

Repairs for heritage footbridge

Ashburton's historic rail footbridge will be refurbished later this year, in a project that will preserve an important slice of history and ensure a safe mid-town rail crossing for future generations.

Council has awarded the tender for the special work to local company Grant Hood Contracting.

Group Manager of Infrastructure Neil McCann said it was no small job.

"First we'll need to use a crane to remove the 25-metre central iron truss, which will be placed onto Kiwi Rail land to the south of the footbridge, to be repaired and repainted."

"Then the decking on the central truss and sections of the ramps will be removed so repairs can be made to the support piers, including the one that was damaged by a car last year. The previously identified decayed timbers will be replaced along with any others once the decking is removed. Ironwork will be cleaned, repaired, and repainted."

The work is expected to take about six months.

Mr McCann said the footbridge has been



in council hands since the early 2000s and has served as a vital pedestrian connection between East and West Street for over 100 years.

"Council adopted a Conservation Management Plan for the footbridge in 2023 and we've been budgeting for the work in this three-year transport cycle."

"The management plan has guided an appropriate refurbishment, and our contractor will use sustainable hardwood in accordance with the plan. It's important the footbridge retains its heritage value, but it's equally important the structure survives as it's the only safe rail crossing between Havelock Street and Walnut Avenue."

The footbridge is used by pedestrians and cyclists, to get to and from school or work. It has been acknowledged by Heritage New Zealand with a blue historic places plaque.

Mr McCann said the footbridge continued to be well used, despite its old age.

"We know it is valued for its history and it was one of the most photographed spots in a recent competition run by Heritage New Zealand."

The project will cost about \$880,000 and comes under Council's existing budget for maintenance and renewal work on local bridges and structures. It will be partly-subsidised by NZTA.

Deputy Mayor Richard Wilson

Planning for uncertain times

The budget for 2026-27 continues to be a main focus for Councillors, and we are hoping the war in Iran and other things outside our control will not derail it.

The Annual Plan has been a work in progress for several months and it is looking like an average rates rise of about 8.71 per cent (3.75 per cent of that is for mandatory three waters work). That means the rates Council collects to do the work planned will be 8.71 per cent more than collected in 2025-26.

The actual increase will depend on where you live, the value of your property and the services you receive.

Higher fuel and energy costs are evident in the draft budgets and I hope the war will be wrapped up soon, though it's possible the high oil prices will linger

while infrastructure in the Middle East is rebuilt.

Some things – like Donald Trump and Covid – are beyond Council's control, though we have been able to scrutinise a lot of other spending in the year ahead and prune budgets where we could. It's a careful exercise balancing community expectations with reality and rate rises – we know many of our residents are on fixed incomes, and all other households will be experiencing increased living costs, just like Council.

We must be practical, and use all the financial information at hand to support our decision-making.

A lot of information about our stockwater race network has been gathered as Council works towards exiting the stockwater delivery service

by 2027. Council agreed to the closure of two more race networks earlier this month and the programme rolls steadily on – there are many views, emotions and expectations.

If you are a stockwater user, I encourage you to respond to Council letters when they arrive and learn about alternative water sources available for your property.

On a positive note, it was great to read ASB's quarterly financial report this week and see that Canterbury's economic outlook is brighter than any other region. The diversity of our agricultural base is our strength.

A special shoutout to the arable sector, who are facing some very difficult times.



Parcel to be rezoned for more housing

Council has approved the rezoning of 16 hectares of residential land on the corner of Farm Road and Racecourse Road to allow for low-medium housing development.

The rezoning to from Residential D to Residential C is a result of a private plan change application by Coniston Park Limited.

Group Manager of Compliance and

Development Ian Hyde said the application was publicly notified last year and heard by an independent commissioner.

"There were seven submissions from people in the community, with some wanting to talk about stormwater, and ultimately the commissioner recommended the change to low-medium density development."

An outline development plan for the site showed areas set aside for stormwater management (swales), but more detailed design work will be needed to satisfy Council at the resource consent stage.

Ashburton councillors last week adopted the commissioner's recommendation and the plan change has been publicly notified. There is a 15 working day period for appeals against the decision.

SHORT AND SWEET

SKATEPARK

The Ashburton skatepark on West Street will be closed during the day on Thursday 2 April while new LED bulbs are fitted into overhead security lighting. Contractors will be using vehicles with equipment to work at height, so the wider skatepark will be closed while the work is done.

GRANTS CLOSING

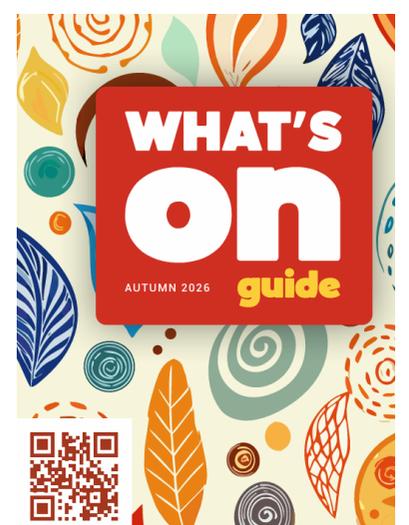
Is your community group planning a big project and could do with a financial boost? Council's annual community grants are open until 31 March, so be quick. There are nine categories - from biodiversity to events. Check out our website for more details, ashburtondc.govt.nz/grants

CHERTSEY RESERVE BOARD MEETING

The Chertsey Reserve Board looks after the Chertsey Domain and is looking for new members to help its cause. The board is holding its triennial meeting at the Chertsey Hall on **Thursday 16 April**, at 7pm. All welcome!

WHAT'S ON?

The April school holidays are just around the corner and a whole heap of fun is planned at the Ashburton Library, EA Networks Centre and Rokowhiria Ashburton Art Gallery and Museum. Download our autumn What's On Guide for ideas and activities, most of them are free, or pick up a copy from any of our facilities. Go to ashburtondc.govt.nz/events



Employers earn mayor's praise

Mayor Liz McMillan is thanking the district's employers for getting behind the Mayors Taskforce for Jobs programme, with 50 job-seekers offered work in the past eight months.

The national taskforce is all about helping young people into jobs and Mayor Liz is one of 17 provincial mayors supporting the programme.

"The programme in Ashburton is co-ordinated by Sharon Watson here at Council and since July last year she has arranged for 27 people on a benefit to be placed into work, as well as 13 young people not in education, employment or training.

"Our target was 35 for the whole year, so I really want to thank those local employers and businesses out there for stepping up, whether it has been to offer seasonal or full-time work."

Young people were placed into jobs in the building industry, in hospitality, and in the agricultural and horticultural sectors.

Building company McIntosh Group has taken on several employees, who first came to them through the programme.



A Mayors Taskforce For Jobs worker helps establish a Mid Canterbury apple orchard.

Managing Director John McIntosh said the employees had progressed into permanent roles and were now undertaking apprenticeships through BCITO.

"They all came to us prepared by Sharon for the realities of working in the construction sector and she does an excellent job of supporting them and helping them understand expectations around attitude, work ethic and reliability."

Mr McIntosh said the taskforce's programme was a valuable initiative that helped connect motivated young people with meaningful employment opportunities, while ensuring employers received candidates who were well

prepared for the workforce.

Kelvin Lysaght, who runs a consulting structural engineering company, said he'd been working with the taskforce for six weeks and had taken on one worker.

He offered a civil engineering technician position, where the employee would learn how to undertake geotechnical soil field testing and computer-aided design drawing skills, related to structural engineering.

"Sharon identified the right type of person, suitable for the role in my business."

If you want to know more about the Mayors Taskforce For Jobs, please get in touch with Sharon.Watson@adc.govt.nz

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council meetings are held in Hine Paaka, the Council Chamber, unless otherwise stated; agendas at ashburtondc.govt.nz

Tuesday 31 March, **Bylaw Workshop - Keeping of Animals, Bees & Poultry**, 10am

Tuesday 31 March, **Arts, Culture and Heritage workshop**, 2pm

Wednesday 1 April, **Audit, Risk & Finance Committee**, 2pm (live-streamed)

Wednesday 8 April, **Draft Dog Control Bylaw & Policy workshop**, 9.30 am

Wednesday 8 April, **Council Meeting**, 1pm (live-streamed)

Wednesday 15 April, **Three Waters Committee**, 10am (live-streamed)

Monday 20 April, **Methven Community Board**, 9am, Mt Hutt Memorial Board (live-streamed)

ROADING NOTICES

David Street (Hinds) - Closed from No 5-49 until 10 April while water mains are upgraded.

Trevors Road - Closed from Ealing Montalto Road to Cracroft Maronan Road, 7am-7pm closure, until 19 April for road maintenance by Fulton Hogan. Detours in place.

Fairfield Road - Closed between Company Road and Singletree Road until 19 April, while Fulton Hogan carries out heavy road maintenance.

Seafield Road - Closed between Stanley Road and Christys Road until 10 May for road maintenance by Fulton Hogan. Traffic management in place.

Elizabeth Avenue (Rakaia) - Traffic management in place from Burrowes Road to Tancred Street until late March, while Rooney Earthmoving installs water pipes. Access for residents remains.

Catherine Street - Closed between McMurdo Street and Archibald Street/SH1 until Friday 24 April while new wastewater pipes are installed. The work will include traffic management, trenching and pipe-laying. Resident access will be maintained.

Oak Grove/Harrison Street roundabout - fully closed from 13 April to 3 May for maintenance and new asphalt. Detours will be in place.

Domain set for homegrown sounds



The guitars are tuned and the grass is mown in preparation for Live on the Lawn this Saturday at the Ashburton Domain.

The free music event kicks off on the long lawn (adjacent to West Street) from 11am, with two bands from Ashburton College, Window Spiders and One Layne Bridge, taking to the stage to warm up the crowd.

At midday, rising country star Molly Harrison is set to delight visitors with her songwriting talents, and many will be hoping to hear her recently released single From the Hillside.

Tyrone Schwalger follows with a chilled acoustic set just after 1pm, before Geraldine singer-songwriter duo Amelia and Cam Luxton perform their mix of

country, folk and blues shortly after 2pm.

Bringing a high-energy finish, The Mavericks will close out the afternoon from 3.15pm, playing the greatest singalong hits from the past 50 years.

Music lovers are encouraged to bring a picnic or purchase something tasty from the range of food vendors, offering everything from blueberry ice cream to butter chicken.

Attendees may bring their own beer or wine to consume responsibly; however, no glass is permitted in the domain, and the event is smokefree.

Free parking is available on surrounding streets and at the West Street Car Park. If the weather is wet, check the Council's Facebook page or website for updates.

Lake Hood in the clear

Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora has lifted its harmful algal bloom health warning for Lake Hood.

Recent water testing at Lake Hood has shown the quantity of potentially toxic harmful algae (planktonic cyanobacteria) in the lake has reduced and concentrations are now below levels that are of concern to public health.

Dr Claire Salter, Medical Officer of Health for the National Public Health Service, said the public would be informed if testing shows that concentrations have increased and there is a risk to public health again.

Council Group Manager Neil McCann said

warning signage at the lake would be removed, to reflect the health warning being lifted. "This is great timing with Easter coming up as there'll be plenty of people keen to be on the water if the weather stays warm. The water quality has improved since the health warning was issued in January, and the back-to-back readings confirmed it."

Council is continuing to work with scientists on ways to manage algal blooms in the lake. Mr McCann said the past summer had been cooler and wetter and as much information as possible was being gathered about how cyanobacteria blooms formed in Lake Hood.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Plan Change 7

Notice is hereby given that the Ashburton District Council made its decision on **Proposed Private Plan Change 7** to the Ashburton District Plan (2014), at its meeting on 18 March 2026. The Commissioner's recommendation to approve the Plan Change was adopted by the Council.

The adopted recommendation and the Plan Change are now available on the Council website at ashburtondc.govt.nz. Copies may also be inspected during office hours at Council Offices, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton.

IAN HYDE, Group Manager Compliance and Development

EASTER WEEKEND RUBBISH & RECYCLING

There is no kerbside collection on Friday 3 April, so people whose bins are normally emptied on a Friday should put them out for collection on Saturday 4 April instead. Bins will be collected as normal on Monday 6 April.

The Ashburton Resource Recovery Park will be closed Friday 3 April and open its usual winter hours 9am-5pm on Saturday 4 April, Sunday 5 April and Easter Monday 6 April.

Rakaia Resource Recovery Park will be closed Friday 3 April, open Saturday 4 April and closed on Monday 6 April.

The Methven greenwaste facility will be open Sunday 5 April.

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 5.45am-9pm (pools 8pm Mon & Tue, 7pm Wed-Fri; gym 8pm). Sat & Sun 7am-7pm (pools 6pm, gym 6pm)

ASHBURTON ART GALLERY & MUSEUM

327 West Street
10am-4pm daily