

## Hotspots hit the spot

### Council funds WiFi hotspots and better rural broadband

The recent flurry of fibre-related activity on Waihi residential streets is a particularly welcome sight for Councillor Austin Rattray. A member of former community group Connect IT Hauraki, he's been on a mission to get ultrafast broadband into Hauraki communities since 2015.

Back then the government asked councils to put together a business case for their communities to receive fibre, along with a plan for how better connectivity might be used to create economic and educational opportunities and improve social well-being in the area.

"We set up a district wide community group (Connect IT) to work on our application and create a Digital Enablement Plan. The plan included a number of exciting projects and the council at that time put \$44,000 into the budget to kick start it," Councillor Rattray said.

Over the next few years fibre will be rolled out district-wide and last year Council's Economic Development Committee started working with the Community Wireless Trust, the first registered charitable digital development Trust in the country. Having trialled a project to provide fibre broadband via wireless connectivity to the Waimate community, the Trust was keen to do something similar in Hauraki.

An agreement has since been formed with Waihi College to use the school's fibre connection to provide high speed wireless internet in Waihi. The Trust is also working with the Maratoto Valley community to set up a similar connection via Hikutaia School and hopes to expand into Paeroa and Ngatea in the near future.

#### Fibre installation well underway

Chorus Stakeholder and Communications Manager Steve Pettigrew says the build is expected to be complete in May 2019.

"Residents will be able to connect to fibre about six to eight weeks after the build completes in their area," he said.



*"The Trust's business model is to put profits from its service subscriptions back into the community to support education and digital development projects identified by the community"*

Austin Rattray

Recently the Council agreed to contribute \$30,000 of the funds earmarked for its Digital Enablement Plan to the Trust.

"This money will be used by the Trust to implement projects in the plan, including the installation of wireless hotspots to provide free WiFi in the town centres of Waihi, Paeroa and Ngatea. It will also be used to pay for repeater units to speed the delivery of wireless broadband to areas of the District with limited internet connectivity, which was also identified as a priority in our plan," he said.

Economic Development Committee Chair Ross Harris says the Digital Enablement Plan is about so much more than digital connectivity.

"It's about sharing knowledge, providing access to education, and ensuring rural communities like ours stay connected and globally competitive," he said.

"We all know we live in a complex, fast changing world. The one certainty is that technology will continue to advance exponentially so we'd better get on board."

Those wondering when they are likely to be able to order fibre from their broadband provider, can use the broadband checker on Chorus' website [www.chorus.co.nz](http://www.chorus.co.nz)

## New farm in the wind

Kaimai Wind Farm Limited has lodged resource consent applications with Hauraki District Council and Waikato Regional Council for a proposed wind farm at the northern end of the Kaimai Ranges at Tirohia, near Paeroa.

The applications, which will be processed jointly by the two Councils, cover 1304 hectares bordering Rotokohu Road, Paeroa and SH26 Tirohia.

The resource consent applications to the Hauraki District Council are for the proposed construction of 24 large scale wind turbines. Seven of the proposed turbines would be 180 metres high (to blade tip standing upright) and 17 of them would be 207 metres high. Other proposed structures include a substation, two lattice transmission towers, two overhead power lines, and 18.9km of on-site roading. Two on-site quarries to supply material for the roads are also proposed.

The resource consent applications to the Waikato Regional Council are to authorise specific aspects of land use; removal of vegetation, earthworks, to permit the discharge of surplus soil and surface water associated with the construction phase of the project and culvert upgrades.

The company has requested that the resource consent applications are publicly notified, which means there will be an opportunity for community feedback via written submissions.

Council staff are currently checking the documents to ensure they include all necessary information. Once this is complete, further information may be requested from the applicant and the documents will be made available on the Council websites. Hard copies will also be available in the offices and libraries of HDC in Waihi and Paeroa once the application is notified. Those considered directly affected will be notified of the applications by post.

Mayor John Tregidga says it's still very early days and the council needs to ensure the information received from the company is complete and technically robust before notifying the community and asking for feedback.

"We understand there is a high level of interest in this project and we'll make sure people have every opportunity to give us feedback on this proposal when the time comes. Details of how and when you can do this will be advertised in the newspapers, on our Facebook page, and also posted on our website" he said.

"We'll also provide regular updates on the applications' progress and details in relation to the hearing as they come to hand."

It is likely independent commissioners will be appointed to decide on whether or not the application is approved.

## How many councillors should represent you?

**There's still time to tell us what you think but don't dilly dally.**

**Submissions close 4pm Friday 3 August**

After looking at all the feedback, the Council will make a final decision on how it thinks councillor numbers and wards should look for the next two elections. We'll let you know how that goes.

There will then be a one-month appeal/objection period inviting further feedback from the community.

However, the final decision is likely to rest with the Local Government Commission.

Find out more at [www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/representation-review](http://www.hauraki-dc.govt.nz/representation-review)