



# Remote/virtual building inspections way of the future

Fifteen per cent of Council's building inspections are currently completed virtually using an app, saving time and money, and that figure is set to grow.

Building Control Group Manager Dhyanom Gala told last week's Environment and Planning Committee that virtual/remote inspections were the future of the building industry. "We were one of the very early adopters of the BRANZ Artisan app and we now have 35 building firms using it," he said. "Since we started using it in 2021, 1,085 inspections have been completed, saving more than 32,000 kms and 1,000 man-hours."

The Government recently announced plans to make remote inspections the default approach for BCAs (Building Consent Authorities), an initiative expected to streamline the building consent system, reduce costs and improve efficiency. While remote/virtual inspections are the future of the building industry, there were several challenges Mr Gala said. The benefits were increased efficiency, cost savings, flexibility, high-quality digital records, reduced health and safety risks as

inspectors were not on site and continuity during emergency events (e.g. road closures). Challenges included lack of liability sharing framework, resistance to change, staff training, technological requirements and maintaining consistency and quality control. Mr Gala said Council's Building Control Group currently undertakes up to 5,000 inspections yearly and is continually exploring ways to promote efficiencies.

The Artisan app is recognising the quality assurance processes of building teams and fostering stronger connections between council and the building community. The Building Control Group is gradually increasing its uptake of inspections carried out using the Artisan app. "We will continue to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of remote/virtual inspections and make adjustments as needed to adapt to new challenges and regulatory challenges," Mr Gala said.



Building Control Group Manager Dhyanom Gala using the Artisan app to inspect a building

## Harbourmaster direction withdrawn for Tory Channel/Kura Te Au

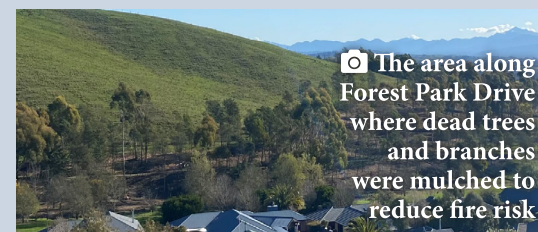
Following collaborative discussions with Maritime New Zealand, the Marlborough Harbourmaster has decided to lift the Harbourmaster's Direction for Tory Channel/Kura Te Au regarding the size of vessels and requirements for the introduction of new ships into the channel.

Earlier this year, the Harbourmaster introduced a direction setting a maximum length of 187m for any new vessels looking to use Tory Channel/Kura Te Au to access Port Marlborough at Picton. Under Maritime NZ Rules a specified risk management process exists for determining the size limits of pilot exempt vessels. "Current rules are in place to guide which vessels require pilotage and that they need to be under the command of a master with the correct certification. If there are requests to change pilotage, there is a risk management process which requires engagement with harbourmasters and other affected parties," Maritime NZ Director Kirstie Hewlett said. "Removing the direction simplifies the regulatory picture for maritime safety

for the Channel," she said. Marlborough Harbourmaster Captain Jake Oliver said he was confident that the risks the direction was designed to address would be managed through a combination of national regulatory requirements and the statutory powers he had. "I want to assure the Marlborough community that safe passage for vessels in the Tory Channel/Kura Te Au is a top priority for me as Harbourmaster. For large vessels, such as those over 187m in length, the onus is on the operator to demonstrate that this sized vessel can use the channel without impacting maritime safety standards. I will continue to advocate for the high standards of safety that the public



## Fire risk and erosion control trial



The area along Forest Park Drive where dead trees and branches were mulched to reduce fire risk

Walkers on the Wither Hills Farm Park will have noticed large-scale works under and around the trees on the lower slopes near walking tracks adjacent to Forest Park Drive.

A trial to reduce fire risk from excessive dry fuel loading has been underway through this tree block. Previously the area had significant numbers of dead and dying trees as well as fallen branches which formed a significant risk during dry summer periods. Additionally, huge numbers of self-seeded wattles were stunting and suffocating existing trees, which compromised the sustainability of the block and had resulted in large areas of bare, eroding soil. Any useful lengths of firewood are being removed and donated to the Blenheim Lions Club for their firewood programme while the remaining brush was mulched into the soil to support existing trees. While the area looks a little bare, grass is starting to emerge under the remaining tree canopy and the area should look mostly recovered by the end of November. So far there has been an overwhelming positive response from local residents and park users. A comprehensive report on trial results will be done in the spring when the trial finishes.