**Councillors’ update December 2024**

**SH1B Telephone Rd re-opening mid-2025**After more than two years of lobbying and behind-the-scenes discussions about potential solutions between Waikato District Council, local community representatives, KiwiRail and NZ Transport Agency, Transport Minister Hon Simeon Brown has made the very welcome announcement that the Telephone Rd rail crossing will re-open by mid-2025 after NZTA does the work needed to make it safe.

It's great to see that community connectivity still means something in New Zealand and that a local community and their Council can work with Government and government agencies to get good outcomes. Local communities in the Tamahere-Woodlands Ward from Gordonton to Tauwhare and further south - including Eureka, Puketaha, Newstead, Matangi and Tamahere - can look forward to restored travelling links to school, work and home.

Deserved thanks go to the local Re-open Telephone Rd lobby group, and local representatives who gave up their time to meet with Council and government agencies several times. Thanks to Federated Farmers Waikato president Keith Holmes who weighed in on the issue and to Waikato MP Tim van de Molen for listening to his electorate. Thanks to local Councillor Mike Keir who proposed some alternative options, and to Council staff for helping coordinate local discussions. And of course thanks to Hon Simeon Brown for making it a funding priority and to NZTA for finding an affordable and safe solution. See the 28 November announcement on [www.beehive.govt.nz/releases](http://www.beehive.govt.nz/releases) and follow project updates on [www.nzta.govt.nz/projects](http://www.nzta.govt.nz/projects).

**Drinking water safe despite elevated arsenic levels**Local councils and public health authorities have confirmed that drinking water supplies in the region remain safe despite slightly elevated levels of arsenic detected in drinking water sourced from the Waikato River within the last couple of weeks. Arsenic in the Waikato River is primarly due to geothermal activity. The ‘maximum acceptable value’ for arsenic in New Zealand drinking water is 0.0100 milligrams per litre, but Watercare and Hamilton City Council have reported slightly higher levels on three occasions in late November (the highest being 0.0115 mg per litre). National Public Health Service regional clinical director Dr William Rainger says arsenic limits in the NZ drinking water standards are based on the level of risk from a lifetime of drinking water so slightly elevated levels for a short period of time are not cause for alarm. Tamahere-Woodlands Ward residents with connections to reticulated water supplies are supplied by Hamilton City through an agreement with Waikato District Council. The Ward includes the villages of Tamahere, Matangi, Tauwhare, Newstead, Eureka, Puketaha and Gordonton.

**Work continues on 3 Waters CCO and new roading contracts**Waikato District Council is still investigating two options to establish a Waters CCO (council controlled organisation) either with Hamilton City or with up to seven other Waikato district councils. The scale of both proposals is expected to deliver substantial savings in the long term, but both need careful analysis and any final decision incorporated into our 2025-34 Long Term Plan which will go out for consultation early next year.

Road maintenance work in Waikato district is currently delivered by the Waikato District Alliance through a contract between Waikato District Council and Downer established in 2015. The contract was extended in 2020 and is due to expire on 30 June 2025. The Council has sought tenders to establish two new contracts for the next 10 years (initially five years with rights of renewal) covering the northern and southern halves of the district. The new contracts are expected to be awarded in February 2025 for a 1 July 2025 start date.

**Naming of Tamahere Reserve**We expect to bring feedback from a meeting on 2 December between TCC, TMRT and iwi representatives, and with local Councillors and support staff also attending.

**Tamahere Response Plan**We have a skeleton plan with contacts willing to provide assistance in case of emergency (eg beds, food, heavy machinery etc), but we still need volunteers willing to be available as coordinators in such an event.

**NZTA roadworks**

* **SH21 Airport Rd -** Resurfacing work on SH21 Airport Rd near the Narrows Bridge is planned by Fulton Hogan for NZTA for the week commencing Sunday 15 December. The work will be done between 8pm and 6am over two nights between Sunday 15 December and Thursday 19December. During these times SH21 Airport Rd will be closed to through traffic between Clearway Rise and Narrows Lane. There will be a detour of about 20 minutes through Hamilton along SH3 and SH1/SH1C. However, emergency vehicles will be allowed through the worksite, as will local residents needing access to their properties. Residents on Narrows Lane will be escorted through the worksite.
* **Waikato Expressway -** The Waikato Expressway section between Taupiri (Gordonton Rd interchange) and the Lake Rd interchange is expected to re-open from midday Friday 6 December after two weeks of full closure for maintenance work. The northbound detour is via Ngaruawahia and the southbound detour is via SH1B, Bankier and Horsham Downs Rds. After that any remaining work will be done with traffic sharing lanes and the occasional night closure if needed.

***Two related detours remain in place until 15 December:*** (1) The south-bound on-ramp at the Taupiri-Gordonton Rd interchange is closed until mid-December so south-bound travellers will need to use the SH1B detour to access the Expressway at the Lake Rd interchange. 2) Northbound traffic on SH1C will need to exit at Lake Rd then head south on the Expressway to turn at the Resolution Dr interchange to head north again.

**Tip on a ‘Red Tape Tipline’**The Ministry for Regulation has established a ‘Red Tape Tipline’ for members of the public to make submissions on regulations that affect them. Minister of Regulation, David Seymour, says the Ministry wants to hear about ‘red tape horror stories’ and compliance issues that cost unncecessary time and money. Go to [www.regulation.govt.nz](http://www.regulation.govt.nz).

**Happy Christmas**Warm wishes for the Christmas holiday season and a happy New Year. Waikato District Council offices will close from the end of business hours on Friday 20 December 2024 and re-open Monday 6 January 2025, but on-call staff will be available to attend to urgent matters if you phone 0800 492 452.

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