

The Rangitoto Observer

DELIVERED FORTNIGHTLY

Issue 124 - March 15, 2024

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE

Bin cull provokes litter worries... p3

Ooh-la-la: French Day in Milford... p7

Artist Tony Ogle returns to Lake House... p22-23

Politicians mull buying house in coastal-track row

Local politicians are actively looking at buying the dilapidated property at the centre of an impasse over the Takapuna-to-Milford coastal track.

Both North Shore ward councillors and all six members of the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board recently visited the heritage-listed

Firth house, where a fence has severed the popular coastal path since last September.

The board has also commissioned a confidential valuation of the property.

Money from the recent \$3.1 million sale of the former Takapuna library is being eyed to provide funds for Auckland Council to buy it.

Debate over a possible acquisition is expected in a closed session at the board's monthly meeting next week.

Reports sought from officials about various options for the property will be presented at the meeting.

To page 2

All smiles at Latin showcase



Salsa on the menu... Gabriel Gomes with friend Audrey Vieille from Takapuna at a lively Latin Fiesta on the Takapuna Beach Reserve last weekend. More pictures, page 12-14.



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Politicians visit house with view

From page 1

Local-board chair Toni van Tonder said the heritage-listed property would need a lot of money spent on it if it were to serve a useful public purpose. The Observer understands the cost of restoration has been estimated at \$800,000.

Van Tonder cautioned that making any decision to buy it would require trade-offs over limited funds the board had a say over.

Using library-sale proceeds to buy the Firth property would affect any chances of the board funding a combined library and community hub in the Takapuna town square or adding a floor to the existing library.

Both of these options are on hold until the board makes a decision on the Firth house. “We are working as quickly as we can,” van Tonder said.

The board was still in communication with the beneficiaries who inherited the house from the late Paul Firth, she said. The beneficiaries are working with a local real-estate agent who is understood to have at the house during the politicians’ visit on 29 February.

The board was given delegated authority by council to try to resolve the matter.

But it has to return to the council’s governing body in April if it wants to put a case for spending on the house in addition to the library endowment, which the board can spend on the house if it wishes.

Van Tonder said the board was facing a 22 per cent spending cut in the next council budget round, so had a lot to consider in how it allocated its resources.

Track-access issues first arose when council did not replace a bridge that washed out in 2012. Firth let the public cross his land, but also tried to strike a deal to sell the property to council in 2018. Council walked away from a deal after Firth’s death in 2021.

The property carries a \$6.81 million council valuation, but its heritage listing, which the beneficiaries wanted lifted, will likely diminish its market value, as it means the house – valued at just \$50,000 – cannot be demolished.

Van Tonder said the property also had access issues from Kitchener Rd, with a “billy goat track” down to the house. But with “views to die for” it was “charming”, despite its condition, she said. An architect-designed rear lean-to was built into a rock wall.

“If I was well-heeled I’d buy it.” she said.

Trio assaults boys at Kennedy Park

Police are investigating the alleged assault of two young male victims by a group of three males at Kennedy Park in Castor Bay on Tuesday 5 March, around 8.30pm.

One of the victims received hospital care after suffering non-life-threatening injuries.

Police have sought sightings of a silver sedan, possibly a Nissan, thought to be in the area at the time. They asked the public for any information about the vehicle, or any CCTV footage from Castor Bay around that time.

The chair of the Castor Bay Ratepayers and Residents Association, Hamish An-

deron, said he hoped the incident was a one-off. “Obviously we are shocked and no one wants these types of things to happen in their community.”

A police spokesman said in response to Observer questions: “Information received to date indicates that this is an isolated incident.”

Police have asked anyone with information to contact them by phoning 105 or online, quoting reference number 240306/48000. Reports can also be made anonymously via Crime Stoppers on 0800 555111.

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Rubbish-bin cull raises beachside litter worries

More than a quarter of public rubbish bins are being removed from the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area this month.

A region-wide cull – adopted by Auckland Council as a cost-saving measure – stepped up locally in the last few weeks.

Residents have questioned the wisdom of removing bins from the waterfront and other popular areas for walking, where litter might easily reach the sea.

The board area is losing more than 28 per cent of its bins, with the number of removals only being revealed in response to questions from the Flagstaff.

Council area operations manager Sarah Jones said 148 bins were going, leaving 373.

Councillors voted for the service reduction as part of the council’s annual budget savings target.

The staged 30 per cent reduction across the city, which began in November last year, will finish by mid-April, but all the removals in Devonport-Takapuna were due to be finished this week

Jones said the “bin optimisation” project was to save ratepayers’ money. It had the potential to save \$9.5 million over the next eight financial years.

“We won’t be providing savings figures for the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board area as they are commercially sensitive,” she said.

The criteria guiding sites chosen for bin removal were:

- Where bins were historically under-utilised, meaning they were often empty when contractors went to empty them.
- Sites in low-use neighbourhood parks or low-use sections of parks.
- Sites with a natural setting such as bush and wetland parks, where users were more likely to ‘pack in, pack out’ their rubbish.
- Sites where bins were not near other infrastructure.

Council would work with the local board



Binned... Workers with a rubbish bin they uprooted in the reserve at the northern end of Takapuna Beach last week

to review any areas where issues might arise, Jones said.

Bins that were removed but still in good condition would be recycled.

Four of the city’s 21 local boards had opted to top up funding from their budgets to retain bins, she said. Devonport-Takapuna was not among them.

At a workshop update this month on services provided to council by contractor Ventia, Devonport-Takapuna Local Board members asked about how bin removals were being managed.

Acting board chair Terence Harpur asked Jones what happened “if we are finding there is an issue and we need to put one back”.

Jones said it would take the community time to adjust.

If a bin had been removed from the wrong location, the council would have to see if it could move one back in from elsewhere.

In some cases larger bins might be needed, she said.

Board member Gavin Busch said more signs should be put up to tell people to take their rubbish away if council was not going to do this.

“Cost is always the problem,” replied Jones. Another issue was that people did not always read signs.

• Tell us if you see overflowing bins

The Observer is keen to hear about the impact of the bin reduction policy. If areas have obvious ongoing litter issues, let us know and send pictures if possible and we will follow up with council.

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Decision on Sacred Grove closure looms

Steps to formally close Te Uru Tapu/Sacred Grove at the north end of Takapuna Beach will probably be put to a Devonport-Takapuna Local Board vote next month.

Closure would end any chance of restoring public boardwalk access through the sensitive ecological area of giant old pōhutukawa, which is also recognised as culturally significant to mana whenua.

Under recommendations drawn up by council staff, a path from The Promenade to the lookout under trees would be retained, but staircases from the beach would be permanently closed and the southern boardwalk removed.

The boardwalk has been off-limits since 2018, with arborists citing the risk to users from tree fall. A petition several years later gained more than 2000 signatures from beachgoers who used the boardwalk as a high-tide route along the coast and wanted it retained.

The staff recommendations were put to board members for feedback at a workshop in late February. The board will likely vote on them at its monthly business meeting in April.

Around a dozen residents of the apartments above Te Uru Tapu attended the workshop. Several have requested speaking rights at the meeting ahead of the vote.

Apartment owners have for some years raised issues with Auckland Council about tree maintenance in the reserve.

Successive local boards have debated how best to manage the reserve while safeguarding tree health and juggling community and mana whenua expectations.

In the last board term, mana whenua expressed reluctance to continue collaboration with the board. A council report said mana whenua felt the then board's preferences for the area breached its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Since then talks with mana whenua have been fruitful, with a hui in March 2023 supporting new proposed changes for the area's management. Along with dealing with the access issues, plans include extending the sea wall to close the gap under the beachside pōhutukawa and improving a stormwater outlet to the beach. A boundary fence would be reinstated at the north-west of the grove and the rear pathway between it and apartments modified to better protect tree roots. Invasive plant species would also be removed and under-storey planting refreshed.

Board deputy chair Terence Harpur asked why more work to tidy up weeds had not already taken place. "A year ago we had agreement about maintenance."

He was also keen to see the sea wall built to prevent the bank slipping.

Council's northern area operations manager Sarah Jones said the weed work was under way. The health of trees was being monitored by council arborists. This included keeping an eye on limited myrtle rust on site, which had not increased, she said.

A budget has been set aside for all the work, including design, consents and construction, with \$200,000 already spent and \$850,000 more earmarked for the project. Elements will be installed to explain the grove's historic significance.

Harpur asked if it might be possible to keep stairs leading up to the lookout from the beach. Member Peter Allen said it would be useful to establish timelines for the work to get things moving.

Board member George Wood questioned the extent of "co-governance" in the handling of the case, including a suggestion an ecological consultant approved by mana whenua be engaged. "I'm aghast mana whenua seem to be the in-crowd here and the local board is on the outside."

Public spending slashed in 'pay less get less' option

Spending on local playgrounds, sports facilities, park paths and benches, public toilets, community houses, library repairs and beach pontoons will be slashed if a new council funding proposal goes ahead.

Lighting in Sunnynook Park and heritage fixes at Kennedy Park would also be less likely to proceed under a new Auckland Council rating model.

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board stands to lose well more than half its capital budget if a "pay less and get less" rating system is adopted after current public consultations on Auckland's Long Term Plan.

Board chair Toni van Tonder said she was shocked by figures supplied by council staff this week from modelling for the 2025-26 financial year. Projections showed a 58 per cent annual cut, from \$5.1 million to \$2.1m, for the community-facilities works programme.

"That's the budget your local board has available to renew our assets or build any new ones," said van Tonder. The 'pay less, get less' option is one of three the public can comment on until 28 March. Van Tonder is urging people to reject it.

Setting rates lower than a proposed 7.5 per cent rise would come at a big cost to the community, she said. Playgrounds could be de-commissioned for lack of money to repair them.

Van Tonder said the board knew it faced a 21.5 per cent cut to its capital funding for 2025-26 under the council's 'central' proposal, due to a shift to equity funding that hits asset-rich boards hardest. But coupled with the lower-rates scenario, the loss was shocking.

Equity funding has been wrapped into a new phrase, 'fairer funding', in questions on the rating scenario. "Unless the public says no to fairer funding, we will see our assets either sit and degrade, or be shut down completely when we can't afford to fix them," Van Tonder said.

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Eyes on the ball... Australian Open racketlon champ Sion Wiggin in action in two of his sport's four disciplines

Racket Man blasts off with Aussie Open victory

North Shore racketlon player Sion Wiggin has won the sport's Australian Open and entered the world top 10 for the first time.

It was Wiggin's first international tournament singles trophy. He also finished third in mixed doubles and fourth in men's doubles at the Brisbane event.

Wiggin was delighted with the result – especially as his preparation was hampered by Covid leading up to the tournament.

"I only became negative the day before I left for Brisbane."

He was "very proud" to have bounced back to claim the title.

New Zealand number one Wiggin (28) was runner-up in the New Zealand champs at Palmerston North recently, pipped by one point by champion Victor Ramero.

Racketlon competitors play each opponent

at tennis, squash, table tennis and badminton, with points accumulated in each sport.

Last year, Wiggin played in Europe, posting good tournament results, including winning a doubles victory in Germany and claiming third place in the singles and second in the mixed doubles at the same event.

He reached one other singles semi and another doubles final.

At the Racketlon 2023 World Championships in the Netherlands he finished 17th. In the doubles, playing with fellow Kiwi Julian Main, he finished 11th.

Next, Wiggin hopes to play on a developing Asian tour that is "building nicely", with tournaments planned for Thailand, and Hong Kong.

Long term, he hopes to be involved in hosting an international event in New Zealand

and also leading a full national team to the World Championships.

He's coaching tennis and squash at various North Shore clubs to build up his finances again for another crack at the European circuit – most likely in 2025.

And he's aiming to get some new sponsors who might open the door to a quicker return.

Wiggin hopes for a long career in the sport – the top 10 includes players in their 30s and even early 40s.

He's an active tennis and squash player and tries to practise table tennis and badminton as much as he can.

However, his badminton progress has unfortunately been hampered by the lack of courts on the North Shore due to the Forrest Hill badminton centre being wrecked in the 2023 Anniversary floods.

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Wairau flood victims updated on recovery measures

More than a year after the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods that caused much damage in the Wairau catchment, people are still coming forward in need of help.

An anniversary morning tea held in Milford last weekend provided a welcome chance to connect homeowners with Auckland Council ‘navigators’, said one of the organisers, Norma Bott, co-chair of the Milford Residents Association (MRA). “There were people there who made a difference to them,” she said.

“Even if we can get one person connected, it is something.”

Bott said one couple told her they had heard nothing from council since their flood-damaged home was first inspected last summer. They were among around 60 people who heard from local politicians about flood-recovery measures.

One of the navigators, seconded from Age Concern late last year, said she was surprised how slow progress was. Many people she helped guide through bureaucratic processes were very stressed, she said.

The first of the buyout classifications for properties with the high-hazard Category 3 rating are now starting to come through for Milford. But only a handful of the around 200 homeowners who have opted into the assessment process are at the stage of deciding whether to proceed with a buyout.

One man told the Observer his flat was



Key players... Milford Residents Association co-chairs (from left) Debbie Dunsford and Norma Bott, with North Shore ward councillor Richard Hills and Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Mel Powell at a flood anniversary morning tea in Milford

Category 3, but he wanted to stay on. He was unsure what his options would be, but feared buyout would not return him enough to stay in the area.

North Shore ward councillor Richard Hills acknowledged initial council emergency response had been slow, but said the catchment had been made a priority area for infrastructure spending. North Shore MP

Simon Watts said the government was intent on streamlining approaches to fixing things.

Devonport-Takapuna Local Board member Mel Powell said it was frustrating not to be able to provide more certainty, but she urged those at the Milford gathering to let people know their needs.

Forrest Hill and Sunnynook held similar community-building dinners last month.

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Skirl of the national champs marching in

The New Zealand Pipe Band Championships are coming to Takapuna for the first time this weekend. More than 3000 people are expected to attend the event, with 50 bands registered to compete.

A parade of bands, starting on Byron Ave and finishing on The Strand, is scheduled for 9am on Saturday, 16 March. A showcase for the public to enjoy, it also forms part of the competition, with bands to be judged on their marching and musical performance.

Most of the event is based at Onewa Domain, with a programme running there from 8am to 5pm on Friday and from 11.30am to 6.30pm on Saturday. The annual nationals were last held in Auckland in 2008.

The Royal New Zealand Pipe Band’s Association publicity officer, Josh Montgomerie, said the public would be able to see bands warming up on Onewa’s front rugby field, but the “contest arena” of the athletics field would be a ticketed area.

Six bands from Australia are among those to compete against New Zealand’s best. Juvenile bands will perform also. Food and beverage stalls, a kids’ zone and a ‘have a go’ tent where people can try out the instruments will be available throughout the two days.

Tickets can be purchased online at humanity.com. Entry is free for those under 18 years.

Bienvenue à Milford!



Beret and braces... French clown JP was a crowd-pleaser at the annual Viva La France day in Milford last Saturday, when French food and stalls drew extra crowds to the shopping centre. Fashions were also on show. Right: Sisters Solene (3) and Prisca (9) Stuart turned up fresh from a dance competition.



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Briefs

Headmaster lauded

The sudden death of Glenfield College principal Paul McKinley is being mourned at Westlake Boys High School, where he worked for 10 years. McKinley joined Westlake as a young teacher in 1996, rising to fifth-form dean then deputy headmaster. The school newsletter said he was a fine man who continually strived to be a better person, family man and leader. Glenfield College, where he became principal in 2017, after being associate principal of Mount Albert Grammar School, announced his death on 25 February.

Shop renovations roll on

Shoppers at the Farmers store at Shore City can expect disruption for another four months as major renovations continue. These are set to end in August, with second-floor renovations, to be finished in May, before work on downstairs departments begins. Renovations began in mid-January.

Local bars recognised

Milford Motel on Shakespeare Rd and Fantail & Turtle at Smales Farm have made a list of the Top 50 Gastropubs in New Zealand. The Hospitality New Zealand competition is voted for by the public, with entrants drawn from the organisation's membership of more than 1000 venues. It recognises premium food-led pubs. Those on the list range from historic establishments like the Cardrona Hotel to newcomers, such as Milford Motel, which opened last year. Seven regional winners and a national champion will be judged and named in April. More than 5000 votes were received for the list, which can be found at top50gastropubs.co.nz.

Hopeful talk on Lake Rd project 'just playing politics'

North Shore's Auckland councillors, Chris Darby and Richard Hills, have cast doubt on a claim in Parliament by the Minister of Transport Simeon Brown that Lake Rd might be a beneficiary of remaining Regional Fuel Tax (RFT) money.

Darby said the minister was playing politics in holding up hope of the \$47m upgrade proceeding. In reality, it was "dead in the water", he told the Observer.

Hills said by the time remaining RFT funds were allocated to the government's stated priorities, nothing would be left for local road-corridor improvements.

The RFT – axed by the government as part of its post-election 100-day action plan – was used for Auckland Transport (AT) projects. Its removal leaves a large hole in funding.

Government transport agency Waka Kotahi last year questioned the case for the Lake Rd project it had been expected to co-fund. The project lives on only as a long-term line-budget item the councillors hope to revive.

It gets a passing mention in a draft Government Policy Statement on transport issue last week, but ahead of it are preferences for the Eastern Busway, a flyover in Pakuranga, trains and City Rail Link infrastructure.

Darby said mentioning Lake Rd and Glenvar Rd in East Coast Bays as potential beneficiaries was political packaging.

"Both are in National Party MP electorates," he said. Not mentioned were other upgrades AT had in the same category, including Lincoln Rd, Henderson. "Lincoln Rd is the biggest of all these at about \$100m."

Hills told the Observer cancelling the RFT removed \$1.2 billion from Auckland's transport budget and affected borrowing for long-term capital by about \$400m on top.

"It has a chilling effect across all [transport] budgets, not just those funded by RFT."

AT is mulling the impact of the cuts, and will update council on this soon. "People need to understand that we cannot deliver in an environment where there's aspiration but no funding," chief executive Dean Kimpton said.

AT told the Observer it could not provide updates yet on the impact of government policies on safety measures such as raised crossings planned locally.

The Government direction is or transport authorities to focus more on road building and maintenance, ahead of "multi-modal" projects that include cycle lanes, footpaths and traffic calming measures.

Future of beach stairs still unclear

Replacement of Kennedy Park's dangling stairs to the beach remains up in the air.

An update last week by council staff to the Devonport-Takapuna Local Board said geotech assessments on replacing the stairs damaged by storms over a year ago were awaited, as was what storm-recovery funding might be available.

Staff sought feedback from board members on preferred options, ranging from not replacing the stairs, to re-siting them nearer

Rahopara pa, or a full replacement at the current location, estimated to cost \$800,000.

Board members asked for more work to be done on replacing the existing stairs, which also washed out in 2017 and cost \$500,000 to fix. They noted the beach below was not easily accessed over rocks from either Castor Bay or Campbell Bay.

Budget of \$290,000 has been allocated towards initial work in the year ahead, but a full replacement would take longer.

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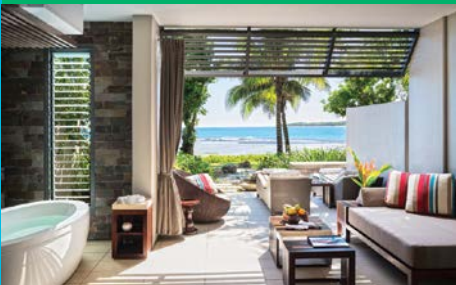
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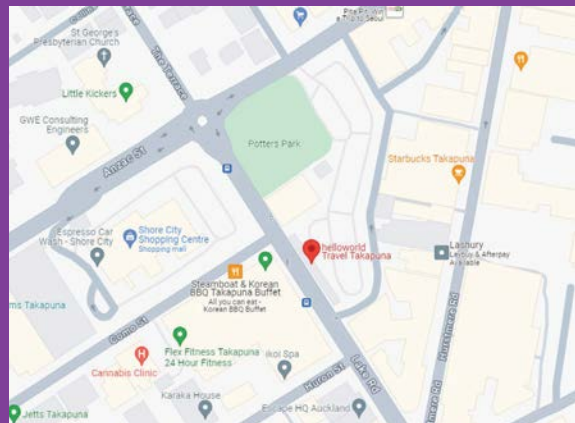
Carolyn Hedley

Carolyn Hedley has owned her Westgate store (was Hobsonville pre-covid) for 8 years and when helloworld NZ offered her the opportunity to open in Takapuna she jumped at it. Prior to that she owned the Luxury Holiday Company and it is still ticking away in the background, creating the type of holidays that the luxury traveller desires and outside the realm of your average traveller. She has been in travel over 30 years, too many to count really and says it is the type of job that gets under your skin and there really isn't any other job that compares. "I love working with my clients to create the holiday they are after". Carolyn has specialized in cruise for a long time and is one of the few "Cruise Masters" in NZ. That means she has undertaken specialty training and has been on lots of different cruise lines which enables her to point her clients in the right direction for the cruise-line for them. She has cruised to the Arctic and Antarctic is high on her list and was invited to cruise on Scenic Eclipse which is the 6-star luxury cruise line especially built for polar regions boasting 2 helicopters and a submarine. She says it is an incredible experience to cruise on her.



Sandy Theron

Sandy is from South Africa and is very knowledgeable about that area. She has been in the travel industry many years having travelled extensively through Europe and Maldives, Seychelles, Madagascar and Reunion Islands, and parts of the middle east.



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¡Arriba! Latin Fiesta brings the beats and treats



Ready to samba... Unidos de Aotearoa, a Brazilian samba drum and dance group, line up on Gould Reserve above Takapuna Beach before their Latin Fiesta performance



Local trio... (from left) Amna Alshawaf, Sara Al Hasany and Jumana Hassoon, all from Takapuna, during the fiesta

to Takapuna

Locals and visitors from across Auckland made up a diverse crowd who enjoyed Takapuna's Latin Fiesta this month.

The annual event included performances, food and the chance to embrace Latin rhythms in a salsa session

PICTURES: KATHRYN NOBBS



Rose-tinted view... Elvis Camus Cerda (left) and Diego Jirenel are visiting from Chile and staying with friends in Takapuna. Below: Local residents Nick Barnes and Karen Timmo enjoy the day



Snap to it... Members of the El Fogón Argentinian dance group show their steps. Below: a tutor from Viva Dance encourages the crowd to try swinging along to salsa



Family affair... Constanza Echeverria and Michael Barria with daughter Leah Barria



Fancy that...Eliza Almeida (centre) with a tempting sweet treat and her team at the Brazilian Uai food stall at Takapuna's Latin Fiesta. Right: The crowd-pleasing Argentinian dance group El Fogón swings into action



Below: Aiga outing... Visiting from Mangere (from left) Taisili Tauasosi with her aunty Ti and grandfather Sione holding brother Leonidas. Right: Shizuka Arai, Peter Chou and son Aizn Arai, from Birkenhead.



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New building coming for Forrest Hill Tennis Centre

A new clubhouse for North Harbour tennis players will be built next to the Forrest Hill Tennis Centre courts at Bond St.

The former clubhouse at the courts was wrecked in the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods and has since been demolished.

This season, interclub players at the courts have had to use portaloos and a temporary water supply.

Tennis Northern this month lodged a resource consent application to build a new clubrooms at the site. The new building will be 176sqm, just over half the size of the former clubhouse of 338sqm.

The building will be elevated to allow any future floodwaters to pass beneath the floor.

Tennis Northern chief executive Chris Casey said it was hoped the building would be ready for the 2024-2025 season starting



New look...an artist's impression of what the new building will look like.

in spring.

As part of the project three courts would be resurfaced and new floodlights installed.

Inoperative and old lights on other courts would be upgraded at the same time, Casey said.

Sports Briefs

Gunning for the Games

Takapuna Athletics Club athletes competing in the 12-person New Zealand team at this country's most successful World Athletics Indoor Championships this month did well as the Paris Olympics loom. Polevaulter Eliza McCartney won a silver medal at in Glasgow, while shot-putter and fellow Takapuna Grammar School alumni Jacko Gill was fifth.

Westlake rowers win gold

Westlake Girls and Boys High Schools coxed-four crews each won a division-one gold at the North Island Secondary School Rowing Championships at Lake Karapiro on 1 March. The boys won the under-17 boys title and the girls their under-16 event. The girls school made three other top-tier podium finishes while the boys picked up four. The schools next compete at the Maadi Cup national championships from 18-23 March.

Playground upgrades supported

The small Belle Verde Reserve playground in Sunnynook is in line for an equipment renewal likely to cost \$90,000.

The works are a year or more away, but Devonport-Takapuna Local Board members this month told council staff they are in favour of plans proceeding.

"These people have got very little in the way of parks. It would be a travesty to take it away," said member George Wood when staff pointed out tight budgets meant tough decisions would need to be made about future playground replacements.

Wood pointed out that there had been a lot of spending on playgrounds in the south of the board area.

Fellow member Mel Powell, who like Wood lives in the north of the board area, backed his view, saying Sunnynook was a more intensified area than others and play assets were needed.

Belle Verde Dr was also unusual in hav-

ing houses close to the street.

"This particular park is the only open space they have."

Board members had been asked at a workshop about Belle Verde and another playground renewal, at Achilles Reserve in Devonport. Staff were keen to get them onto the work programme, so design work and consulting with the public could be done.

Northern operations manager Sarah Jones said council cutbacks meant libraries, leisure centres and sports fields were likely to take priority over playgrounds in future. "Things like playgrounds we will just keep going as best we can," she said.

Members wanted to push on with simple designs for both reserves, including ensuring they have accessible pathways.

Board chair Toni van Tonder told staff it would be useful to have a playground overview, highlighting areas where there were gaps in provision.



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Takapuna bets on young blood in bid for top flight

A fresh-faced Takapuna Football Club first team is aiming for promotion back to the upper North Island's top division, after recruiting with that in mind.

New head coach Daniel Semp said his side is hungry and well-prepared to return to the Northern League.

"We see ourselves as a Northern League club, so we're keeping those same ambitions."

Takapuna was relegated to the Championship from the Northern League on goal difference last season.

The club has brought in six new players, including former North Shore United and Birkenhead United striker Nick Petherick, who made a name for himself during the second half of last season, scoring eight goals for North Shore in the Championship and netting the winner for Birkenhead in the final of the national under-19 tournament in Napier.

Semp told the Observer he wants to implement a possession-based style of play that was rarely seen last season due to the club's position in the league.

"We're trying to bring in a new aspect of being confident on the ball, being able to control the build-up and limit transitions."

The recruiting has been centred around finding players who fit the playing style but also the club's family culture, Semp said.

"We really want the first team to have players and personalities that the young kids can look up to.

"When you come into the clubroom you want people that are going to say hi and be respectful and make you feel welcome, so we're quite lucky this year – we have a really good group of people as well as players."

Semp said everyone in the squad wants to be there and is fully committed to the club's ambitions and goals.



New broom... Takapuna Football Club first-team coach Daniel Semp says his side is well-prepared to fight for promotion back to the Northern League

During preseason fixtures against top-division sides such as West Coast Rangers and Birkenhead United, Takapuna have been able to play their possession style, which was promising for the season ahead, Semp said.

The players are younger this season, but the 27-year-old coach believes they are more than capable of going straight back up. "The young players we've brought in we haven't brought in because they're young, we've brought them in because they're quality."

He said the Championship was looking strong this year, but that the challenge would be beneficial for the side.

"If we can do it this year, next year when you get to prems you're actually

ready for it."

Semp was a centre midfielder for Takapuna's first team for the past three years but decided to move to full-time coaching when the role was offered to him.

"I've always done half and half, but when the opportunity came to be first-team coach here I wanted to give full focus to it."

He will also continue in his previous role as the club's youth director of football.

He said the club's youth development had improved in recent years, with a more cohesive pathway from the youth to senior sides and a higher standard of football within the youth teams.

Takapuna kicks off the season at Tahaero Park on 23 March at 3pm against Onehunga Mangere United.



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Piles of aquatic weed cleared from around Pupuke jetty



Council contractors (above) working from a barge began removing an eel grass build-up from the shores of Lake Pupuke last week. The aquatic weed was piled up for removal in a fenced-off lower section of Henderson Park, where it had spread well out into the water on either side of the jetty. The recurring problem, highlighted in the 1 March issue of the Observer, has been particularly bad this summer. Weed build-up hinders lake access for water-craft users.

The operations manager for the northern team of council arm Healthy Waters, Frank Tian, said the eel grass removal from close to the shore at Henderson Park took four days, starting on 5 March. Weed was left to dry out on the lake banks to make it easier to transport to a green-waste facility. Asked about other areas of the lake where eel grass has grown, he said areas close to Sylvan Park were being monitored.

Sports groups being invited to brainstorm lake-use management

Plans are afoot to bring together sports users of Lake Pupuke to discuss matters ranging from boat storage to event timetabling.

The Devonport-Takapuna Local Board is keen to see a 'Lake Pupuke Sports Collective' formed to brainstorm how to manage increasing use of the lake.

Users include elite and club athletes training and competing, commercial operators, and people enjoying recreational pursuits on a casual basis.

Auckland Council staff hope to organise a first meeting next month, then a wider hui mid-year after approaching the groups involved. Some, like North Shore Rowing

Club, hold council leases on their sites. Others, such as waka ama clubs, operate more informally.

The council's sport and recreation lead, Mike Thompson, said key issues were storage, lake ecology, including weed management, and avoiding over-use.

"We need to coordinate use to make the lake as accessible for as many people as possible," he told a recent board workshop.

Board member Peter Allen urged "quick wins" from talks, and suggested a calendar to track use and avoid the likes of regattas being interrupted by other lake users.

Board deputy chair Terence Harpur asked

who governed lake use. The board's senior adviser, Maureen Buchanan, said Harbour-master guidelines were followed and the board's parks-management plan could also come into play.

Groups were generally well behaved, she said, but having a more coordinated approach was important as usage grew.

Board chair Toni van Tonder said that with intensification more demand to access water was inevitable. Boat storage was already a wider issue. "You see a lot of boats sitting on reserves and parks across the area."

Access to parking near the PumpHouse Theatre was another consideration, she said.

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Northcroft St is a hostile wind tunnel: when will spending stop?

Believe it or not, Eke Panuku is still going ahead with an upgrade of Northcroft St – do they ever learn? It's a hostile wind tunnel and will never be used as a pedestrian thoroughfare.

Thankfully, the idea of street furniture appears to have gone, but we will still have some trees taking out car parks. Also, there will be a "tree pit with a large native specimen tree" outside the leaking Toka Puia car park and "garden build-outs to provide a green entrance to the street".

This will be right beside a raised table pedestrian crossing with lighting (these are the expensive ones). If the 39-storey apart-

ment block goes ahead the crossing will be impeding access to the building site.

During the consultation process, Eke Panuku received 141 submissions, with only 25 per cent supporting its proposal. No doubt the supporters came mainly from residents of the Sentinel apartments located in the street.

How much of our council rates will be spent on something few want or benefit from? How much money was wasted on the original "beautification" which was dismantled?

When will this nonsense spending stop?

John Struthers

Why is CCO not under scrutiny?

Thank you for your article about the Toka Puia car park in Northcroft St, built by Eke Panuku (1 March).

Within one year of its opening, it is appalling that leaks and other problems were found. The cost of these yet-to-be-assessed repairs could well come out of AT's budget.

Amazingly, Eke Panuku has just announced a \$1.9m plan to upgrade Northcroft St with a raised pedestrian crossing, two traffic islands, new and improved lighting, seven large tree pits and trees, and two gardens.

This nearly \$2m costing for the quietest

and windiest street in Takapuna has arrived like a bolt from the blue.

In 2020, Eke Panuku spent over \$500,000 on large tubs of trees, which soon died, and enormous painted blue circles.

As a result of a public outcry they were all removed.

The current project is funded from the Eke Panuku budget set by Auckland Council and a direct payment from our rates.

Why is this supposedly Council Controlled Organisation happily flying under our elected members' radar?

Jan O'Connor

Eke Panuku responds: project will make street safer

Eke Panuku says the final Northcroft St design was scaled back from what was originally proposed in response to public feedback and budget constraints and had been approved by Devonport-Takapuna Local Board and Auckland Transport (AT).

"With further development in the area, the number of people using the street will increase considerably. The upgrade will make the street safer and more attractive for current and future users," a spokesperson said.

Eke Panuku was working through the final feedback and approval process with AT, and a soon-to-be appointed contractor would develop a traffic management plan.

"Importantly, we will ensure people have access to their properties and shops during construction."

The work was expected to start in April/May 2024 and take a couple of months to complete. Originally it was planned for last year, but the design changes delayed this.

The budget for the project was \$1.9m, funded from the Eke Panuku budget set by Auckland Council, not through the proceeds of asset sales, the spokesperson said.

The raised pedestrian crossing would make crossing near Auburn St safer, particularly after the build-to-rent project on Auburn St (at the end of Northcroft St) was constructed.



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Dual outlets... Susannah MacDonald with one of her paintings at a recent Lake House exhibition. Below: An illustration from her latest novel.

Artist-author publishes fourth novel in fantasy series

A Hauraki artist has published her fourth novel, which includes her own illustrations.

Susannah MacDonald, who is an art tutor at the Lake House Arts Centre, started writing poetry when she attended a class at Unitec in 2009 as a writing aid for a student she was assisting.

Poetry led her to writing short stories, and by 2011 she had the idea for a first fantasy novel, *Echoes from a Time Passage*, which was published in 2019.

It has spawned a series, with the latest book, *The Lute Player and the Liusaith of Light*, published on 1 March.

It follows a character, Axxis, as he travels in another dimension to discover his true family heritage.

While this is happening Lucy, a middle-aged academic from New Zealand, encounters a portal to the same world, leading to a meeting between the two characters.

Each chapter begins with a MacDonald illustration.

As with her previous works, she has painted the cover illustration.

Science fiction and fantasy weren't MacDonald's preferred genres before she started the series, but skimming through a sci-fi book at a library 20 years ago brought a realisation that fantasy genres could express the ideas she had in her head.

The *Echoes from a Time Passage* series is set in a version of Earth 200 to 300 years in the future and also in a realm of spirituality and art.

MacDonald said most of the story, setting and characters are invented but that many elements in the series are based on Greek, Egyptian and Maori spirituality and philosophy.

Echoes from a Time Passage: The Lute Player and the Liusaith of Light is available to purchase from Fishpond, Mighty Ape and Amazon.

MacDonald is giving an artist talk at the Mairangi Arts Centre at 12pm on 16 March.



WHAT'S ON @ Takapuna Library



Low Sensory Hour
Thursdays, 2.00pm-3.00pm

As part of Takapuna Library's commitment to inclusion and sharing the complete library experience with people of all abilities and support needs within our community, we are hosting a weekly hour where sensory stimuli will be reduced inside the library. This includes reducing lights, sounds and noise associated with checking out and shelving of books.

All are welcome to enjoy this quiet hour. (In association with Parent to Parent).

I love Takapuna Easter festival
Waiwharariki ANZAC town square
23rd March 10.00am-3.00pm

Takapuna Library will be part of the free Easter Activity Trail - register and pick up your map from the Info Tent in the new Waiwharariki ANZAC town square, follow the map around Takapuna and complete the activities at each location to receive a stamp, then make your way back to the tent for your Easter Treat!

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Painter who helped save Lake House building returns

An artist who helped keep the Lake House in Takapuna during the 1990s returns next week for a retrospective exhibition.

Tony Ogle is exhibiting 18 works, a selection of those he's produced since he left the North Shore, showcasing his bright and bold painting style.

Ogle rented a flat in the Lake House building in the mid-1990s when it was sited on the Takapuna beachfront.

Told by his landlord that the heritage landmark would be sold and moved off-site, Ogle hosted an *End of an Era* exhibition featuring works by more than 40 artists to generate interest in its plight.

The exhibition was the catalyst for the formation of the trust which campaigned for the historic house to remain in Takapuna.

The North Shore City Council eventually allocated the Fred Thomas Dr site where it has served as an arts centre since 2000.

"I developed a real liking for the property and thought this is significant history when there's not that much history remaining in Takapuna," Ogle told the Observer. "That's sort of what inspired me to do something."

Ogle, now a full-time artist in Gisborne, says 30 years after he lived in the house it felt right to return to update the community on what he's been doing.

"I'm looking forward to reconnecting with the house and the people that I was involved with back in that time."

The original paintings for many of his popular screenprints will be on display. One he intends gifting to the arts centre depicts the view of Rangitoto Island from the former Lake House site.

One of the centre's galleries is named after Ogle in recognition of his part in the community campaign to save it.

Built in the 1890s, the building had been used for various purposes at its beachside location.



Brushwork... Tony Ogle at work in his Gisborne studio, experimenting with monotones

It was a hospital during the influenza epidemic of 1918-1919 and a well-known party house during the 1970s and 80s.

Ogle, who is in his mid-60s, was born and raised in Castor Bay.

He worked on the North Shore during the 1990s, from a studio at King's Store corner, north of Devonport.

By the time renovations turning the Lake House into an arts centre were completed

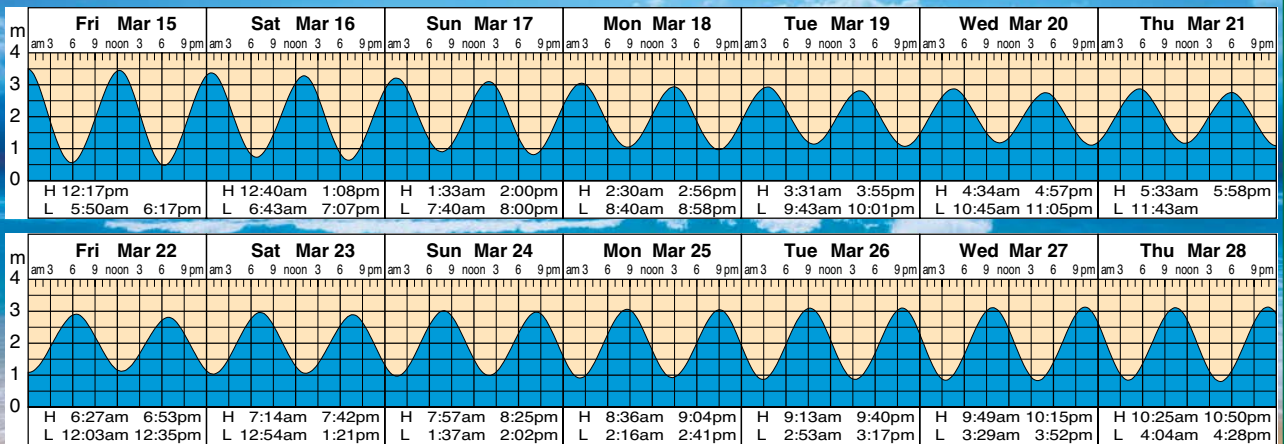
he had moved to Auckland's west coast, where he built a house. He headed to Gisborne in 2009.

The ocean has been a common thread for him down the years, tying into his love of surfing.

His work often depicts the coastline in bold colours

Many of the subjects in Ogle's work still reflect local places, including the beaches

Milford / Takapuna Next Fortnight's Tides





for retrospective



Inspirational vista... Ogle lived and worked from the building that became the Lake House, enjoying its stunning views through pohutukawa from its site above Takapuna Beach. Now he is holding a retrospective exhibition of his paintings at the arts centre it has become.

around Takapuna and Milford and the pa at Castor Bay.

“I got to know that area really well and those parts of the Shore have come through in my work.”

• *Tony Ogle – Selected Works 1996-2023* is showing at the Lake House Arts Centre, at 37 Fred Thomas Dr, Takapuna. The exhibition is on from 15 to 29 March in the Ogle Gallery.



Rangitoto view... North Shore scenes inspire Ogle to this day, decades after he moved from the area



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