

## FROM THE Mayor's Desk

Last week and over the weekend I attended the Tangi at Ratana for Harerangi Meihana, known as Harry Mason.

Harry was the Tumuaki, or leader, of the Rātana faith and his passing was always going to be reflected in huge numbers of people arriving from throughout the country and Australia to celebrate his life and to think about the future. It was an honour for me to sit on the paepae and to be treated as "mana whenua" or accepted as one of the Rātana community.

This week Council sits to hear the submissions on our Annual Plan. These cover a wide range of subjects including housing, forestry differentials etc. Thank you to all those people who have submitted either in person or by way of written submission. Council tries incredibly hard to arrange public meetings to engage and sometimes the number of people attending is disappointing. Recently, as part of that engagement process, I held public meetings in Bulls, Marton and Taihape around the Three Waters. These meetings were to update people around the Government process and how it is being viewed by a number of different groups. The Marton meeting was difficult with activist groups trying to dominate the meeting with their own agenda - that Government has no mandate to rule NZ. These people are entitled to their own view but it was disappointing that others turned up to listen and ask questions only to leave feeling as though they were intimidated.

Onto more cheerful news, on Friday 20 May we will open the new Mangaweka Bridge, a month ahead of schedule. My thanks to Manawātū District Council as project lead, the builders, Iwi and all of the staff involved. There have been sensitivities around the opening process which were resolved by respectful discussion involving all parties.

The Dudding Trust applications are now open and I invite people to make applications now before the closing date of 8 July. The Trust gives out literally hundreds of thousands of dollars annually and every year we get late application requests that we have to decline.

Recently Councillors went to Taihape to look at the progress of Ngā Awa Block - the new amenity block build on Memorial Park. In spite of Covid, it is on track and already looks amazing. Memorial Park will become 'fit for use'. In the past visiting sports teams and equestrians have questioned coming because of the inadequate facilities. I have also had the chance to catch up with Darryl and Tyson to discuss the Squash Club expansion. Their leadership is outstanding and with a club membership of, I believe, over 150 members their future is incredibly bright. I have purchased a new squash racquet and shoes this year and I intend to get back on court even if only at the level to give my granddaughters a hit.

At the time of writing this report Government has not released the budget, which will have impacts on our priorities within this Annual Plan as I am sure there will be further demands of Councils to provide information or associated funding in support of such things as climate change and Three Waters legislation. These processes are incredibly demanding on staff time and resources for a rural council.

**Ngā manaakitanga, Andy Watson, Mayor of Rangitikei District.**



## New Mangaweka Bridge opening

Manawātū District Council and Rangitikei District Council have reached an agreement, along with mana whenua Ngāti Hauiti, to bring forward the opening of the new Mangaweka Bridge to Friday, 20 May.

This is approximately one month earlier than had been scheduled and is a remarkable effort given the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting supply chain issues.

There is still work to be done to complete the bridge approaches, meaning that on some occasions the new bridge will be open to light traffic to allow for construction work prior to the official opening. Landscaping and gardening work on the approaches to the bridge will continue once the bridge has been opened.

Rangitikei District Mayor Andy Watson is excited for the bridge to be open.

"I must firstly congratulate the builders for an early finish, we are looking forward to the bridge opening on the earlier date of 20 May. We appreciate final sign-off works still have to be achieved involving roadworks and guardrails. Thank you to staff from both Councils for allowing this work to continue. Thank you to Iwi for working with us and agreeing to changes of contracts that were proposed earlier", says Rangitikei District Mayor Andy Watson.

A pou will be unveiled by Ngāti Hauiti at the blessing and opening ceremony, which will be held at 10:00am on Friday 20 May.

## Projects UPDATE



### Bulls Bus Station Closure

The old Bulls bus station on Bridge Street will be permanently closed from Friday, 27 May 2022. From this date bus services will no longer operate from here.

Please check with your bus company who will advise you of the location for your bus pick up and drop off.

From Saturday, 28 May 2022 bus services will only operate from the new bus stop at Te Matapihi Bulls - Community Centre on Funnel Street.



### Ngā Awa Block Update

Thanks to the recent clear weather Ngā Awa Block (Taihape Amenities) project continues to track along nicely. Piling has now been completed and the structure has been built for the floor panels. You can head along to the tennis and netball courts to view the progress from outside the barrier.

Preparation work for the carpark has started. Once complete the carpark will accommodate approximately 30 vehicles and provide the easiest access to the new building. Laminated timber floor panels have also arrived on site and will be placed on the structure this week. The panels weigh a huge two tonnes and are 12 metres in length. Storm water pipes under the courts have been cleaned out and will be relined in the next few months.

For more information visit [www.rangitikei.govt.nz/projects](http://www.rangitikei.govt.nz/projects)



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