



Special day at Pukeiti

Pukeiti's new Rainforest Centre has been opened by the Governor-General, Her Excellency the Rt Hon Dame Patsy Reddy.

The new facility means the world-class garden can now offer a world-class visitor experience.

Dame Patsy, pictured here with the Council Chairman, David MacLeod, planted a tree at the Rainforest Centre to commemorate its opening.

She told guests she is always grateful to be given an opportunity to plant trees.

Details and more pics: Pages 3-5

Message to Wellington

New-look newsletter is coming your way

This is the final edition of our newsletter in its current format.

Later in the year we'll be launching a shorter, more frequent bulletin. You'll find it online and in community papers.

Recount was launched in 1990 and is still largely in its original format.

Whoever wins power in the September 23 general elections needs to focus on eight key issues of importance to Taranaki, the region's civic leaders say.

Tourism and communications are big themes in the list drawn up by the Taranaki Mayoral Forum comprising New Plymouth Mayor Neil Holdom, Stratford Mayor Neil Volzke, South Taranaki Mayor Ross Dunlop and Taranaki Regional Council Chair David MacLeod.

They say the incoming Government in 2014 was presented with a list of nine issues and there has been great progress on some of them,

notably a major investment in improvements to SH3 north.

"But there's still work to do in other areas, and new imperatives have emerged – particularly the need to diversify," the civic leaders say.

"Taranaki's economy remains strong, with the nation's highest regional per-capita GDP. But our two key commodities, dairy and hydrocarbons, make us vulnerable to global variations. Tourism is emerging as a sound investment, particularly with Lonely Planet ranking us the world's second-best region."

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From the Chair

It was a huge and exciting privilege to host the Governor-General, Dame Patsy Reddy, MPs, mayors and other guests for the opening of the new Rainforest Centre at Pukeiti earlier this month.



It was a big day and a special milestone for Pukeiti. The region's world-class garden can now offer a world-class visitor experience, no matter what the weather. The Rainforest Centre really does offer the 'wow' factor, so do go and see it for yourself, if you haven't already done so.

The opening was also an opportunity to talk about a wider vision – of the Taranaki Crossing as a new Great Walk, taking in not only Egmont National Park and Pouakai Hut, but extending out to Pukeiti and on to the coast at Oakura. It would be a big economic asset for the region and already, with projects like the Rainforest Centre, all the Councils in Taranaki are working to make it reality. But we also need the Government to show leadership.

The Taranaki Crossing is one of a number of regional issues that the three District Mayors and myself believe the incoming Government needs to address. As we did before the 2014 elections, we've set out the region's priorities in a message for whoever is in Government after polling day. Tourism and communications are big themes – events of the past few years have demonstrated the need for us to diversify. See www.trc.govt.nz/MtW/

Another talking point in the run-up to the election has been the environment, especially freshwater quality. Our cartoon series Talking on Water, which winds up this month, is aimed at highlighting freshwater issues that may not be widely known or understood, and thus encouraging informed discussion. Check this series out at www.bit.ly/TalkingOnWater.

Finally, watch our for our new-look newsletter later in the year!
David MacLeod - CHAIRMAN

Message to Wellington

From Page 1

Taranaki's eight priorities are:



Taranaki Crossing: Taranaki's councils are already working on and investing in an iconic, mountain-to-sea visitor experience. The Government needs to commit more long-overdue expenditure within the National Park to meet visitor demand. As a Great Walk, it would be a major boost to the regional economy.



SH43 – Forgotten World Highway: The sealing of the final 12km is long overdue, along with improvements to ensure the highway is safe for more traffic. This will enhance tourism and make the freight network more resilient.



Predator-free Taranaki: This region is an excellent place for the Government to start achieving its Predator Free 2050 goal, by supporting and further funding a number of initiatives already under way involving public and private agencies – for example, Project Mouna, self-help possum control and many community-based projects. Taranaki's compact scale and united focus make it a great pilot.



Connections to Mt Taranaki: The North Egmont, Stratford and Dawson Falls access roads are under pressure and suffering from under-investment. The Government needs to prioritise a sustainable, long-term funding solution that also includes the Mangorei Rd and Carrington Rd routes to Egmont National Park and Pukeiti.



Cellphone coverage and broadband: The Taranaki councils fully support the Government's broadband initiatives but there has been little progress in rural Taranaki, and there has been no progress filling the gaps in our mobile phone coverage. This is holding Taranaki back. Taranaki could become a pilot to show what can be done by saturating the region with high-speed, high-quality data.



Freedom camping: Freedom camping, particularly along SH45 Surf Highway, has created problems for councils in ensuring visitors can get to attractions safely and that they enjoy suitable amenities. Road safety works require a Crown funding increase to reflect expanding tourist numbers. The Government should also extend its funding for toilets, showers and the like.



Oil and gas returns: The oil and gas industry produces significant tax and royalty revenues for the Government but none is specifically captured in the region that produces the wealth. The next Government must look to ensure direct benefit to local communities which bear the additional infrastructure and other costs.



Western Blue Highway: A previous investigation found a New Plymouth-Nelson roll-on, roll-off ferry service would be both feasible and viable. The concept now needs serious attention given the fragility of the national transportation network exposed by the Kaikoura earthquake.

Progress on the 2014 priorities:

Major improvements to SH3 north: The Government has committed up to \$135 million, with construction to start in late 2018/19. A great result.

Normanby overbridge: The Government committed \$17.6 million to complete the Normanby overbridge realignment, which opened in 2016. A great result.

Road funding: The Government established a contestable \$140 million fund to replace the previous 'R funds' regional allocations. A good result.

Oil and gas industry returns: No response.

Regional development and tourism: A review of Taranaki's regional economic development strategy is now under way with Government support. Promising development.

Treaty settlements: Settlements have now been achieved for all but one of the region's eight Iwi, with the final under negotiation. There has also been formal reconciliation between the Crown and Parihaka. An excellent outcome.

RMA implementation and reforms: The jury is still out on major amendments made to the Resource Management Act in April 2017. Further work needed.

Marine oil spill response capability: No response on the major issue of concern.

Investment in Egmont National Park: Support for Project Mouna is good news but there is still less-than-adequate investment in visitor facilities.

ONLINE: See www.trc.govt.nz/MtW/

Pukeiti celebrates milestone

World-class visitor centre opens at world-class garden

Pukeiti's new Rainforest Centre gives the world-class garden facilities to offer a world-class visitor experience, guests were told at the centre's opening.

"We've created opportunities for people to visit regardless of the weather and time of year, and experience the wonderful gardens out of the rain and under a roof, and to take in the stories of Pukeiti," says the Taranaki Regional Council Chairman, David MacLeod.

The Governor-General, Dame Patsy Reddy, formally opened the Rainforest Centre, which features a multi-media interpretation areas and new function space and direct access to covered areas housing the largest public display of vireya rhododendrons in the world. It also offers panoramic views of the rainforest garden and coast, and easy access to a tree-top lookout over Pukeiti's famed waterwheel.

Mr MacLeod says the new centre represents a significant investment by the Taranaki community.

"One way or another, the magic of this place has been important to generations of Taranaki people. The new Rainforest Centre and associated developments will ensure the magic continues and can be appreciated."

Mr MacLeod paid tribute at the opening ceremony to the Taranaki Iwi, and to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust, whose members established the garden in 1950 and developed its collection until 2010, when the Taranaki Regional Council assumed ownership and management on behalf of the people of the region.

"The Trust is still an important part of Pukeiti today, supporting the Council in its work. And material from some of the Trust's original structures has been put to new uses in the Rainforest Centre. The Trust's efforts live on, in more ways than one."

And he says Pukeiti and its new Rainforest



The Vice-Regal party is welcomed into the Rainforest Centre for the formal opening ceremony.



The Governor-General, Dame Patsy Reddy, addresses guests at the formal opening of the Rainforest Centre at Pukeiti.

Centre would be an important waypoint in a promising new regional venture – the proposed Taranaki Crossing.

This "exciting and iconic mountain-to-surf experience" would extend from North Egmont Visitor Centre to Oakura, via Pukeiti, with a shorter option via Pouakai Hut to Mangorei Rd.

"The Rainforest Centre represents a substantial community investment in this wider project. So

too does the New Plymouth District Council's commitment to improve Mangorei Rd at the Egmont National Park boundary.

He says that the Taranaki Crossing would add to the wonderful experiences Taranaki has to offer, and be another 'Great Walk' for New Zealand.

"Today, though, we're celebrating what's been achieved so far. And it's looking fantastic!"

Pukeiti celebrates milestone

RIGHT: Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy and TRC Regional Gardens Manager Greg Rine discuss the view from a walkway linked to the Rainforest Centre.



BELOW: The official party makes its way across a covered walkway within the new Rainforest Centre.



Guests enjoy a meal at the Founders Café after the opening of the Rainforest Centre in early September.

Revamped café part of new Rainforest Centre

Visitors to Pukeiti wanting a light meal or a snack have a treat in store this season.

The new Rainforest Centre includes a revamped Founders Café. Colourful modern décor is a feature of the new eatery, which seats 60 inside and another 40 in a covered area directly in front, with panoramic views of the world-

renowned garden and down to the coast.

The menu features light meals and a selection of snacks, sweets and refreshments. The café is licensed. The Founders café is open from 10am to 4pm Wednesday to Sunday from 1 September to 31 March, and all public holidays except Christmas Day.

Pukeiti celebrates milestone

Upcoming events at the gardens

*Pukeiti: 2290 Carrington Rd,
New Plymouth.*

*Tūpare: 487 Mangorei Rd, New Plymouth.
Hollard Gardens: 1686 Upper Manaia Rd,
Kaponga*

Pukeiti, Sunday 1 October, 10.30am-2pm: Explorer Day - Insect Olympics

Fun, games and cool facts all centred on insects. Check out the new Rainforest Centre while you're there. Bring a picnic lunch or try the new-look Founders Café.

Tūpare, Sunday 1 October, 2pm-4pm: High Tea

Dress up in your finest and soak up the atmosphere while enjoying a delicious high tea in Tūpare's Chapman-Taylor designed house. Fundraiser for Mangorei School PTA. Tickets \$20, available from Black Bird Boutique, 148 Devon Street East, New Plymouth, Ph: 06 759 0011.

Pukeiti, Tuesday 3 October to Friday 6 October, 10.30am-2pm: School holiday programme - Treehouse Trail adventure challenge.

Explore our Treehouse Trails and challenge yourself with our maps, clues and fun activities in the forest.

Pukeiti, Sunday 15 October, 10am to noon: Guided Walk

Let us show you around the new developments at Pukeiti.

Pukeiti, Tūpare and Hollard Gardens, 27 October-November 5: Powerco Taranaki Garden Spectacular

Walks, talks and garden tours at all three Taranaki Regional Council gardens. See festival programme at www.rhodo.co.nz.



Governor-General Dame Patsy Reddy plants a tree to commemorate the opening of the Rainforest Centre, with her aide-de-camp and the Taranaki Regional Council Chairman David MacLeod in attendance.



Visitors admire the view out over the garden and down to the coast from the rear of the Rainforest Centre.

Bus services: Much to consider

Recent commentary on Taranaki's bus services reflect a high level of public interest and support for public transport, says the Council's Transport Services Manager, Chris Clarke.

But he says higher patronage is needed to drive change and further improvement, taking Taranaki forward and improving our lifestyle.

Some have suggested that smaller buses could be used to cater for off-peak services when there are fewer passengers.

"However, during morning and afternoon peak periods the bus network is tied to the school bus service for students and we need the big buses to cater for student numbers," says Mr Clarke.

"At the end of the school day, about 83% of the total Citylink fleet is used for the school bus service – that's 24 out of 29 buses taking more than 1,100 students a day home as quickly as possible."

He says smaller buses are not practical as it's more efficient and better value for money to operate one bus all day, rather than swapping between two smaller buses to meet fluctuations in passenger numbers.



Higher patronage would help to bring about change and further improvement to our bus services.

"Just like it's more expensive to own and run two cars – a large car when you need to transport the entire family, as well as a smaller car when there are just a few members using it – it's the same for buses. If we were to have

smaller capacity buses, we would need to have more buses in the fleet, with more operational and maintenance costs, to handle maximum passenger numbers."

He says given the number of passengers currently using the services, the challenges would be similar if bus frequency was increased. "More routes/services equals more buses, more drivers, more maintenance, more driver uniforms, more training and more bus ticketing equipment. It all adds up to more money – so who pays?"

Revenue for public transport is from three main sources – passengers, ratepayers and central government. "Adding more buses and/or services would likely mean more expensive passenger fares and increased Taranaki Regional Council rates, with no guarantee central Government would provide any additional investment."

However, he says the Council recognises that services could be improved and is continuously working on this. "We are currently investigating adding more Waitara/Bell Block bus services and next year we'll launch new bus ticketing technology. This will make it easier, simpler and faster to buy a bus ticket and board a bus in Taranaki."

The Council is one of seven regional authorities investing in new technology that enables passengers to buy a ticket, top up a card or cancel a lost or damaged card online. Following that, work has already started on a bus journey planner with the development of a bus app in progress.

In the meantime, the Council will continue working to meet public demand for Taranaki bus services, in the most efficient way possible.

The private lives of kiwi

Technology is providing a rare glimpse into the intimate relationships of kiwi at a South Taranaki property.

The Taranaki Regional Council is using new audio recording devices to help monitor the quality of native environments in Taranaki.

The devices are allowing a closer look at a small-to-moderate kiwi population at a private rural property in South Taranaki, revealing a competitive mating scene for male and female kiwis. Dean Caskey, TRC Senior Environment Services Officer, says the recordings show several kiwi in the area are looking for a partner, including two females competing for the same male.

"It's a difficult mating situation perhaps, but potentially it's a great boost for the kiwi population. It gives a strong foundation for a species recovery in this habitat.

"We'll be sending the recordings to Massey University for expert analysis, but a quick look at one recorder shows an average of 2.2 kiwi calls per hour, recorded over 13 nights," Mr Caskey says.

The South Taranaki property is a Key Native Ecosystem, which means the Council and landowner have agreed to work together restoring the native environment and biodiversity values, improving our lifestyle.

The kiwi findings follow sustained predator control work by the landowner, who is working with the Council to restore the property's natural environment – kiwi rely on low predator numbers and healthy bush areas to survive, so are a good indicator of habitat quality.

"Together we have designed and are deploying a predator control programme to protect priority habitat and priority species at the site," Mr Caskey says.

After seven months following this programme, at least 15 stoats, one weasel and 39 rats have been caught.

Prior to the predator control work, the landowner approached the Council for assistance to help manage forest habitats, as he had occasionally heard kiwi at night.

"This has been a really valuable partnership. It's helping kiwi and native habitats recover," Mr Caskey says.

Contact Taranaki Regional Council for advice about biodiversity or predator and pest management control on your property - call 0800 736 222

Key Native Ecosystems in Taranaki:
www.trc.govt.nz/key-native-ecosystems/



The new Committee members are, from left, Emily Bailey (P&P Committee), Fay Mulligan (C&R Committee), John Hooker (P&P), Keith Holswich (C&R), Mitchell Ritai (P&P), Hoani Eriwata (C&R).

Iwi representatives join key committees

The Council's two key standing committees, Consents & Regulatory and Policy & Planning, each have three more members after new Iwi appointments took up their positions in August.

Under the terms of recent Treaty of Waitangi settlements, all eight Iwi in the region were involved in the selection process, with the appointees chosen to ensure each Committee has connections from the three Taranaki waka — Aotea, Kurahaupō and Tokomaru.

The appointees act in the interests of the Committee they are part of, while bringing an Iwi perspective to the table.

The new Consents & Regulatory members are Fay Mulligan, Keith Holswich and Hoani Eriwata, and the new Policy & Planning members are Emily Bailey, John Hooker and Mitchell Ritai.

They were all formally welcomed to their new roles with a pōwhiri earlier in August.



The new Iwi representatives and their supporters are welcomed by Council staff at the pōwhiri.

Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

Address: Private Bag 713,
Stratford 4352

Street Address: 47 Cloten Road,
Stratford 4332

Telephone: 06 765 7127

Fax: 06 765 5097

Email: info@trc.govt.nz

Websites: www.trc.govt.nz
www.taranakibus.info
www.tupare.nz
www.hollardgardens.nz
www.pukeiti.nz
www.taranakiplants.net.nz

Twitter: @TaranakiRC
@TaranakiCD
@TaranakiRG

Facebook: TaranakiRegionalCouncil
TaranakiCivilDefence
TaranakiRegionalGardens

Environmental hotline: 0800 736 222

Civil Defence freephone: 0800 900 049

NP bus information: 0800 827 287

Total Mobility: 0800 868 662

REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

New Plymouth Constituency:

Tom Cloke 06 753 5586
David Lean 06 753 3325
Charlotte Littlewood 027 354 5330
Bev Raine 06 757 5825
Craig Williamson 027 687 4122

North Taranaki Constituency:

Mike Davey 06 756 7126
Donald McIntyre 06 762 4701

South Taranaki Constituency:

Michael Joyce 027 494 8975
David MacLeod (Chair) 06 278 5577
Neil Walker 06 278 7541

Stratford Constituency:

Matthew McDonald 027 481 4648

MEETING SCHEDULE

Venue (unless otherwise stated): Council chamber, 47 Cloten Rd, Stratford.

Tuesday 17 October, 9.30am: Consents and Regulatory Committee.

Tuesday 17 October, 10.30am: Policy and Planning Committee.

Tuesday 24 October, 10am: Executive, Audit and Risk Committee.

Tuesday 31 October, 10.30am: Ordinary Council meeting.

Thursday 16 November, 10.30am: Taranaki Solid Waste Management Committee.

See www.trc.govt.nz/meetings/ for agendas and minutes, and www.trc.govt.nz/meetings-schedule/ for any last-minute schedule changes.

SH43 improvements ‘vital’

SH43’s importance is increasing and it’s become vital for the route to be fully sealed and have more spent on safety improvements and maintenance, a new investigation has concluded.

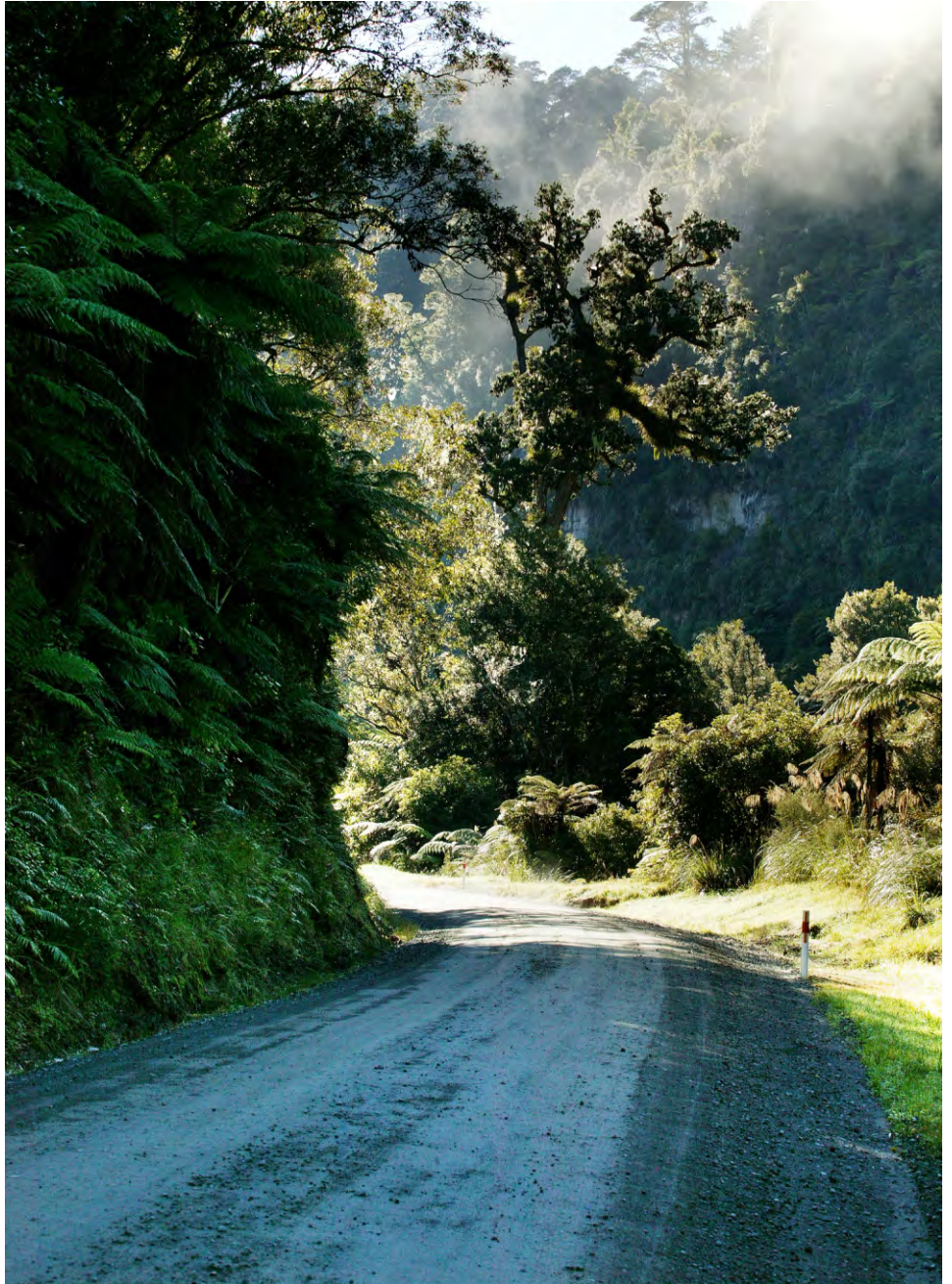
Traffic volumes are up but maintenance spending has declined, and the unsealed section is daunting for visitors and hinders efforts to boost tourism at both ends of the highway, says a report on the investigation carried out for the Taranaki Regional Council.

The investigation, by Abley Transportation Consultants, found:

- It is essential for the remaining 12km unsealed section of SH43, through Tangarakau Gorge, to be sealed, and all at once. This would cost an estimated \$8 million.
- Safety improvements are also urgently needed, including better signage and road markings. A relatively small investment in safety could result in savings of \$7 million in crash costs.
- The NZ Transport Agency also needs to spend more on maintaining the route. Annual maintenance spending decreased from \$1.2 million in 2010/2011 to \$500,000 in 2015/2016.
- Such improvements are vital if promising new tourism initiatives in Taranaki and Ruapehu District are to realise their full potential.
- SH43 is also widely used as an alternative route during the regular closures of SH3 north of New Plymouth due to slips, flooding or accidents. This occurs despite the NZ Transport Agency not promoting it as an alternative.
- Traffic volumes increased by nearly 13% between 2012 and 2015, despite the current condition of the highway. So improvements can only result in further volumes.
- The NZ Transport Agency should consider upgrading the route from ‘Secondary’ to ‘Primary’ in its road network classification system.

“The message is clear: The highway in its current state is not adequate,” says Taranaki Regional Councillor Craig Williamson, who chairs the Regional Transport Committee.

“We’ve sent the findings of this investigation to the Government and told them that though this route may be called the Forgotten World



A 12km section of SH43 through Tangarakau Gorge remains unsealed.

Highway, it cannot remain forgotten by them. The Taranaki Region and Ruapehu District speak with one voice on this. It’s essential to take Taranaki forward.”

Stratford Mayor Neil Volzke says local communities have long been calling for improvements to the route.

“The current state of the highway makes it a barrier to progress, rather than an asset,” he says. “There has been a recent history of lack of maintenance, and the unsealed portion is a major deterrent for motorists who travel the highway. It needs to be better and safer.”

Ruapehu Mayor Don Cameron says that like Taranaki, his district is making a concerted effort to improve facilities and attractions for tourists.

“The current state of SH43 is a major constraint,” he says. “This new report offers plenty of evidence.”

Taranaki’s Regional Transport Committee will consider including aspects of the report in the Regional Land Transport Plan, which is currently under review.

Read the report here: www.bit.ly/SH43report