

Submissions Do Matter

Over a hundred submissions were received on the Annual Plan and Bylaws Review. Each one was read by Council's Chief Executive Officer, council managers, the Mayor and the councillors.

The arguments and opinions put forward in those submissions were heard, considered and debated before a decision was made. It is a lot of work for both the community and Council but it does make a difference.

The Vehicles on Beaches Bylaw was shaped on the arguments put forward by those who were for and against and has resulted in a change that will see only some areas restricted to vehicles instead of all beaches as identified in the old bylaw. Horses are not restricted but riders have agreed to continue to use the beaches responsibly and to stay off the sand dunes.

The tennis court is to get a divider fence which will save a lot of embarrassing dashes after missed balls and the Coast Community Board will see an increase in discretionary funding for Coast projects.

The Opotiki Bowling Club will receive \$15,000 to assist in the installation of artificial greens and funds have been identified for the lodgement of a resource consent for the Harbour Development Project following the completion of a positive funding strategy.

Council will continue to contribute to regional projects such as the Regional Development Agency Toi EDA and will save \$1,000's on the implementation of an electronic records management system (as required by legislation) by joining up with Environment Bay of Plenty.

Council has opened the way for youth to be represented with the adoption of a policy on youth and is investigating the provision of a facility for a youth centre.

Opotiki District Council has the lowest spend per ratepayer of any New Zealand local authority. Nevertheless our services and facilities are comparative to other similar sized Councils and as a community we continue to keep pace with the rest.

The Annual Planning period is a difficult time for Council according to Mayor John Forbes.

"There is so much to do and so little to do it with. Some very good ideas and projects can't be done and someone is always disappointed. Our approach for the next few years is one of steady as she goes, aim for economic improvement and the other things will fall in behind.

"We still have to meet the community needs and the requirements of central government. I think, with the support of our community, we are managing to do that reasonably well within a 5.7% general rate increase" Mayor Forbes says.

Love Our Place

The bylaws and policies review process saw us drag out, dust off and reconsider the many rules regulations and guidelines governing the way we behave as individuals and as a community. That seems a lot of do's and don'ts for a small place like Opotiki, but the process, which involved a good deal of consideration, consensus and compromise, has shown us that we mostly agree that regulation is required if we are to protect our environment, ourselves and our way of life.

Having set the rules, the challenge for us now is to promote and enforce them without intruding on the sense of freedom and spontaneity we enjoy here in Opotiki.

Council's Chief Executive Officer, Vaughan Payne thinks this can be done if we work as community.

"If individuals, community groups, other agencies who have an interest, all work together I believe we can bring about a change without the need for a multitude of unwelcoming signs, enforcement patrols and unhappy people," Mr. Payne says.

Enter, the OpotikiCoast by Nature™ Love our Place campaign!

"This is a campaign about all the things we love in our district," says Council's Corporate Services Manager, Donna Adlam. "It explains why the rules are in place

and promotes such things as the dotterel, zero waste, dune care, harbour protection and care of our waters and ocean resources and native areas. It promotes the safety of people and their rights to enjoy a clean and peaceful existence. Love Our Place also explains some of the history, culture, fishing tips, water safety, location of facilities and provides interesting bits of information about our district."

There are three components to the campaign; education, information and persuasion. A Love Our Place brochure will be sent out to ratepayers and be available through out the district so that we can all promote the district. Careful thought is being given into the placement and design of informational signage, the establishment of a voluntary Coast Host group who will welcome and provide information and advice to visitors. The implementation of an effective reporting and enforcement process is also underway.

Council hopes to involve the Department of Conservation, Environment Bay of Plenty, Department of Fisheries, the Police, environmental interest groups, and people of the community in the campaign.

"No one enjoys being told what to do but, I believe we can, with the right approach, convince people to respect our values and our collective wishes," says Mr. Payne.

Creative Children Colour The Town

Children of the Opotiki Youth Art in Public Places Project recently celebrated the opening of the latest of four town murals.

The murals which depict Opotiki as the children see it are designed and painted under the guidance of local artist Shona Hammond-Boyes.

"Children are the future of our community and they hold a very special place in society. The murals are colourful, expressive and they mark the children's place in our town," Mrs. Hammond-Boyes says.

The children are selected from schools throughout the district and work together to research, design and paint the murals. The process requires them to share their opinions on a range of current issues and learn about the history of the area as well as painting and drawing techniques.

"This is more than painting pictures; the children are learning skills and expanding their knowledge while they are contributing to the community in a positive way. They receive a lot of good comment and encouragement from passers-by and that is great for their confidence and sense of belonging to the community."

The murals can be viewed on walls by the old Plunket Rooms, at the Opotiki Wharf, at Te Aria Toka Preschool and at Good Tukka Takeaways on the corner of State Highway's 2 and 35.



Opotiki Harbour Development Update

Representatives from Oriental Ocean Limited (OOL) visited Opotiki District this month to investigate the potential for investment in aquaculture and harbour infrastructure in the area.

Mr. Li Cunming, General Manager, Professor Zhou Yushan, Deputy General Manager, Ms. Zhan Shuping, Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Cong Yizhou, Chief Engineer and Ms. Yang Zhenya, Manager of International Trade, received briefings by Cawthron Institute and Auckland University Marine scientists and marine specialists from Environment Bay of Plenty. They also travelled up the Coast and visited kiwifruit packhouses and orchards. While here they visited the mussel farm site and were treated to a successful spot of fishing with expert guides Mayor John Forbes and Deputy Mayor Selby Fisher.

"The outcome has been positive with Oriental Ocean expressing an interest in a joint venture in the Mussel Farm and investigation into its use for other fish species. They also want to explore the establishment a laboratory and test breeding facility for New Zealand Sea Cucumber," Mayor John Forbes says. They have some further research to do and Mr. Cunming expects to return to Opotiki again in September with a more detailed proposal."



"We caught thirty fish in a very short time. Jack (Opotiki) was the only one who got sea sick," said Mrs. Cunming.

Opotiki Gets Heads Together on Social Issues

Council, community and government agencies are putting their heads together to tackle social issues head on.

Mayor John Forbes has called department managers from CYFS, Work and Income, the Police, Ministry of Social Development, Te Puni Kōkiri, Iwi, the DHB, the Education sector and Council to work through some of the social issues facing Opotiki.

There are many different agencies providing social services to our community. We need to combine and coordinate those services and focus on a joint strategy.

I want to know what services are provided, who is providing them and what standards are being met. It is possible that we could have overlaps in some services or are not providing what is needed in others. We need to get together and organise how we operate together in the future.

Members of the forum believe that by aiming to make Opotiki the best place to raise children the district will be a better place for all people.

Coast Community Board Update

The Coast community Board is looking at local power generation as a way to cut costs and create an income for Coast residents. The Board will meet with industry experts to learn about the potential of both small and large generation units and to investigate the possibility of development of power plants for local consumption and national grid supply.

The board is also working closely with Council on the possible development of land at Oruaiti Beach as a public access and amenities area.

Assistance with making applications to the rate rebate scheme is also offered by the Board. Interested residents should contact Jill McRoberts on 325 2833.

"If a place is safe and invigorating for children then we will all benefit. It may seem like a lofty goal but if we have a plan in place, work together and tackle issues one by one we will make progress," Mayor Forbes says.

The Ministry of Social Development has taken up the challenge and has provided administration and facilitation services to the group. The preparation of a Local Service Map (or stocktake of services) has also been undertaken by MSD staff and the initial draft is now available for comment.

Full community input is encouraged. Forum participants want to be sure that everyone that provides a service to the community is listed. The draft can be viewed at council offices or on the Council Website www.odc.govt.nz

Opotiki Community Trust

The Opotiki Community Trust has begun the serious business of finding ways to create community wealth from community assets.

The six members of the Trust will also be looking to establish a process for administering bequests. Before they had even had their first meeting a local resident donated \$400 to help the Trust.

All the trustees have a strong commitment to the Opotiki community and excellent commercial and legal skills and experience to make the Trust successful.



Council welcomes new trustees Ray Sharp, Ian Craig, Peter Anstis, Barbara Collis and Bryan Gould.

Councillor Comments



By Councillor
Robbie Petersen

In this column Opotiki District councillors are invited to share their views with residents. The views expressed are those of the individual councillor and not necessarily of the collective council.

Opotiki - a very special place

Having lived in the rural environment all my life, I know how tremendously important it is to look after the environment in your own backyard.

By being aware of what we have locally in the way of natural resources and working together to protect

and enhance them, we can all play our part to ensure future generations will enjoy our backyard even more than we do now.

This need to look after our own backyard applies equally, regardless of whether we have a small urban section or are running a 500 hectare farming unit. We all have access to fresh water, unpolluted land and soils, plus wonderful beaches and clean air to breathe.

These things are absolutely critical to us all, whether we live in the rural or the urban environment. So let's all work together, making more of these small but vital steps to preserve our environment.

We are a small community with big hopes for the future. Punching well above our weight, we will need a committed team all pulling together to achieve our goals. The Opotiki harbour development, enhancing our town centre, the Opotiki Community Trust, developing the Town to Beach walkways, building changing rooms at Memorial Park and improvements to our library are just some of these goals. This is a

huge mountain to climb, and only time and hard work will see us succeed.

If we have a vision we have a future. We must push for every government grant dollar that is available to fund some of these projects.

Opotiki is a friendly place with great people and a relaxed town to live in.

I believe the community must be fully informed at all times. This is something this Council needs to improve on. For me, accountability and transparency are good business for the community and for the Council and my door is always open to residents who have questions or need help.

To finish, I believe fuel prices are completely out of control and people are really feeling the pinch.

Council should be proactive and negotiate with Public Transport or Government for the people of Te Kaha for the return of their bus service.

R W Petersen

Are we there yet?

Opotiki District Community Outcomes Report

The first Community Outcomes Report is expected to be released at the end of next month.

The report gathers together all the statistical data and feedback on our environment, economy, social and cultural position so we can measure our progress towards achieving our community goals.

"This has been a very interesting project," says Council's Corporate Services Manager, Donna Adlam. "Just getting the information we need on our district has been difficult because agency boundaries do not align with Local Authority boundaries. The methods of gathering data also vary but, by working jointly with other Bay of Plenty Councils and government agencies, we have been able to find out more about how Opotiki is doing. And it is quite good news."

While Opotiki is identified as having the highest level of deprivation it also has a high level of enrolment in preschool education, a low level of school standdowns (expulsions) and increased levels of academic achievement. This tells us that our communities are committed to improving the level of education of our young people in preparation for the future.

We know that overall Opotiki's unemployment rate is one of the highest in the BoP at 13% but this has been alleviated by the amount of seasonal employment opportunities which sees only 2 persons registered unemployed in the district in last months' figures.

The total personal income level for Eastern Bay of Plenty residents is much lower than the New Zealand average with Kawerau lowest and Opotiki second lowest in the Bay of Plenty. From this information we know that a focus on economic development is vital.

There has been a steady increase in tourism in the district and while there is evidence of a slump in the retail sector there has been an increase in the number of businesses established in the district. The recognition of the historic value of the town centre and

of the unique cultural aspects of our district provides a way to further increase growth.

While most people are happy with the level of service and facilities provided in the district there is also an appreciation of the significant difference that community organisations and volunteers are making towards the betterment of the district.

Our beaches and waterways have maintained a high standard of water quality and our natural environment has been used as a basis for the promotion of economic development with events and tourism activities and also with the Harbour Development proposal.

Opotiki traditionally has a high voter turn out at election times. However there is a decreasing trend globally and a sharp decline at last years local authority elections combined with relatively positive feedback could suggest that people are generally happy with the current leadership or there is a decline in civic responsibility.

"The final report will provide the baseline data we need to measure our progress against in three years time. It is a stick in the sand so we know how far we have come," Ms. Adlam says.

"At this stage the report is in draft form but in very general terms it appears that Opotiki's push toward economic development is justified, the community's commitment to educating young people is paying off, peoples involvement in community affairs is making a huge difference to our progress, and the value we place on our environment is beginning to pay dividends

The final report will be available from Council Offices and on the Council's web site www.odc.govt.nz

In the 2008 community Survey residents were asked whether or not they think the District is making satisfactory progress towards achieving the community outcomes.



The report is a stick in the sand so we know how far we have come.

What you said

Community Outcome	Strongly agree/ agree	Disagree Strongly disagree	Don't Know
History and culture is treasured and promoted	50%	12%	4%
The spirit and character of the Opotiki Coast community remains strong and distinctive	79%	10%	4%
The potential of the natural environment is developed and protected	77%	12%	3%
Innovative development involves and supports the community	66%	11%	7%
Leadership is visionary, community focused, efficient and representative	64%	15%	7%
Facilities and services meet current and future needs are accessible to all	59%	25%	5%
People derive pride and purpose from a variety of work and learning opportunities	56%	20%	6%

Beach Bylaw 2008

Council has completed its Bylaw review and the Opotiki District has a new Beaches Bylaw that came into effect on 1 July 2008.

The draft Bylaw attracted over 60 submissions. Most of the submissions considered that the Bylaw was too restrictive on vehicles and the riding of horses on beaches. In the Bylaw, land yachts have been included as vehicles.

In the new Bylaw, horses are allowed to be ridden on beaches but they are not allowed to be ridden over dune or conservation areas or areas that are being rehabilitated with native plants. Horses are to use designated entry / exit points to get onto the beach.

Council in hearing the submissions decided that there were four areas where vehicles should be prohibited and one beach where there should be restrictions on vehicle access for a six week period commencing each year from 26 December through to 31 January of the following year. The only exception is that vehicles used to carry out particular works from the Department of Conservation, Environment Bay of Plenty and the District Council will be allowed on the prohibited and restricted beaches, as will emergency vehicles.

The beaches where vehicles are to be prohibited are:

- Waiotahi Beach from Appleton Road to the Pou Whenua;
- Tirohanga Beach from the Waiorua Stream (East of the motor camp) to the entry / exit point on Kelly Beach
- The Ohiwa Harbour mudflats
- The mudflats of the Waiotahi River Estuary

The beach where vehicles are restricted is Ohiwa Beach from the holiday Park west towards the Ohiwa Harbour outlet for the Christmas Holiday period.

The Beaches Bylaw does not apply to any beach east of the Waiaua River.

Council is to work on placing signage at access points to show where vehicles and horses can access the beaches.



CLEAN UP

eDay

NZ'S e-WASTE

Electronic waste (e-waste) is the fastest growing type of waste in the world and is more toxic than normal household rubbish. Computers and other electronic devices can contain toxic heavy metals such as cadmium, lead and mercury. The plastic casing and wiring of computer equipment can also contain hazardous materials, such as bominated flame retardants.

The problem is that landfilling stores the waste rather than allowing for recovery and reuse of valuable materials. There is also a risk that hazardous substances will leach from landfills into surrounding land and waterways, polluting our environment.

The Rotary Club of Opotiki is taking up the challenge to manage waste in an environmentally appropriate way and has announced Saturday 4 October as e-day for Opotiki.

Rotarians will be at the Opotiki Recycle Centre to help you unload and dispose of your electronic equipment safely and for free.

So start sorting out that junk and keep your eye on the Opotiki News for more information.

Tourism and Promotions Committee Update

The Tourism and Promotions Committee has ticked off a lot of the tasks it set in 2004 and has begun reviewing its strategy for the next three years.

In 2004 the strategy identified six improvement areas for the committee to focus on. All of the ten actions listed under the events focus have been achieved, work has progressed on all five actions under the marketing and promotion focus area and the eleven actions under community participation and the visitor information focus areas have been addressed.

"We need to keep working on these areas but can now have a closer look at the development of tourism product and infrastructure and research and strategy," says new Committee Chairperson Councillor Doug Leeder.

Actions put forward for consideration include a review of the marketing plan, retail sector and historic precinct revitalisation, increased district brand pick up, a review of Fun Unplugged, increasing Coast visitor activity, progressing the event centre and town to beach walkway, reviewing of our agreement with Tourism Eastland and researching potential funding opportunities.

"There are a lot of balls on this court. You have to decide which are the best ones to hit," says Councillor Leeder. "The 2004 Committee has made very good progress under the Chairmanship of Robbie Petersen and we need to keep the pace on. Of course the more people you have playing the game - the better your chances of getting somewhere so we appreciate the great support and involvement we get from the community."

It is expected the Strategic Plan will be finalised at the next Committee meeting on 30 July.



Be an early bird to be in for the draw of a brand new kennel and run valued at \$600

Dog Registrations due 1 August 2008

The Dog Control Act 1996 requires all dogs to be registered no later than 31st July each year and it is that time of year again. However, the Opotiki District Council has extended the date for imposing penalties by a further four weeks.

Dog owners who register their dogs by 1st August 2008 will go into the early bird draw for a brand new \$600 kennel and run and consolations prizes on offer.

Micro-Chipping Laws

The Act requires all dogs registered for the first time after the 2005/06 financial year to be micro-chipped. The only exception to this requirement is if the dog is a working dog (e.g. kept solely or principally for the purposes of herding or driving stock).

Specific breeds such as Brazilian Fila, Dogo Argentino, Japanese Tosa and the American Pitbull Terrier are required by legislation to be micro chipped.

All dog owners required to have their dogs micro chipped must provide the Council with a microchip certificate.

Kids In Politics

"No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of government except all those others that have been tried from time to time."

Winston Churchill 1947

Well perfect or not Opotiki kids are willing to get in and have a go at learning about and participating in the politics of our District.

Young people from CAYD made a submission to Council's Annual Plan and addressed the Council on the need for a place for young people to go - the result of their involvement is that Council will now seriously consider helping them find a location for a youth centre.

Children from St Josephs School visited Council and met with the Mayor to find out about how Council works and The Opotiki Youth Art in Public Places children attended a presentation by Council on the value of community involvement.



Good on you Kids!



Library Report

Today's technology has had an impact on the way we communicate, entertain and access information but, there is still nothing like a good book on the bedside table or on a cold wet day.

Opotiki's library has provided a service for the past 130 years and is still going strong with a membership of some 6,500 and a book stock of over 35,000 items.

In recognition of this Council has undertaken a review of the service provided to ensure future needs.

"Our library has provided an excellent service and is well supported by the community. It is in need of an upgrade if we are to meet the needs of the new generation of readers and those who work with technology."

The review was carried out by Kawerau District Librarian, Susan Harris, and confirms the need for increased storage and activity space, provision of computer and internet facilities, upgrade of decor, layout and presentation and a weeding of book stocks and collections.

A number of options have been put forward for consideration including possible additions to the existing building, relocation to a larger site,

development of shared services with local schools, other libraries and national services.

In her report Mrs. Harris concludes that overall, the Opotiki District has a Library service that is highly valued and appreciated by its Community. And for many, the Library has evolved into a community space that has many uses beyond the traditional recreational reading and information needs.

"As a visitor to your Community, I was impressed by the range of amazing things happening in your District, but to meet the needs of a younger generation and to continue this value into the future, there is a pressing need for investment and change is needed to make the service relevant for the 21st century," Mrs Harris said.

Public libraries need to evolve and develop in response to the changing world and it is important that Opotiki District Library moves towards the standards achieved by other Level 3 Public Libraries."

Council is currently preparing a proposal to put to the community for consideration.

Community Survey Results

The results of Council's survey of residents have been released.

The survey was conducted by the National Research Bureau as part of Council's legal requirement to monitor its activities.

A sample of 200 people selected to represent the districts demographic make-up were asked to evaluate Council's facilities and services, policy and direction, customer service, and level of representation. They were also invited to give an opinion on local issues.

Overall residents are satisfied with the level of community support and roading provided but satisfaction with parks and recreation, solid waste management, footpaths and stormwater drainage and animal control is less than peer group and national averages.

Almost half of those surveyed recalled a recent Council decision or action they approved or disapproved of

which is similar to national and peer group averages. Sixty two percent rate the performance of the Mayor and Councillors as very or fairly good which is on a par with peer groups and slightly above the national average.

On the not so good side; only half of those surveyed have an emergency kit or house-hold emergency plan.

"From this survey we have a better idea of what people think of our performance, where we need to improve our level of service and to allocate resources," Chief Executive Vaughan Payne says.



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