

FROM THE MAYOR'S DESK

Welcome to 2026. I hope you have all enjoyed a refreshing break and quality time with your whānau and friends.

For Rangitikei, the first few weeks of the year are always busy, with a packed calendar of events across the district. We've recently hosted the Shearing Sports in Taihape, with the Shearing Sports in Marton still to come, alongside the Turakina Highland Games this coming weekend, Kiwiburn, and the Marton Country Music Festival.



There has been social media discussion around how Rangitikei District Council and the residents of Marton contribute to the Country Music Festival. Personally I would like to thank the Parks and Reserves Team for the way Wilson Park is presented – I was there before the festival started and there were a number of staff literally grooming the grounds and rose gardens and taking such great pride in presenting the district in its best possible light.

Contrary to some of the social media, Rangitikei District Council has provided a grant (applied for within the events scheme) that largely covered their direct costs of charges for the ground. All of our sports clubs and booked users of our grounds have to pay a fee and Country Music is no different to that. I congratulate Michael and Ashley Tipping on a successful event, once again enormous numbers of motor homes were there for 3-4 days supporting retail heavily within the Marton township and I thank them. They have pledged to be back next year and we look forward to working with them in the future.

Unfortunately, due to the Rātana celebrations, I was unable to attend the Shearing Sports in Taihape. This year's event had to be relocated because of the exceptionally wet weather and the difficulty of moving sheep into the usual venue. This may be something Council can work on alongside organisers in the future, including exploring potential funding applications to Trusts. As part of my Mayor's Report to Council on Wednesday 12 February, I will also be updating and thanking the Dudding Trust for the generous support it provides to our district.

Last week, I was honoured to attend the Rātana celebrations at Rātana Pā. For many, this is a place of deep history, reflection and connection. It was a privilege to stand on the paepae, to listen, and to acknowledge the shared whakapapa and values that shape both our district and our country. These occasions remind us of the importance of unity, respect and community as we look ahead to the year before us. This was also, I believe, the first year that the Māori Kuini, Ngā Wai Hono i te Pō, made her official visit to Rātana.

That sense of reflection has also been felt closer to home. I want to express Council's sincere condolences to the whānau and loved ones of the road worker who was tragically killed on the Taihape-Napier Road two weeks ago. Any loss of life on our roads is felt deeply across our communities. Rangitikei has some of the most challenging roads in the country, and the safety of people working on and around them must always remain paramount.

Looking ahead, 2026 will be a significant year for local government, and for our Council. The pace and scale of reform facing local government is unprecedented. Decisions that once sat firmly with councils and communities are increasingly being made elsewhere, making it more important than ever that local voices, relationships and perspectives are heard and respected.

While many details remain unclear, I am confident in the strength, capability and resilience of Rangitikei District Council. We have a dedicated team of Councillors and staff, and a clear focus on what matters most to our communities. I am committed to navigating these changes with you, with a strong emphasis on advocating for Rangitikei.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Helen Cooper, who received a King's Service Medal in the New Year Honours for her service to the Bulls community. Helen has called Bulls home for 43 years, and her belief that if you live in a community, you support it, is a wonderful example to us all.

I also congratulate John Eaden on receiving a King's Service Medal for services to art, particularly his more than 45 years of contribution to Creative Communities, along with his mentoring of young and emerging artists and people with disabilities. John has recently relocated to Rangitikei, and we look forward to getting to know him and his work more.

Ngā mihi, Mayor Andy - Rangitikei District Council.

NEW!

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK FOR CONNECT

Following feedback from last year's Communications and Engagement Survey, we have refreshed Rangitikei Connect to make it clearer and more informative.

Instead of a fortnightly update, Connect will now be published monthly as a double-page spread. Each issue will:

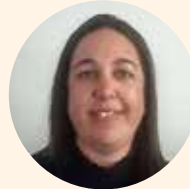
- Look back at what has been happening around the district
- Share what is coming up
- Spotlight the people who make Rangitikei a great place to call home

Your feedback is always welcome. Email us at comms@rangitikei.govt.nz.

COMMUNITY VOICES

MEET YOUR COUNCIL TEAM – SARAH HALE

Kia ora, my name is Sarah, and I am the Team Leader Customer Experience at Rangitikei District Council.



I'm a ratepayer and a local to the district, having done all my schooling here right from kindergarten.

Being a local helps me connect well with the community and assist people with their enquiries to the best of my ability.

I'm passionate about our district and proud to be a familiar face at Council.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR NEW YOUTH COUNCILLORS FOR 2026!

2025 Youth Councillor Julius recently shared what he gained from being part of the Youth Council.



Julius describes the experience as exciting and rewarding, and says it gave him a real opportunity to help ensure youth voices are heard by Council.

One of his highlights was serving on the Creative Communities Scheme Committee, where he was able to combine his passion for art with supporting initiatives across the district and wider region.

Julius encourages young people with ideas about how to make Rangitikei a better place for youth to apply for the 2026 intake.

If you know a young person who's passionate about Rangitikei, like Julius, and keen to influence decisions that affect rangatahi across the district, the Youth Council could be the perfect fit.

Applicants must be:

- Aged 15 – 24
- Live in Rangitikei, or have a strong connection (whakapapa, schooling, work, or community involvement) to Rangitikei District.

Applications close on Waitangi Day, Friday 6 February. Shortlisted applicants will be interviewed in February and the new Rangitikei Youth Council announced later that month.

www.rangitikei.govt.nz/youthcouncil

YOUR RATES AT WORK



TAIHAPE-NAPIER ROAD CLOSURE FROM 2-7 FEBRUARY

Taihape-Napier Road, also known as Gentle Annie, follows historic Māori trading routes between Rangitikei and Hawke's Bay.

Until the early 2000s, much of the road was unsealed and used less frequently by freight vehicles. Since sealing was completed, traffic volumes - particularly heavy trucks - have increased. However, the road pavement was not designed for the level and type of use it now receives.

To address this, Council will close the road to through traffic from 2 February to 7 February so pavement rehabilitation can be completed on a section of the route.

Our contractor, Downer NZ, will use a method called foam bitumen stabilisation. This involves:

- Crushing the existing pavement materials
- Mixing them with foamed bitumen
- Grading and rolling the surface
- Finishing with a new chip seal

The road will be open between 6pm and 6am during this period, with restrictions in place.

Did you know?

Rangitikei District has more than 770 kilometres of sealed roads, stretching from Scotts Ferry to the base of the Kaimanawa Ranges.



TAIHAPE WASTEWATER NETWORK INSPECTIONS

Council has been carrying out inspections of the Taihape wastewater network, with the final inspections expected to be completed today.

These checks are important to ensure stormwater is not entering the wastewater system, which can reduce efficiency and increase treatment costs.

Did you know?

Council maintains and upgrades 152 kilometres of wastewater pipes across our urban networks.



COUNCIL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Rates fund essential services we rely on - roads, pipes, water parks and reserves.

In addition, each year Council also sets aside a small amount of funding to support community-led projects and events. This is part of our mission to boost community vibrancy and support the many awesome groups who contribute to making Rangitikei a great place to call home. We do this in two ways:

- The Event Support Scheme
- The Community Initiatives Fund

Past Event Support Scheme recipients include the Hunterville Huntaway Festival, Marton Country Music Festival, Rangitikei Shearing Sports and Taihape Dressage.

Community Initiatives Fund recipients have included Marton RSA, Cancer Society Whanganui Rangitikei, Taihape Art Club and the Itty Bitty Kitty Committee.

Council also administers two central government funds:

- Creative Communities Scheme
- Sport New Zealand Rural Travel Fund

These schemes are now open for applications. If you have an event you'd like supported, we'd love to hear from you.

Funding closing dates

- Event Support Scheme - 31 March
- Community Initiatives Fund - 31 March
- Creative Communities Scheme - 30 April
- Sport New Zealand Rural Travel Fund - 30 April

Applications must be received by midnight on the closing date.

If you need help with an application, call 0800 422 522 or email info@rangitikei.govt.nz.

Did you know?

There are 9,834 grants worth \$36.4 billion (public, private and charitable funds) that are available for individuals and organisations to apply for. You can search for opportunities using the Rangitikei Grant Finder on our website.



161ST TURAKINA HIGHLAND GAMES

WHEN	31 January 2026
TIME	
LOCATION	Turakina Domain, Cameron Road, Turakina
COST	Adults \$10 Under 15 free

The games are the oldest of its kind in New Zealand and attract people from around the country who compete in piping, drumming, highland dancing, and sports, or are there just to celebrate Scottish culture and history.



63RD RANGITĪKEI SHEARING SPORTS

WHEN	7 February 2026
TIME	7.30am - 6pm
LOCATION	RSA and Citizens' Memorial Hall, Marton
COST	Free

Watch some of the locals mix it with the worlds best in the North Island Shearing and Wool handling championships!



DO A DUATHLON

WHEN	11 February 2026
TIME	4pm
LOCATION	Tūtaenui Reservoir, Marton
COST	Free

Held over four consecutive Wednesday's from 11 February at the Tūtaenui Reservoir. You can turn up on the day and register. It is free (thanks to Rangitikei District Council and Sport Whanganui) and open to kids from 5 years old right through to adults. Bikes available for use if you don't have your own bike.



67TH TAIHAPE SHOW JUMPING GROUP ANNUAL SHOW

WHEN	7-8 February 2026
TIME	8.30am
LOCATION	Taihape Memorial Park
COST	Spectators Free

This event caters to equestrian riders of all skill levels and is a fantastic free event for families to attend if you just want to watch.



FEST-A-BULL

WHEN	28 February 2026
TIME	10am - 5pm
LOCATION	Te Matapihi - Bulls Community Centre
COST	Free

Fest-a-Bull is all about whānau, fun, and spending quality time with each other. Enjoy live music, FREE face painting, FREE balloon twisting, FREE giant games, FREE rides & obstacles, and an epic team relay challenge, there's truly something for everyone to enjoy!



FLYNN'S CELTIC STRINGS

WHEN	13 February 2026
TIME	7:30pm
LOCATION	Mangaweka Town Hall
COST	Free

An unmissable event for lovers of Celtic songcraft and inventive instrumental interplay. Free concert supported by Rangitikei District Council from the Creative Communities Fund. Koha appreciated.

