

Review of the Rural Zone in Wanganui District Plan

David Johnston

Every district has a District Plan that is required to be reviewed every 10 years.

Consultation with rural communities on Phase 4 (Rural) and Phase 5 (Archaeology and Protected Trees) of the Wanganui District Plan is being done now.

Phase 4 includes:

- The River Valley Zone
- Rural Settlement
- Landscape Overlay Zone
- Papakainga

Seven meetings were held in September/October in rural areas - some of which were poorly attended in my opinion.



Key themes that have arisen from these meetings include:

- Lifestyle properties were discussed at all of the meetings.
- Some said they wanted smaller lot sizes so lifestyle properties could cluster together.
- Others wanted larger sizes to discourage lifestyle subdivision.
- General thought is they are unsustainable.
- There is a need to protect high class soil land as once this land is subdivided we cannot get it back.
- There needs to be more input from neighbours about subdivision.
- There is a need to protect significant trees within Wanganui region.
- There were concerns about putting archaeology sites in the District Plan as it creates a double process and discourages farmers from telling council about the sites.
- Will Papakainga mean different rules for different areas?

Information about Shaping Wanganui (the District Plan Review) is available online at www.wanganui.govt.nz/shaping

Fordell infrastructure improvements sought

Bill Ashworth

A community meeting held at Fordell two months ago highlighted the poor state of Fordell's footpaths.

Little maintenance work has been done since the County Council days, and while residents acknowledge the constant repair work on No.2 Line, they are concerned at the apparent neglect of work carried out in the village.

It was pointed out that before this work could be addressed there needed to be some consideration given to improving the wastewater drainage of the village. Wanganui District Council officers are currently preparing drainage options so they can be presented to villagers for prioritising. When these options are finalised, the locals will have input into the planning of future work.

Working with the community

Thank you to everyone who took the time to attend one of our recent community meetings.

The meetings are a great opportunity for us to bring you up to date with what the Board is doing and also to hear directly from you about issues affecting the rural community.

However, you don't have to wait for a meeting to talk with us. Our contact details are on the front page of this newsletter and we invite you to raise rural issues with us throughout the year.

HOTWIRE



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Want to talk about rural issues?

Wanganui Rural Community Board represents the interests of our rural sector within the community and at the Wanganui District Council table. The Board members invite you to contact them to discuss matters affecting the rural community.

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Forestry

Wanganui Rural Community Board Chair Alan Taylor discusses the effects of forestry harvesting on rural roads.



The most comprehensive task the Board has ever undertaken has been to assess the likely impact of forestry on rural roads.

Three years ago Ian Moore delivered a report scoping the size, location and likely timing of log extraction in the Wanganui District for the next three decades.

Subsequently the Board commissioned three further reports covering the expected road deterioration, its cost and the expected damage attributable to different rural industries.

The Board has held discussions with as many forestry industry stakeholders as possible on the content of these reports.

Specifically, we have worked through the findings with forest owners, loggers, transport operators, sawmillers, local authority staff and elected members, and government officials to try to gain a comprehensive understanding of all points of view about how the increased road maintenance could be funded and how the potential damage might be mitigated.

The task has been complex as the impacts are geographically variable and there are significant vested interests involved.

The financial impact is large for our district. At the very least it appears that we will have to cope with finding at least an expected \$20 million over the next 30 to 35 years, over and above the normal road maintenance programme. This excludes allowing for bridge and culvert work, and inflation. And it is quite clear that the costs will be neither met, nor subsidised, by national government. This is a big one, and we are largely on our own.

By the end of this year (2012), the Rural Community Board will have met to weigh all the physical and financial options available toward funding and mitigating the expected damage.

The Board will then make recommendations to Wanganui District Council which bears the ultimate decision-making responsibility for a solution.

Community safety focus

Darrell Monk

The Wanganui District Council has established a Community Safety Group to deal with the community's concerns about the release of Stewart Murray Wilson in the Wanganui District.

I am the Board's representative on the Community Safety Group. It also has representatives from the Council, Department of Corrections (Community Probation and Prison Services), New Zealand Police, local residents and agencies involved in the care of those exposed to sexual offending. The group is working within the Safer Whanganui framework.

The idea is to have a co-ordinated approach to dealing with the public's concerns. The reports we have received from those managing Mr Wilson's parole have been reassuring and we are confident that the comprehensive safety plan and response matrix which is in place is working well.

However, we do acknowledge that there has been heightened awareness of sexual trauma issues in the community, with more referrals to Whanganui Safe and Free (formerly the Sexual Abuse Healing Centre). For some people, the release of Mr Wilson has brought out issues from the past that had not been dealt with at the time.

The Safety Group recognises the significance of this issue and acknowledges that friends and family of sexual abuse survivors are impacted by this. Whanganui Safe and Free Manager Miriam van Dingenan and Neil Forlong from the Police will work with Safer Whanganui on supporting community members who are affected by past trauma.

For people in our community who have been victims of crimes, and who may have heightened worries or difficulties as a result of the release of Mr Wilson, the following agencies and organisations can offer support and help.

Whanganui Safe and Free, phone 927 6582
Relationships Aotearoa, phone 345 3578
Whanganui Family Works, phone 345 6681
Whanganui Women's Network, phone 345 6833
Victim Support, phone 349 0647

Wyley's Bridge update

Andy Collins

Wyley's Bridge is the gateway to the upper Whangaehu Valley and the Mangamahu community.

The area is a key producer of horticulture, beef, sheep and forestry, and a vital part of the region's economy.

Wyley's Bridge crosses the Whangaehu River at the commencement to Mangamahu Road. It is an aging asset - its transoms are suffering from rapid deterioration and other bridge components are also affected by wear and tear.

Wanganui District Council has managed to extend its life by placing speed limits on the bridge and more recently has not approved requests for overweight loads. Unfortunately, the bridge now needs to be replaced (this is the best value option).

Consequently the Wanganui and Rangitikei District Councils have included this replacement in their 10-year plans to happen in 2013/14.

This is currently under review by the New Zealand Transport Agency for funding approval.

For the time being, the current speed and overweight load restrictions are adequate, but due to the rapid speed of transom deterioration this will be reviewed every year. It is unlikely the current bridge will last beyond 2013/14 without further load weight restrictions.

History of Wyley's Bridge

The single lane bridge, consisting of a 69.4m suspension span and 10m approach span, was built in 1957. The bridge was partially reconstructed about 1980 by the installation of steel I beams to replace the timber trusses. Three of the transoms were replaced in 1999.



Growing our primary industry base

Mark Lourie

Now into our second year of focussing on our primary industry base, things are starting to take shape.

The previous 18 months has been spent identifying our region's resources and what our land is currently producing. We have had three sessions with local farmers and industry people. Updating land use maps of our region's current industries has been important as an update of information has been long overdue.

The last six months has been a time to consider our opportunities. This has been a huge task and will be ongoing as the target will continue to move. Things like what are our soils most suitable for; our climate, including seasonal rainfall, sunshine and other influencing weather conditions; what is sustainable short and long term - this includes soil, water, people, infrastructure; what do our markets want now and in the future. In the past producers have had very little involvement in the sale of their product or any knowledge of who is buying it. The last 10 years has seen pasture to plate thinking; now the reverse is the thinking - plate to pasture. What do they want, when do they want it and in what form? Simply we need to supply what the consumer wants that has a quality and convenience they are happy to pay a premium for.

One of the opportunities to come out of growing our primary industry base is the potential of elite and versatile soils within our region. Nationally, they make up less than 5% of the landscape. Most of these soils are found in small pockets on pastoral farms; within a 20km circle of Wanganui there are 3500 hectares of these high class soils. Some larger areas like Westmere are on the town boundary, while most are small fragmented pockets within predominantly sheep and beef farms. On their own they offer little more than current use but collectively they have greater potential to add a new and high value income stream to the current livestock business.

The next step is to get the right people involved. To date, the team is led by Allan MacGibbon and Tim Stubbs from the Wanganui District Council, Alec Mackay from AgResearch, myself from the Rural Community Board and Donald Wickham, Alistair Polson, Hugh Dalrymple, Paul Macintosh and Trevor Laird from industry. As we progress, sub-groups may emerge and concentrate on areas of expertise and interest. At that point more people with an interest and skills to offer will be required to move the concept forward. If you are interested in being involved, please contact Allan MacGibbon at Council, email allan.macgibbon@wanganui.govt.nz or phone 349 0001.

The long term benefits to our community will include increased farm profitability, viability and the demand for labour, provide additional primary industry development pathways and double export receipts from the primary sectors by 2025.

A stronger rural voice on Council

Under the terms of former Mayor Laws and current Mayor Main we have enjoyed speaking rights on the three full committees of Council.

Earlier this year the Rural Community Board became aware that legislation provides for our body to be represented on District Council committees with speaking, moving and voting rights.

We have sought, and gained, these important extensions for our representatives. Important because they raise the profile of the Board and give more voice to rural matters.

We are grateful to Council for allowing this extension which was enthusiastically endorsed by Mayor Main and Cr Laws who have both acknowledged the value to Council of the Board's role and input.

The Board's representatives to these committees are:
Community and Environment - Darrell Monk
Infrastructure and Property - David (Tex) Matthews
Strategy and Finance - Mark Lourie

