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Solar farm plans draw ire of locals

A solar farm costing more than \$60 million and with the capacity to power around 14,000 homes is planned for Helensville.

The 100ha site is accessed from Rogan Ave and stretches from the railway tracks almost beside Mangakura Road down towards SH16 and the Kaipara River opposite Rimmer Road, predominantly surrounded by the river (see graphic).

The proposal has already drawn the ire of a number of locals, especially those whose property outlooks - and potentially values - would be affected by the farm. A dedicated Facebook group has been set up to discuss the plans.

The project is being developed by HES Aotearoa Ltd, a joint venture company established by three British solar power firms led by Hive Ethical Project Developments. It is one of 11 sites the company is looking to develop in New Zealand.

Hive has already constructed numerous solar farms in Europe and the United Kingdom, and has projects under development throughout Europe, Africa, South America, Asia, and Canada.

The Helensville farm would feature more than 82,000 solar panels and produce around 98,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of power each year, making it one of the consortium's mid-sized farms.

An application for resource consent was lodged in late January, and HES Aotearoa director Nick Keeler says once approved construction is expected to take around nine months.

"The mechanical construction and primary electrical works are expected to be carried out in the first six to seven months on the site," he says.

Construction would involve driving almost 12,000 piles into the ground, and would employ around 60 people. Once finished, there would be work for the equivalent of four full-time maintenance workers.

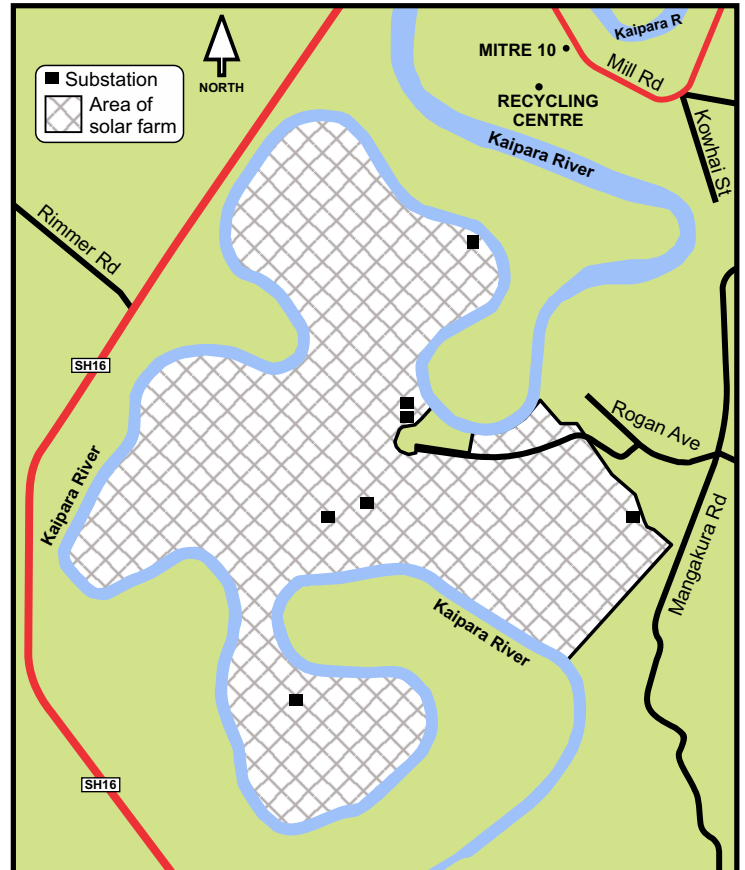
Rows of solar panels, 8m apart, will tilt from east to west each day to follow the sun. At their maximum tilt they would be 2.7m above ground level.

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The farm would be physically connected to the 33kV circuit that runs between Silverdale and Helensville.

"The final approvals from Vector and Transpower for the connection of the solar farm to the electricity



• A graphic showing the location and extent of the planned solar farm

transmission and distribution network are ongoing," says Nick, "and of course subject to resource consent being authorised."

Residents' primary concerns about the solar farm are mainly focused around its visual impact, glare, and consequent potential loss of property value.

HES Aotearoa has undertaken a 'landscape and visual assessment' (LVA), the results of which were sent to affected parties on January 26, says Nick.

"This assessment considers the existing landscape, the potential

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editorial

When I found out that 'my' doctor, local GP Dr Phill Barter, was leaving, I was a bit upset. As a patient you grow comfortable with a doctor you like, and while there is something to be said for seeing different doctors and getting different perspectives, there is a sense of familiarity, comfort, and less stress seeing the same doctor over the years.

My initial thought was, 'he can't be leaving already!' And then I realised Dr Barter had been at Kaipara Medical Centre for 19 years - almost a third of my life! I grew up in the days when most GPs ran solo medical practices and they were your 'family doctor'. Mine was Dr Allen - but when I think back, I was a patient of his for less time than I have been of Dr Barter.

With a larger medical centre like Kaipara, you often see different doctors anyway, and I'm lucky to have also been treated by Dr Tom Longworth, who I get on with equally as well. So Tom, if you are reading this, I look forward to being your patient for the next 19 years... ;)

We catch up with 'Dr Phill' on page 10, and wish him all the best for the future.

Next, we have an interesting local conundrum. Everyone agrees renewable energy is the way to go, and solar is part of that mix. But is the planned Helensville solar farm (pages 1 & 3) in the best place? It is pretty unusual to have a solar farm - at least one anywhere near the 100ha size of this proposed one - so close to a major settlement (OK, Helensville isn't that 'major', but you get the idea).

The 179-page 'Assessment of Environmental Effects' report commissioned as a lead-up to resource consent says the farm "will result in the introduction of structures that are of an appearance and scale that will diverge from the existing pastoral and rural character of the site" and "the potential viewing audience within the valley, particularly that associated with the elevated terrain on its eastern side, is large", but also says "the landscape quality is assessed as being, at most, of 'ordinary' value" and concludes "adverse effects on natural character values is considered to be less than minor".

Yet photographs in the report showing the site from various locations in the surrounding area such as Wishart Rd, Mangakura Rd, Garfield Rd, and Kawariki Rd show the farm will be readily visible by many local residents - most of whom, I suspect, value their rural outlooks, and doubtless disagree with the report's authors that the landscape is only 'ordinary'.

HES Aotearoa is also pushing for only a 'limited notification' of the project to those property owners directly affected, rather than full public notification - something we should all perhaps be wary of. This will affect our whole community one way or another.

- Dave Addison, Editor

CAB volunteers like a pou whakawhirinaki

There's a timely and relevant message standing behind Citizens Advice Bureau Helensville - it's the Māori saying: Taku pou whakawhirinaki i ngā wa o te porotaitaka (My source of strength in moments of adversity).

A Pou Whakawhirinaki is a person one can rely upon when seeking solace, strength, and assistance. The term is mainly used in relation to a person with the sense of giving assistance without any financial gain being sought in return.

CAB board secretary and volunteer Rani Timoti says the saying is particularly relevant in these Covid-19 times.

"Volunteers are like a pou with their support, clarity and neutrality for their clients. They are trained with skills to access

and deliver the information needed with kindness and confidentiality," says Rani.

This continues with their legal obligation in face-to-face interactions with clients including sign-ins, vaccine passes, and masks. All volunteers are protected and follow a Health and Safety plan from their national office and take Government guidance over Covid-19 rules.

"The values I've been brought up with, as many of my South Kaipara whanau have too, include respecting your elders," she says.

"As most of our volunteers are in this age bracket, they are also the ones more prone to health risks. Consider this when you visit us," adds Rani.

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Jana Mills



Solar farm plans (cont)

• From page 1

effects on visual and landscape values as a result of the proposal, and mitigation measures.

"An extensive range of mitigation measures are proposed, including planting, screening, and placement of solar panels to



• Rows of solar panels similar to these will cover 100ha

minimise adverse effects for surrounding landowners."

That planting consists primarily of a riparian strip of native plants right around the Kaipara River boundary, varying in width from 10m to 20m.

The boundary backing on to Rogan Ave properties and along the Mangakura Road side would feature a planting screen maintained to a height of 6m.

Species suggested include, among others, manuka, karo, harakeke, pohutukawa, kowhai, and tarata.

It is unclear how much of the farm would be hidden by the planting, and the LVA report only says the riparian planting will "assist with the 'blurring' ... between the panels and the river edge".

With regard to concerns about glare, the

Junior & Rippa Rugby

Helensville Rugby Club's Junior Rugby and Boys/Girls Rippa Rugby registrations and weigh-in will be held at the rugby club from 3.30pm to 5pm on the following dates.

- Wednesday, February 16
- Wednesday, February 23
- Wednesday, March 9.

report says the panels are designed to reflect as little light as possible, usually around two percent which it says is less than the light reflected by grass, crops or water.

A consultation letter was sent out to property owners identified by the LVA as "likely to experience adverse effects on visual amenity as a result of the proposal" just two days before Christmas.

Some of those contacted have voiced concerns the company was trying to push the project through over the holiday period.

However, Nick says "throughout the consenting process we are happy to consult with any other interested parties or stakeholders."

"We are seeking limited notification of the resource consent application to all affected parties and any other interested

parties. Auckland Council as the consenting authority will ultimately decide on whom should be notified."

He adds the company is "happy to engage and discuss ideas put forward through the consenting process."

The consent application is for 35 years, after which the solar farm would be decommissioned and the site cleared.

Phone directory

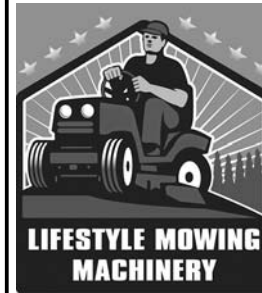
Helensville Lions Club is preparing the 2022 edition of its annual local telephone directory.

Anyone living in the 420 telephone code area who wants to alter an existing white pages listing or add a new listing, should email: helensvilledirectory@gmail.com or phone 420 6422, by Monday, February 21. White pages listings are free and can include cellphone numbers.

Businesses wanting to advertise in the directory should use the same contacts.

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New playground ready to open



By the time you read this, the new playground at the Cabeleigh Drive Pond Reserve (above) should just about be finished.

All that will remain to do will be the landscape planting, which has to wait until the autumn planting season.

Helensville News revealed plans for the 'toddlers to teens' playground in our May 2020 issue. Work started last November by construction company Recreational Services, around 10 months behind schedule owing to Covid-19 delays.

The playground design celebrates Helensville's logging and timber industry history, with a nature-based theme

incorporating trees, logs and wooden play equipment.

It features two distinct play areas, a junior playspace and a primary/teen playspace, both influenced by nature and each with a wide variety of play equipment suited to those different age groups. A concrete path running through the reserve will make for easy access even in winter.

A major design consideration was to ensure children aren't encouraged to go near the reserve's pond.

The family-friendly design is highly visible from Cabeleigh Drive ensuring it is a safe place for children to play, with plenty of on-road parking.



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More eligible for service medal

Kaipara Memorial RSA hopes local veterans and their families take advantage of an extension to eligibility for the NZ Operational Service Medal (NZOSM).

The government has extended eligibility to include members of the armed forces who served in Malaysia and Singapore, but were not required to deploy into combat theatres such as Borneo or Vietnam.

About 4500 veterans who served in South East Asia between February 1959 and January 1974 can now be awarded a medal, and Kaipara RSA president Rex Keane says he hopes locals will take the opportunity to have their service recognised.

Eligible veterans, plus the next of kin of

deceased veterans, will need to apply for medals on the NZ Defence Force website.

Rex says veterans and all former service personnel should register with Veterans Affairs, even if they don't need welfare support at present. Contact details to do that are: Email: veterans@nzdf.mil.nz; Phone: 0800 483 8372; Mail: PO Box 5146, Wellington 6140; Website: www.veteransaffairs.mil.nz.

He adds former service personnel can join their local RSA for information on welfare support and updates.

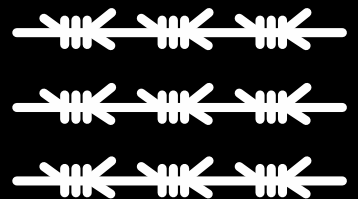
The Kaipara Memorial RSA is open Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 4pm to 8pm.

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Tennis star in the making?

Rising Helensville tennis star Lexie Tilson (right) has been winning tournaments all around New Zealand this summer, culminating in an invitation to represent Tennis Northern at the national team championships in Christchurch later this year.

After being invited to join the Tennis Northern academy by Jeff Simpson (known as the 'Godfather of NZ tennis'), and now coached by former Wimbledon coach Nick Jacques, the future looks bright for the 14-year-old Helensville Tennis Club member.

With Covid-19 restrictions around interclub tennis hampering opportunities for match play during 2021, Lexie decided to

give up her summer break and focus on competing in competitions throughout the country.

That involved more than 30 matches, starting with a South Island tour of Waiwaka, Queenstown,



and Christchurch before heading back north for tournaments in Hawke's Bay, the Wairarapa, Auckland, and North Harbour.

After a summer spent winning numerous Under 14 and Under 16 titles, Lexie was looking forward to getting back into the classroom, and along with her sister Chloe was hoping to form a team to represent Kaipara College in this year's Auckland High School teams event.

Anyone interested in joining the Helensville Tennis Club should visit: www.helensvilletennis.co.nz for more information.



• Lexie celebrating her Queenstown matches

Vax passes, masks needed in hall

Helensville senior librarian Anne Coppell wants to remind locals that vaccination passes and masks are required to enter the Helensville War Memorial Hall building - which includes the library, the council service centre, and the hall itself. Children under 12 years and 3 months don't need a pass.

Rates instalments are due in February. These can be paid online, or at the service centre desk.

Anne reminds locals the library offers a 'click and collect' service for members. Locals can choose their own books, or have a librarian choose for them - see more at: aucklandlibraries.govt.nz/Pages/click-collect.aspx.

For (close to) contactless pick up, have

your library card or photo ID handy at the door, and a staff member will bring your books out to you.

Both council and library services are available Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5pm, and Saturday: 9.30am to 4pm.

However, Anne notes that due to staffing, service capacity at both the library and service centre may be reduced.

For more information email the library team at: helenlib@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz, or phone 0800 695 427 between 8am and 7pm Monday to Friday, and 10am to 5pm on weekends. Check Facebook for notice of when Kids Time sessions will resume - these cannot be held during Red alert level - www.facebook.com/HelensvilleLibrary.

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Christmas Lights winners



• Above: The first place winner, and below the second place display



Congratulations to the winners in the first *Helensville News* Christmas Lights competition.

We had a great range of entries spread around Helensville and Parakai, and our team of four judges were unanimous in choosing the Hand Road home of Dan and Brooke Kelly as the overall winner, with its truly impressive light display. They have received a \$100 voucher for Countdown in Helensville courtesy of *Helensville News*.

Second place was also awarded unanimously to Kane Blank for his character-full display at his house in Mary Keane Lane, Parakai. Kane won a \$50 Countdown voucher, courtesy of Harcourts the Difference in Commercial Road.

Our judges saw several other beautifully decorated houses during the judging, some of which could have even given the Kelly's a run for its money - however they weren't entered in the competition. Maybe this year...

Thank you to everyone who entered.

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Festivals postponed

A series of Family Festivals set to be held around the district during February, March and April by the Northwest Country Business Association have been postponed because of Covid.

Tighter restrictions on the number of people who can attend events under the Red Light level mean the festivals, planned for Helensville, Parakai, Kaukapakapa, Muriwai, and Huapai, have been put on hold.

The festivals had received funding from the government's 'Activate Tāmaki Makarau' fund.

Rates due this month

Rates instalments are due in February. These can be paid online, or at the service centre desk in the Helensville hall.

"It would be very helpful if you could bring along your rates notice when you come to pay," says senior librarian Anne Coppell. "We're all still getting the hang of council services, so please bear with us."

Those without a vaccination pass can pay their rates at the KiwiBank counter at Helensville PaperPlus Select. More information about paying online at can be found at: www.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz.

medical centre notes

We are pleased to welcome Dr Nicole Badie to the team at Kaipara Medical Centre. She was recruited by the centre earlier this year after Dr Vaughan Lock left the practice, and she will be taking over the care of his patient list. She will be working Monday to Thursday.

Dr Badie is originally from the United States, where she received her medical license and family medicine training at the University of Cincinnati College of Medicine. She has worked in various clinical settings as a general practitioner as well as in more urgent care settings both in the US and abroad.

Her areas of focus include gastrointestinal disorders, minor procedures, women's health, and tropical medicine, with a strong emphasis on prevention of chronic diseases. She was a part of the Kaipara Medical team back in 2013-2014, and rejoins us now with her family out of her love for the community and for the natural beauty of the New Zealand landscape.

In other staffing news Dr Martine Gerritsen, who was with us for almost two years, sadly left in late November. We thank her for her hard work in what has not been an easy time since she arrived in New Zealand in early 2020, and we wish her the best for her next job.

As many of my patients may already be aware, Dr Tomos Longworth and I had our third child in January. I will be away on maternity leave until late July this year.

You may see a couple of new doctors around in coming months - we have some long-term locums coming to work for us to cover maternity leave and make sure we are fully staffed early next year.

Finally, vaccination updates:

Kaipara Medical Centre is now offering Covid-19 vaccinations on site. This is initially available two days per week to our enrolled patients. If you would like to book then please phone reception to book an appointment.

If you think you may be eligible for the third dose due to being immuno-compromised, please book a free appointment with a GP to discuss that as this dose must be prescribed by a GP. Certain criteria apply to this third dose, and more information can be found on the Ministry of Health website: <https://bit.ly/3COCm0K>.

Those not enrolled at Kaipara Medical Centre and wanting to access a first or second dose of the vaccine can still access the vaccination clinic run daily by Unichem Pharmacy in Helensville. You can book online for that at: <https://bookmyvaccine.covid19.health.nz>

- Dr Kathryn Elcock



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Plenty of A&P competitions

Got a giant pumpkin? Some great arts and crafts? What about some fabulous photographs or spectacular flowers in your garden?

Those are just some of the classes locals can enter this month in a wide range of competitions aimed at keeping the A&P Show spirit alive despite the cancellation of this year's Show due to Covid-19. They are mostly based on the traditional Show classes, but some have been adapted to suit the digital entry format - and some are unique. The photos on these pages show examples of some of the classes from previous Shows.

The competitions are all free to enter - and even better, they all have great prizes courtesy of the Show's sponsors.

Closing dates for all classes have been extended to Sunday, February 20 - with the exception of the two giant pumpkin classes, which close on March 15.

Entries, which are mostly by photograph or video, can be made at any time - they just need to be entered no later than the closing date. Video entries should be a maximum of one minute long.

Entries should be emailed to: entries@helensvilleshow.co.nz.

A full schedule of the competitions and entry requirements is on the Show website: helensvilleshow.co.nz/2022-helensville-show-competition.

Here is the list of classes:



HELENSVILLE SHOW

■ Farmlands Adults/Children's Video Competition:

Video and photo entries, videos no longer than 1 minute - see schedule.

Class 6: Best pony or horse trick.

Class 7: An unlikely matching pair, eg. a similar looking cat and calf.

Class 8: Mini musterer (any animal).

■ Physio Flex Guess the Weight Competition:

Entries by email, guesses to be made from photos supplied on Facebook, and also available on the Show website.

Class 9: Bull.

Class 10: Jar of Pumpkin seeds.

Class 11: Marrow.

■ PGG Wrightsons Children's Video Competition:

Video entries, no longer than 1 minute.

Class 12: Waggiest tale (any pet)

Class 13: Best trick by your pet lamb/kid/calf/dog

Class 14: Animal buddies

■ Burmester Realty Floral Art & Cut Flowers:

Photo entries (varies by class - see schedule).

Class 20: Harry Potter themed floral arrangement, any size. Accessories allowed.

Class 21: Floral arrangement in an unusual container, any subject, freestanding, any size.

Class 22: Selfie with your favourite flower

Class 23: Specimen Rose in bloom.

Class 24: Any Small Dahlia, under 20cm.

Class 25: Any Large Dahlia, over 20cm.



■ Raines Homewares Baking:

Photo entries (varies by class - see schedule).

Class 26: Anne Holst's Melting Moment, made with Anne's recipe (in schedule).

Class 27: Celebration Decorated Cake - judged on decoration, accessories allowed - any celebration eg birthday, wedding.

Class 28: Rural Women Favourites

Class - a selection of two baked items and one other culinary item, all featuring the same fruit, eg apple pie, apple muffin and apple jelly.

Presentation will be taken into account.

(Sponsored by Makarau branch of Rural Women NZ).

■ Jas Sergeant, Ray White Garden Produce:

Photo entries (varies by class - see schedule).

Class 29: Arrangement of herbs, min four varieties, must be grown by you.

Class 30: Potatoes, any 3.

Class 31: Vegetable collection, four varieties - one large and three each of small, presented on a tray. Presentation will be taken into account.

Class 32: Hen Eggs 3, fresh, presented on plate, 1 to be broken.

Class 33: Apples 3, any variety.

Class 34: Lemons 3, any variety.

Class 35: Tomatoes 3, any variety.

■ Ernie & Christine Smith Giant Pumpkin Competition

Closing date March 15, Class 36 judged in-situ, Class 37 photo entry with grower.

Class 36: Heaviest Giant Pumpkin - local only, for weighing purposes.

Class 37: Best-coloured Giant Pumpkin, open to entrants nationwide.

■ FIGG Art & Craft

Photo entries (varies by class - see schedule).

Class 40: Māori Craft item, eg weaving, carving, from any traditional media (flax, wood, bone etc).



Class 41: Any item, hand-knitted or crocheted.

Class 42: Any item, patchwork, embroidered or sewn.

Class 43: Any item, paper, macrame, beading, wood or metal work.

Class 44: Painting or drawing, 2 dimensional, any theme & media.

Class 45: Painting or drawing, 3 dimensional, any theme & media.

Class 46: Original Painting, child 12 or under.

Class 47: Original Painting, child 13 - 18.

Class 48: Original Painting, differently-abled adult.

■ Vets North Animal Photography - Adults & Children

Colour digital images to be emailed to: entries@helensvilleshow.co.nz.

Class 50: Pet(s).

Class 51: Bird(s).

Class 50: Equine portrait (head only).

■ Barfoot & Thompson Photography - Adults

Colour digital images to be emailed to: entries@helensvilleshow.co.nz.

Class 53: Lockdown antics.

Class 54: Mostly Yellow.

Class 55: Rural NZ.

despite Show cancellation

■ Barfoot & Thompson Photography - Children

Colour digital images to be emailed to:
entries@helensvilleshow.co.nz.

Class 56: Sports.

Class 57: People.

Class 58: Local Scene (within the Kumeu Subdivision of Auckland Council).

■ Harcourts the Difference Children's Indoor Classes:

Photo entries.

Ages 5 and Under

Class 60: FLORAL - Floral arrangement in a sand or vaseline saucer.

Class 61: CRAFT - Decorated hard boiled egg, accessories allowed.

Ages 6 to 9 years

Class 62: FLORAL - Floral arrangement in an eggcup.

Class 63: CRAFT - Creature created from fruit or vegetable, accessories allowed.

Class 64: MODEL FARM OR GARDEN - no larger than 30x30cm.

Class 65: BAKING - Homemade sweet, eg fudge, coconut ice, choc, 2pcs.

Ages 10 to 12 years

Class 66: FLORAL - Floral arrangement in an eggcup.

Class 67: MODEL FARM - no larger than 30x30cm.

Class 68: HANDMADE ARTICLE - any item made by sewing, knitting, embroidery, woodwork, metal work etc.

Class 69: BAKING - School Lunch Box, with 1 home baked item.

Ages 13 to 16 years

Class 70: FLORAL - Floral arrangement in an unusual container.

Class 71: MODEL FARM - no larger than 30x30cm.

Class 72: HANDMADE ARTICLE - any item made by sewing, knitting, embroidery, woodwork, metal work etc.

Class 73: BAKING - Baking assortment, 1 each pikelet, biscuit, slice.



• Above: Class 27 - Celebration Decorated Cake

• Below: Class 31 - Vegetable Collection, 4 varieties on a tray



• Left: Class 36 - Heaviest Giant Pumpkin

• Below: Class 64 - Model Farm or Garden



Popular GP leaves after 19 years

A need to slow down saw popular local doctor Phill Barter leave Kaipara Medical Centre last month after almost 19 years as one of Helensville's GPs.

While he will still be working as a doctor, at the Upper Harbour Medical Centre in Hobsonville alongside fellow former Helensville doctor Holly Shine, he will just be doing three days a week - and saying goodbye to tiring 'on-call' duties.

He will continue teaching doctors each Wednesday at the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners faculty in Ponsonby, a role he has held since around 2014.

And he is reserving the remaining day each week to indulge his new-found passion for woodworking, hand-crafting mainly items of furniture in a workshop he has set up at his Waimauku lifestyle block.

Phill met his Kiwi wife Sarah, a physiotherapist, while at university doing his GP training in London. After working for a while in Islington in north London, the couple moved

to New Zealand.

Looking around for somewhere to work, he stumbled upon Helensville, which reminded him of the small town where he grew up in England.

He joined the GP practice run by doctors Adrian and Maryanne Gane in mid-2003, then located in what is now known as Alison McKenzie House.

"Initially when I started working here, it was only going to be for a couple of years,

just to dip my toes into New Zealand GP [life] and here we are 19 years later. It was a bit longer than two years!" quips Phill.

He started in the days before low-cost funding was available.

"I think it was like \$40 to come and see a doctor at that point, so I remember you'd have days when it was quite quiet. Those days are long gone!"

Phill was living in Albany at the time, so when he was on call he slept in a room upstairs in the practice.

"Back then the on-call phone was literally my mobile, so you would get wrong numbers, or farmers waking up at five o'clock asking for an appointment later. All kind of phone calls coming through.

"The nurses would often play pranks on me by putting various things in the bed upstairs for me as well," he recalls.

In 2006 the current Kaipara Medical Centre was opened, the buildings owned by the Helensville District Health Trust but with the practice itself still owned by the Ganes. Phill describes the new centre as a huge improvement.

The Ganes sold the practice in 2011 to Peak Primary, and under their ownership

Phill, then clinical director, says he became "a bit disenchanted" - enough to actually resign and take on a new job in Silverdale. However the business was bought by the HDHT and literally on his last day Phill was able to pull out of the Silverdale job and remain in Helensville, becoming a shareholder in the practice along with Dr Aimee England.

In late 2019 the practice was sold again, this time to ProCare.



• Dr Phill Barter

"I realised that I went into medicine to do medicine, not managing I guess."

Phill stayed on as clinical director for another year, then passed that role on to Dr Kathryn Elcock and began "slowly winding down."

For the last two years he has been getting into wood working. His father was a mechanical engineer working with Grand Prix teams, but Phill was never interested in engines - he just wanted to do woodwork. He recently found out the three generations before his father were all furniture makers - "so that kind of makes sense."

"It's great - it's kind of like solitude, and you have to solve problems. I'm still learning as I go." He uses hand tools and traditional carpentry techniques like finger jointing.

• To page 11

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Pop-up book fair on next month

The Lions Club of Helensville will hold a one-day Pop-Up Book Fair on Saturday, March 12, in the Helensville War Memorial Hall.

Running from 9am to 4pm, the event will go ahead if Auckland is still at Red on the Covid Protection Framework - dependent on any further restrictions which may be put in place.

Locals attending the fair must be double vaccinated - vaccination certificates will be inspected - and there will be a limit of 83 people in the hall at any one time. Social distancing must be observed, and masks worn.

Organiser Chris Clark says there will be the usual selection of good used fiction and non-fiction books with nothing over \$2, and children's books at 50c.

"There can't be as many books displayed as at our regular book fairs, but patrons can be assured there will be enough to keep them reading until our Autumn Book Fair, scheduled for the last weekend of May," says Chris.

"We usually have about three truck loads of books delivered to the hall for our regular book fairs, and we are thinking one would probably suffice for

the pop-up, but we can reassess that on the day. We will probably only have books, no magazines or DVDs.

"One advantage of bringing a smaller number of books is that they are all new stock, no left overs from previous sales."

The plan is to reduce the number of rows of tables and do away with the chairs at the end of each row to make social distancing easier.

"We are conscious of our responsibility to provide a safe environment for everyone," says Chris.

There seems to be a greater demand out there than ever for books," he adds. "I'm constantly getting calls asking about the next book fair, and our monthly stall at the Kaukapakapa Market has almost sold out in the last two months.

Small donations of books for the club's fairs can be left at Burmester Realty in Commercial Road, or for larger amounts phone Chris on 09 420 8527 (or any other Helensville Lions Club member).



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Arts festival

South African born Lee Stephens (below) was among the artists exhibiting at the Christian Arts Fest, held in Helensville over Waitangi Weekend.

In her late teens Lee moved to the UK and now lives in New Zealand, saying her travels have given her a deeper understanding of life and how this can be expressed in form and colours. She likes to explore a juxtaposition of light and dark.

"I find myself infused with a rich colour palette entwined with the cultural underpinning of landscape and movement," she says.

Working in oils and acrylics, Lee has the ability to unite repetition of colour and form, and express rhythm in her work. Her ultimate form is the human body, elongated lines that enhanced shape, movement and perspective, and simple compositions.

The Arts Fest was held in the 'Lighthouse', which is part of Magnify Church at 118 Commercial Road. There was also a 'reflective space' to inspire and refresh visitors.

For those unable to attend, the art can be viewed on the Spirit Arts NZ Facebook page.



Popular GP leaves (cont)

• From page 10

Phill is especially looking forward to leaving behind on-call duties - "weekends, public holidays, it's not a nine to five job."

"But that is kind of the deal, part of being part of a community, which I think has been such a huge privilege, getting to know so many people.

"It's one of the few places in Auckland that still feels like a small community and it's been a real privilege to be here.

"The biggest privilege has been the end of life care, terminal patients where you get to be a part of that in their homes. It's really emotional, but a real privilege to be there in those last weeks."

He says it will be "hugely" difficult to leave behind his patients, many of whom he has known for almost two decades. He adds "it's been really rewarding for my soul" to receive the thanks of patients over his last few weeks at Kaipara Medical Centre.

"It's nice to have been part of the community."



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Several art exhibitions over next few months

Helensville Art Centre has an exhibition by Leigh-based artist Andy Turner running until Saturday, February 26.

His paintings feature a 'popping candy' colour palette and a part cubist, part surrealist style.

"Turner's artwork will be an enjoyable way to kick off 2022," says Art Centre manager Yvonne Abercrombie.

A builder by profession and having trained in a carving workshop, he also creates sculptures, some of which are included in the show. Most recently he has turned his paintings into 3D wood carvings.

As well as various exhibitions in Auckland and murals in Leigh, he has held international shows in Thailand and Rarotonga.

In March the Art Centre will host the 'Helensville Art Trail', with the 12 artists who have open studios on the third Sunday of every month in Helensville joining forces for a



• An Andy Turner painting

show, which will run from Wednesday, March 2 until Saturday, March 26.

Art Kaipara's first member's exhibition for the year will be in April with a portraiture theme. Entry forms for this show will be on the centre's website and Facebook page.

For all enquiries email Yvonne at: manager@artcentrehelensville.org.nz.

the business

Happy 2022! Fingers crossed for a smoother year and a profitable one for our businesses. As Covid-19 keeps challenging us we must remain fluid and ready for any changes ahead.

At the end of last year the government announced funding for events to 'Activate Auckland', and we are excited to announce we had a successful application for a series of family-focused events in Helensville, Parakai, Kaukapakapa, Muriwai, and Huapai to be held through February and March - hopefully bringing some much needed fun back to our communities (now postponed).

Last year was difficult for all of us, with lockdowns, new restrictions, and the introduction of vaccine passes and the traffic light system.

During lockdown we lobbied government MPs for more flexible arrangements for the health sector and hospitality around vaccine passes to enable them to get back to business quickly.

August saw more pain for businesses in Kumeū as flooding deluged buildings causing devastating damage. We provided emergency cash grants to business, coordinated donations from Westgate Mitre 10 with Civil Defence crew to assist with the clean-up, set up a Give a Little page, and ran a Facebook group so people could connect their donations with those in need. The community and businesses got behind the effort to help those affected which was hugely positive.

Sadly some businesses did not survive the twin blows of Covid-19 and the flooding.

December saw an end to lockdown and we welcomed in the Covid-19 Protection Framework (traffic lights), and most businesses started to open gradually with some ability to function at near normal levels. But with consumer confidence damaged the return to a profitable situation for almost all businesses was some time off.

Looking forward through 2022 we have had a great summer so far, with fantastic weather around Auckland and businesses reporting a significant increase in spending in both the retail and hospitality sectors. The trades and construction sectors have been doing exceptionally well in the face of increasing material costs and low building supply stock levels, and this is expected to continue for some time.

- Mark Dennis
Chair, North West Country Business Assn



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councillor comment

It's been a rough ride for Auckland. As we regroup as a city in 2022 it is time to act responsibly.

Yet Auckland Council will continue to swell into a bloated, cash sucking, employee-thickened, debt-laden beast.

Under the Goff administration the rates grab has accelerated at pace. Auckland Council is now harvesting over \$5.3 billion a year from Aucklanders. This is not demonstrating kindness post-lockdown.



This intake increase has been achieved through a combination of general rate increases of over 16 percent per annum in the Kumeu/Huapai region, significantly increased Council fees, a fuel tax, and the introduction of an extensive number of targeted rates.

Auckland Council is sitting on \$16 billion of total liabilities, including Council's borrowings along with its interest rate hedging, which is an increase in debt of \$5 billion under Mayor Goff.

Furthermore, despite all the spending, Auckland still has gridlock, unaffordable housing, empty 'ghost buses', and most roads no better than they were pre-amalgamation.

There are now more than 12,000 staff at Auckland Council. Since the Super City was created the payroll bill has more than doubled, and is running just shy of \$1 billion a year. One in every four staff members earns more than \$100,000 per annum. Middle management overkill.

A scythe needs to be taken to peel Council back to core business. It has taken on too many projects and agendas that are actually the domain of central Government - from climate change, business development, to promoting various social agendas.

Such a cost-cutting exercise must simultaneously not harm the customer's interactions with Council but instead greatly enhance them by driving for customer service excellence - including the removal of red tape, greater public transparency over spending, further empowering Local Boards, and an unswerving commitment to delivering core Council services.

My recommendation is that the Auckland Council CEO, who earns \$630,000 and has an army of staff, should prepare an alternative budget for Aucklanders - reflecting Council better delivering on core services and axing the nice-to-haves. However, the Mayor and the majority of councillors oppose me on this.

Instead Mayor Goff is proposing a six percent overall average rates increase for this year. This has to be openly challenged as a broken promise. Last year he guaranteed Aucklanders' rates would not increase by more than 3.5 percent, following last year's 'one-off five percent emergency' rates increase.

Part of the six percent rates increase is a proposed 2.5 percent climate change tax. This is on top of Council's existing budget of \$152 million for tackling climate change. Surely this money should be directed into flood prevention measures in suburbs like Kumeu and Parakai, the building of seawalls, or proactive Council planning to alleviate storm-water runoff from all the new housing.

So let's call this new climate tax what it really is - a disguised rates hike designed to fill Auckland Council's financial hole after Covid.

- Greg Sayers

Rodney Ward Councillor, Auckland Council
greg.sayers@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz

Ph: 021 285 9900

Auckland Council Spending Trends

	L. Brown: 2010/11	P. Goff: 2015/16	P. Goff: 2021/22
Rates & fees collected	\$1.9 billion	\$3.7 billion	\$5.3 billion
Total staff payroll	\$443 million	\$803 million	\$963 million
Total liabilities	\$5 billion	\$11 billion	\$16 billion
Debt per household	\$11,111	\$23,404	\$29,611
Interest payments	\$730,000/day	\$1.1 million/day	\$1.2 million/day
Staff numbers	10,157	11,591	12,328
Staff earning \$100k+	1,165 (11.5% of staff)	2,048 (17.7% of staff)	3,157 (25.6% of staff)

Source: Auckland Council Annual Reports 2011, 2016, 2021. Supplied by: Cr G. Sayers

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from our local MP

Happy New Year to my Helensville constituents! I hope you have enjoyed a restful and well-deserved break and had the opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family.

Speaking of the New Year, I propose a new year's resolution for the government: think local, not central.

What I mean is that it's time for the government to take action on local needs in local areas and not just hold a Wellington-centric view of world.

Let me give you a couple of examples. First, midwives across the country are set to be treated the same regardless of some midwives providing more rural services than others, leading to higher travel costs. The co-designed pay recommendations from Midwives NZ have continued to be ignored by the Ministry of Health.

Consequently, it is estimated that 75 percent of on-call community midwives will boycott working over future Christmas/New Year periods. We are also sadly hearing that student midwives are considering quitting over poor pay.

This is part of the proposed health law changes to disestablish the local District Health Boards (DHB's) and centralise healthcare in Wellington under a new Health NZ body and Maori Health Authority.

Then there's the 'Three Waters' proposal to remove water services from local councils and centralise drinking water, waste water and storm water under unelected, co-governed entities in Wellington.

None of these reforms are guaranteed to achieve anything for local needs for everyday New Zealanders. The government is out of touch with local issues, including ongoing traffic and congestion in Northwest Auckland, issues with housing development, and a lack of shovels in the ground for other desperately needed infrastructure such as quick, reliable internet for all areas.

For all these reasons, I'd challenge the government to take on my suggested new year's resolution for 2022: think local and think Helensville, not centralised and Wellington ... and turn that thinking into action this year.

- Chris Penk, MP for Kaipara ki Mahurangi
chris.penkmp@parliament.govt.nz | Ph: 09 412 2496.



making the difference

Is there someone special who has done something that's made a difference for you, your family or our town? To nominate someone, write to: Nicky Horsbrough, Harcourts Helensville, 92 Commercial Road, Helensville 0800 or fill out the form online at: nickyhorsbrough.harcourts.co.nz. The lucky recipient will receive a \$100 voucher for a local business of their choice plus a bouquet from Love Flowers.

February's recipient is Michelle Hildreth, who chose a \$100 voucher for use at Eleventh Hour Gifts in Helensville.

Michelle was nominated by Nicola Stevens, who says: "I would love to nominate my mum, Michelle Hildreth.

Regardless of how busy she is, or what she has on, she always makes an effort to support me and her granddaughter, who absolutely adores her. She goes above and beyond for so many people in her life and I am so blessed to have her."



• Michelle (left) receives her voucher & flowers from Nicky Horsbrough

local board matters

We're about to enter Auckland Council's Annual Budget consultation process, and this brings the often passionate debate about what the level of rates should be set at.

Because this is an election year you can expect the debate to be slightly sharper, and that means short, snappy, and headline grabbing, where complex issues are condensed down to one line of text and difficult decisions are presented as simple binary ones.

Remember Boris's Brexit Bus? It proclaimed the UK was sending 350 million pounds to the EU each week and this could be used to fund their health system, the NHS. This was a great political stunt. Unfortunately, it wasn't entirely correct, or what has happened post-Brexit.

We have a similar annual debate about rates.

Some say the rises could be zero percent, some say they need to be higher. Many politicians make firm political promises about what level of rates they will or won't support, and those promises are often made without knowing the financial position the council will be in when the decisions need to be made.

This is against a backdrop of no ratepayer being happy to have annual increases for a variety of perfectly legitimate reasons.

And so we find ourselves in a challenging situation.

By now everyone will know that council faces significant challenges with its budget due to Covid-19. But in a way our current situation may be one that was going to happen anyway. For years council staff have quietly been pointing out to politicians that there needs to be more money invested in repairs, maintenance and renewals of our existing assets, from roads to community halls and libraries.

We can only go on sweating assets for so long before we start seeing serious issues with some of our key infrastructure.

We have also been cutting spending to keep with the Covid-19-driven constraints on our budgets, and this is proposed to continue for the coming year.

This means there are now fewer staff in key areas such as compliance, planning and consenting. The effects of this can now be seen, and this is not a great outcome for our community. While council must constantly be looking to work more efficiently and giving value for money to ratepayers, increasingly elusive cost savings are a drop in the bucket to what's needed.



Add to this our rapidly growing population which is tipped to hit two million residents in about eight years. We are not investing enough each year in new facilities, parks and transport infrastructure to meet the demand.

Every time council has approved a Regional Land Transport Plan the list of unfunded projects has increased - it is now many billions of dollars.

Putting off spending in these areas of our core business comes at a cost. Not only are the assets we have slowly worsening some need to be totally replaced, and to meet the needs of more residents likely expanded and improved. Construction costs have been steadily rising, and as they say, it's never cheaper to do this now, and that is very true for the sorts of capital investments we need to make in Auckland.

As seductive as the low or zero rates message may be, there will, inevitably, be a reckoning.

Councillors and Local Boards have been warned for years about the risks and consequences of delaying the hard decisions around the required level of rates and investment.

We will all ultimately end up having to pay for this either with significant rates increases or through general taxes to government if they need to come in and bail out Council.

- Phelan Pirrie
Chair, Rodney Local Board
021 837 167

phelan.pirrie@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz



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HELENSVILLE NEWS - PUBLICATION INFORMATION

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■ **Editorial Enquiries, Letters to the Editor, and Advertising:**

Dave Addison
Ph: 420 7215 • Mobile: 021 178 5568
Email: dave@helensvilleneews.co.nz

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■ **Editorial:** Ph 420 7215 or 021 178 5568.
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town talk

community tidbits from town and around

■ WAITOKI MARKET

The first Waitoki market in some time will be held on Saturday, February 12 in the Waitoki Hall, 1095 Kahikatea Flat Rd, from 8.30am to 1pm. There will be baked goods, plants, essential oils, locally crafted gifts, homemade and used bargains, bric a brac, preserves, and more. All proceeds from the market go back to the local community.

Those attending must be vaccinated, and all Covid protocols must be observed.

Prospective stall holders should phone Gill 420 3301 or email: waitokihall@gmail.com.

■ KAUKAPAKAPA LIBRARY

Find out more of Kaukapakapa's local history from the photographic collection created by the late Alan Jordan and the amazing research completed by Bruce Shanks when the Kaukapakapa Library next opens to the public, on Sunday, February 20 from 9am to 1pm.

Learn about who lies in the historic All Saints Kaukapakapa cemetery, dating from 1864, and discover the details of the 70 unmarked graves.

"We know who they are, we know where they lie, but they remain forgotten," says 'librarian' Megan Paterson. "Are you their whanau?"

For more information email Megan at: threehorses@xtra.co.nz or phone her on 021 959 017.



■ KAUKAPAKAPA MARKET

Live music from duo 'Take 2' Gillian and Mike will be a feature of the next Kaukapakapa market on Sunday, February 20 from 8.30am to 1pm.

The selection of stalls will include hand-made crafts, knitting, spinning, sewing, crochet, soaps and jewellery, used goods, bric-a-brac and collectibles, locally grown fruit and vegetables, plants, preserves, and books from the Helensville Lions.

For more information phone Sarah on 027 483 1542 or email: sarah1@maxnet.co.nz.

■ TARRA AGM

The annual meeting of Te Awaroa Residents & Ratepayers Association Inc (TARRA) will be held on Thursday, February 24 starting 7pm at 44 Commercial Road, Helensville. All welcome, with vaccine passes required.

The annual membership subscription is \$10, which may be paid at the AGM.

■ RSA AGM

The Kaipara Memorial RSA will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, March 31 at 6.30pm in the RSA clubrooms, 49 Commercial Road, Helensville. All members are urged to attend.

New committee members to be nominated by Friday, March 11. Steven Wilson will be awarded a Life Membership of the KMRSA at the meeting.

For an agenda or more information, email: kaipararsa@xtra.co.nz.

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