

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 Rangitīkei, 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 Rangitīkei 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, Rangitīkei 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. Rangitīkei 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 Rangitīkei 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 Rangitīkei.

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 Rangitīkei, and we look forward to getting to know him and his work more.

Ngā mihi, Mayor Andy - Rangitīkei District Council.

NEW YEAR, NEW LOOK FOR CONNECT



Following feedback from last year's Communications and Engagement Survey, we have refreshed Rangitīkei 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 Rangitīkei 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 Rangitīkei 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 Rangitīkei a better place for youth to apply for the 2026 intake.

If you know a young person who's passionate about Rangitīkei, 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 Rangitīkei, or have a strong connection (whakapapa, schooling, work, or community involvement) to Rangitīkei District.

Nominations will open on Friday, 6 February and close on Friday, 13 March. The nomination form is available on our website. www.rangitikei.govt.nz/communityvolunteerawards

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2026

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Back after a three-year break, the Rangitīkei Community Volunteer Awards celebrate the many volunteers who make a difference across community service, welfare, sport and recreation, culture, arts and education sectors in Rangitīkei.

It's time for you to start thinking about who you would like to see acknowledged for their contributions.

Nominations will open on Friday, 6 February and close on Friday, 13 March. The nomination form is available on our website. www.rangitikei.govt.nz/youthcouncil

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YOUR RATES AT WORK



TAIHEAPE-NAPIER ROAD CLOSURE FROM 2-7 FEBRUARY

Taihape-Napier Road, also known as Gentle Annie, follows historic Māori trading routes between Rangitīkei 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?

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



TAIHEAPE 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.



WHAT'S ON RANGITIKEI?
www.visitrangitikei.nz/events

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161ST TURAKINA HIGHLAND GAMES

WHEN 31 January 2026

TIME 7-8 February 2026
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.



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!



63RD RANGITIKEI 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 world's best in the North Island Shearing and Wool handling championships!



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 Rangitīkei District Council from the Creative Communities Fund. Koha appreciated.

