

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 123 - March 1, 2024

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Politicians question merger with Glenfield... p5

Stinking weed hinders Pupuke access... p10

Revamped netball centre a post-flood boon... p17

Toka Puia carpark exposed as leaky liability

Toka Puia public carpark building in Takapuna is leaking and requires repair, little more than three years after opening, the Rangitoto Observer can reveal.

Auckland Council property arm Eke Panuku, which built the five-storey building between Northcroft and Huron Sts, reported leaks and made repairs within a year of its

opening in December 2020, Auckland Transport (AT) said in response to an Observer request under the Official Information Act.

Consultants later identified leaks during a condition assessment in October 2021. They have been added to AT's forward works programme for repair this financial year.

"We are currently scoping and pricing

the leaks," said AT asset portfolio manager Myles Lind. "No actual cost is available at this stage."

The carpark, operated by AT, was built by Eke Panuku at a cost of \$36 million (including streetscape upgrades) as part of its masterplan to develop Takapuna.

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Turkish festival makes a splash in Takapuna



Fountain of youth... Koray Isik, aged nine, from Takapuna cools off in the town square's water feature during the Taste of Turkiye festival last Sunday. More pictures, p12-13.



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Email news@rangitoto-observer.co.nz

Leaks followed opening fanfare

From page 1

Lind said Eke Panuku’s report of leaks and “some repairs” happened during the first year of the building’s defects liability period.

The report by engineering consultant GHD in October 2021 served as a baseline assessment of the asset after the defects liability period, he said.

Toka Puia (pictured at right) was opened with fanfare. Eke Panuku’s website boasts of the exterior’s “distinctive, metallic gold-lattice pattern inspired by the structure of the former gas storage facility that once stood on the site”.

It has 420 vehicle parks, along with space for bike parking, electric bike charging facilities and changing rooms.

Well used on weekdays, its occupancy at weekends is low – sitting at just 10 per cent in August last year.

AT is trialling free parking on the weekends to promote use.

The car park was built ahead of development of the Takapuna central car parking site, accessed from Anzac St.

The central park is being phased out in stages, with an area already lost to allow



Eke Panuku to build Waiwharariki Anzac Square.

Other parking spaces will go when apartment construction on the bulk of the site commences from this year.

AT hopes that free weekend parking will encourage people to choose Toka Puia over on-street parking to help change visitor behaviour.

The car park’s Sunday hours of 6am to 6pm have been criticised by local businesses and theatre groups who want later hours more accommodating to evening use.

AT says it will not extend the Sunday hours without a strong business case, as plenty of street parking is available at that time.

Developer plans 45 homes at Forrest Hill Rd

Planning permission is being sought to build 45 terrace houses on the former Kings Plant Barn site at the bottom of Forrest Hill Rd.

Close to both Westlake girls and boys high schools, the property covers 5344sqm.

It includes two lots – 1 Forrest Hill Rd and 4 Nile Rd – and is across the Wairau Creek culvert from Atlas Concrete on Wairau Rd.

The near triangular site was vacated by the garden centre last year.

Developer Goa & Li and Forrest Hill Ltd said if consented they would complete the building within 24 to 30 months.

The terraces would be built in six blocks,

three storeys high. Each house would have three bedrooms.

Nearly all dwellings would have single garages on the lower level, with extra parking on site for the remaining units and visitors.

The site, which sits below road level, would feature basement courtyards facing onto Nile Rd.

In a submission on the developer’s behalf, consultant Civix acknowledged the presence of the creek at the rear of the site might trigger council to seek an esplanade reserve along it but maintained this was not required on an artificial section of the waterway.

HON SIMON WATTS

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Security cameras prove useful at Takapuna square

Cameras covering Waiwharariki Anzac Square are proving a useful security tool, says Takapuna Beach Business Association chief executive Terence Harpur.

Installed quietly late last year, the cameras cover the civic square, and give an overview of the bus-station area on Lake Rd beyond.

The footage feeds into the live police monitoring network.

Harpur said having security cameras in place helped deter people from misbehaviour, including graffiti, vandalism and breaches of the area's 24-hour liquor ban. Rough sleepers had also mainly moved on.

A few issues had occurred around the bus station before the cameras were installed, including an arrest last year, he said, but the area had mostly settled down.

"It's a big public space for people to gather and have fun and interact with each other, but you have all kinds in the community."

The cameras have long been on the association's wishlist, but were not provided as part of the square's construction by Auckland Council property arm Eke Panuku, despite it installing cameras in civic locations in central Auckland.

The association topped up the installation

cost from its own funds after it was able through the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board to gain access to a share of a city-wide Proceeds of Crime Prevention Fund allocated by the previous government.

The board granted just over \$12,000 to the business association. Another \$10,000 went to Neighbourhood Support North Shore (including for its 'Safe Plates' initiative), while \$5000 was given to the North Harbour Community Patrol.

Harpur, who is the board's deputy chair, stood aside during the discussions of how the money should be dispensed.



Counter crew... Project Employ trainees Kimiyo Ng (left) and John Simpson with job coach Marissa Taylor at Flourish Cafe in Takapuna.

Charity goes extra mile to land jobs for graduates

Takapuna's Project Employ has expanded its operations to offer a wrap-around service to help its graduates transition into employment.

The new support programme will make the transition from training to employment easier for the neurodivergent trainees at Flourish Cafe in Takapuna, founder-director Sarah Dann-Hoare told the Observer.

Staff network with employers to tell them of a hiring opportunity and discuss what employing people with neuro differences can involve.

As part of the programme the trainees are taught skills such as CV writing and how to conduct a job interview.

During the second half of their six-month training period, the trainees tell staff what kind of work they would prefer.

An emphasis is placed on relevant skills to make them more employable in their

desired industry.

Previously, Project Employ focused solely on giving trainees work skills.

Although trainees came out of the programme work-ready, without the extra support to secure employment jobs were hard to find.

"If we send them out to look for work without that support they won't get a look in."

Dann-Hoare said that Project Employ will help "iron out" any difficulties employers have with the graduates during their early stages of employment.

The new programme was first offered to graduates finishing training last December. All of the eight graduates have now found employment – seven in hospitality and one as a gardener at the Knightsbridge retirement village in Windsor Park.

The charity previously had a contractor

providing a similar service but decided to take it in-house.

It recently opened up a second cafe in partnership with Air New Zealand in the airline's office in Fanshawe St.

Graduates who want to further their hospitality skills after training can apply for six-month paid internships at the Air New Zealand cafe, where they work more independently than they do at the training course.

Project Employ has had 18 people graduate from its training programme since it started in July 2022. All but three have found full-time work, and two of those are on internships.

Dann-Hoare said 11 more graduates will be looking for employment in the next few months. She asks businesses seeking to increase inclusion and diversity in their workplaces to make contact.



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Politicians wary of forced marriage with Glenfield

Joining the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area with East Coast Bays might be preferable to an amalgamation taking in neighbouring Glenfield and Northcote, says board member Mel Powell.

The Devonport-Takapuna area had more in common with coastal neighbours such as Mairangi Bay, Powell told a board workshop last week.

“The community uses resources north to south, and the motorway is a division – we don’t have an east-west flow,” she said.

Her suggestion runs counter to an Auckland Council proposal that Devonport-Takapuna be merged with the Kaipatiki board, based in Glenfield.

Board members showed little appetite for change when briefed by a council programme manager, John Nash. They feared cutting the number of boards from 21 to 15, as proposed, would reduce local representation.

They also wanted to know why nine boards, including Orakei and Waitemata, were being left untouched and why Aotea Great Barrier Island with a population of 1000 would remain a standalone entity while the DTLB with 60,000 people would not.

“It doesn’t make sense for the resources council is putting into it,” said member Gavin Busch.

Member George Wood asked: “Is there a study on where cost savings can be found?”

Members were concerned local voices

would no longer be heard with a proposed 12-member North Shore board based on the boundaries of the existing North Shore ward from which the area’s two councillors are elected.

The Kaipatiki and Devonport-Takapuna boards already share some staff resources. On population, Kaipatiki would be entitled to seven representatives and the DTLB area five, one fewer than it has currently.

Member Peter Allen was worried a 12-member board would not function as well as it did with six, taking longer to make decisions.

Board chair Toni van Tonder said “localism” was at stake. “You won’t have a connection with your elected member,” she cautioned.

Devonport-Takapuna had some of the highest engagement based on local-body-elections voting numbers and responses to council planning consultations, so “it could be argued we are very happy with our representation”.

Van Tonder said a rudimentary approach to reform had been taken – merging boards rather than looking council-wide at how decision-making and delegation could be improved. “It’s the path of least resistance just merging boards. There’s no business case attached to it.”

Busch agreed and pointed out that much of the criticism board members faced was

about Council-Controlled Organisations such as Auckland Transport. He feared bigger boards would become more politicised and cumbersome, which might deter business people like himself from being involved.

Membership might end up skewing more towards politically driven representatives or older retired folk who could spend all day in meetings, rather than encouraging a broad cross-section of the community to seek election.

Nash said discussions were still being held on whether members would be elected at large, or if in areas with a “community of interest” seats could be set aside. Other boards, especially those with rural communities wishing to retain a voice, had indicated they were keen on this.

Detail on budgets and savings had yet to be laid out, Nash said. So too, how much local board members might be paid if their roles expanded.

Mayor Wayne Brown was keen to give boards more decision-making power, more in line with original plans for the super city of fewer and bigger boards, Nash said. He wanted the changes in place for the 2025 local body elections.

The DTLB will formalise its feedback on the amalgamation plans at its March business meeting. It wants the community to also give its views before council votes on the matter in the next few months.

Briefs

Thumbs up for local eats

Three Takapuna restaurants have made a list of ‘100 Iconic Auckland Eats’. Jalepeno wontons at Fantail & Turtle in Smales Farm, kaiju ramen at Ajisen Ramen in Northcroft St and (next door, also in the Sentinel building) Zong’s braised chicken from Zong’s Kitchen are all on the annual list, put together by Auckland Council. Two moderators pick the 100 finalists from nominations submitted by the public. Nine northern Auckland outlets are named this year, including four in Birkenhead and one in Devonport, where Manuka Cafe and Restaurant’s braised lamb shanks won approval.

Garden fund grows

Fundraising for the big indoor garden planned at North Shore Hospital is progressing well, with around three-quarters of the \$2 million target collected. The Well Foundation, which is behind the initiative, plans further fundraising drives in the next few months, with the new hospital building expected to be open mid-year. Its wards are built around the healing garden, which will be a place where patients, visitors and staff can take time out, or just enjoy the outlook.



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Shore Junction to hold concert on former bowls green

Youth hub Shore Junction hosts a concert on the former Takapuna RSA bowls green in Northcote Rd this Saturday, 2 March.

Summer Sounds, featuring live music, food, games and a volleyball competition, is the hub's first event on the space it took over in August last year, having been granted a ground lease by the Devonport-Takapuna local board.

It is in the process of deciding what permanent use to make of the former green.

Garden beds, workshop spaces and basketball facilities have all been suggested as possibilities for the site.

Hub director Annaliese Hewitt said feedback from a survey of group members will be presented to youth engagement groups to "work through all the suggestions and start putting a plan together".

The green is currently in use as a general outdoor space, with picnic tables, umbrellas and chairs. Whatever permanent additions are made to the space, Hewitt said she hoped it would become an asset that other community groups could use.

Shore Junction's membership has grown to 3385 registered members, from 2800 members last September. It had 12,613 visitors during 2023.

Community activator wants to create new links

The new community activator for the northern half of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area hopes to connect groups so they can work cohesively to achieve their goals.

Ruth Moloney told the Observer her role, which is new, consists of linking community groups and people so they can be aware of each other's objectives.

Her role is Auckland Council-funded and contracted through the Sunnynook Community Centre, where she is based.

The area Moloney will be working in covers Sunnynook, Castor Bay, Forrest Hill, Takapuna and Milford.

The 37-year-old said there were many great organisations doing good things in the community that could benefit each other if they were more connected and aware of each other's goals and needs.

Moloney has already connected Grow Forrest Hill, which runs the suburb's community garden, with disability advocacy organisation PHAB, so they can discuss how to make gardening spaces more accessible.

"Right now I'm just learning what people are doing, trying to connect and tell the stories of other organisations so we can learn collaboratively in some spaces."

Moloney, an Irish native, has a background in the outdoor industry. She worked at the University of Limerick's outdoor



Making connections... Ruth Moloney is the new council-funded activator based in Sunnynook

department teaching kayaking, sailing, climbing and other outdoor activities.

Eleven years ago she came to New Zealand for a six-month holiday that turned into a permanent move due to the weather, standard of living and accessibility to the outdoors.

Wet wipes blamed for sewage spill at Castor Bay

Castor Bay Beach was left unswimmable for a day last month due to another water-pollution case Watercare blames on wet wipes.

A 'black flag' was raised on the Safeswim website on 15 February. "Our crews were alerted to an overflow from a manhole on Thursday evening," a Watercare spokesperson said.

"They cleared a blockage of mostly wet wipes and quickly stopped the overflows."

As the overflow had gone into a stream that flowed into Castor Bay,

the warning remained in place until 5.30pm on Friday 16 February.

Discoloured, frothy water pouring from a stormwater drain into the estuary at Milford near the intersection of Inga and East Coast roads was spotted by residents at the same time.

Wet wipes and rags in sewers were behind Safeswim warnings at both Castor Bay and Milford beaches in December. Watercare says when they combine with fat and oils, they are a main cause of pipe blockages.



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Family fun... Liz Spencer with grandson Walter Plunkett, aged 3, his mum, Emma Plunkett, and his three-month-old sister, Heidi, at a Sylvan Park nature session. Below: Lauren Naidoo and four-month-old Aria

Tots taught about nature

An environmental learning programme for preschoolers has been launched to help foster a love for the natural world.

Run by the Takapuna North Community Trust, the programme offers weekly sessions, covering different topics such as the life-cycle of a butterfly, the importance of trees and how the ecosystem works.

Trust manager Natasha Geo said the programme has evolved from the organisation's pre-school play groups, with the idea of making the community gatherings more educational.

Each theme is linked to seasons and events such as sea week and forest week.

The activities for children accompanied by a parent or caregiver have been designed to be interactive.

Sessions, costing \$5 a child, are held at Sylvan Park, Milford, on Wednesdays from 1-2pm and will continue throughout the year.



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Higher taxes are coming for trusts: the PIE escape route

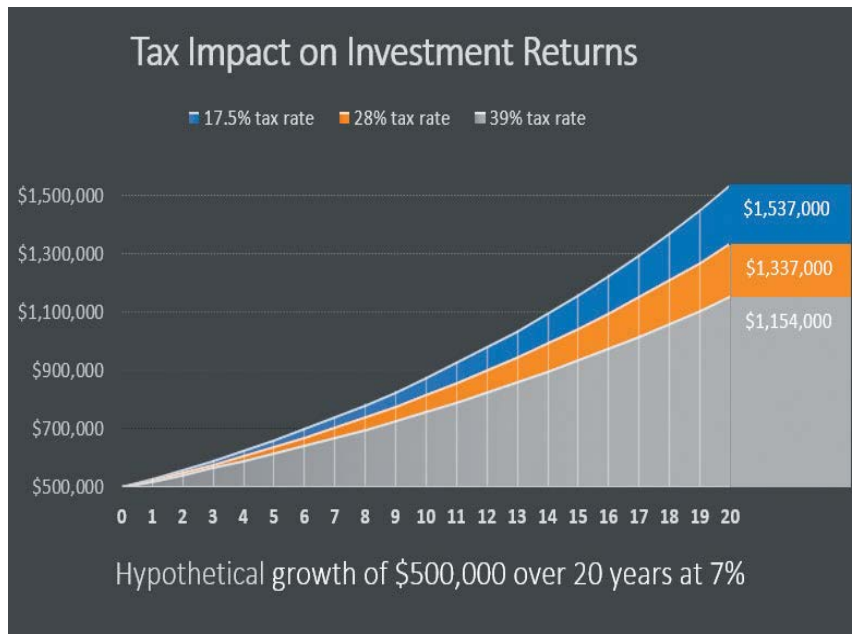
The tax rate for family trusts is increasing from a flat 33% to 39% from 1 April 2024. Many Kiwis use trusts to build their retirement savings or pass on their wealth to the next generation and, without care on how investments are structured, may face the full impact of this 6% increase in tax.

Which trusts will this affect?

If a trust fully distributes its income to its beneficiaries, that income is taxed at the recipient's marginal tax rate meaning the upcoming trust tax increase will not affect them. However, if the trust does not distribute all its income, then the trustee flat rate of 39% will apply.

What does this mean to me as a trustee?

With the incoming tax changes, it is a good time to review your trust investment strategy for tax efficiency. While taxes



should never be the primary reason for making an investment decision, they are an important consideration as each investment pathway has its own risks, benefits, and nuances in how they are treated by the IRD.

consideration is efficient deduction of trust expenses against PIE income. The individual circumstances of a trust and its beneficiaries may provide avenues to further optimise after-tax returns by using a combination of PIE and non-PIE investment assets in a portfolio.

What is a Portfolio Investment Entity (PIE) and how can it help my trust?

A PIE is a type of investment entity that has special tax rules. Investments structured in a PIE will have a maximum tax of 28% applied. However, not all PIE structures are created equal – an important

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Paddlers flock to waka ama festival at Takapuna

A small event started in Takapuna by a keen paddler 17 years ago has grown into an international drawcard, which two weeks ago attracted more than 1300 competitors to race in local water.

Explaining the visitor appeal of the Takapuna Beach Cup, race director and Taniwha Outrigger Canoe Club vice-president Michael Mann said: "Paddling around a dormant volcano is a pretty cool thing to do."

The cup was originally the brainchild of North Shore accountant Ken Gilbert, who died shortly after it launched in 2007, and fellow Taniwha Grizzlies crew members who had participated in similar events in Australia and Hawaii.

The first event drew 19 crews. This year, after a four-year Covid and weather-event hiatus, it was a three-day festival, with around 200 participants from overseas. Crews from around the Pacific, Australia, North America, Hong Kong and New Zealand attended.

A 30-strong contingent from San Francisco staying at the Spencer on Byron hotel was just one example of the injection it gave to local hospitality businesses.

Gilbert's daughters Merenia and Amiria welcomed visitors at the opening function. His son Kingi was in the Akarana Waka Ama Club's Pineula crew, which won the premier 42km open race, pipping an Australian crew from Mooloolaba in an exciting finish.

Kingi also presented the Ken Gilbert Memorial Paddle to the winning Pineula masters crew (aged 40-plus), saying his father would have loved to have seen how the event had grown.

Mann, who paddled with Gilbert in the sport's early days, has been central to growing the cup, which Waka Ama New Zealand has officially taken under its wing.

"It's becoming a destination race that rivals some of the big overseas races," he says.

This year, the event drew women's, men's,



Paddle power... The Akarana Waka Ama Club's orange-clad Pineula crew in action during the premier 42km open race, which they won in a close finish with an Australian boat

and mixed crews, including junior divisions from under-15 up. Based out of the Takapuna Boating Club, it ran from 16-18 February. Race distances ranged from 5km upwards and included relays.

A challenging 21km race, without changes to the waka crews of six, headed from Takapuna down to Cheltenham and then north to Mairangi Bay and back. In the 42km event, which rounded Rangitoto and other Hauraki Gulf islands, chase boats accompanied paddlers, allowing for crew swaps.

Victories over the well-regarded Tahitians were prized, said Mann. "If you're in the Tahitian national team, you're like an All Black."

He took up the sport when he was 40, after mates suggested the lawyer and former swimmer, life-saver and water polo player

could do with a fitness regime.

He slotted into the Grizzlies, who were mostly former sportspeople too, and soon found the sport lived up to its claim of being the perfect mix of "camaraderie, competition and culture".

Taniwha, like the very competitive Akarana club, train on Lake Pupuke and in the sea off Takapuna.

Although Maori and Pacific Islanders are drawn to the sport, Mann says plenty of Pakeha participate.

These days, the Grizzlies' old guard are more interested in building the sport than racing around the world, he says. "It's probably the largest, fastest-growing sport in our area," he says.

Taniwha offers have-a-go training sessions on Lake Pupuke, with details on its website.



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Weed makes a stink and hinders access at Pupuke



A smelly build-up of aquatic weed on either side of the Henderson Park jetty on Lake Pupuke (above) is making access difficult for water-craft users. The water edge at Sylvan Park in Milford and Killarney Park in Takapuna (above right) are also affected.

The northern parks are used by people training on the lake in kayaks, waka ama and other craft, and as spectator bases for yachting and rowing regattas.

The Friends of Henderson Park residents group says the build-up this summer – and the stench from rotting weed – is worse than usual. It wants Auckland Council to do one of its periodic cleanups.

Council says it will work with contractors to remove weed “in the

coming weeks”. Work would be dependent on weather.

Healthy Waters general manager Craig McIlroy said the weed was eel grass, an introduced species that had established itself within the complex eco-system of Lake Pupuke since 1897. “The leaves of this particular weed tend to break away from their roots easily, resulting in the large floating mats currently in the lake.”

McIlroy said the weed density fluctuated from year to year and could be driven by a range of environmental factors.

Anecdotal reports suggested that there was high growth (in both native and non-native species) in Lake Pupuke this summer, he said.

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Takapuna turns Turkish



A perfect pour... Adnon Dogan (far left) and Mehmet Caren from Cezwe cafe in Wairau make traditional Turkish coffee over hot sand. Above: North Shore musicians Mustafa Demiralp and Alev Aktas take a break.



Fun and games... Ilknur Ozbal (above left) greets a friend. Left: Boyd and Hilary Miller from Hauraki enjoy backgammon in the shade.



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The inaugural Taste of Turkiye festival drew good crowds to Takapuna last Sunday, with food stalls and music a big drawcard on a sizzling hot day



Dad and daughter time... Ayhan Dalkilic (above) with daughters Rabia (left) and Aliya enjoy the day in Waiwharariki Anzac Square. Left: Visitors from Turkey, Amanda Iklani, with her son and daughter Arshan and Shireen Ozbal. Below (from left): Aaron Barreta, Andrea Necklen, Nadia Necklen, Zehra Ozturk and Zeynep Ozturk.



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At O-Studio, our mission is clear: we strive to make holistic wellness as accepted, understood, and practised as physical fitness. Nestled in the heart of Auckland's North Shore at 111 Hurstmere Rd, O-Studio Takapuna stands as a sanctuary - a place you go to nourish your body and mind amidst the pressures of life.

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Boat speed... Westlake Girls High School's under-18 eight (from left) Steph Severin, Charlotte Mawston, Bella Davies, Payton Berry, Maeve Lockett, Phoebe Dobson, Annabel Savage, Talia Chatfield and cox Tayla Coplestone (out of frame) push for the finish at the Aon Junior Regatta

PICTURE: CONRAD BLIND

Westlake rowers in good form as big events loom

Three 15-year-old Westlake Girls High School rowers helped the school's under-18 eight take victory at the Aon junior regatta at Karapiro last weekend.

Talia Chatfield, Charlotte Mawston and Maeve Lockett have stepped up to the senior level this year having been in an under-15 coxed four that won their division at the Maadi Cup in 2023.

The school's head of rowing, Ian Bright, said the girls' "big step" into the under-18 crew and a higher-pressure environment had been impressive.

On a learning curve when they first got into the eight, they had to get used to closer racing and keeping their cool in a more intense environment, but they had taken the challenge "head on".

The under-18 eight is the pinnacle of the school's rowing programme. Their selec-

tion showed they "add value and speed", Bright said.

At the Aon regatta, the crew overtook Waikato Diocesan in the second half of the race to win by just under two seconds.

"The girls showed really good composure to get the result they did," Bright said.

The fourth member of last year's under-15 four, Sasha Van der Net, has also progressed this year, being part of the under-17 eight.

Westlake's under-15 coxed four also picked up a division one win at the Aon regatta.

Last month, the school's under-18 eight, under-18 coxed four, under-18 coxless pair, under-17 eight and under-17 and under-16 coxed four crews also won their division-one events at the Head of Harbour regatta on Lake Pupuke.

That gave Bright confidence for the upcoming North Island Secondary School Championships and Maadi Cup, where Westlake will compete against top rowing schools from the Waikato and South Island.

"I'm excited to see what they can do." Bright said he wanted the girls' best races to be their last of the season. The intensity of training would be ramped up as Maadi Cup loomed.

Westlake Boys High School also had a good Aon regatta, with its under-16 eight and coxed four crews claiming division-one wins. The school's under-18 eight and coxless pair both took division-one wins at Head of Harbour.

The rowers from both schools head to Lake Karapiro for the North Island champs this weekend. Maadi Cup runs from 18-23 March at Lake Ruataniwha near Twizel.



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No need for speed when football's a walk in the park

Not breaking into a jog was a major challenge for former football players giving a gentler form of the game a try in Takapuna last weekend.

A have-a-go 'walking football' day at Takapuna Football Club drew around 60 players and a bigger crowd of onlookers.

Walking football, like fast-growing walk-ing netball, is designed to give players who are getting older or carrying injuries a way of staying active.

"It keeps people involved in a sport they love," says club manager Stacey Sinton.

As well as former players, she said the club had contacted retirement villages about the event.

After demonstration games on Saturday morning, rotating lineups of players tried the sport for themselves.

The game is usually played on a small pitch, tackles have to be non-contact and the ball must stay below head height.

Seniors, including women, were among those trying the code, but middle-aged players and even a 14-year-old also took part.

The turnout was encouraging, said Sinton, and people had a lot of fun.

The club would now consider further events or even a regular competition.

Football golf, in which balls are kicked into a cup rather than hit with a club, is another idea the club is considering to widen membership.



A pedestrian affair... Takapuna Football Club chairman Terry Hobin focuses on saving a shot and (below) lines up with other former players who turned up at to Taharoto Park last Sunday to give walking football a go. From left: Paul Gerrard (69), Alan Yates (72), Hobin (73) and Chris Masters (65).



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Badminton hall rebuild delayed by council queries

A resource consent for rebuilding the North Harbour Badminton hall, wrecked in last year's January flood, has still to be granted after being submitted to Auckland Council for processing almost six months ago.

North Harbour Badminton (NHB) chief executive Glenn Cox said when the association lodged the resource consent last September it had thought approval for its Forrest Hill facility would be granted by December.

But council sent back a list of questions in mid-January which resulted in further "to-ing and froing" between architects, assessors and council.

The process had been "very, very" frustrating, Cox said.

North Shore Badminton hoped the consent would be issued soon, as the rebuild was expected to take five months, putting a reopening back to July at the earliest.

The association was banking on the building being fully functional by October, when it was due to host a world-circuit tournament, the Maxx North Harbour International, attracting players from Australia and Asia as well as from around New Zealand.



Team players... Fay Freeman from Takapuna, Anne Carnie from Beachaven, Margaret Burgess from Devonport and Carole Maddix from Hillcrest were among a group of life members of Netball North Harbour (NNH) honoured for their contributions to the sport by having rooms in the reopened centre building named after them. Below: Board chair Tracey Mehrtens (left) and NNH chief executive Lynette Brady on the stairs to the new function room, beneath a net-like backlit canopy made by the company that created similar "chain mail" for the *Lord of the Rings* movies.

Netball centre's flood repair creates smart new spaces

Thousands of school, club and social netballers will start the winter season next month at the revamped Netball North Harbour headquarters at Onewa Domain.

A new wooden floor has been laid in the Barfoot & Thompson arena, and new carpet and wall linings have been installed through the downstairs areas. Gone are the raw concrete and exposed walls left after the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods in January last year.

The centre muddled through the year, but was now "ready to go", said NNH president Jan Skilton at a recent reopening function.

From October the centre closed its doors for nearly five months, with staff mostly working from home during the \$1.8m rebuild, which was funded by a \$1.4 million insurance settlement and by dipping into reserves. Chief executive Lynette Brady said the "silver lining" of the floods was the chance to freshen up the building at the same time as repairs were made, especially the upstairs area, which brings in valuable revenue from being hired out.

Changes include a more natural timber look, offset with feature lighting, and the economical screening of storage areas with netting.

Rooms for match officials, functions and meetings, along with the cafe, have all been named – on ball-sized discs – to recognise key former chairs and presidents of the organisation.

Brady said the centre, which has 450,000 visitors a year and is used by 800 registered netball teams, has bounced back to pre-Covid activity levels. Volleyball will return next summer. She expects the Silver Ferns will use the arena as an occasional training venue this winter.

Remaining challenges include facing the future with reduced insurance and a larger excess, along with uncertainty over council's infrastructure plans for the area.





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Letters

Why didn't council buy Firth house?

Having met Mr [Paul] Firth some years ago, I am a little perplexed as to why the Auckland City Council reneged in 2022 on his seemingly generous offer to sell the property to council for 50 per cent of its valuation.

Even at \$3 million in today's terms that is only six upgraded pedestrian crossings.

Perhaps his adjoining property owners with deep pockets may be prepared to assist the council to purchase the property to ensure that in the long term their views of the Takapuna foreshore are protected.

Given Mr Firth and his sister Ann's obvi-

ous passion for this locality and guaranteed public access around the foreshore forever, it seems a little sad that resolution of the matter has turned into yet another legal merry-go-round. The estate's and the council's legal fees plus staff, and the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board's time, which is not free, must be well over seven figures.

This money would have been better spent going towards the purchase of the property.

Why is that Kiwi ratepayers never seem to learn."

Bruce Tubb Devonport

How about a quick bitumen fix?

Concerning the Takapuna-to-Milford walkway: It would be helpful if we could know which councillors are blocking progress on a resolution to the impasse and who are trying to resolve it.

As an interim resolution, a single concrete truck with black mix spread over the nooks

and crannies of the rocks below the property would not make a path but would certainly make it less lethal to ankles and knees.

This would be a very cheap interim fix until the path is opened. We certainly cannot give up on this fantastic walk.

Vince West

Disappointed at loss of Warehouse

I am one of the customers who will be lost to the Milford Shopping Centre. I endorse the opinions expressed by your letter writer on the loss of the Warehouse (Letters, 2 February).

I used to frequent the small cafe in the side mall. No longer. It is gone. Shortly, I will be unable to shop at the Warehouse, which is moving out.

I will no longer shop at the glitzed-up expensive supermarket. I will now shop

at Pak'nSave, with its fair prices and most helpful staff, but continue to shop at [Milford mall fruit-and-vegetable retailer] Greens, which has quality produce at fair prices.

Who will move into the space soon to be vacated by the ASB? Not another women's dress shop!

Milford mall management is looking through retrospective glasses.

Rowena Scaletti

Long-term plan: community feedback wanted

Meetings are scheduled this month to encourage community feedback on Auckland Council's Long-Term Plan.

The 10-year budget strategy document includes three proposals regarding rate increases and council service delivery, which the public can have a say on during a month-long consultation period.

The options canvas the Mayor's suggested rate rise of 7.5 per cent and alternatives.

"We need people to put in submissions," Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member George Wood said at a workshop where the arrangements were outlined.

He said transport, Lake Rd and stormwater were all issues about which the community could usefully offer views. The consultation does not have questions specific to the board area, but gives the public a chance to advocate for priorities in council spending and strategy.

The local board and council staff will host a Have Your Say event on Tuesday 19 March from 5-7pm at its Takapuna meeting room at The Strand. North Shore councillors Chris Darby and Richard Hills have been invited to attend. The session will provide background on the council plan to members of the public and council leaseholders, who can make their views known in short speaking slots.

The week before, invited groups, including arts and community partners who are funded by the board, will have their own informal hui to talk through the plan.

Efforts will be made to involve ethnic groups.

Consultation on the plan runs until 28 March and can be done online, by mail, in person or by phone. Staff compile responses by mid-April. The local board will also give feedback before Auckland councillors make final decisions.

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Poultry branding wins gold for Takapuna designers

A Takapuna design house won multiple international design awards this year.

Onfire Design won a gold, three silver and a bronze award at the World Brand Design Society Awards, held in the United Kingdom.

The gold award was for brand development for a Saudi poultry company. Two silver awards were for the packaging and typeface developed for the same company.

Onfire also won silver for the brand identity it developed for Benny's Bike Shop in Auckland and bronze award for its packaging refresh for pet supplement company Nutrideer.

Onfire was started by Sam Allan in 2005 after his return from his London OE, during which he worked with brands such as Play-Station and Aston Martin. Allan, who grew on the North Shore, moved his business to

Takapuna five years ago.

The company's creative director, Matt Grantham (right), said the awards were judged by top designers and creative directors in the US and Europe.

OnFire has been named in the World Brand Design Society's top 10 agency rankings for the past five years.

"You look through the top 10 or top 20 and there are big international London-based [and] New York-based agencies," Grantham said.

"It's really great to see a small agency in Takapuna rubbing shoulders with these agencies that have 50, 60, 100 people."

Among other local projects, Onfire, which employs 13 people, last year redesigned Takapuna Football Club's badge to give it a modern feel.





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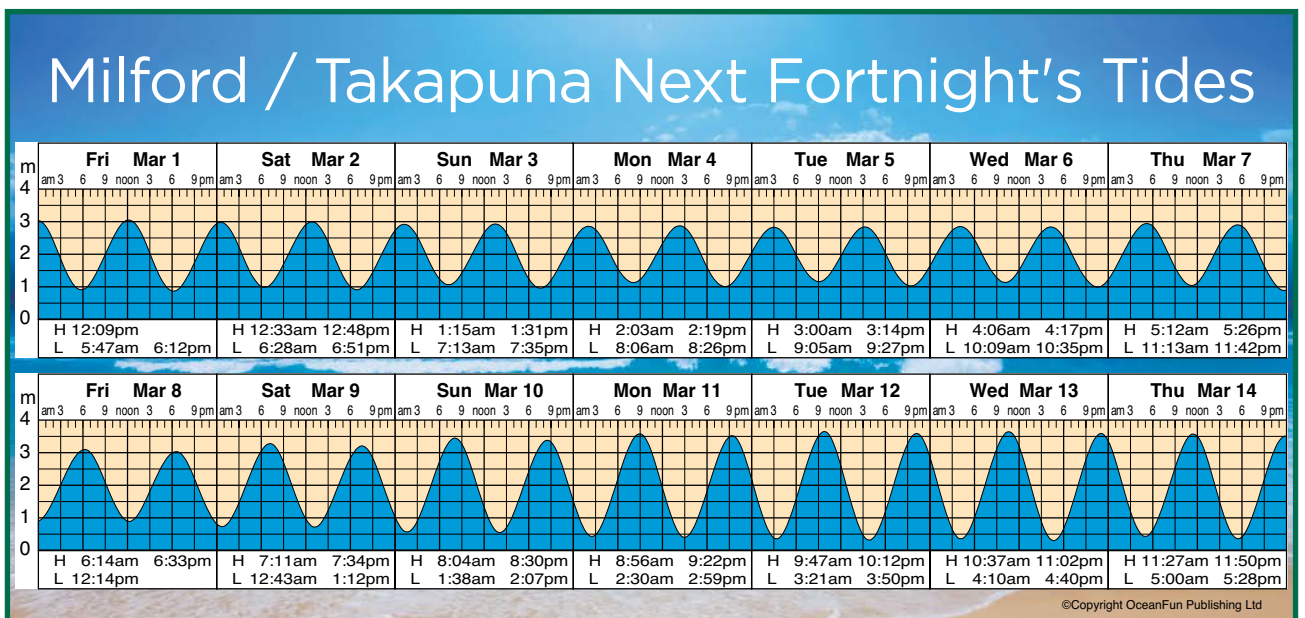
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All skill-levels welcome at Lake House art sale

An artist and teacher at the Lake House Arts Centre is looking forward to an open exhibition she says helps bring the community together.

The venue's annual Great Art Sale being held next week is an open-call exhibition, for which artists of all skill levels can enter their works.

Susannah MacDonald, who teaches children's watercolour and painting classes twice a week, said the sale is a "great idea" that brings people together. "It gets the community buzzing when they come in here and have a look at everything," she said. "It's really good fun to see what other people submit as well."

MacDonald is entering three of her recent acrylic-on-canvas works depicting volcano cones.

The Hauraki resident submitted pieces to two of the previous events – and sold both. She looked forward to this year's entries "finding a happy home".

Lake House arts coordinator Hannah Berry said the exhibition had served as a starting point for a lot of artists who had gone on to present solo exhibitions at the venue.

• The Great Art Sale, at the Lake House Arts Centre until 15 March.



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