

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY Issue 37 – August 21, 2020 AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Reserve projects survive under new budget... p2

New bus lane mooted for East Coast Rd... p7

Simon Watts 

North Shore 

Authorised Simon Watts,
107 Gt South Rd, Akl



Alarm at Shore's heritage downgrades... p11

The face of lockdown: nesters get busy



Casting off Covid... Wild & Woolly Yarns owner Fran Stafford is finding the nesting instincts two lockdowns have brought out in people have been a boon for her Milford business in tough times. See story, page 13.



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Becroft Park and Milford Reserve projects retained in Emergency Budget

New sports fields at Becroft Park and changing rooms and toilets at Milford Reserve look set to go ahead this year.

Amongst all the cutbacks and work deferrals brought on by Auckland Council's Emergency Budget to address a \$750 million shortfall caused by the fallout of Covid-19, four key projects in the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area remain in the current work programme:

- Becroft Park, Forrest Hill – renewal of two sports fields, including a sand carpet, with a budget this year of \$625,000 (total budget \$694,000).
- Milford Reserve – renewal of the toilet block and changing rooms with a budget this year of \$366,000 (total budget \$1.1 million).

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Lake Town Green in Hauraki – construction of a new "permaloo" toilet, with a budget this year of \$235,000 (total budget \$251,000).

- Renewal of play areas at Devonport Domain and Melrose Reserve, Devonport, with a budget this year of \$319,000 (total budget \$385,262).

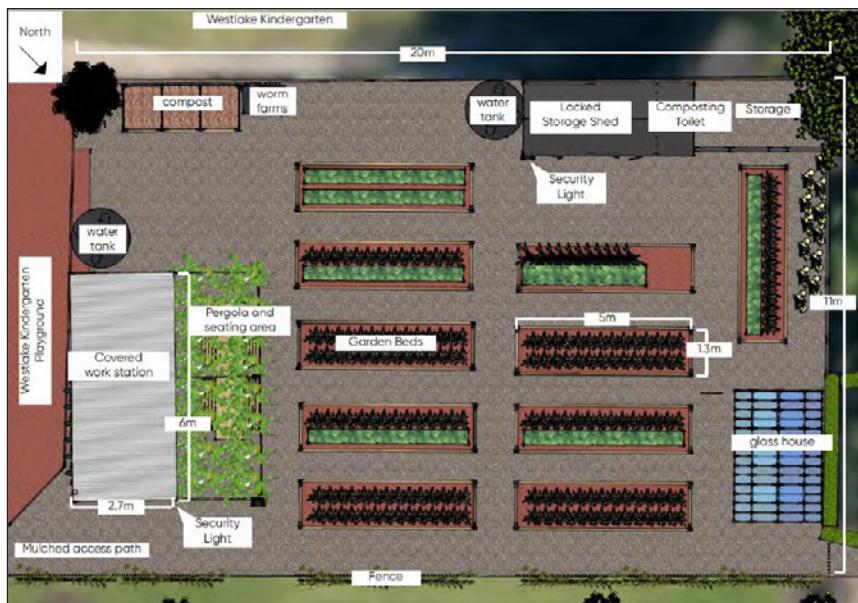
Discussion and final decisions on the works programme were to be made at the August monthly meeting of the Devonport-Takapuna

Local Board after the Observer went to press.

"Prioritising the delivery of one project may mean other projects have to be phased into later years to meet budget requirements," a report to the board said.

"For example, the delivery timing of constructing the new permaloo at Lake Town Green has meant the upgrade and renewal of the walkway of Patuone Reserve will be phased in later years," the report said.

Community garden could bloom soon



Growth plan... a layout for the proposed community garden in Seine Reserve, Forrest Hill

The driving force behind setting up a community garden in Forrest Hill has high hopes of having a team of helpers with fingers in the soil by spring.

Phoebe Atkinson is "super-excited" that the final step in gaining sign-off to cultivate a portion of Seine Reserve has been taken. Auckland Council approval has been granted to use the land, but a so-called licence to occupy needs to be advertised to allow for public and iwi input. All going well, this process could be completed by late September.

Green-fingered Atkinson and husband Dave live across from the reserve and have been rallying community interest in the project for nearly three years. The first lockdown drove local enthusiasm for the initiative, with around 80 people now on the database of the Forrest

Hill Community Garden Trust.

Lucy Xia is helping out as a Chinese community liaison officer, and Atkinson would love a Korean volunteer as well to better involve the area's high Asian population.

"We want people to know they are welcome and doing this in their own language is really valuable."

The plan is to grow fruit trees, vegetable seedlings and flowers in a plot measuring 20m by 11m, or around half the size of a netball court. Atkinson already has the support of local businesses to give materials.

The no-dig garden will be organic, with the first tasks to prepare soil and raised beds. Compost bins will be added. In time, workshops will be held on the likes of worm farming and pest eradication.

2 The Strand: empty for 892 days

The former Takapuna Library building at 2 The Strand has been vacant since an earthquake notice was issued in March 2018. The 1956 heritage-listed public building has now been unoccupied for 892 days. At some point, its future will be determined by Auckland Council.

Bottom role is tops again thanks to family connection

Fifty-five years ago, Maureen Monk missed seeing son Gary's school play, but now she's counting down to seeing great-grandson Liam Greenway in the same key comic role at Hauraki School.

"You wouldn't believe it," she says, putting some of the unlikely repeat act down to their shared genes and love of acting. "It's too coincidental not to be."

Gary Monk was equally amazed to learn his daughter's boy was to play Shakespeare's Bottom, a comic character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. "It wasn't just that it was the same show, but the same character."

The Takapuna businessman was 12 when he performed the role at intermediate school in Gisborne. Liam is two years younger and will take to the stage this weekend in his school's musical version of the play, called *Kidsummer Night's Dream*.

"Nan" will be at a matinee for the first performance on Tuesday 18 August, a day on which the 88-year-old normally juggles aquarobics, cards and exercise.

Hauraki puts on a major production every second year. Pre-lockdown, Liam jumped at the chance to audition.

Principal Clarinda Franklin said finding out later about the family history with the show added another element to what already promised to be a special season.

The Year 5 pupil and other students have been rehearsing hard, building to three times a week, practising their song and dance.

"I know all my lines, I just have to perfect them," Liam told the Flagstaff.

Maureen, a resident at the Poynton retirement village, is hazy as to why she didn't attend her son's play.

Gary says it was performed to fellow students rather than to parents, as was the way back in the day. "Arts in Gisborne in the 60s weren't very big," he recalls, a tad regrettfully.

She remembers plenty of carting Gary around, plus seeing a couple of later high-school productions, but agrees children now have more opportunities to shine.

Both Belmont Intermediate (BIS) and Takapuna Grammar, the schools Liam will attend after Hauraki, are strong in encouraging performance.

"Liam has got the chance to take this further," says Gary.

Liam says he is definitely keen to try out for more shows. He also likes maths and art, dance and drama classes.

Maureen remembers her own first school play fondly. It was *The Princess and the Woodcutter*, penned by A.A. Milne. Home performances were part of family life.

Her sister, a seamstress, helped make Gary's donkey head costume for his turn in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. A running gag in the script is that Bottom has been unknowingly transformed into an ass.



Ages and stages... Liam Greenway (left) with his great-grandmother Maureen Monk, and grandfather Gary Monk, who as a schoolboy once played the same Shakespearean role Liam will perform in a Hauraki School production

Liam admits to getting a bit of teasing about his role. "Everyone says to me, 'Hey Bottom'."

He is happy to play to the crowd, saying being "loud" was a help in auditioning. "At home, I'm more the kind of person who tries to make people laugh."

Gary says his own forays into acting and debating at school stood him in good stead. "I don't have problems getting up in front of an audience talking. It gave me that confidence at an early stage."

The founder of pioneering exporter Intersea, Gary went on to be made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit for his services to the seafood industry and the community. Over the

years, he has often been asked to be an MC.

Liam has confidence already, he says. His grandson agrees, saying he's "not too nervous".

Not only will he have his great-grandmother and grandfather in his support crew, but his 12-year-old brother, Josh – now in Year 8 at BIS – is coming back to Hauraki to help out with drumming in the show. The boys' mother, Sarah, a past pupil of Hauraki, will be working backstage. Father James, chairman of the school's Board of Trustees, will watch on proudly.

- The production was planned to show next week but has had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 level 3 lockdown. Announcement of new show times will be made in due course.

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Day-one déjà vu: Shops and shoppers soldier on



Here we go again... Shoppers line up for their last pre-lockdown purchases Milford New World

Milford and Takapuna businesses were back grappling with the idea of being “open with the door shut” as another lockdown kicked in last week.

Most customers stayed calm as they stocked up on their own idea of essential supplies for the duration.

These ranged from books, wool and wine, to restocking everyday items from supermarkets. Pharmacies reported a brisk trade in masks, and plenty of shoppers were wearing them.

Many the Observer spoke to assumed the lockdown would be extended or stepped up a level, so were determined to be ready.

Queues formed early at Barrys Pt Rd Countdown last Wednesday, said a 5am swimmer, who stopped by shortly after 6am.

The queue to get into the Countdown Milford supermarket extended out the front steps of the mall by late morning. Across the car park, New World had a shorter queue outside, but a backlog of customers down the aisles inside. Canny bread buyers decamped to the bakery over the road, where the lines were shorter.

Inside the mall, some clothing stores had chosen not to open at all, given they were under orders that by midday they were to shut for the next three days.

The Well Hung butcher was determined to make the most of what time remained, while also readying for online trading. Last-minute business had been “pretty crazy”, said co-owner Caroline Mulholland. Customer Val Milsom said she was at the mall to meet a friend, but had decided “I’ll stock up while we’re here.”

Around a dozen hopefuls were waiting to buy Lotto tickets.

At the bus stop up Kitchener Rd, David Mortensen and another older man were waiting, wearing masks. Mortensen said he had

ventured out from Castor Bay to buy milk and other groceries while he could. His wife was out of town, helping their daughter with her sick child. His situation illustrated the painful positions Covid can leave people in. He was not allowed to travel out of Auckland and his grandchild’s condition meant she might end up having to be brought to Starship Hospital.

Outside the Unichem pharmacy back down the road, Sue Hayman was waiting to refill a prescription. “It’s so crippling for the local economy,” said the Milford resident, who had to call on a neighbour to do her shopping during the last level-4 lockdown. It was good the Observer was still telling local stories, she said.

Over the road at the Milford Nutritional

Pharmacy face masks were the hot-ticket item. “We’re trying to get people not to panic, but everyone should be prepared,” said pharmacist Jay Kumar. He understood there were plenty of supplies in the country, but would be looking for another delivery the next day.

Takapuna Pharmacy on Lake Rd had sold out of masks after a very busy morning. The pharmacy at Hauraki Medplus was also out, but expecting more. Inside the Shore City mall, there were still stocks at Life Pharmacy, and the queues at New World weren’t overly long. Hauraki’s Goodfor refillery, which became a source of bread and flour last lockdown when supermarkets ran low, said buying had been much calmer this time round.

Susan Simpson, who lives in Greenhithe



Packing protein... Val Milsom stopped by Well Hung butchery at Milford mall

as latest Covid-19 lockdown ordered

but often shops in Milford where her daughter works, made a special trip there for “lockdown essentials”. At Blake’s Providore she bought foodie goodies, before visiting Cave à Vin for a selection of red wine. Owner Zane Kelsall had already set up a table at the door, ready to offer food to go, including pastas and cheeses and meat platters. The Canadian, who opened his combined bottle store and food bar 18 months ago, said business had been great. He had obtained an off-licence after the last lockdown, but would be counting the days until the bar could host guests again. “It’s not like being open.”

Around the Milford Rd corner, the Booklover was doing a steady trade. Owner Olivia Spooner said she was planning on being “open with the door shut”, allowing for pick-ups and online orders. Last-minute customer Megan Dereus said: “I was just walking past and thought I’d get a book.”

At Don’t Burst My Bubble cafe on Hurstmere Rd, Paul Wang was quick to reinstitute his level-3 drill of setting up a storefront counter with sanitiser, contactless payment and tracing. Construction worker Monty Filimaea was happy to find somewhere open near his work site.

“They want coffee and we can do coffee,” said Wang, who is thankful he also has many loyal customers living nearby. He owned Red Cup cafe a few doors up the road for four years, sold it, but stayed on to help the new owner who then rebranded, moving the cafe along the strip two months ago. Wang said he was used to serving 50-60 regulars, but had been busier than ever. Some were enjoying sitting at a table while they could, some were buying coffee beans for home.

“Nobody knows what’s going to happen.”

Coffee corner... Paul Wang takes workman Monty Filimaea's lunchtime order at Hurstmere Rd's Don't Burst My Bubble cafe



In to win... the queue at the Lotto shop at Milford mall



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Youth views sought on local-board plan

Public transport concerns have been highlighted as youth views are sought on the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board's draft three-year plan this month.

Youth board Younite is encouraging young people to contribute to the plan by going directly to local high schools.

"Transport is a key concern for young people, and improvements to services in the area are sorely needed," says Younite member Gabriel Ford. "Using public transport is a really concrete way people can mitigate the impacts of climate change on the environment, which is a very prominent issue for us."

She says Younite is also looking at public safety in the board area, and at how upcoming developments of spaces in Takapuna are going to affect youth.

"We think consultation on both local-board and broader council planning tends to skew heavily towards older people, when we're the ones that will still be living with the impacts of these decisions in 30 or even 50 years," Ford says.

"We think that it's important that everyone gets their say, and a lot of the time the processes, documents, and consultations aren't presented in a way that's friendly to youth, or people who aren't familiar with how they work," says Ford.



Democracy in action... (from left) Younite's Molly McGarvey, Alana Rodrigues-Birch, and Michael de Boyett take submissions from students at Takapuna Grammar

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DESIGN CONCEPTS

Bus lane proposed to help solve East Coast Rd issues

A northbound bus lane is in the offing for a section of East Coast Rd between the roundabouts at Forrest Hill Rd and Sunnynook Rd.

Auckland Transport (AT) is calling for public feedback on plans it has designed to speed public-transport time and to improve traffic flow and pedestrian safety near the roundabouts.

Improvements have been pursued for several years by Devonport-Takapuna Local Board members George Wood and Jan O'Connor, who lobbied for pedestrian crossings to be placed for safe access to bus stops, and for more road-speed enforcement. AT proposes that a new 710-metre long bus lane operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Delays were being experienced by buses in traffic queues along this section of East Coast Rd at peak times, it said. Bikes and motorbikes would also be able to use the bus lane.

Bus travel times could be cut by a few minutes per journey, and AT says the changes would make travel more reliable on the eight buses per hour during the morning peak and 11 buses per hour during the afternoon/evening peak.

Three new signalised pedestrian crossings are proposed for outside 252, 278 and 308 East Coast Rd. These would provide safe crossing points across the busy road for bus passengers and other people, AT said. Bus stops and shelter positions would be altered to fit.

To make room for the new bus lane, the painted central median would be removed or narrowed through most of the project area. The existing T2 lane on the northern side of East

Coast Rd would also be narrowed and kerbs adjusted in places. A median and right-turn bay would be retained at William Souter St.

The project also proposes that the southbound dual traffic lanes on East Coast Rd exiting the Sunnynook roundabout would be extended. AT said the current merge point of traffic turning right from Sunnynook Rd and the southbound bypass lane on East Coast Rd was potentially unsafe, with the merging close to a proposed pedestrian crossing. This could hamper driver awareness of the crossing. To enable merging safely, two southbound lanes would run from the roundabout to the start of the existing T3 lane.

Changes would also be made at the Forrest Hill Rd roundabout. Buses only would be able to turn right from the left lane northbound to East Coast Rd. By narrowing the roundabout island, space would be made for a bus lane on the south and western edges of the roundabout. All three approaches to the intersection would feature raised sections to slow traffic.

AT said the creation of the bus lane would not require car parks to be removed. But 18 parks would need to go on the north-east side of the road, mainly due to the proposed bus stop improvements.

Bus-stop changes would affect properties at 246, 248, 248A, 250, 278, 280, 280A, 312 East Coast Rd, as well as the Pupuke Golf Club. Driveway access would be reconstructed for properties at 248, 248A, and 250 East Coast Rd.

Details are available at AT.govt.nz/haveyoursay. A drop-in evening about the

proposals is being held at Pupuke Golf Club, 231 East Coast Rds on Wednesday, 26 August, from 5pm to 8pm. Public submissions are open until 30 August. These will be considered before a final report is decided on.

Wood said another area of concern was on Sunnynook Rd, outside the Northern Busway bus station, where passengers, including children, transfer from feeder buses to the Northern Express services.

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New MP faces yet another property-snatch issue

The ancients of Britain and China regarded the regular reappearance of Halley's Comet every 75 years as an omen, a harbinger of upcoming calamity such as warfare or pestilence.

North Shore has a curious parallel in the regular rotation of our local National MPs, each change marked by a major battle over community land-and-facilities seizure by our governing authorities.

Wayne Mapp's election as North Shore MP in 1996 was immediately followed by the National government's Nick Smith's proposal to sell the land of the redundant Fort Cautley Army Camp at Narrow Neck for up-market residential housing.

This was challenged through the courts by the local Tamaki Reserve Protection Society, on the grounds that an underlying reserve status precluded any sale. The locals won, and the land became the current Fort Takapuna park, transferred to North Shore City Council, with the 1880 heritage military-fort site being managed by the Department of Conservation. The Navy retained the Officers Training School facility, on the basis that if they ever left, the land would revert to recreation-reserve status and become part of the Maritime Park.

Mapp, as the new National MP, got landed with this, and commented later that the issue cost him a 3000-drop in his majority.

Maggie Barry's election as the National MP in September 2014 was followed a few weeks later by the announcement by National Minister Chris Finlayson that the Navy-occupied land destined ultimately for the Maritime Park was to be included in the Ngati Whatua Treaty settlement transfer of the Navy housing stock of approximately 200 properties. It is understood this was to make up for an unanticipated shortfall in value of the agreed settlement amount.

This led to a strong community reaction,

with accusations of the government not being open and candid with the settlement process, mixed with other internal Maori Treaty settlement and mana whenua issues, a vexed special Select Committee hearing at the Ngati Whatua marae at Bastion Point, and ultimately community concerns being overridden and no change in the settlement transaction.

Another difficult time for a new MP sandbagged by her own government, and leaving an unhappy resentment in the electorate, to be followed by the later sale under Barry's watch of the Bayswater marina.

And now in 2020, with the election of Simon Watts a few weeks away, we have Auckland Council announcing the Emergency Budget seizure for sale of a number of Shore Council community facility properties, one being the heritage Devonport Borough Council building at 3 Victoria Rd, unrented since community and council support facilities were evicted for commercial rental in July 2018.

Another is the heritage Takapuna Library building in the Strand, provided through a private bequest many years ago, also left vacant since March 2018 for "earthquake strengthening".

These follow on from the Takapuna Car Park grab, and the successful Takapuna Camping Ground battle.

It is back to the trenches for a war-weary community, who along with most of Auckland are extremely concerned and tired of council and Panuku intransigence and rigidity (under council riding instructions) towards community sensitivity and needs.

Both Shore councillors Chris Darby and Richard Hills voted against the sale of 3 Victoria Rd, so Simon Watts' first role as our local MP will be to take up the cudgels as well and come up to speed and take a lead on this critical issue.

A safe seat is too often a soft target for Government action – our new MP must not be dazzled by hobnobbing with admirals and ambassadors, and the privilege of being an MP.

He must recognise that his primary, indeed sole, purpose is to act for his community. Gumboots before glamour.

Key North Shore issues now are the unsatisfactory structure and function of the Rodney Hide Super City and the need for change, and the current consequential local issues of dealing with the council and its council-controlled organisations (CCOs), and the retention of its community properties and character.

Simon, the job starts on 17 October – we wish you well.

Bill Rayner
Grey Power

Old Takapuna Library building needs protection in sale

I was involved for over 10 years in trying to get a lease from Auckland Council for an art gallery in the former Takapuna Library building. I am resigned to the fact it is to be sold, although not only the land but considerable donations from private citizens were given to the people of Takapuna for this library. I have this week asked the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board to require Panuku to add the following condition to the sale of the building: that the building is not to be demolished. It is part of the streetscape of Takapuna and is fondly remembered by the thousands of people who used the library between 1950s and 1980s. And it has heritage status.

I have correspondence from the Auckland

Council Heritage Manager which says that "the building is a fine example of modernist architecture and is associated with an important period in Takapuna's development". He also says that demolition would mean the complete loss of heritage values for which the building has a Category B rating. Very few permissions for demolition (which would have to be by resource consent) are granted in these circumstances.

I would like to make sure that any prospective buyer is well aware that there are people who will fight to prevent demolition, but it would be better if a "no-demolition" clause was made a condition of sale.

Ruth Ell

Schnapper Rock chapel vandalised by alterations

Some few years ago KRTA, the consulting firm, designed the North Shore Memorial Park at Schnapper Rock. From memory it received an award for its excellent design.

Last week we gathered there to remember Graham Wheeler, one of the principals of KRTA. It took a few moments to realise the full enormity of what had happened to the once gracious chapel.

Molly Macalister's charming and appropriate hanging sculpture has gone; the excel-

lent fair faced brickwalls have been badly whitewashed; the speakers alcove is lined with green glass, possibly appropriate for a fast-food outlet; the unpleasant public-bar carpet is fortunately hidden by the nondescript furniture. It is a travesty of all that it once was.

Obviously Auckland needs to restore the role of City Architect to protect our community buildings from this sort of vandalism by the forces of darkness.

Denys Oldham

Community Conversation POSTPONED NEW DATES TO COME

Planning for the Election

- 7.30pm on Friday 21 August

What is in the **End of Life Choice Act?**

This is not a discussion to persuade you how to vote but simply what the Act contains and what happens after the vote

- 7.30pm on Monday 24 August

The Mairangi Castor Bays Presbyterian Church holds its traditional **Candidates Evening**. The North Shore candidates have been invited to introduce themselves and answer written questions (collected at the meeting). Spokespeople for parties represented in parliament have also been invited.

Vehicular entry to the Church
between 8 and 10 Penzance Rd

Foot access and vehicular exit
11 Hastings Rd, Mairangi Bay

Early wake-up call explained

Forrest Hill residents woken in the early hours last week by the sound of a helicopter buzzing overhead were hearing the end of a police call-out.

The incident began around 2am in Orewa on Tuesday, 11 August, when police spotted a stolen vehicle and signalled it to stop.

The car was driven south, pursued by

police, who abandoned the chase due to how the car was being driven on the motorway, a spokesman said in response to Observer questions.

Spikes were successfully deployed near Constellation Drive, although the car continued on to near the Sunnynook Bus station where it was dumped, with the occupants

fleeing the area.

The police helicopter "Eagle" assisted staff on the ground to find those that fled in the Forrest Hill area.

A 23-year-old male was arrested and charged with unlawfully getting into a motor vehicle. He was to appear in court this week.

Glass empty, coffers full

Takapuna and Milford participants in Dry July raised \$15,086 for charity.

Funds from the month, which encourages taking a break from alcohol, go towards three health charities.

Nationally, nearly \$1 million was raised for Bowel Cancer New Zealand, the Prostate Cancer Foundation and another cancer charity, Look Good Feel Better, which runs community-based programmes.

Locally, 75 people signed up to seek sponsors to recognise their abstinence efforts. As well as those who register, a number of other people take the challenge informally.

The Dry July NZ Trust launched eight years ago and this year it was extended to a Dry(ish) July, allowing Kiwis to support the cause by cutting back, rather than giving up drinking entirely.

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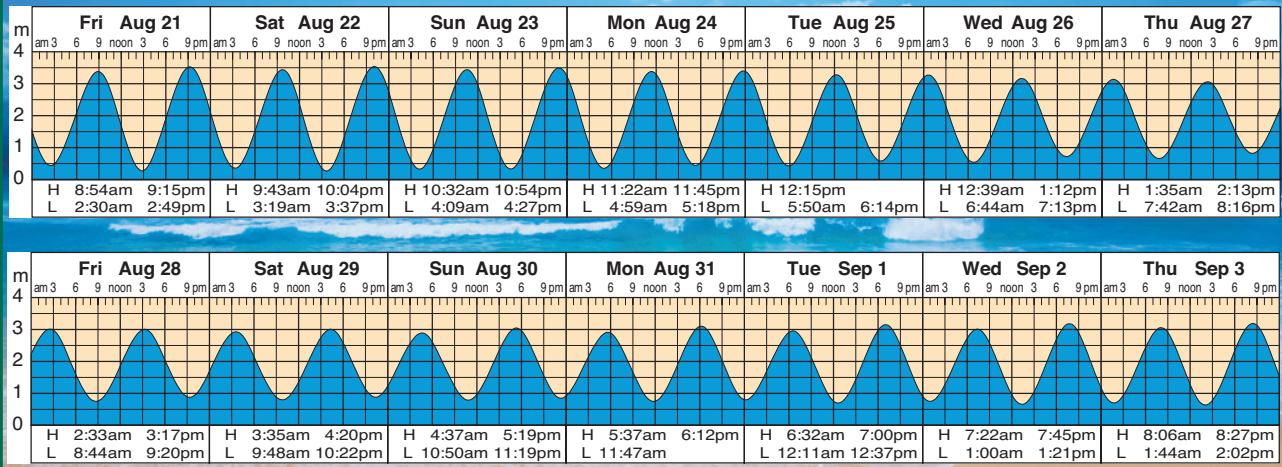
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Shore Junction delays opening

The opening event for new youth hub Shore Junction set for the end of the month has been postponed due to the Covid-19 outbreak in Auckland.

Prior to the latest lockdown, the facility was on the cusp of opening its doors to its first 100 youths to test out the new spaces.

"We were so close to opening to our testers, but then this lockdown has happened," said Shore Junction director Analiese Hewitt.

However, the hub has been able to announce the recruitment of its Youth Development Specialist, Josh Martin.

"We searched high and low to find someone who is passionate about youth, and was not afraid to stand out and put their stamp on this amazing facility," said Hewitt.

Josh Martin has experience as a youth worker and a track record of developing high quality regional and national events, she said.

Martin, currently based in Ponsonby, will lead future events, workshops, and activities at Shore Junction.

Martin said: "I'm pumped to be working with the Shore Junction team to help change the world one young life at a time. I'm excited to help develop the youth of the North Shore.

"I feel privileged to have the responsibility to create a space for our local young people to feel safe and like they truly belong, I see Shore Junction as a movement."



New appointee...
Josh Martin (above) will be Youth Development specialist at new youth hub Shore Junction

Rockdown – dumped stones hit another brick wall

Another deadline has come and gone for shifting the rocks dumped on Milford beach. Now Auckland Council says the current situation with Covid-19 and alert levels will have an impact on progress, meaning the path of beach walkers along the sand continues to be impeded at high tide.

The rocks were to have been shifted back into residents' existing rock walls by July 24 -- the third date to have been missed since they were brought to the beach without permission in early June. Some rocks were moved on July 30, but the work was not completed.

The council's manager of regulatory compliance, Steve Pearce, said: "At this stage, some owners have already moved rocks and we're working with others. We have issued some infringement notices and are pleased that now all property owners are communicating with us."

Lawyers letters had earlier been exchanged by the residents and the council, with the case complicated because the legal boundaries of their erosion-prone properties extend beyond the walls onto the beach.

Pearce told the Observer last week that the compliance unit would establish progress with the rocks being moved "in a way that is appropriate to alert levels."

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Heritage downgrades a ‘big loss’ to Milford and Takapuna



Listing history... Earnoch House in Takapuna, which dates back to 1875, has had its heritage rating reduced

Two historic Milford homes have been removed from a heritage register and Earnoch House in Takapuna, which dates to 1875, has had its status downgraded.

“It’s a big loss to Milford and Takapuna because there’s so little of their heritage left,” says Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Trish Deans.

Earnoch House, set back from the road at 194-196 Hurstmere Rd, now has a B rather than an A rating. This means it could be demolished, but only with consent. Built as a summer house for prominent businessman of the day John Robertson on a then-6000sqm site, the timber home with feature French windows boasted views to the sea and Lake Pupuke.

The decisions, rubber-stamped by Auckland Council last week, follow reviews by the council’s heritage team. These are partly designed to standardise listings across the city, with the existing A-grade having been allocated differently by former councils comprising the Super City. A-grade protection is considered best left for buildings of national or regional significance.

The heritage reclassifications made to the council’s Unitary Plan, known as Plan Change 27, are also to better dovetail with Resource Management Act (RMA) building definitions. Thus, a number of heavily modified buildings have been downgraded or removed from the register.

This was the case with B-graded Porthcurnow East at 14 Muritai Rd, Milford, taken off the register at the request of its owners. The gabled home, built in the late 1880s, had previously been moved from its original site with

a section of the building relocated elsewhere. Its interior had also been heavily modified.

The former Halling homestead at 68 Kitchener Rd was also removed from the register and lost its B grade rating.

Deans says the North Shore is vulnerable to losing its old buildings, in that, with the exception of Devonport, it is not generally considered an area with high heritage values. This makes the historic buildings it does have all the more precious.

Deans, who is also president of Devonport Heritage, says that when buildings go from an A to a B rating it is a slippery slope. They often still have exteriors considered worthy of conserving, but because they have had extensive interior changes, their status is lowered, making them more vulnerable.

“It’s a disaster for heritage,” she said.

Allowing valuable heritage buildings to be heavily altered was a pathway to downgrading them, Deans said.

Library a clear favourite

Takapuna Library came out top of the pops in a report looking at “optimising” the area’s community facilities.

The needs-assessment report, prepared for the Auckland Council and tabled at the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board meeting last month, said that the library was well used and well-regarded. Community awareness was more mixed about the neighbouring Community Services Building on The Strand and the Mary Thomas Centre around the corner on Gibbons Rd, and the activities run from there, the report noted. Aspects of the two facilities were said to be tired, although their central location and nearby public car-parking was a plus.

The report nodded to how the buildings might fit with the “Unlock Takapuna” urban regeneration plans of the Auckland Council’s development arm Panuku. (Panuku is tasked with selling \$40 million of assets under the council’s Emergency Budget.)

Officials told the board selling some existing facilities might allow for better new ones.

Board member Ruth Jackson said it was imperative the local board, rather than the council and Panuku, drove decision-making.

“The library is not being sold off,” said member Toni van Tonder. She went on to suggest upgrades to services generally might include an exciting new facility in Takapuna Square.

Deputy chair George Wood said the library entrance needed a revamp, the Mary Thomas Centre was marking time and the Community Services Building was under-utilised. It was good that the premises were being reviewed, he said.

Jackson said the latter two buildings could be better marketed to increase their use. Member Jan O’Connor said the library was lovely and the community has said “loud and clear – leave it alone”.



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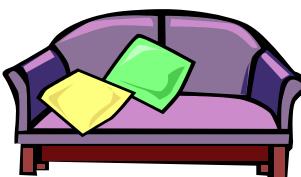


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Traditional craft attracts new interest



Woolly thinking... Fran Stafford serves customers at her Milford store

Knitters of all ages are finding fresh appeal in dusting off their needles, a trend that is proving a godsend for Milford business Wild & Woolly Yarns.

Owner Fran Stafford says the hobby also has mental-health benefits in stressful times.

Customers flocked to her Kitchener Rd shop ahead of the latest lockdown, resulting in “business since the announcement of what we would [normally] do in a month,” Stafford said.

This repeated what occurred under Covid-19 in late March, when customers were quick to stock up before the store had to shut its doors, and then to order online.

“It’s tough, but we’re making hay while the sun shines,” says the Belmont resident, who moved her store from Devonport four years ago. Loyal regulars have followed, at the same time as new younger customers have come in for expert advice from a specialty store.

Knitting is “like meditation”, says Glenice Taylor, who travelled from her home in Devonport to stock up. “If we’re locked down, I need to finish a jumper.”

Her latest challenge is Nordic knitting, whereby a garment is created on a circle, rather than being made in pieces that are joined up.

A other customer, Suzanne Innes-Kent, describes herself to the Observer as a “born again knitter”. The local popped in for extra supplies, saying: “I started some knitting

last lockdown and now I’ve got a queue of people wanting things knitted for them.” She wants wool on hand to deal with requests for beanies and jumpers. “It’s a good way of being productive in downtime.”

“People just want to hunker down, grow their veges, make some cakes and do some knitting.”

Stafford, who has owned the 40-year-old business for 20 years, remembers a decade or so back when things weren’t as buoyant. Internationally, the niche uptake of crafts, including among younger people, has been on the rise for several years, but the pandemic has accelerated wider interest and appreciation for hand-made items.

“They’ve all rediscovered knitting – and that it’s good for stress levels,” she says.

“People just want to hunker down, grow their veges, make some cakes and do some knitting.”

Many customers were connecting with loved ones overseas by posting them garments. As she puts it: “You’re wrapping your family in love.”

Younger people were teaching themselves how to knit from YouTube tutorials

or asking relatives to show them how. “Young girls come in wanting to do a sexy jumper.”

Although Stafford expects the upsurge in knitting will settle, she believes it won’t reverse. “You do get addicted to it.”

Adult daughter Annie concurs, observing: “She knitted at my graduation.”

While expert knitters can knit anywhere, often in front of the television, Stafford says it is the deliberateness of it that has mental-health benefits. “It’s the mindfulness, it’s the repetitive nature, you can’t walk off to the dishwasher when knitting.” Her daughter, called into the shop to help out during its busy time, says she’s more of a sewer, but can see the appeal of knitting as “a great textural hobby”.

With spring in the air, Stafford was starting to see the start of a seasonally quieter time, but after Covid-19 flared she is now working seven days a week to keep up with demand. “It’s gone through the roof.” Even if the shop can’t be open in the weeks ahead, she is ramping up her online site and looking to click-and-collect sales.

She is grateful to have such “lovely customers” and says community-minded Milford has proved to be an ideal location, with a good catchment area and fewer access issues than Devonport.

“Milford is thriving, retailers are giving the customers what they want – good service and good quality.”



Milford Rotary finishes planting project before level-3 lockdown

Milford Rotary Club raced last week to plant hedge plants at the bus stops on Milford Rd as part of a local beautification programme, completing work just before the return of Covid-19 lockdown.

The beautification programme began last year when the Milford Business Association met the cost of stage one, which included large potted plants along the Milford shops.

Last year, Rotary received a \$5000 grant from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board, and just spent the last of the funds on plants and pots in the village, and the hedge plants at the bus stop.

The pots and other plants used at the bus

Milford Rotary Club President Alison Waugh (left) and Rotary district head Elaine Mead (below) at work on the planting project in Milford

stop were funded by Auckland Transport, and Kings Plant Barn in Forrest Hill supported the project with guidance on planting techniques along with some pots and potting mix.

Rotary's next project will be barking the garden in the car park off Omana Rd.

The longer term plan is to design and build with consultant assistance a feature garden at the entry to Milford. The current garden there is overgrown.

To ensure the latest plantings are well cared for and watered the Milford Business Association has hired a gardener for a couple of days each week.

In addition to the garden at the Milford bus stop, Rotary plans to showcase old photographs of Milford on the wall above the garden but Waugh said that in the meantime they will have to work around the Covid-19 lockdown and delays.



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Forest & Bird concerned about Patuone Reserve walkway

A cycleway and walkway to be built through the ecologically sensitive Patuone Reserve in Takapuna shoreline mangroves have upset Forest & Bird.

The 1km-long, 2.5m, wide path of concrete and boardwalk is planned to run between Esmonde Rd and Auburn St.

The work, budgeted at \$2.5 million to be spent over two years, first won backing from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board several years ago.

But board member Trish Deans says the environmental group's concerns, expressed in an email last month, should be considered.

The idea is the path will join a growing network of recreational and offroad paths that will connect across the area, and in time to the planned Harbour Bridge SkyPath.

Forest & Bird has pointed out that the boardwalk will cross a designated significant ecological area (SEA) that is home to endangered birds. Among the birds in the reserve are banded rail, white-faced heron and spotless crake, which benefit from the mangrove cover.

The boardwalk will be 1.5m above the waterline, with a side barrier, resulting in a structure almost 3m high. The concrete path will be sited in a root zone of pohutukawa trees, which the group contends will break up with root disturbance.

Shifting the cycleway west to avoid the main area of pohutukawa is suggested by the group. Extensive planting is also recommended to improve options for wildlife and to maintain the "estuary experience".

Deans said the local board should consider if constructing a boardwalk where mangroves would be removed, disturbing the natural ecosystem where birds nested and fed, was wise. It should also weigh building a concrete path in a coastal protection area subject to inundation and shoreline changes.

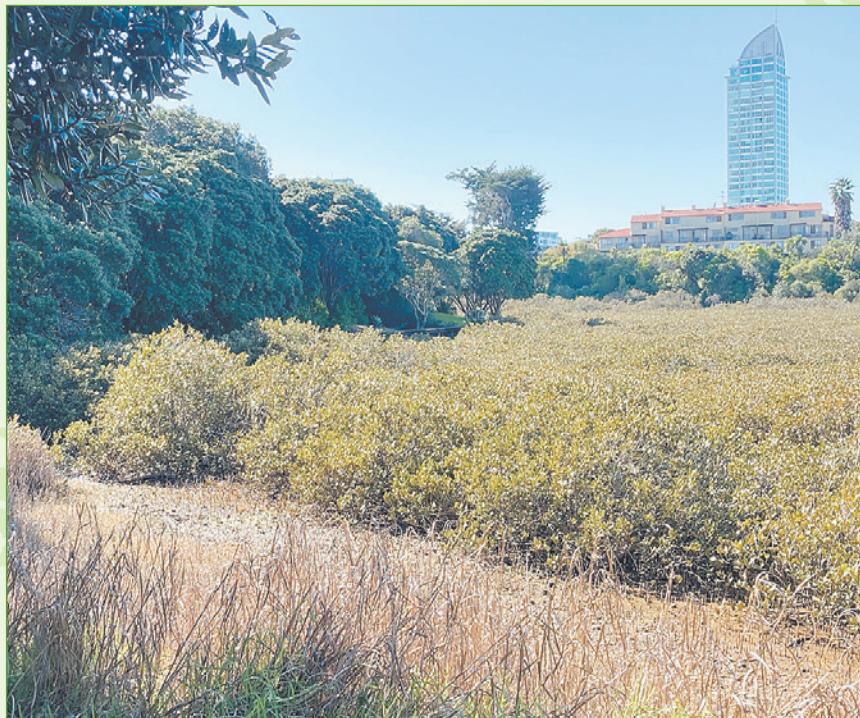
Chairman Aidan Bennett said at the board's July meeting that "we need to consider the people as well". The wider Barrys Pt area was a mess, he said, with rubbish dumped there. "It's a terrible environment for birds."

Improving the area would have the spin-off of seeing it better looked after. "Barrys Pt is a classic example, like the bridge at Bayswater. You put a really lovely thing that they love and they look after the area as well."

"People and birds need to live together," Bennett said.

Deans still wants to know if a resource consent to change the natural environment of the reserve will be publicly notified.

That would give groups like Forest & Bird a last chance to sway design plans.

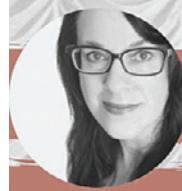


Birdland... Mangroves at Patuone Reserve are part of a designated significant ecological area

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