

## New Council sworn in at Papa o te Aroha Marae



The new South Waikato District Council has been confirmed following its official swearing in and inaugural meeting on Wednesday 29 October at Papa o te Aroha Marae in Tokoroa.

Mayor Gary Petley also confirmed Tokoroa Ward

Councillor Maria Te Kanawa as his Deputy Mayor for the upcoming triennium. Mayor Petley said Councillor Te Kanawa was a natural choice for the role, in what will be her second term on Council.

"Maria is an incredibly well-respected member of our community who delivered tremendous value

at the Council table in the last triennium, as a member for the Tokoroa Ward," he said.

Ahead of his second term as Mayor and third in total on Council, Mayor Petley said he is excited to continue the strong work started by the previous Council. "I'm really excited about this Council and what we can achieve together," he said. "Over the past triennium we have laid a foundation from which we can continue to do some wonderful things for our community."

### Full Council Representatives

Mayor Gary Petley (Chair), Deputy Mayor Maria Te Kanawa, Cr Zed Latinovic, Cr Thomas Lee, Cr Ani Lipscombe, Cr Kerry Purdy, Cr Dave Shaw, Cr Josiah Teokotai, Cr Michael Thomas, Cr Elvise Van Der Leden, Cr Sandra Wallace.



Scan the QR code to watch the video of the inaugural Council meeting.



MAYOR

### Gary PETLEY

Kia ora, I'm Gary "Puku" Petley, born and bred in Putāruru, and proud to call South Waikato home for all of my 70 years. I'm honoured to be re-elected as your Mayor for the 2025-28 triennium. Of Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngāti Mutunga descent, I've worked across the District - from the bush and Kinleith Mill to running a small business in Tirau with my wife. I first stood for Council because I believe in fronting up, listening closely, and making decisions that reflect the values of our people. My goal has always been to protect our future and strengthen our communities through honest leadership and hard mahi. As I begin my second term as Mayor, I'm looking forward to continuing the momentum - investing in infrastructure, supporting local jobs, and making sure South Waikato remains a place we're proud to call home. I have met with each of our new Councillors (who are profiled on the coming pages) to establish specific interests, skills, values and ideas. I think our new Council is a perfect mix of re-elected Members and new Members, culture, gender, background and age. We're very fortunate that this District is represented by people who bring such varied backgrounds and experiences. I am looking forward to us working together over the coming three years.



DEPUTY MAYOR

### Maria TE KANAWA

Tēnā koutou katoa. Ko Maria Te Kanawa tōku ingoa. I was born in Mangakino and raised in Tokoroa. I have been involved in many community based kaupapa for many years, including netball, school boards, cultural groups, civil defence and welfare coordination. It has also been my honour to work for Raukawa for 17 years, currently as Tāhuhu Rangapū (CEO), supporting its charitable mahi.

It is my honour to be elected again as a SWDC Councillor, and an honour to serve as Deputy Mayor this term. I stood for Council back in 2022 and again in 2025 because I have always been proud of Tokoroa and our District and have also felt it was important to give back to the community which supported and shaped you. I have whānau, friends and colleagues right across our District, and doing my best to serve everyone across the whole District is important to me.

# Meet our new Council



## Council Committee Structures

### Local Services Committee:

Cr Lee (Chair), Cr Lipscombe, Cr Latinovic, Cr Thomas, Cr Van Der Leden, Cr Wallace.

### Growth & Infrastructure Committee:

Cr Wallace (Chair), Cr Lee, Cr Purdy, Cr Shaw, Cr Teokotai, Independent Member (TBC).

### Audit, Risk & Improvement Committee:

Rachael Dean (Independent Chair), Cr Purdy, Deputy Mayor Te Kanawa, Cr Thomas, Cr Shaw, Anthony Byett (Independent Member).

### Chief Executive Relationship Committee:

Mayor Petley (Chair), Deputy Mayor Te Kanawa, Cr Lee, Cr Wallace.

### Tirāu Community Board:

Chris Hunt, Fiona Van Lent, Mandeep Singh, Graham Singers.

### Community Engagement and Investment Committee:

Cr Teokotai (Chair), Cr Lipscombe, Cr Lee, Cr Shaw, Deputy Mayor Te Kanawa.

### District Licensing Committee:

Commissioner (Chair), Mayor Petley (Deputy Chair), Cr Teokotai, Cr Thomas, Cr Purdy.

### Creative Communities Scheme:

Chair (TBC), Cr Wallace (Council Rep), public members (6-11).

### Regional Land Transport:

Cr Van Der Leden, Cr Purdy (alternate).

### Waikato CDEMG Joint Committee:

Cr Lee, Cr Thomas (alternate).

### Trade Training:

Cr Lee.

### Kinleith Consul Group:

SW Environ Initiatives (External) 1 member (TBC).



### Raukawa Settlement Trust Joint

### Management Co-Governance Committee:

Mayor Petley (Co-Chair), Cr Lee, Cr Lipscombe, Cr Teokotai.

### Te Arawa Iwi River Trust Joint Management

Co-Governance Committee: Mayor Petley (Co-Chair), Cr Lee, Cr Teokotai, Cr Van Der Leden.

# Better Eggs expansion brings new opportunities to South Waikato

Exciting business developments are underway in Putāruru, as Better Eggs intends to expand its operations, creating new economic opportunities and signalling confidence in the South Waikato District.

The company intends to be the first tenant on a 40-hectare industrial site, which will feature a modern packing, processing, warehouse and distribution facility.

## WORK UNDERWAY AND COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

Work on the first eight hectares is underway, which was marked by a ceremony attended by 70 people including Mayor Gary Petley, Council Chief Executive Susan Law, Raukawa representatives and Kataraina Hodge, QSM.

Following the formalities, the team from Better Eggs hosted a BBQ giving guests an opportunity to connect with fellow attendees and community members.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT

The project is expected to generate construction jobs soon and create a variety of permanent roles once the facility is fully operational. Strategically located with easy access to State Highway 1, the main trunk railway line, and the Port of Tauranga, the site is well positioned to support Better Eggs and other businesses that may establish themselves alongside, helping to build an industrial hub.

Better Eggs CEO Gareth van der Heyden stressed the importance of the relationship with South Waikato District Council, as it helped make the expansion possible. “We’ve got to support the community. South Waikato District Council is the most pro-growth of the five District Councils our family works with, and their support has been key,” he said.

Council CE Susan Law described the project as a strong vote of confidence in the District. “Not only does it bring new jobs to our community, but it also shows that South Waikato is open for business and ready for innovation and growth,” she said.

Mayor Gary Petley added that the development will help diversify the local economy. “It’s a huge positive after so many challenges we’ve faced in the District lately. This expansion will reduce our reliance on traditional industries like timber and bring new work opportunities for our residents,” he said.

The Better Eggs’ expansion shows a commitment to innovation and to building a stronger, more diverse local economy, benefiting Putāruru and the wider South Waikato community for years to come.



## AIR QUALITY CAMPAIGN DELIVERS BIG RESULTS IN TOKOROA



Winter 2025 marked a turning point for air quality in Tokoroa, thanks to a community-focused education campaign led by Waikato Regional Council. The initiative, which ran in Tokoroa and Te Kūiti, aimed to reduce harmful emissions from home heating by promoting better wood-burning practices.

This year, the Tokoroa airshed recorded just two PM10 exceedances, the lowest in five years. According to the Warm Home Clean Air website, wood smoke contains known carcinogens (substances that may increase the risk of cancer) and a range of chemical toxins, including carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10). Over time, inhaling wood smoke can cause breathing and even heart issues.

It can have greater and more immediate impacts on children, the elderly and people with existing respiratory conditions like asthma. Burning dry, seasoned wood is key to reducing smoke and protecting our air.

For more tips visit <https://warmhomescleanair.co.nz>.

2025

Festive Season Closure Hours

| MON<br>22 DEC | TUE<br>23 DEC | WED<br>24 DEC | THU<br>25 DEC | FRI<br>26 DEC | SAT<br>27 DEC | SUN<br>28 DEC |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|

COUNCIL OFFICES

|  |  |  |                  |  |  |              |  |
|--|--|--|------------------|--|--|--------------|--|
|  |  |  | closes<br>midday |  |  |              |  |
|  |  |  | closes<br>midday |  |  |              |  |
|  |  |  | closes<br>midday |  |  | 9am<br>4pm → |  |

RUBBISH & RECYCLING

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LEISURE FACILITIES

|                                |               |  |                  |  |  |               |  |
|--------------------------------|---------------|--|------------------|--|--|---------------|--|
| Library                        |               |  | closes<br>midday |  |  |               |  |
| Animal<br>Shelter              |               |  | closes<br>midday |  |  |               |  |
| SW Sport<br>& Events<br>Centre |               |  |                  |  |  |               |  |
| The<br>Plaza                   |               |  |                  |  |  |               |  |
| Pool                           | 12pm<br>6pm → |  | 12pm<br>4pm      |  |  | 12pm<br>6pm → |  |
| Pool                           | 1pm<br>6pm    |  | 1pm<br>4pm       |  |  | 1pm<br>6pm    |  |

OPEN (NORMAL)

OPEN (SPECIFIC)

→

CLOSED

TOKOROA

PUTĀRURU

TĪRAU

DATE

Offices and facilities opening days and times are not as normal during the festive break. Check out the opening times below.

20  
25

| MON<br>29 DEC | TUE<br>30 DEC | WED<br>31 DEC | THU<br>1 JAN | FRI<br>2 JAN | SAT<br>3 JAN | SUN<br>4 JAN |
|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
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COUNCIL OFFICES

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| 9am<br>4pm |  |  |  |  |            |  |  |
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RUBBISH & RECYCLING

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LEISURE FACILITIES

|             |  |             |  |  |             |  |                          |
|-------------|--|-------------|--|--|-------------|--|--------------------------|
| 9am<br>4pm  |  |             |  |  |             |  | Library                  |
|             |  |             |  |  |             |  | Animal Shelter           |
|             |  |             |  |  |             |  | SW Sport & Events Centre |
|             |  |             |  |  |             |  | The Plaza                |
| 12pm<br>6pm |  | 12pm<br>4pm |  |  | 12pm<br>6pm |  | Pool                     |
| 1pm<br>6pm  |  | 1pm<br>4pm  |  |  | 1pm<br>6pm  |  | Pool                     |

# Work begins on Library-turned-Community Hub Project



A karakia was held on 25 September to start work on the Tokoroa Library Refurbishment Project.

Council has awarded the contract for the refurbishment of the Tokoroa Library to Brunel Group. The much-awaited refurbishment of the library is one of Council's major projects outlined in the Long Term Plan, with \$2M set aside for it.

Once completed, the library will reopen as a Community Hub for the District with bookable community and meeting rooms and will accommodate Council's customer services alongside library services. The Tokoroa Library

on Mannerling Street was originally constructed in 1994. The much-needed refurbishment project includes a number of structural changes, the most important being water tightening of the building.

The building will get a seismic upgrade and other changes that will make the facility more energy efficient and cut operational costs, including double-glazed windows, an upgraded HVAC system and LED lights.

The refurbishment project also includes

replacement of wall cladding and roof repairs to address issues with waterproofing, moisture and mould. Once the refurbishment project is complete, the library will also have a Customer Service Desk for rates payments and more, a Meeting Room that can be booked by the community which can seat up to 20 people, and a smaller private meeting room for confidential conversations with staff, Justices of the Peace (JPs), etc. The room can also be booked for an online hui, private lessons or smaller gatherings. An additional soundproof room that serves as a sensory room for neurodiverse members of the community will double up as a sound recording room.

While this project is underway, all library services can be accessed at the temporary library at Leith Place. **You can scan this QR code to find out more about what's happening at the Library and for frequently asked questions.**



## GROWING OUR CARE FOR NATURE IN THE SOUTH WAIKATO



Despite the colder winter months, South Waikato students got involved in environmental mahi by planting out corridors along the Waikato river with the Waikato River Trails Trust. Supporting their efforts, the Pokaiwhenua Catchment Trust held a couple of community planting days along tributaries while Raukawa and Council did their usual mahi (work) and continuing to care for te taiao (nature).

Winter is planting season as the damp soil allows roots to establish. With the warmth of spring and summer comes growth. Roots slow down and the plant's energy is diverted into the leaves so they can use the sunlight's energy to fuel the growth of leaves and putiputi (flowers). But this also means more weed growth. Releasing weeds and mulching are important summer maintenance activities for looking after young native plants.

We have really special taonga (treasured) species in the South Waikato, including kākā moving in from Maungatautari, pekapeka (bats) and kōkako in the Mokaihaha Ecological Area off Mossop Road. We also have Whakamaru with its beautiful natural

scenery and of course we have the world-famous Te Waihou Walkway, much of it planted out by locals and mana whenua over decades.

With more motivation to get outside and enjoy nature over summer, we encourage you to explore the nature in our own backyard! Can you hear the kōkako in Mokaihaha? Can you spot a kererū at Jim Barnett or a kākā in Arapuni?

We would love to share your summer experiences of exploring our local nature - Send in a short blurb (60-70 words) and a photo of you exploring nature in the South Waikato and you might be featured in the next In Touch newsletter!

Email your submissions to [e.vanderleden@forestandbird.org.nz](mailto:e.vanderleden@forestandbird.org.nz) by 20 January 2026.

*Published on behalf of Forest & Bird.*



## South Waikato Indoor Pools Project Update

The South Waikato Indoor Pools Project has made major strides in the last few months. The seismic strengthening and structural steel installation have been completed, marking a significant project milestone.

The old roof has been removed completely and the new roof is now being installed. The electrical, plumbing, mechanical and fire installations are all underway and the new HVAC equipment will start going up soon.

While these works continue at pace, the summer pools at Putāruru and Tirau are now open and we are looking forward to a busy summer! You can see the opening hours and charges on our website.



## Pool Safety Matters



With warmer days ahead, backyard pools and spa tubs become popular spots for summer fun. But they also come with serious safety responsibilities - especially when it comes to protecting our tamariki.

If your pool or spa can hold 40cm or more of water, it must have a compliant barrier or fence. This includes temporary, inflatable, and portable pools.

- Barriers must be at least 1.2m high.
- Gates must be self-closing and self-latching, and there should be no climbable objects nearby (such as pot plants or pool filter).
- The gate latch must be at least 1.5m above ground level.

The only exceptions are when:

- The pool sits above ground with smooth vertical walls 1.2m or more high, with no permanent steps or objects that would enable a small child to climb into the pool.

These rules apply to all residential pools under the Building Act 2004 and Building Code Clause F9, which aim to prevent unsupervised access by children under five.

Sadly, many drownings involving children under five occur in home pools, often due to faulty or missing barriers. According to Water Safety New Zealand, home pools are one of the most common locations for toddler drownings, and most incidents happen when children gain access without supervision. Before you fill up your pool this summer, make sure it's safe, legal, and secure. It only takes a moment for a child to get into trouble around water.

**Scan the QR code to check the full requirements.**



As the festive season approaches, many of us will be hitting the road to visit whānau, enjoy summer getaways, or attend community events. But with increased traffic, unfamiliar routes, and the general hustle of holiday travel, it's more important than ever to drive safely and plan ahead.

### Why holiday driving requires extra care

Holiday periods see a surge in traffic volumes, which means a higher risk of crashes. Drivers are often fatigued from long hours behind the wheel, navigating unfamiliar roads, or dealing with distractions like heat, noisy passengers, and holiday stress. Sadly, drink-driving also tends to increase during this time.

### Top tips for a safer journey

**Plan ahead:** Avoid peak traffic times and allow plenty of time for your journey.

**Drive to the conditions:** This includes weather, road type, traffic flow, and your own physical state.

**Vehicle safety:** Before you travel, check your tyres, brakes, lights and fluid levels. Ensure your Warrant of Fitness and vehicle licence are current.

**Stay calm and courteous:** Let others merge, keep left unless passing, and don't engage with aggressive drivers.

**Buckle up:** Seat belts save lives. Make sure all passengers are properly restrained, especially children under seven who require approved child restraints.

**Share the road:** Be mindful of cyclists, pedestrians, motorcyclists, and vehicles towing trailers or boats. Maintain a safe following distance and give others space.

**Watch for fatigue:** Get a good night's sleep before travelling, take breaks every couple of hours, and share the driving if possible.

Lastly, use NZTA's Journey Planner to stay updated on road conditions and route changes.

For more information and real-time travel updates, visit [nzta.govt.nz](https://nzta.govt.nz).

# Upcoming Events

## DECEMBER 2025

14 Dec: Christmas Movie at the Plaza - **"The Polar Express"**

### Viewing Times

- 2pm-4pm: Over 60s - \$10 includes tea/coffee and a mince pie.
- 5pm-6.40pm: Family viewing - \*\$20 per family includes small chocolate and Christmas gift for children. \*Terms and conditions apply.

21 Dec: Tokoroa Kart Club Race Weekend (venue: Airfield)

26-28 Dec: Street Rodders (venue: Airfield)

## JANUARY 2026

16-18 Jan: NZ Jet Model Association (venue: Airfield)

## FEBRUARY 2026

6-8 Feb: Street Rodders (venue: Airfield)

13-15 Feb: NZ Jet Model Association (venue: Airfield)

## MARCH 2026

27 Feb - 1 Mar: Street Rodders (venue: Airfield)

7 Mar: Airfield Open Day (venue: Airfield)

20-22 Mar: NZ Jet Model Association (venue: Airfield)

24 Mar: Balloons over Waikato in Tokoroa (venue: TBC)

## CONTACT DETAILS FOR ENQUIRIES

### New Zealand Jet Model Association

Email: secretary@nzjma.com

### Tokoroa Kart Club

Email: president@kartsporttokoroa.co.nz

### Tokoroa Street Rodders

Call Matt on 0275223883

# READ IN TOUCH? PROVE IT...

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

We will be running this competition in every issue. The answers to the five questions below are in this issue – December 2025. You have to get them all correct to be in the draw.

Text your answers and your name to 027 287 5980 or private message our Facebook page by 10 January 2026.

1. Where was the inaugural meeting of the new South Waikato District Council held?
2. Who is the South Waikato District Deputy Mayor?
3. What is one major upgrade included in the Tokoroa Library refurbishment project?
4. What is the minimum depth of water a pool must hold before it legally requires a compliant safety barrier?
5. What can you do with the Antenna mobile app?

Congratulations to Janine Mair who was drawn as the lucky winner for the September 2025 In Touch competition. Thank you to all those who entered. Try again this issue!

The correct answers were:

1. Special needs ramp & swing seat, parent/child swing, 2. True, 3. 3 Years, 4. \$60k, 5. Warmer Kiwi Homes



## Mayor Gary Petley

0272 343 370  
Gary.Petley@southwaikato.govt.nz

## TOKOROA ward



Maria Te Kanawa  
0273 368 750  
maria.tekanawa@southwaikato.govt.nz



Thomas Lee  
0273 178 758  
Thomas.Lee@southwaikato.govt.nz



Ani Lipscombe  
0273 248 156  
Ani.Lipscombe@southwaikato.govt.nz



Elvise Van Der Leden  
0277 672 649  
Elvise.Vanderleden@southwaikato.govt.nz



Josiah Teokotai  
0272 121 326  
Josiah.teokotai@southwaikato.govt.nz



Michael Thomas  
0273 192 744  
michael.thomas@southwaikato.govt.nz

## PUTĀRURU ward



Dave Shaw  
0272 482 918  
Dave.Shaw@southwaikato.govt.nz



Zed Latinovic  
0272 784 031  
Zed.Latinovic@southwaikato.govt.nz



Sandra Wallace  
0273 365 094  
Sandra.Wallace@southwaikato.govt.nz

## TĪRAU ward



Kerry Purdy  
0273 364 541  
Kerry.Purdy@southwaikato.govt.nz

## IN-HOUSE

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

Tel: 07 885 0340  
Email: communications@southwaikato.govt.nz  
Website: southwaikato.govt.nz



## DONT MISS AN UPDATE

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

Install the app, and we send you messages relevant to your address. Users can also use the app to report issues or ideas to us.



CONTACT YOUR ELECTED REPRESENTATIVE