



Te Waihou Walkway re-opens to the public



When fully re-opened in early 2025, visitors will have the option of walking the entire Track which stretches from Leslie Road to Whites Road, providing a 5km walk.

Re-opening timeline:

- Leslie Road entrance re-opened in December 2024.
- Whites Road Entrance partial reopening, approximately 1.9km, 14 February, with the remaining section of the Walkway from Whites Road slated to open during the first half of 2025.



SCAN HERE FOR MORE

Visitors to the South Waikato can once again enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the Blue Spring. Due to ongoing works, Council has taken a phased approach in re-opening the Blue Spring / Te Waihou Walkway. In December 2024 Council re-opened the Leslie Road entrance to the Track, much to the joy and excitement of residents and visitors alike. The Leslie Road section, sometimes known as the 'Instagram Track' is most popular with visitors as it offers a short scenic walk, approximately 800metres, to the viewing deck where people can get their snaps for social media. In February 2025, Council partially re-opened the Track from Whites Road, approximately 1.9km from the Whites Road carpark. However, visitors should note that the Track is only partially open from these two ends. Work is ongoing further in from the Whites Road end of the Walkway, where Council is strengthening the existing boardwalk.

IN HOUSE

Produced in-house for South Waikato residents by the SWDC Communications Team.

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Local Waters Done Well

A unified approach to water services



SCAN HERE FOR MORE

This year we all have a big decision to make about the future of water services delivery in the South Waikato.

Local Water Done Well (LWDW) is the Government's approach to improving the management of the three waters (drinking water, wastewater and storm water).

As part of this, Council will need to produce a water services delivery plan by September 2025, focusing on ensuring that future delivery is financially sustainable and meets quality standards.

The options provided by the Government under the new legislation include:

- Forming an internal business unit to deliver water services. This option includes significant changes to how councils manage and report on water services - so while it would still be delivered by council, it is not the 'status quo'.
- Joining with others to form a multi-Council controlled organisation (CCO). This option is what Waikato Waters Done Well explores.
- Forming a single council water organisation to deliver those services.

In November last year Council voted to proceed with entering into a non-binding Heads of Agreement relating to Waikato Water Done Well, alongside Waipā, Matamata-Piako, Waitomo, South Waikato, Ōtorohanga, Hauraki, and Taupō District Councils.

The community will have their chance to give their opinions on the available options later this year. In the meantime, people can learn more about the background of the topic and the options by visiting www.southwaikato.govt.nz/our-services/water-services or scanning the QR code on this page.

A FRESH APPROACH TO A REGIONAL CHALLENGE

Multiple independent reports over more than a decade have said that managing water services regionally could save money and improve infrastructure by leveraging scale. This regional model would involve creating a new multi-council organisation—called a Council Controlled Organisation (CCO)—to handle drinking water, wastewater, and, where requested, stormwater services.

Under Waikato Water Done Well, participating councils would transfer responsibility for their water services to the new organisation which they will collectively own, and have a say in its strategic priorities.

COMMUNITY INPUT MATTERS

In early 2025, each council will make the Waikato Water Done Well model available to the public as part of community consultation.

NEXT STEPS

If approved, the CCO would be established in mid-2025, and following an implementation period that will support the safe transition of Council's water services, it would become operational by mid-2026. A key requirement is that this is seamless from a customer experience perspective.

The outcome of the community consultation and subsequent decisions by each council will determine which councils formally adopt the Waikato Water Done Well model.

Hamilton City Council and Waikato District Council are also exploring establishing their own CCO, but have been clear that they see a regional model being of benefit at some point in the future.

WAIKATO WATER DONE WELL PROPOSED TIMELINE



Labour of love for NZ rugby's volunteer of the year

He might be the best part of 20,000kms from the place where he grew up, but Connor Croke reckons he's never never felt more at home than he does in Putāruru.



An Irishman from a small town called Port Laoise in the centre of the country, Croke found his way to the South Waikato six years ago after spending a long stretch in Australia with wife Malesa, who is a Tirau native.

"Where I'm from, it's Putāruru on the other side of the world," Croke laughs.

"I left Port Laoise saying I'd never move back to it and here I am in a mirror image of it on the other side of the world.

A keen follower of both rugby and Gaelic football back in Ireland, Croke wasted no time in getting involved with the Putāruru Rugby Club after arriving, quickly becoming an integral member of the club and serving as both Club Captain and Junior President.

"I turned up to an AGM one night just offering to help out and maybe sweep out the sheds. I ended up being given the Club Captain's role, which I did for three years, before trading that in to become junior president," he says.

Late last year his dedication to the Club was recognised with one of the highest honours possible, being named New Zealand Rugby's Volunteer of the Year.

Croke says he's lucky to be part of a club which has a key role to play in fostering a thriving community.

"I grew up around rugby clubs and Gaelic football clubs in Ireland and your Saturdays were spent there from morning to night," he says.

"But times are changing and the Club probably drifted out of being the centre of the community. So one of the things we have worked hard to do across the board is make it a community hub again.

"Even if people are done with playing, it's a place to come and hang out and catch up with people. We want it to be a meeting place for the community.

"The proof of it working was two years ago when we did a big refurbishment at the Club and were able to do it all through volunteers and Club contacts.



On the award, Croke says it was a humbling experience and one that belongs to the whole Club, not just him. "There were plenty of congratulations from people in the town. I still feel there's harder workers at the Club than me to be honest, I think I might just be the noisiest one!" Croke says.

ARAURA DAY 2025: CELEBRATING CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

The Cook Islands community of Tokoroa, known as the 16th Star of the Cook Islands, joyously celebrated Araura Day on the 26 and 27 January 2025. The festivities began on Sunday with a church service at St Luke's PIPC, followed by a traditional UAPOU (fellowship). On Monday, the community came together for a fun-filled Sports Day and Kaikai at the Sport and Events Centre. The celebrations culminated in a vibrant Cultural Night, marking a memorable conclusion to Araura Day 2025.

Here are some photos from the festivities taken by photographer: ZarChan Studios.



WHAT'S HOT

WHAT'S NOT



In December, vandals damaged the sound shell at the Tokoroa Skatepark. This has affected a popular community spot where many of our youth gather for recreation and sport. Please help protect our shared spaces by reporting any suspicious activities to the Police.

Clive Somerville appointed SWIFT CEO



Above, New SWIFT CEO, Clive Somerville.

The South Waikato Investment Fund Trust, a community-owned economic development fund set up to provide growth and development in the District, welcomed Clive Somerville as its new CEO.

Clive brings experience in banking, technology,

and community development, most recently as General Manager of the Graeme Dingle Foundation Waikato, to his new role with a track record of building meaningful partnerships and delivering transformative initiatives.

"I am deeply committed to fostering opportunities that drive economic regeneration, intergenerational well-being, and social resilience in South Waikato."

SWIFT Chair Stephen Veitch says the Trust enhances education and employment opportunities, drives economic regeneration and development, improves public services and infrastructure, and supports other charitable purposes which enhance wellbeing in South Waikato. "Under Clive's leadership, we will continue to focus on delivering our vision: "Growing Together, Growing Stronger" by investing in opportunities that unlock South Waikato's full potential."

With family roots in Okoroire, Putāruru and Rāhui Pōkeka (Huntly), Clive says his ties instill in him a profound sense of belonging and purpose. Away from work he is an avid cyclist, outdoors

enthusiast, and family man who values the rich heritage of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Clive follows in the footsteps of former SWIFT CEO Amanda Hema who resigned in December 2024 after three years in the role.



Amanda has taken up an appointment as Head of Engagement at Waikato University. Stephen says Amanda's time with SWIFT had been transformational.

"Through her visionary leadership and commitment to regional development, Amanda has left an enduring legacy that has positively impacted businesses, youth, and the wider South Waikato community."

STRATHMORE PARK RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISION LARGEST HOUSING DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE 1970S



Left to right: Steven Farrant (S&L Land Specialists), Adam O'Leary (Prime Solutions Ltd), Les O'Leary (Landowner), Clyde Rouse (Rouse Contracting), Craig Tulloch (S&L Land Specialists)

The holiday season marked a significant milestone for Tokoroa and the wider South Waikato, with a karakia (blessing) and the turning of the soil for the new Strathmore Park Residential Subdivision in Tokoroa. Over the next few years, this privately-owned site will introduce 187 new homes in a staged approach by developer Prime Solutions Limited (PSL).

The project is expected to create significant employment opportunities for locals throughout its various stages. South Waikato Mayor Gary Petley remarked, "This is great news for Tokoroa and the wider South Waikato District. It's aligned with our goals and vision outlined in the Long Term Plan, which aims to see more people own their own homes."

"Council has worked closely with the landowner for over five years to overcome challenging development economics. As a result, the first three stages of the



development will deliver between 26-31 market affordable homes, priced around \$550,000 for two- to three-bedroom homes," Petley added. "Developments like this, alongside those in Putāruru, support our ambitious economic growth plan, enabling more people to live and work locally. We are working with the community to deliver on our plans. These are not just promises."

Adam O'Leary, Director of Prime Solutions Limited, expressed his satisfaction in collaborating with a solutions-focused Council with ambitious plans for Tokoroa. This development is expected to address the District's current housing shortage of 870 homes, as noted in the Waikato Housing Initiative 2023 Housing Stocktake Update. The development risk lies solely with the developer, and no additional infrastructure is required from the Council.

The initial township of Tokoroa was built in the 1950s, with most residential housing stock constructed between 1970-1979. There has been no significant residential land development in Tokoroa since then. Various residential housing options have been considered since 2019, although the land has been zoned residential since 1998. High build costs and risk have previously prevented its development.

Prime Solutions Limited has carefully considered creating a socially and economically diverse development throughout the design process.



EXCITING UPGRADE FOR SOUTH WAIKATO INDOOR POOLS

In February, Council embarked on a significant upgrade project to the South Waikato Indoor Pools Facility, heralding a journey toward a top-notch facility that will serve our community well into the future.

As outlined in the District's Long Term Plan for 2024-34, this vital project aims to secure the Pool's future, which faced potential closure without these essential upgrades.

The Pools will be closed for more than a year, however the community can still enjoy limited services at a temporary pop-up pool at the Tokoroa War Memorial Sportsground. This facility will host learn-to-swim classes and water safety programmes for schools.

The Pools will see key improvements such as the installation of non-slip flooring around the pools, new family-friendly changing rooms, facilities for those with physical disabilities and the elderly, as well as a new splash pad for family fun, a sauna and a plunge pool.

A new community room will be available for events and parties, and the outdoor area will receive a facelift with a new play area. Mayor Gary Petley emphasised the project's importance:

"We're improving a place that has been a cornerstone of our community for nearly three decades," Mayor Petley said. "It's where children learn to swim, families celebrate, and the community comes together. Without this work, we risked losing this vital facility forever. While the temporary closure may cause some inconvenience, the long-term benefits—enhanced features and improved safety—will be well worth it."

The District's Summer pools in Tirau and Putāruru will remain open until 2 March 2025 and 30 March 2025 respectively, before closing for Winter and reopening in November 2025.





FEEDBACK SUBMISSIONS CONSULTATION

101

Read on for Council's guide to giving feedback - what submissions are, who can make a submission, how the consultation process works, what you can say in your submission and much more... It is important, as a member of the community to have your say.

Not every decision will go the way you want it to, but at least you your voice can be heard before a decision is made.

WHAT IS A SUBMISSION?

A submission is formal feedback. It is your chance to give Council your view on a matter under consideration. Any individual or group/organisation can make a submission. Your submission can support, oppose or express a view or opinion.

WHEN CAN YOU MAKE A SUBMISSION?

When Council is consulting on a matter, we ask for submissions. We publish this on our website and advertise it in a range of places, including local newspapers, our social media pages, this community newsletter (In Touch) and our mobile phone app Antenno.

CAN ANY PERSON, ORGANISATION OR GROUP MAKE A SUBMISSION?

Yes. If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation or group (eg a sport or social club), make sure you have permission to do so and that you are presenting the views of the group correctly. If you are submitting on behalf of a group, it is good to indicate the number of people who support the submission, but please note it will be treated and processed as a single submission. So, if you list 20 people on the submission, it will not be counted as 20 individual submissions.

WHY MAKE A SUBMISSION?

Every year we consult on several issues that may affect the community. Your feedback is important to us. Making a submission is the best and most important way for you to be heard. While the consultation process is not a vote, your submission ensures your views are considered by those making the decisions. Also, by making a submission, you will have the chance to speak directly to Council during public hearings – only submitters have this opportunity.

It is important, as a member of the community to have your say. Not every decision will go the way you want it to, but at least you your voice can be heard before a decision is made.

WHAT TO SAY IN YOUR SUBMISSION?

If you are an organisation or submitting on behalf of a group, provide some background information, such as the aims and structure of your group/organisation, how many members you have, and what consultation you have undertaken with your members to put this submission together. As for your feedback, what you say is up to you. You can write as little as you wish or as much as you want. If the submission form contains questions, you can answer as many or as few of these as you wish. It is important that you keep your feedback focused on the issue at hand to ensure your submission is as relevant as possible. It is also a good idea to keep feedback short and to the point – some consultations receive many submissions, so the easier and clearer they are to read, the easier it is for reading and analysis of all data and input. It is handy to remember that it is often not a 'numbers game'. One submission with a good idea, backed up with good reasoning and explanations, can have more effect than multiple submissions providing little or no explanation for the viewpoint. You do not have to use the standard submission form. You are welcome to attach and upload any extra information alongside the submission form.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER CONSULTATION IS CLOSED?

Feedback is analysed, along with advice from technical experts and other relevant evidence. Public feedback comes from a range of sources. These may include online and paper feedback forms, emails and letters, social media comments, public meetings and hearings. Once staff have analysed all feedback and other relevant information, staff provide a summary report of key findings to decision-makers. This report will include copies of all feedback received. We publish the reports on our website as soon as they are available. We also generally release a media statement too. All of our media statements are available on our website. Statements may or may not appear in local media.

WHAT ARE HEARINGS AND WHEN ARE THEY HELD?

For some consultation processes, we may also hold a Hearing which is where people have the opportunity to speak to the decision-makers (usually the Mayor and Councillors) about their submission. In these cases, submissions are made public, as part of a Hearing report. Submitters must indicate they wish to speak at a Hearing when they make their submission. You can't just arrive and speak. If you indicated a wish to speak to your submission at a Hearing, we will contact you with a time and date on when the hearing will take place. Hearings are open to the public.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A SUBMISSION AND FEEDBACK?

Sometimes Council wants input into an issue, but it's not a formal consultation process with formal submissions. We're just looking for feedback, a guide, ideas or suggestions. We do this through engagement, be it face-to-face or through online and written means using the same means as for formal consultation.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT SUBMISSIONS AND FEEDBACK

- A submission is not the same as a vote.
- Submissions are part of the decision-making process used to help inform Council, but it's not the only thing. Council also considers things like expert advice, laws and regulations. Submissions don't need to be technical.
- A submission can be made in plain language, in fact plain language is preferable!
- The submission process is not simply a 'box-ticking' exercise. Councillors, alongside staff, review and analyse all feedback and/ or submissions received. All submissions play an important role in decision-making, along with advice from technical experts and other relevant evidence. Sometimes our community is divided in their feedback and there is a split in views. A decision still needs making one way or the other. It is untrue that Council does not "listen" to feedback. Feedback is noted, but the answer - for a variety of reasons - might not be what some people want to hear.

Upcoming Events at the Sport and Events Centre

Multi-Purpose openplay sessions

Sessions involve a wide range of skill-based activities such as jump, balance, swing, and step. Adults must actively supervise their child. 1y and under **FREE**. 2y – 8y **\$3**.

MONDAY

0 – 6y: 9.15am-10.15am

5y – 8y: 3.45pm-4.45pm

TUESDAY

0 – 6y: 3.45pm-4.45pm

THURSDAY

0 – 6y: 9.15am – 10.15am

Party Packages

You name the activity and we will deliver soft play for under 8's.

Sporty parties - Friday & Saturday
Soft play parties - Saturday & Sunday
Price includes - 3 hours room hire & staff member for 1 hour to deliver your activity

Healthy Hearts

TUESDAY & THURSDAY

- 10am-12pm

- **FREE** to all 60+ SW District residents

- Includes: movement classes, table tennis, Pickleball, group walks, healthy tips and check ups

- Tea and coffee (Gold coin donation)

Contact

Phone: 07 885 1059

Email: sportsandevents@southwaikato.govt.nz

Upcoming Meetings

- **19 March** - Community Investment Committee
- **26 March** - Council Meeting
- **10 April** - Tirau Community Board (5.30pm at the Tirau War Memorial Hall)
- **30 April** - Council Meeting
- 8 May - Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee
- **14 May** - Local Services Committee
- **21 May** - Growth & Infrastructure Committee
- **28 May** - Council Meeting
- **30 May** - Citizenship Ceremony

All public meetings will be held at 9.30am in the Council Chamber (Council Offices in Tokoroa) unless otherwise stated.

NEWS FROM THE PLAZA



Ace Fighters Gym - Fight Night:

1 March from 3pm.

Waste-ed with Kate Meads: Food Lovers Master Class - 11 March from 6pm to 8pm - \$10 entry which comes with a free \$40 goodie bag.

Sunday Movie: HERE (2024)

- 16 March at 2pm \$10 entry.

A generational story about families and the special place they inhabit, sharing in love, loss, laughter, and life. Starring Tom Hanks & Robin Wright



Black Sheep Circus: ROCK BOTTOM

performance - 17 April 11am & 1pm - \$5 entry.

Pack your sandwiches and load up your wheelbarrow for a backyard adventure! Our tradie clown, Doug, tackles tricky tasks from his boss, learning to try again and again. Have a laugh while helping Doug discover the importance of calming down and asking for what he needs.

ANZAC Civic Service: 25 April at 10am

SWPICS Vaccination pop up clinic: Thursday 16 May at 1pm to 3pm.

Elton John and Billy Idol Tribute concert:

24 May. Elton John vs Billy Joel are coming in MAY 2025 for a night of legendary hit songs and banter. Two grand pianos in black and white, epic costumes and tunes makes this an award-winning tribute show not to be missed!



Sign up to our monthly newsletter through our website www.plaza.org.nz to keep up to date on our events.

CONTACT THE PLAZA

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Email: theplaza@plaza.org.nz

Facebook: [theplazaputaruru](https://www.facebook.com/theplazaputaruru)



NAVIGATING PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS SAFELY



A pedestrian crossing is an area of the road marked with white stripes. As you approach a pedestrian crossing, you should see signs before the crossing and black and white poles at the crossing. White diamonds are generally painted on the road before the crossing, and a white limit line shows where to stop (note the white diamonds and limit lines are not guides for pedestrians!).

Who could be using a pedestrian crossing?

Pedestrians, people using mobility devices (such as motorised wheelchairs), and wheeled recreational vehicles (like skateboards and foot-propelled scooters). When using a skateboard or scooter, it is safer to dismount and walk across. Bicycles must not be ridden across a pedestrian crossing.

What should I do when I approach a pedestrian crossing in my car?

Slow down and prepare to stop. Always approach as if you need to stop. Any user of a pedestrian crossing has the right of way. Remember, you are surrounded by steel; the pedestrian is not!

Stop for pedestrians stepping onto or on the crossing, including those waiting to use it.

If there is no raised traffic island, stop and give way to pedestrians on any part of the crossing.

If there is a raised island, stop for pedestrians on your half of the road. Wait until they have crossed and are clear of your vehicle before proceeding.

Show patience, especially for the elderly or those with impaired mobility.

Anything else to be aware of?

Remember, children aren't little adults, so always be prepared to stop. Be especially careful around the beginning and end of school but remember anyone could use a pedestrian crossing at any time.



Tokoroa Airfield Upcoming Events

MARCH 2025

7 - 9 March: NZ Jet Model Association Jet Unmanned Aircraft Operating SFC to 1000ft AGL

15 March: Tokoroa Aero Club Training Day

29 & 30 March: Tokoroa Kart Club Race Weekend

APRIL 2025

5 April: Tokoroa Aero Club Training Day

5 & 6 April: Auckland Motorcycle Club AMCC Bucket Championship R2

11 - 13 April: NZ Jet Model Association Jet Unmanned Aircraft Operating SFC to 1000ft AGL

MAY 2025

3 May: Tokoroa Aero Club Training Day

10 & 11 May: Tokoroa Kart Club Race Weekend

16-18 May: NZ Jet Model Association Jet Unmanned Aircraft Operating SFC to 1000ft AGL

31 May - 1 June: South Waikato Motocross Club Kings Cup

JUNE 2025

7 June: Tokoroa Aero Club Training Day

13-14 June: NZ Jet Model Association Jet Unmanned Aircraft Operating SFC to 1000ft

CLUB DETAILS FOR ENQUIRIES

New Zealand Jet Model Association
Website: www.nzjma.com
Email: secretary@nzjma.com

Tokoroa Kart Club
Email: president@kartsporttokoroa.co.nz

Tokoroa Street Rodders
Call Matt on 0275223883

Tokoroa Aero Club
Aero Club Facebook page
Call Luke on 021 190 7151

Auckland Motorcycle Club
Email: David Diprose at david@diproses.com

South Waikato Motorcycle Club
Email: swmcc-sec@hotmail.com

READ IN TOUCH? PROVE IT...

... and be in to win a lucky dip \$50 supermarket voucher.

We will be running this competition every issue. Text your answers and your name to 027 287 5980 or private message our Facebook page by 30 March 2025.

1. When was the Leslie Road entrance to the Blue Spring re-opened?
2. When was Araura Day celebrated?
3. What is the name of the new SWIFT CEO?
4. What is the name of the new residential subdivision in Tokoroa?
5. List one key improvement as part of the Indoor Pools Upgrade.

Congratulations to Violet of Putāruru who was drawn as the lucky winner for the December 2024 In Touch competition. Thank you to all those who entered. Try again this issue!

The correct answers were:

1. Leith Place, 2. 2006, 3. 70 years, 4. TIS Rusty Demons, 5. 2 December.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

Would you prefer to have In Touch delivered to your post box or Inbox. Let us know. Email: communications@southwaikato.govt.nz



Antenna is a mobile phone app that is FREE for users to download from Google Play or the App Store.

Install the app. Input your specific address(es) - home, work, play, and we send you messages relevant to your address. Users can also use the app to report issues or ideas to us.



Mayor Gary Petley

0274 836 809
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TOKOROA ward



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