

Far North Māori ward 'actively' retained

Councillors voted unanimously to retain the district's Ngā Tai o Tokerau Māori Ward during an Extraordinary Meeting on Friday 6 September.

The 'active decision' not to disestablish the ward means a referendum will be held during the 2025 Local Election giving voters the opportunity to say whether or not to retain the ward in the Far North.

Far North District councillors voted to create Ngā Tai o Tokerau Māori Ward in 2021 following informal feedback from the community as part of its Representation Review held that year. Of the 499 responses received, 408 (81.76 per cent) supported establishing a Māori ward. Ngā Tai o Tokerau covers the entire district with four councillors elected by voters on the Māori Electoral Roll.

The council's decision to retain its Māori ward was expected, as it had previously passed the same resolution on 9 May 2024. However, that decision was made before the Local Government (Electoral Legislation and Māori Wards and Māori Constituencies) Amendment Bill 2024 had been passed, and did not qualify as an 'active decision'.

The amended Act passed its third reading on 31 July



Local rangatahi demonstrating their support for retaining the Ngā Tai o Tokerau Māori Ward during the council's Extraordinary Meeting.

2024 and was enacted after receiving royal assent. The amendment specifies that an active decision on whether to retain or disestablish a Māori ward must be made by all councils by Friday 6 September. The amendment also reinstates the requirement of binding polls to establish Māori wards, which was

removed in 2021. Since 2021, 45 councils have established Māori wards without holding a poll.

Councillors also voted that the council's CEO, Guy Holroyd, be asked to investigate options of not conducting a binding poll at the next local body election in 2025.

Feedback plea for speed limits



Speed limits are proposed for the Russell-Kororāreka catchment area.

The council is seeking community feedback on proposed speed limit changes in the Russell-Kororāreka catchment area, which includes Russell, Ōkiato, Rāwhiti, Waikare, and Kāretu.

Over the past five years, there have been 34 crashes in the Russell-Kororāreka catchment resulting in injuries, with 10 leading to death or serious injury. Combined with an increase in walkers and cyclists on the routes, it highlights the need to review speed limits.

The government's recent draft of the Land Transport Rule, Setting of Speed Limits 2024, is at the proposal stage and is not yet legislation. If adopted, it may influence the proposed changes. The draft rule identifies "blanket" speed restrictions. Proposals for the Russell-Kororāreka catchment area are not blanket speed restrictions; they are carefully considered responses to public feedback over many years.

The council is legally required to consult with the public before making speed limit changes. The council has developed a social pinpoint map where submitters

can drop a 'pin' on the roads they use or have an opinion on. They can leave comments and see what others are saying. Visit the Russell-Kororāreka Speed Management Plan webpage to find out more. A link to the survey is on our website.

Adoption and implementation of the Speed Management Plan is subject to approval from councillors and the availability of funding. Consultation closes on Monday 30 September 2024.

Seed libraries taking root

Seed libraries at five Far North libraries are flourishing with people of all ages discovering their green fingers. The seed exchange programmes are held in Procter, Kaikohe, Kawakawa, Paihia and Kāeo libraries, with a monthly Garden Guru event at Procter Library in Kerikeri once a month.

The seed exchange is a cache of seeds donated by local businesses and members of the community. The public can take seeds home, plant them and then replenish the seed library with their own seeds, seedlings, or produce. Since the Procter Library launched its seed library nearly a year ago, more than 800 seed packets have headed out the door.



The most popular seeds at the seeds libraries are for food crops.

Going potty for new loos



The new toilet block has opened on the Rangitāne Loop Road.

A flash new toilet block has opened at the reserve on the Rangitāne Loop Road in Kerikeri, close to the Rangitāne boat ramp. The Exeloo dry vault toilet block consists of two unisex cubicles, one of which is wheelchair accessible.

Initial investigations of the toilet block location uncovered evidence of what was potentially the outer edge of an historic midden. The headland to the west of Rangitāne Reserve was once a pā site and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (Heritage NZ) has since found other points of historical interest nearby.

The final location of the facility was agreed with local hapū and Heritage NZ, to protect historical elements. Excavation of this location took place with the oversight of both a cultural monitor and Heritage NZ. The toilet facility is open 24/7, as elected by the community board. The project budget of \$205,400 was included in the Long Term Plan 21-31.

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