

Public transport: Do we need it?

Safer Mid Canterbury and the Ashburton District Council are gathering information about the future need for public transport in Ashburton, and people are invited to share their views via an online survey.

Survey responses will be analysed alongside the thoughts of community groups, businesses and existing transport operators, to help Council gauge if a public transport pilot is feasible.

Infrastructure and Open Spaces Group Manager Neil McCann said the process was simply information gathering at this stage and Council is working with Safer Mid Canterbury on the exercise.

“Environment Canterbury runs public transport in the region and is reviewing its regional public transport plan later this year. Information we gather from the survey and research, will be valuable and help us prepare a submission on the review.”

The research project is being undertaken by Sarah Wylie, of Social Research and Evaluation, and should be completed by early April.

Mr McCann said the project was aimed at finding out the likely level of demand for



public transport in Ashburton, as the town had not traditionally had such a service.

“We want to know how often people would use public transport, what sort of schedule they want and if they would be willing to pay.”

Safer Mid Canterbury already operates the Mid Canterbury Connector service, a vehicle which travels to more rural areas of the district to bring people to Ashburton for medical appointments, shopping and to access government and social services.

Christchurch operates buses as public transport and Timaru has MyWay, an on-demand public transport system; public transport could also include scooters and ebikes.

Mr McCann said feedback from community groups will be gathered separately from the online survey, as well as the views of taxi and bus companies.

“We’re hoping to get a lot of feedback from the online survey and we will be promoting it widely because we want the views of young people, older people, people who don’t have a licence or no longer drive, or people who have mobility problems.

“This is a great chance to see if we should trial something like a MyWay or if we need any sort of public transport at all.”

The survey is available until 8 March. Hard copies are also available from Council, Ashburton Library, Ashburton Community House and Age Concern.

CE - Hamish Riach Drinking water standards set high bar for councils

Supplying safe and reliable drinking water is a core, and sometimes complex part of Council business – it’s also a topic you will hear about during our Long Term Plan consultation process.

Having a reliable water source is only part of the matter; you also need water treatment plants, a pipe network to deliver it, and robust monitoring and testing programmes.

A good part of rates to be collected in 2024-25 will go towards upgrading Council’s water treatment plants – by adding more monitoring from abstraction right through to delivery, by testing more and by upgrading filtration and treatment processes.

That’s not to say that our water is not safe, it is, but new drinking water standards that came into force in November 2022 set the bar high for all those who manage and supply drinking water. In some cases, the new compliance means we have to add on to existing water treatment plants, or build new ones.

We are committed to providing high quality drinking water from all our Council supplies and the Long Term Plan out for consultation next month will detail the work planned for the next few years and how much it is likely to cost.

Drinking water supplies are critical to the communities they serve and that is why much time and energy is needed on them.

This week Councillors talked about the future of the Fairton drinking water supply. This supply needs about \$1m spent on it to be compliant with the new standards. Another option was for Council to spend the same money on a new pipeline connecting the Ashburton drinking water supply to Fairton.

The ability to meet compliance, now and in the future, is part of the discussion and closer monitoring of water use, as a Council or as an individual, will become the way of the future as it is a resource too precious to waste.

This week has also seen the first Council meeting of the year, in the new chamber Hine Paaka.



If you are in Te Whare Whakare, the library and civic building, at any meeting time, then feel free to see democracy in action - if the door is open, come in and take a seat in the public gallery. Meeting details will be posted on digital screens at the door, and members of the public can access the chamber from Level 1 of the library.

As it has turned out, the new chamber is in the same spot as the old chamber in the former Ashburton County Council building that once stood on the site.

Wednesday’s meeting was the first opportunity to test out all the technology – the chambers has five digital screens, including a specific screen for those in the public gallery, as well as cameras that will be able to show councillors as they debate and ask questions around the council table.

Council meetings and many workshops are livestreamed and recorded on our Facebook page, and agendas with information about what is to be discussed are on our website ashburtondc.govt.nz.

SHORT AND SWEET

ARTIST TALK

The Ashburton Art Gallery and Museum hosts a double-header event this Sunday 11 February, when artist Chris Pole talks about his current exhibition of traditional landscape paintings and Merv Falconer talks about the history and development of ski plane operations in Aoraki Mount Cook National Park and the Tasman Glacier. Both events start at 2pm.

MUSEUM GIFTS

You’ll soon have a chance to explore some of the treasured objects, archives and photographs that have been generously donated to the Ashburton Museum and Historical Society in 2023. The Ashburton Art Gallery and Museum is hosting an exhibition called Sharing Histories, which opens on Sunday 18 February at 1pm. It showcases some of the most special and fascinating museum acquisitions of the previous year.

GRANTS OPEN

If you have a group, project or event that helps make Mid Canterbury a great place to live, then you may be eligible for a community grant. Grant categories are diverse, from biodiversity and heritage to one-off projects. Applications are assessed against set criteria and funding allocated as part of the annual budget process. Applications for the February grant round are open now and close at the end of the month - check out all the info at ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants.

MT SOMERS WATER

Around 150 properties connected to the Mount Somers water supply are being advised there will be a late-night water shutdown for three hours on Thursday 15 February. The shutdown, from 10pm until 1am, is part of installing new water mains on Ashburton Gorge Road to connect to the new water treatment plant; the shutdown will allow the existing pipeline to be connected to new pipeline. Residents are advised to store water, however a potable water tanker will be parked at Mt Somers Springburn School if needed.

New recycling rules already in play

Kerbside recycling around New Zealand has now been standardised, but the good news for Ashburton District is that there are no changes – we've been recycling this way for two years already.

Under the new national rules, only hard plastics 1, 2 and 5 can be recycled in kerbside collections; soft plastic (that you can scrunch with your hand) needs to be put in the rubbish.

Tetra packs (like those for juice and milk alternatives) must go in the red rubbish bin, along with all lids (of all sizes, shapes and material). Plastic bottle lids cannot be processed by the sorting machine, however can be recycled if dropped off at the collection bin at the Ashburton Resource Recovery Park.

Pizza boxes may be recycled in the yellow bin, but only if there is no leftover food in them and any cheese is scraped off the bottom.

Infrastructure and Open Spaces Group Manager Neil McCann said Ashburton residents are still able to recycle clean glass containers and bottles in their



green kerbside bins, as per the national standards.

“Our district has been ahead of these new national standards for several years and our residents are pretty good at recycling what they can, and disposing what they can't.

“The one change to come is a few years away, which is a food waste collection, required by the Government before 2027. This is something we will be talking to the community about in our Long Term Plan soon, and we'll be asking whether a green waste collection should be included with the food waste collection bin.”

Ashburton's kerbside rubbish and

recycling is collected by EnviroNZ and recycling currently taken to Christchurch for sorting by machine.

Council also employs bin auditors who routinely check recycling bins to ensure residents are sticking to the recycling rules.

“Our auditors leave educational material with any non-recyclable items in a brown paper bag, to inform householders what should or shouldn't be in the yellow bin. Persistent offenders will lose their recycling bins for three months.”

Mr McCann said that standardising recycling around the country was a positive move. “Now, when our Ashburton District residents travel around, they can take their good recycling habits with them.”

Kerbside bins should be at the kerb on designated collection days by 7.30am, with the windstrap on.

Too much rubbish for your red bin? Contact our customer service team about getting another red bin, or buy official black refuse bags that can be dropped off at Ashburton and Rakaia resource recovery parks at no cost.

New path makes trip to school safer

Contractors working for Council are making good progress on road improvements to Albert Street in Ashburton, where the road is being widened and a footpath, with kerb and channel, added.

Group Manager Infrastructure and Open Spaces Neil McCann said just under 500 metres of road was being improved, from Trevors Road to the Ashburton Christian School.

“This new footpath will make it much safer for all the students who walk or scooter to the school, and a wider road will be safer for those who cycle.”

The \$200,000 project is on track to be finished by early March, and the contractor Fulton Hogan is working hard to have two lanes operational within a couple of weeks. The road has been widened from 6.5 metres to 10 metres, including the footpath.

Mr McCann said the new footpath and kerb and channel connects to Council's existing network, and will improve connectivity in the whole area.

“Money for this, and a few other footpath projects, has come from the Government's Better Off Funding initiative and we're happy to see Albert Street almost finished with the new school year under way.”

Fulton Hogan is also completing a footpath project, with associated kerb and channel, on Line Road and Dolma Street, in Methven.

Community garden to go

The community garden at Chambers Park in Methven is to be removed because of a lack of interest in residents using and regularly maintaining it.

Methven Community Board members decided recently to ask Council's Open Spaces team to remove the community garden, as it is overrun with weeds and an eyesore.

Deputy Mayor Liz McMillan, who sits on the board, said the garden was set up a few years ago by the Methven Food Forest group.

“They planted the back area with natives and council planted some fruit trees, and they are still there, along with a raised garden that has just been growing weeds.”

The fruit trees included three apple trees, three plum trees, three pear trees and a fig tree.



The raised garden once grew strawberries and herbs.

Ms McMillan said she had weeded it herself in the past and tried to engage with members of the community, but no one had come forward to maintain it.

“Now the whole thing is full of twitch and looks terrible.”

Community board chair Kelvin Holmes said enthusiasm had got the garden going, but a lack of enthusiasm was killing it, and there appeared to be no-one to carry on the work.

TALK IT UP TUESDAYS

RESTARTS 13 FEBRUARY

Drop by for a biscuit and a chat with a Councillor, and let us know how we can better serve our community.

Every Tuesday: 2pm - 3pm
Ashburton Library.
No booking required.

Got feedback on local issues?

A matter to raise with Council?

WORKS NOTICES

Graham Street/McMurdo Street - Traffic management (including one-way or full road closure) is in place at the intersection of McMurdo and Graham Streets until 29 February, as part of the SH1 improvements project. Access through the intersection will change, depending on work being done. Be prepared for a short detour, if posted.

Walker Street - Closed between Phillip and Elizabeth Street while contractors install new water and sewer pipes. Elizabeth Street outside the hospital is one-way (traffic running west to east). Hospital access remains.

Maronan Road - Traffic management is in place on Maronan Road while contractors rehabilitate a section between the Hinds River and just north of Swamp Road.

Thompsons Track - Closed between Braemar and Pole Roads until 15 March for road rehabilitation. Detours in place.

Tinwald viaduct - Closed until late February while contractors work on Waka Kotahi's SH1 Tinwald corridor improvements project.

Back Track and Barkers Road - Back Track is closed between Woods Road and Highbank Cairnbrae Road from 6 February until 8 March for repair and sealing. Barkers Road to Back Track is closed from 7-13 February for maintenance and sealing.

Seafield Road - Work is planned for Seafield Road, between Christys Road and Stanley Road, from 12 February to 19 May. Traffic management will be in place and may include detours.

Upper Downs Road - Closed between Quarry Road and Hinds Gorge Road on 24 February for the Ashburton Car Club's shingle sprint event.

Full closure details on our website ashburtondc.govt.nz

STOCKWATER ALERTS

Council staff are monitoring stockwater flows, which have declined because of reduced river flows. A special text alert system has been set up so people can receive stockwater updates in the event of sudden changes – text STOCK to 4196 to receive these free alerts.

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Meetings are at Council Chambers, 2 Baring Square East, unless specified. Meeting agendas are online at ashburtondc.govt.nz

Biodiversity Advisory Group, Monday 12 February, 1pm in Wakanui Room

Council Activity Briefing, Wednesday 14 February, 9.30am

Audit & Risk Committee Meeting, Wednesday 14 February, 1pm

Council Meeting, Wednesday 21 February, 1pm

Ashburton Water Zone Committee, Tuesday 27 February, 1pm

Council Agencies - Six-month reports, Wednesday 28 February, 9.30am

COUNCIL OFFICE

2 Baring Square East
Mon, Tue, Wed & Fri 8.30am-5pm
Thursday 9am-5pm

ASHBURTON LIBRARY

2 Baring Square East, Ashburton 7700
Mon & Fri 8.30am-6pm, Tue-Thu 8.30am-8pm
Sat & Sun 10am-4pm

EA NETWORKS CENTRE

20 River Terrace
Mon - Fri 6am-9pm (pools 7pm, gym 8pm)
Sat & Sun 7am-7pm (pools 5pm, gym 6pm)

ASHBURTON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

327 West Street
10am-4pm daily (late night Wed)