

News from Marlborough District Council.

Health of Marlborough estuaries revealed

A report to Council's Environment and Planning Committee about the health of the region's 13 estuaries has revealed several important findings.

Senior Coastal Scientist Katie Littlewood said the estuaries were assessed for various environmental indicators and understanding their condition was essential for proper management.

"Estuaries act as vital buffers between land and sea, delivering essential ecosystem services like maintaining biodiversity, providing habitat and nursery grounds for wildlife, and aiding in coastal protection against storms," she said.

"Findings indicate that the inner estuaries of Tōtaranui/Queen Charlotte Sound are in 'fair to good' condition, benefiting from healthy seagrass beds and native forest catchments despite some human modifications. The outer estuaries in this region are rated 'very good', with minimal human impact enhancing their ecological value."

However, Ms Littlewood noted that not all findings are positive.

"Kura te Au/Tory Channel is considered to be in 'fair to poor' condition, due to shoreline modifications and other environmental

stressors that have significantly diminished the estuaries' ecological health," she said. "This reminds us of the growing human pressures impacting our estuarine ecosystems."

The Council aims to use these insights to monitor trends over time, implement necessary management measures, and ensure the sustainability of Marlborough's precious estuarine ecosystems for future generations.

To find out more about the state of the region's estuaries, go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/coastal/estuaries



Estuaries, like the one above, act as vital buffers between land and sea

The piercing problem of Chilean needle grass

Council is continuing to tackle Chilean needle grass (pictured below), a high-threat and invasive weed with serious implications for the local environment and economy.



Councillors received an update at March's Environment and Planning Committee meeting.

The persistent pest, first spotted in the Blind River area in the 1940s, has expanded its presence, with a total of 2,626 hectares affected as of the 2024/2025 season - an increase of 14 hectares from the previous year.

"Council staff, land occupiers and contractors have rallied together during the crucial seeding period from late October to mid-January, putting in significant efforts to manage and contain this pest," Council Biosecurity Manager Liam Falconer said.

"Despite these efforts, nine new affected properties were identified this season, highlighting ongoing challenges in controlling its spread."

Chilean needle grass has long stood as a national threat, with a recent study suggesting it could cost New Zealand up to \$1.1 billion over the next 200 years if not adequately addressed.

"Since 2014, Council has increased its resources and implemented intensive search and destroy operations. These efforts aim to tackle new infestations early and support managing lightly and moderately affected properties. However, with 232 active infestations currently recorded, the battle is far from over," Mr Falconer said.

In July last year, the Environmental Protection Authority approved Council's use of a rust fungus that affects Chilean needle grass, which was released in Blind River in October, and further releases are planned for the coming months.

Engaging the community is crucial in this fight. Council is exploring new ways to raise awareness about the risks associated with this pest, particularly within larger companies where turnover can lead to a lack of understanding regarding its spread.

A full review of the programme is set for 2027, aligning with the Regional Pest Management Plan.

To find out more about efforts to control CNG, go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/environment/biosecurity/a-z-of-pests/

Working for Nature/Mahi mō te Taiao grants open in April

The 2025/26 Working for Nature/Mahi mō te Taiao grant scheme opens for online applications on Tuesday 1 April.

In its sixth year of funding, \$138,000 is available for projects ranging from pest control to restoring wetlands on Marlborough's public, private or Māori-owned land.

Funding is awarded in three categories:

- Habitat Marlborough - for restoring native habitats, improving biodiversity and enhancing freshwater quality.
- Protecting Marlborough - for controlling animal and plant pests
- Environmental Advocacy - for initiatives that promote environmental awareness.

The scheme enables groups and individuals to protect and enhance the environment. The maximum funding cap for a Habitat Marlborough project is \$10,000; for Protecting Marlborough,

it's \$15,000, and for Environmental Advocacy, it's \$2,000.

Community groups or trusts involved in multi-year projects are encouraged to apply for multi-year funding through the grant, up to the specified category maximum each year. To be eligible, the trust or group must show a proven history of successfully delivering environmentally beneficial biodiversity projects.

Further information can be found on the Council's website via the link below. Applications close at 11:59pm on Wednesday, 30 April, and all applicants will be notified of the outcome by July 2025.

Paper applications are not accepted. Online applications should be made at: www.marlborough.govt.nz/our-community/grants-and-awards/working-for-nature-mahi-mo-te-taiao

Bus fares to increase from 1 July

Fares on Marlborough's publicly funded buses will rise this July for the first time since the service started twenty years ago.

Council's Assets and Services Committee has approved a 20 per cent increase which will see the price for an adult one-way bus fare in Blenheim rise from \$2 to \$2.40 and a child fare increase from \$1 to \$1.20. The Picton bus service one way fare will increase from \$4 to \$4.80 for an adult and from \$2 to \$2.40 for a child. This is subject to the approval of full Council on 3 April.

The new fares take effect 1 July.

Marlborough Roads System Manager Wayne Oldfield said the increase was in response to increased operating expenses and the need to maintain the service and to meet the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) directive to the sector to increase the private share funding component which comes from ticket sales and advertising on the buses.

"The public transport system in Marlborough has seen an increase in

operational costs like many other sectors due to inflation, wage increases, fuel price rises and maintenance expenses," he said.

"To date these have been absorbed by NZTA and Council however that is not sustainable in the long term. To maintain our current service and to meet the NZTA obligations, we need to adjust fares."

"Our private share component is currently sitting at around 5 per cent and we need to increase that to 6.5 per cent by 2027. Super Gold Card holders, who travel for free, make up 70 per cent of passengers."

Mr Oldfield said the new fares still represent great value for money and the public transport service continued to offer an excellent alternative to private vehicles as well as providing a social service for users. It also supports Council's regional climate change mitigation efforts.

The Marlborough bus service began in 2005.

Marlborough Multicultural Festival



The weekend's Marlborough Multicultural Festival was once again a huge success. Thousands of people turned out to enjoy a day of music, dance, food, and friendship.

Photo Tcytel - Ahurei Visual

Social buzz at seniors' expo

The annual Marlborough Seniors' Expo was hugely successful again this year.

Around 670 people came through the doors at the Marlborough Events Centre in Blenheim to learn more about the services and activities available for older people in our region.

Fifty-nine organisations and groups delivered information on a wide range of topics from health services to advice on planning a holiday as well as regular groups such as the Marlborough Lines Stadium 2000 team sharing all the programmes they offer, Council's Events and Community Partnerships Officer Natalie Lawler said.

"People stayed around to enjoy the refreshments and chat to others which meant there was a real social buzz to the day," she said.

"The performers were also a real highlight - Sophie Jones performed on the keyboard, there was a lovely dance from the Tamaiti Ole Vine Dance Group, followed by the energy of the ukulele."

"Richmond View student volunteers welcomed attendees, handing out resources and information."

While Council delivers the expo, this year Geoffrey T Sowman Funeral Directors and Summerset Blenheim generously came on board as sponsors.



Bobby and Liz from Age Concern Marlborough were one of almost 60 stalls on site for the Marlborough Seniors' Expo

Tails are wagging in Picton

It's a great time to be a dog in Picton.

Council has recently installed a new bin and bag dispenser (pictured) along the Picton to Waikawa track, below Victoria Domain, much to the delight of dog owners - and their dogs.

There is also a great doggy day out coming up courtesy of the Picton Veterinary Clinic. The 2025 Traffic Light Bandana Dog Walk and Games Day is back for its fourth year on 29 March at Memorial Park in Picton.

Picton Veterinary Clinic Co-Owner Dr Christine Mackenzie said the unique event promotes safe and respectful dog interactions with colourful traffic light bandanas for dogs and t-shirts (for owners) helping communicate how our furry friends are feeling.

"The bandanas are a clever way for dog owners to be an advocate for their dog and protect their well-being. They express the dogs' feelings toward other dogs or people - they wear green for friendly, yellow for disability like deaf or blind, orange when caution is required and red when they may be nervous or not like certain other dogs or people," she said.

"The bandana day includes lots of fun family games like egg and spoon and includes awards for the smallest

and tallest dog, best dressed dog and handler and the waggiest tail."

Registration is essential. Go to: www.eventfinda.co.nz/2025/traffic-light-bandana-dog-walk/picton



Public Notices

Meet your Council



Mayor Nadine Taylor leads a team of 14 elected councillors. They are responsible for making decisions and developing policies that will help shape our province into the future.

Council's vision is that Marlborough is a globally-connected district of smart, progressive, high-value enterprises, known for its economic efficiency, quality lifestyle and wellbeing, caring community, desirable location and healthy natural environment.

For more information or to contact one of your elected representatives, go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/councillors or Ph: 03 520 7400.

Sport and Recreation Community Activity Fund open now

Council's 2024/2025 Sport and Recreation Community Activity Fund is open now and accepting applications for activities held before 28 February 2026. There is \$30,000 available for allocation each year.

This fund is open to event organisers or local clubs and organisations looking to create small sport and community activities that are of low cost to participants and that encourage and promote involvement, accessibility and physical activity.

Key dates:

- Applications close: 5pm Monday 7 April 2025
- Funding decision by: 5pm Thursday 24 April 2025

Applications must be completed via Council's website; go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/recreation/events/sport-and-recreation-community-activity-fund

Any enquiries to Council's Events and Community Partnerships Manager, Samantha Young, Ph: 03 520 7400 or email: events@marlborough.govt.nz



Blenheim Customer Service Centre

15 Seymour Street, Blenheim 7201
Ph: 03 520 7400

mdc@marlborough.govt.nz

Mon - Tues 8.30am - 4.30pm
Wed 8.30am - 12.30pm
1.30pm - 4.30pm
Thurs - Fri 8.30am - 4.30pm

Picton Library & Service Centre

2 Dublin Street, Picton 7220
Ph: 03 520 7493

pictonlibrary@marlborough.govt.nz

Mon - Tues 8.30am - 5pm
Wed 9am - 5pm
Thurs - Fri 8.30am - 5pm
Sat 10am - 4pm
Sun 1pm - 4pm

Council & Committee Meetings

The following meeting is open to the public and anyone is welcome to attend. Copies of the agenda will be available online and at Council's Office, 15 Seymour Street, Blenheim

Council

Thursday 3 April at 9am

The time and date may be subject to change, please contact the Committee Secretary, Ph: 03 520 7400 for confirmation.

Proposed road closures, navigation warnings and alcohol licensing

For the latest public notices, please go to: www.marlborough.govt.nz/your-council/latest-news-notice-and-media-releases/public-notice

Awatere and Dashwood rural boil water notice

Water from Council's reticulation network to the Awatere and Dashwood rural areas should be boiled.

It does not currently meet the NZ Drinking Water Standards and may contain bacteria or protozoa that are harmful to human health.

All water used for drinking, food preparation or cleaning teeth should be boiled before use.

Treated water is available at the public taps on Marama Road, outside Seddon School. For further information contact Council on Ph: 03 520 7400.



Marlborough Roads office is on the move

Until Friday 28 March

Our current location:
Level 1, The Forum

Monday 31 March to Friday 4 April

You can visit us at:
Marlborough District Council,
15 Seymour Street

From Monday 7 April

Our new location:
28 Alfred Street

Our opening hours,
8am to 4pm
remain the same.

For information
about parking, visit
marlborough.govt.nz/services/parking

