

Mayor Neil Brown

Cats, cars and birdsong



Council has been asked this week to investigate the introduction of a cat management policy.

The request was made by members of the Methven Birdsong project, who say that the apex predator of native birds in their town is the domestic cat.

They told us that Methven had about 750 companion, stray and feral cats and if each one killed one bird a week, then about 40,000 birds a year would disappear, meaning the new community project to grow bird song would struggle to gain momentum.

Birdsong project people are already trapping possums, rats and hedgehogs in the town and they say they need Council help to deal with cats.

Any policy Council might make will be first informed by a report from staff,

and there are many councils around the country who already have cat management policies so that native birds have a fighting chance.

So what does a responsible cat-owner look like? The birdsong people would like owners to have their cats de-sexed, micro-chipped and registered - de-sexing will reduce the number of unwanted cats they prey on birds and if companion cats are caught in a trap then they can be quickly returned.

I look forward to this discussion around the Council table as cats are much-loved members of many households in the district.

It's important any policy would actually work and that may mean education is key, rather than enforcement.

Council is currently supporting the

Rakaia community as it has a cat-fight of its own to keep the 50km/h speed limits on State Highway 1 through the township.

We've conveyed our strong objection to New Zealand Transport Agency and asked that the speed limits remain as they currently are, for the safety and wellbeing of Rakaia residents as well as those who pass through the district.

Rakaia has fought for years to have a lower - and safer - speed limit, particularly for the children who walk or bike to school and need to cross the busy highway. While they are not consulting the community over the speed reversal, you can still give feedback to Slspeedmanagement@nzta.govt.nz.

Budget workshops take a breather

Councillors have spent two and a half days giving direction to staff on the draft Annual Plan for 2025-26, which will determine this year's rates.

The Annual Plan will include any changes from the Long Term Plan 2024-34, which sets out the services and capital projects Council will deliver over the next decade.

Mayor Neil Brown said councillors had gone through nearly 200 pages of budget documents and talked a lot about depreciation and the cost of insurance.

"There are not too many differences from

when we consulted the community during the Long Term Plan and there are unders and overs, which is usual.

"We've asked staff to look at all ways we can reduce the rates increase. That may mean being able to use money that has built up in Reserve Contributions and Property Contributions accounts over the years, but there are rules about how we are able to use it.

"We started these workshops with an average rate increase of 9.8 per cent and we'll use as many levers as possible to keep rates in line with the levels of service the community expects."

Council is forecasting to collect about \$57.6 million in rates, with capital expenditure including about \$16m on drinking water, wastewater and stormwater projects and about \$19m on roading and footpaths.

"Most of that capital expenditure is in core work, but we are also dealing with the high cost of things like insurance and electricity," Mayor Brown said.

"So we're exploring if we can sell property or sweat our assets longer, and we'll come back for another workshop on 26 February with an amended budget."

Work about to start on Chertsey plant

Work begins on Monday 10 February on a new water treatment plant for Chertsey township.

The current plant on the grounds of Chertsey School has no room for expansion and Council needs to upgrade the water treatment system with UV disinfection and cartridge filtration to meet national drinking water standards.

The bore will remain at the school and water will be piped about 180 metres along the road to the new treatment plant.

There will be no disruption for those dropping children to school, though parts of King and Alexander Streets will be closed while the plant is built.



FRIENDSHIP LANE SHAPING UP: Bricks are currently being installed on the 16 new Elderly Persons Housing units, as the project tracks on schedule toward a mid-year completion. Drainlayers are also on site working on drains, stormwater and sewer. Interior painting is expected to begin later this month.

SHORT AND SWEET

CITIZENS ADVICE

Do you have a problem or a question about your rights or obligations? Then drop into a Citizens Advice Bureau session at the Ashburton Library on **Wednesday evenings** (5.15pm to 7.45pm). The CAB helps people to know and understand their rights and obligations. The service is free, confidential and available to all.



GARDENING HOUR

Connecting Mid Canterbury and the Ashburton Library are hosting a Gardening Conversation Hour in the Ashburton Lakes Room on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Anyone is welcome to join in and discuss all things gardening, whether you are a novice or an expert. Next session is **Wednesday 19 February**, at 1.30pm.

BRAIN INJURY HELP

Are you or someone you know living with or supporting someone with a head injury? Facilitated by the Brain Injury Association this monthly group offers peer support and education on concussion and brain injury. Learn coping strategies and self-management to help you adjust to a new you. For people who have suffered a brain injury and their families that feel they need this support. Next group meeting is **Wednesday 26 February** at 10.30am.

GRANTS NOW OPEN

Community groups are being encouraged to think about projects that could qualify for funding as the first round of community grants and funding is open now for applications. Council grants about \$300,000 annually, and projects can be as small as buying a heat pump or as large as replacing carpet in a well-used community hall, and a lot in between. Grant applications are open until 28 February.

Listening for leaks on our network

A specialised team of technicians is listening for the sound of water running underground, with Council's leak detection programme under way in February.

Group Manager Infrastructure and Open Spaces Neil McCann said the work was part of regular monitoring of Council's drinking water network and helped find leaks in reticulation pipes.

"The detection technicians use specialist acoustic equipment and can pinpoint the likely spot of a leak, helping us identify if it is on the public network or on private property."

The detection squad is working in Ashburton, from West Street all the way west to Allens Road, and in all of Methven. Over three weeks, they will listen to about 100km of underground pipes.

They use inground microphones, correlators, sound sticks and headphones to listen for different sounds in the network of pipes. A mix of computer-generated images and sound audio indicates the location of a potential leak.

Mr McCann said residents who live on streets where the detectors were working would see contractors open toby boxes to place sensors. This will not interfere with water supply to properties.

"Detecting big and small leaks is important work. It saves water and the cost of treating the water that escapes, but it also gives Council an indication of the condition of our water pipes.



"We are constantly renewing older sections of the drinking water network to reduce the risk of pipe failure causing significant water loss and disruption to residents. This kind of detection work also helps us find issues that were not previously on our radar."

Mr McCann said water meters were another valuable tool in the quest to reduce the volume of water lost from public and private networks.

"Meters help us measure water usage and identify areas of potential leakage in the network.

"We installed meters as a trial in Methven two years ago and the data is helping

us schedule pipe renewals in parts of the town. It's also helping Methven property owners deal with any leaks on their land, as they can read the meter in their toby boxes and spot potential leaks themselves.

"Meters in other smaller townships have also helped us manage drinking water schemes more proactively and they would be useful district wide."

Data from the leak detection work will be analysed by Council staff and used to improve reticulation networks. Private properties with suspected leaks will also receive a letter from Council, encouraging them to investigate and fix the leaks.

PROPOSED ROAD CLOSURE

Ashburton District Council gives public notice of a proposal to temporarily close roads to traffic to enable the holding of a community event - the **Ashburton Car Club's Sealed Autocross**.

The proposed closure is made under the Local Government Act 1974 - Schedule 10 (11 (e) and will be considered at a Council meeting on 5 March 2025.

Roads proposed to be closed:

- **Bonningtons Road, from Fitzgerald Road to Seaside Road**
- **Seaside Road, from Bonningtons Road to Fitzgerald Road**
- **Fitzgerald Road, from Seaside Road to Bonningtons Road**

Period of closure: From 8am to 6pm on **Sunday 30 March 2025**.

Any person objecting should do so in writing by post or email to the Council, 2 Baring Square East, Ashburton, by 4pm on **Monday 17 January 2025**.

NEIL McCANN
Group Manager Infrastructure & Open Spaces

COUNCIL MEETINGS

Wednesday 12 February, **Three Waters Committee**, 10.30am (live-streamed)

Wednesday 12 February, **Audit & Risk Committee**, 3.30pm (live-streamed)

WORKS NOTICES

Seafield Road - Closed between Morris Road and Ashburton Airport, until 12 April for road rehab. Detour available.

Maronan Road - Closed between Swamp Road and Simpsons Road (no access through Barford Road) until 31 March. Road rehabilitation work in progress.

Mainwarings Road - Closed between Griggs and Gardiners Road for daytime works until 24 February (the closure is 6am-7pm daily, with the road re-opened at the end of each day). Contractors will be doing road maintenance. Detours available.

King and Alexander Streets, Chertsey - Closed until 13 September while a new water treatment plant is built. Closure will not impact Chertsey School access.

Snap Send Solve rated highly by users

Keep shared spaces safe, clean and great to be in.

- Dumped rubbish
- Road issues
- Water leaks
- And more!

Free!

Download to Snap!

Community problem-solving app **Snap Send Solve** has recognised **Ashburton District Council for its overall high rating.**

The Council received an overall snap rating of 4.18 (out of five stars) across 2024 by local users of the app.

This result was measured up against 90 organisations across the country and landed in the top five.

Chief Executive Hamish Riach said it was a good sign the system works well.

"We're pleased that people are rating their

snapshots with us highly, as they are eyes and ears for us across the district.

"When people snap us geotagged photos like a water leak, a pothole, or illegal parking, we can identify the issue very quickly and prioritise a solution."

Snap Send Solve is a free app that simplifies the reporting of community issues into a short number of clicks on a smartphone app.

The Council has recently enabled a function so that people can report a Snap Send Solve through their website for those who have not downloaded the app.

Chance to talk up a storm

Residents are invited to a public workshop to discuss the district's approach to climate change and sustainability. It will be held this **Wednesday 12 February at the Ashburton Library and Civic Centre.**

The event is an important early step in the Council's efforts to develop the district's first Climate Change & Sustainability Strategy.

The workshop is described as a chance to have a conversation about what work

is already under way, what Council should focus on, and to plan together as a community for the challenges that climate change will bring.

There's also been strong interest in a second workshop aimed at organisations, community groups and industry stakeholders that will be held the following day.

A light supper will be provided at the community workshop; people can register for free and find out more about the strategy at itsourplace.nz

How do we work together to protect the places we love?

We're starting work on a climate change and sustainability strategy and we want to hear your ideas.



Find out more and have your say!

Have your **Say!**



[ItsOurPlace.nz](https://itsourplace.nz)

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 (late night Wed)