

MAY 2023  
**THE FIRST EDITION**



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**There's a moose on the loose!**  
**See page 11**





# THE YEAR AHEAD

There are undoubtedly tough times, with households and businesses alike feeling the pinch from rising prices.

In a recession such as we are currently experiencing the instinct is to hunker down, slash spending and ride it out. In local government, however, it is not so clear cut.

Here at Southland District Council we too have had to grapple with cost increases across the board, while trying to get the best value out of each dollar we are spending on your behalf.

In roading, as an example, the money that would have previously paid for 8km of programmed pavement rehabilitation might actually get us closer to 6km now that the increased price of bitumen and other costs are factored in. Those inflationary pressures apply to every metre of road, every bridge, every water pipe and every community facility in the \$2.2 billion of infrastructure assets SDC manages on your behalf.

But we are committed to continuing to replace ageing infrastructure that needs

to be replaced. This is the course we charted when we were developing our previous Long Term Plan (LTP) over six years ago, and as much as we can't afford to replace infrastructure as fast as we would like to, neither can we afford to stop doing it. This would create a broken network and an unaffordable cost burden on future generations to fix it.

So our challenge is always to strike the right balance. In our draft Annual Plan we have made some savings to bring the average rate increase as low as we can, while continuing to budget on our programme of work to make the district a better place to live.

In the 2023/2024 year – year three of our current LTP – we have \$42.6 million of capital works on the books, ranging from big district-funded three waters projects to community-funded hall improvements to installing new cemetery beams. Included in this total is nearly

\$21 million of roading projects, with co-funding from the government transport agency Waka Kotahi.

Each dollar of your rates represents an investment in the future of our district.



On the following pages we've summarised some of the key points of the draft Annual Plan for 2023/2024.

We'd really like to hear what you think.

[makeitstick.nz/annual-plan](https://makeitstick.nz/annual-plan)

## WHAT IS AN ANNUAL PLAN?

The Annual Plan sets Council's works programme for the coming financial year, which runs from 1 July in the current year to 30 June the following year, and how it will be paid for.

It also records any variations for that year to what was planned in the Long Term Plan (LTP).

The LTP is Council's 10-year plan where we take a longer-term view of what we're planning to do, the levels of service we're planning to provide and what everything will cost. Because it covers 10 years it

builds in external factors like inflation and interest rate charges and forecasts what increases in rates might be needed to pay for it all.

It is also where communities plan and budget for activities and projects to be completed over the next 10 years to enhance their areas through Council's nine community boards.

At the end of each financial year Council reports back to the community in an Annual Report, which lets you know whether we did what we said we'd do in our LTP and Annual Plans.



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# Residential annual average increase in townships by community board area showing services provided

## Annual average increase range

- \$100 to \$150
- \$150 to \$200
- \$200 to \$250
- \$250 to \$300
- \$300 to \$350
- \$350 to \$400
- \$500 to \$550

## Services

- Rubbish
- Water
- Sewerage



## Rural annual average increase range, by community board area

- Northern
- Fiordland
- Ardlussa
- Tuatapere Te Waewae
- Oreti
- Wallace Takitimu
- Waihopai Toetoe
- Oraka Aparima
- Stewart Island/Rakiura

# ANNUAL PLAN

## – what we're proposing

Southland District Council is budgeting on average residential rates rises across the district ranging from 6% to 13% in its draft Annual Plan for 2023/2024.

Overall total rates are budgeted to increase by \$4.6 million, or 7.84%, over the previous year (2022/2023).

The increase in rates is higher than what we had projected in our Long Term Plan (LTP) for 2021-2031 and is mainly the result of:

- higher interest costs on loans to complete capital works projects (\$1.3 million)
- the removal of reserve subsidies for sewerage previously used to reduce rates during the Covid-19 downturn (\$1 million)
- an increase in overall waste costs (\$800,000).

Because sewerage, water and rubbish are mainly provided in townships, these cost increases will impact residential households the most.

Council discussed the draft Annual Plan in March and decided to seek feedback from the community about the reasons for the increases.

This is because there are no significant or material differences from the rates increase projected for year three of the LTP, other than those caused by inflation and the predetermined move to stop subsidising rates rises through use of reserves.

The proposed rates changes will affect townships throughout the district differently depending on a range of factors, including the type of property, its location, the services provided in respective areas, and the capital value of the property.

By township the proposed average rate increase varies from \$110, or 6%, in Orepuki, to \$337 or 13%, in Riversdale. The highest dollar increase is in Manapouri at \$400, or 11%.

By land use sector the proposed average rate increase varies from \$76, or 1.83%, for forestry, to \$888, or 10.66%, for commercial properties.

To see the rates for your property, go to the rates search tool on SDC's website:

**[www.southlanddc.govt.nz/home-and-property/rates/rates-search-predicted/](http://www.southlanddc.govt.nz/home-and-property/rates/rates-search-predicted/)**

The rates analysis is based on budget and rating information as at 21 February 2023 and may change before Council adopts the final 2023/2024 Annual Plan in June 2023.

# ANNUAL PLAN

## – in plain English

If the Annual Plan is given the go-ahead in June, your rates will go up anywhere between 6% and 13%. It depends on a range of factors. These include the type of property, where it is, what services are provided in your area, and the capital value of your property.

"Overall total rates" doesn't mean you will have a total rates rise of 7.84%. This is simply the average increase across the district. People in different parts of the district will have different increases depending on several things. Some will be more than 7.84%, some will be less.

You can see the rates for your property using the rates search tool on SDC's website: **[southlanddc.govt.nz/home-and-property/rates/rates-search-predicted/](http://southlanddc.govt.nz/home-and-property/rates/rates-search-predicted/)**

SDC subsidised the cost of the wastewater (sewerage) rate for two years by using some of its reserves to help ratepayers feeling the pinch during Covid. A total of \$2 million of reserve funds were used over two years to reduce wastewater rates.

SDC has a policy that has guidelines on whether an issue is "significant", and how much communities should be involved in the issue. This ranges from providing information only, asking for public feedback or doing formal consultation. In this case we are asking for your feedback on the Annual Plan.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

If you would like to provide feedback about the proposed Annual Plan, you can do it on

**[www.makeitstick.nz/annual-plan](http://www.makeitstick.nz/annual-plan)**

We would appreciate your feedback before **5pm on Friday 26 May 2023.**

**Make it stick**  
**SOUTHLAND**

# 2023/2024 PROJECT PLAN

## ROADING

Unsealed roads metal renewals  
\$2,346,651

Sealed roads surface renewals  
\$5,165,550

Drainage renewals \$1,413,765

Pavement rehabilitation and renewals  
\$5,675,752

Structure component replacements  
\$437,259

Bridge replacements \$3,250,000

Footpaths (district wide) \$453,231

## FOOTPATHS (STREET WORKS)

Edendale/Wyndham \$16,243

Lumsden \$47,463

Manapouri \$52,736

Mossburn \$8,248

Stewart Island \$82,320

Te Anau \$58,010

Tokanui \$10,290

Waikaia \$22,432

Woodlands \$11,525

District wide \$453,231

Riversdale \$4,050

Colac Bay street lighting \$14,239

Te Anau street lighting \$22,149

Winton reclamation and lichen spray  
\$11,303

## OTHER

Traffic services - level of service  
\$212,386

Traffic services - renewal \$861,363

Minor improvements \$255,344

Pedestrian facility \$369,937

Road to Zero TBC

TOTAL ROADING IN ANNUAL PLAN  
\$20,903,053

## BY COMMUNITY BOARD AREA

### FIORDLAND

Te Anau - Development of the town  
centre, lakefront and boat harbour  
\$334,750

#### TE ANAU AIRPORT MANAPOURI

Upgrade to security system \$2,000

Runway line marking programme  
\$5,145

### NORTHERN

Athol - hall roofing \$8,118

Garston - village projects funded from  
the Garston Special Reserve \$6,869

Lumsden - playground equipment  
renewal \$102,911

Lumsden - hall roofing \$20,000

Lumsden Railway Station (information  
centre) roofing \$20,000

### ORAKA APARIMA

Colac Bay - Manuka Street Playground  
equipment renewal \$5,150

Riverton - harbour refurbishment  
\$57,596

Cemetery - new berms \$6,782

Cemetery - land purchase to increase  
cemetery size \$225,836

Riverton - Taramea Bay Playground  
equipment renewal \$82,429

Thornbury - war memorial upgrade  
\$25,725

### ORETI

Dipton - hall internal refurbishment  
heating \$68,557

Limehills - hall painting \$68,557

Wallacetown parks and reserves  
investigation \$13,711

Cemetery - new beams \$6,782

Winton - tree removal, Great North  
Road, stage 3 \$27,424

Walking path installation \$82,400

Winton - Ivy Russell Reserve  
development programme \$15,000

Winton - Anzac Oval project \$79,472

Winton - Drill Hall demolition \$77,900

### STEWART ISLAND/RAKIURA

Wharves refurbishment \$127,516

Main wharf infill investigation \$77,900

Golden Bay wharf renewal investigation  
\$450,580

Golden Bay wharf renewal \$1,749,300

Horseshoe Bay Road new walking track -  
part 3 \$153,740

SIESA transmission renewal programme  
\$123,480

SIESA generation renewal programme  
\$88,494

### WAIHOPAI TOETOE

Edendale/Wyndham drinking fountain  
\$27,477

Edendale/Wyndham walking track  
investigation \$406,250

Tokanui - Rata Park playground  
equipment renewal \$62,842

Tokanui - Hall, new heating system  
\$15,000

### WALLACE TAKITIMU

Nightcaps - Dr Wood Memorial Reserve  
playground equipment renewal  
\$49,371

Ohai - Playground equipment renewal  
\$122,681

Otautau - Holt Park changing shed  
painting \$20,567

Otautau - Holt Park changing shed  
roofing \$48,083

Otautau - Holt Park toilet painting  
\$10,985



# DISTRICT FUNDED/LOANS AND RESERVES

## DRINKING WATER IMPROVEMENTS AND RENEWALS

Mobility field inspection integration	\$51,750
District-wide acuflo manifolds and check valves	\$112,815
Dosing and monitoring instrumentation district wide	\$103,500
SCADA to all water schemes	\$77,600
Replacement of AC pipe - end of life - district wide	\$1,459,350
Lumsden water supply - consent renewal preparation	\$53,096
Manapouri - water treatment plant upgrade	\$1,500,000
Mossburn water supply - consent renewal preparation	\$53,096
Tuatapere waste supply upgrade	\$1,221,197

## SEWERAGE RENEWALS AND UPGRADES

End of life wastewater pumps and electrics	\$171,810
Balfour wastewater treatment plant - consent renewal treatment upgrade	\$1,679,865
Lumsden treatment renewal for infiltration basins and pump replacement	\$220,000
Lumsden - electrical valving and controls for infiltration basins	\$150,000
Manapouri - wastewater treatment upgrade	\$2,123,820
Riverton - townside treatment renewal for infiltration basins and pump replacement	\$220,000
Riverton - electrical valving and controls for infiltration basins	\$150,000
Stewart Island - wastewater treatment plant consent renewal preparation	\$107,000
Winton - wastewater network consent renewal preparation	\$500,000
Winton - wastewater network stormwater infiltration project	\$530,955
Edendale/Wyndham - wastewater treatment plant consent renewal preparation	\$1,592,865

## WASTE SERVICES

Wyndale 24/7 recycling transfer	\$70,000
Woodlands 24/7 recycling transfer	\$70,000
Signage - repair and replace at all recycling centres	\$30,208

## OPEN SPACES

Open spaces strategy capital development	\$987,892
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## COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Riverton - SDC office painting	\$31,642
Otautau - SDC office roofing	\$211,356

## TOILETS

Athol - renewal	\$181,000
Garston - renewal	\$186,356
Manapouri - Frasers Beach North refurbishment	\$52,736
Mossburn - renewal	\$330,000
Nightcaps refurbishment	\$51,450
Riverton - Howells Point renewal	\$211,356
Riverton - Leader Street renewal	\$211,356
Te Anau - Lions Park refurbishment	\$528,390
Edendale - Kamahi Reserve refurbishment	\$52,736
Fortrose - renewal	\$211,356
Tuatapere - Half Mile Road playground (new toilet)	\$180,000
Wallacetown - investigation project	\$10,290
Dunsdale - renewal	\$140,000

## RATES SUPPORT – CAN WE HELP YOU?

We appreciate this is a challenging time financially for some ratepayers.

If you are going through financial hardship and you have any concerns about your rates bill please call our friendly rates team on **0800 732 732**, or email: [rates@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@southlanddc.govt.nz).

They'll be happy to help you.

If you are a low-income earner, receiving superannuation or living on a benefit, you could qualify for a Department of Internal Affairs rates rebate of up to \$665. Please get in touch with us for more information.

**W**e are already six months into the triennium and there has been plenty going on.

I have just got back from a local government conference with all the South Island councils where we heard from the DIA and Ministers primarily about all of the reform that is in front of us all. We also had a round table where we heard from each other about our current challenges and things that are going well in our respective patches.

I was able to reflect on our uniqueness of having 69 elected members and the collective strength this brings to our local democracy. Our nine community boards are doing really well as they gather momentum and help us to navigate this challenging space.

A couple of changes we have initiated this term are meeting more often as a council and ensuring some of these are held out in our district. Our first was held in Wyndham in March and it was great to have the Waihopai Toetoe chair Pam Yorke speaking to us on behalf of the board. Her passion for the area was very clear. We also had Geoff Scott, aka the Bee Man, talk to us about the wasp issue plaguing parts of Southland and he brought some nests along where we all learnt a lot about these invasive pests.

In February we undertook a bus trip of the western and northern parts of Southland which was really valuable for the team to see first-hand and discuss what is happening around our awesome district. It really brings home just how large, diverse and unique our patch is when in two days you only just cover half of it.

A highlight of this trip was watching a Peter Rabbit play at the Garston school delivered by a really talented bunch of kids.

We are all looking forward to getting out and about a lot more as the triennium progresses and meeting many more of our great people.

We are now entering into the Long Term Plan (LTP) process, which is one of the core procedural pieces of work we are required to do under the Local Government Act. It is essentially a 10-year budget for the district, covering the many functions and roles that we do.

We had a stark reminder this month

of the main theme of the last LTP when a paper came to us regarding two bridges, one out at Channel Road and the other at Riverside School Road.

Since July 2018 we have replaced 33 bridges, with a further 137 scheduled to be replaced before 2031. 63 of these are currently posted which means they are not up to the required standard to meet their level of service and have speed and/or weight restrictions applied to them.

All of our bridges are continually monitored and, like in the case of these two, from time to time some bridges require work earlier than anticipated.

Although our roading and bridge network is vital for keeping our communities connected, it is just one component of what we look after and provide as a council. When all aspects have been compiled together, the draft LTP will then go out for public consultation. This is a very important part of the process; it is where you as a ratepayer get to have your say. One of the main outputs of the plan is the projected rates for each of the 10 years.

Last time around we received about 260 submissions. Although the plan is prepared for the auditor, it is actually about you, and I encourage you to have your say both locally through your community boards and when the draft goes out. We would love to hear from you.

One of the key questions that we will be asking ourselves as a Council is ‘can we (the community) afford the proposed plan?’ and equally as important, ‘are we ensuring we are planning far enough ahead that we are not kicking the can down the road and giving our mokopuna a big problem to solve?’.



One of the biggest challenges for us as a Council is to address the affordability of rates, while still delivering the expected levels of service. On top of this, we have the addition of unfunded directives coming from the Beehive. These are legislative requirements for us to carry out, which don't come with the appropriate funding.

With our smaller population we have some big challenges around economies of scale, and this does not help with affordability of key infrastructure which, irrespective of the number of users, still costs the same. An example of this is a waterpipe between Balfour and Lumsden spanning 17km which only has a handful of connections compared to a similar length pipe in an Auckland suburb – how many houses span 17km in Auckland? The cost of the pipe is exactly the same, but the cost per connection is significantly different between the two.

On a more positive note, a part of my role which I really enjoy is the chance to get out into our awesome communities to meet and engage with people that define what it is to be a Southlander.

I have attended two 50-year service honours for our local fire volunteers with Murray Johns (Dipton) and Allan Jones (Hedgehope), celebrating an impressive milestone of service to their respective communities.

Among the recent Community Service Awards bestowed, Steven and Marylyn Hayes, of Tokanui, and their family were honoured for their generational contribution to music.

While no two days are the same in this role, one thing remains consistent. Every day I wake up proud to be a Southlander.

# NGĀ TAONGA O MURIHIKU HISTORICAL TREASURES IN SOUTHLAND'S MUSEUMS

Hidden in the hills of Waikaia are the remains of old miners' huts, evidence of the gold rush left behind in the 1800s.

One man who kept the peace of this slightly tamer version of the "wild west" was magistrate, coroner, officer, adjudicator, and warden of Switzers, John Nugent Wood.

Born in April 1827 in Cheshire, England, J N Wood spent his years living and working around Central Otago and Southland. He was well respected in the community for his fairness, and the way he treated the Chinese community – so much so, that Wood was presented with an illuminated address, a large framed testimonial expressing the community's appreciation for his involvement.

The document had been stored for safe keeping in a garage belonging to descendants of J N Wood, until the family decided to pass this piece of history on to Switzers Museum at Waikaia.

It was deposited into the museum by the Lylla (nee Wood) and George Skerrett Whanau Trust, grandchildren of J N Wood himself.

A member of the family says the illuminated address has remained in the family since the date of its presentation in 1880.

"It's always just been with our family. I asked my brother ages ago about where it was and he said, 'Oh! It's in my garage!'".

The family decided to return the artifact to the town of Waikaia "because that's where it came from ... and dad would've been happy we did that. It's in really good condition and we've learned lots by taking it up to the museum in Waikaia".

J N Wood has left a fascinating legacy in and around the district. During his time as the first warden of the Lakes District/Wakatipu goldfield based in Queenstown in January 1863, he had some run-ins with miners in the area, which caused some unease. Wood's reputation would make a complete about-turn later that year, when he provided testimony for an innocent man accused of murder in Millers Flat. This testimony created a backlash from some, particularly legendary police commissioner St John Branigan and his cronies, known as "Branigan's Troopers".

Branigan was seen as the best in the business around this time. However, when Wood proved the "ruthless single-minded" commissioner had arrested the wrong man, tempers would have likely flared, and Branigan supposedly never spoke to Wood again. To this day, the murder has not been solved.

Wood left his posting in Queenstown in July 1863 and was stationed in Nokomai, where he served as the Switzers goldfield warden for the next 17 years. The Wood family had purchased property below Carnie's Hill in Waikaia called Willowbank, but never lived there until March of 1869. Wood was well respected for his fairness and was awarded his address from the Waikaia district upon relocation to Ashburton.

The Wood family had their fair share of troubles during the gold rush. Three of their children died and his

wife Susan, a talented author, was struck down with tuberculosis several times throughout her life.

While her husband worked in Ashburton Susan settled in Orepuki, where she died in 1880. John passed away in 1909 at his son's house in Orepuki. Both Mr and Mrs Wood are buried in St John's Cemetery in Waikiwi, Invercargill.

If you are wishing to see this incredible illuminated address in person, at the time of writing it was being professionally reframed and will be available for display in Switzers Museum soon.

**Switzers Museum and Bottlehouse opening hours are, summer: Labour weekend through to Easter 11am - 4pm daily. Winter hours: 1pm - 3pm weekends only.**

**Feel free to arrange a visit on 020 4095 6181.**



## J N Wood - *peace keeper*



In the world of local government our reporting cycle of Long Term Plans, Annual Plans and Annual Reports – like the seasons – seems to be merging into one.

Having finally put to bed our 2022/2023 Annual Report, which was delayed by 10 months due to a national shortage of auditors, we are already nearing completion of our 2023/2024 Annual Plan.

This document will acknowledge rising costs and inflationary pressures that are impacting on the people who live in Southland district, and from which Council is not immune.

Everything's a balancing act in the public sector. The needs and aspirations of our people have to be considered carefully alongside the rising costs of service delivery and infrastructure replacement, and there are competing demands every step of the way for the finite amount of money available.

We made a commitment in our 2018-2028 Long Term Plan to budget on replacement of ageing infrastructure, a lot of which was going to reach the end of its useful life within the following 30 years.

This work is expensive, and becoming more so all the time, meaning there is constant recalibration of how much can be achieved with the same amount of money.

It is clear we have an infrastructure burden that isn't going away in this time of recession. The need for infrastructure that is fit for purpose and able to service our economy is as great now as it ever has been.

Rather than slowing that momentum, we have opted to continue to fund asset maintenance and renewals and community projects, and not slash vital services.

Not continuing to fund these essential capital works would, in effect, hasten the decline of our vast network of roads, water pipes and other expensive assets, putting an overwhelming financial burden on future generations. Continuing on this path was one of the key themes we consulted on for our 2021-2031 LTP, and a clear majority of your submissions supported this.

At the same time we have programmed more than \$42 million of projects for the coming year. Many of these are being driven by, and for the betterment of, our communities.

We know the work needs to be done. But we also know that times are tough and many ratepayers are hurting. It is a difficult task trying to strike the right balance, but I'm proud of the efforts made by all those people in our organisation who are trying to do their best for the people of Southland district.

The challenges we face in prioritising our spending have been graphically demonstrated recently.

Rural bridges mean a lot to a local community, and it is an emotive issue when those bridges finally reach the end of their lives and tough decisions have to be made about their future viability. Old wooden bridges on Channel Road and Riverside School Road have both been identified by our structural engineers as posing a risk to public safety in their current condition.

Of the 842 bridges in the district, 63 bridges are currently posted. There isn't enough money or resources available to replace them all at once but we have been making good progress, with 33 bridges replaced so far.

Neither Channel Road nor Riverside School Road were near the top of our list of bridges due for replacement, so in order to rebuild them they would have to jump the queue at the expense of other bridges. These are the difficult decisions councils have to make when deciding where to best spend money on replacing infrastructure.

### Climate change is factoring prominently in our thinking as we begin work on developing our next 10-year Long Term Plan, due in 2024.

From Fiordland to the Catlins, Southland is contained within 3,400km of coastline, the longest of any region in New Zealand, meaning we are disproportionately susceptible to the effects of any rise in sea level. While there is still scientific debate about the specifics, we have already had a glimpse of what the future will look like with historical damage by encroaching tides on Papatotara Coast Road and more recently Colac Bay Foreshore Road and the Riverton Rocks Highway.



There are serious implications ahead for coastal infrastructure. The impacts of changing weather patterns and rising seas over the next 100 years will be major in terms of our coastal asset management. It is natural to assume that there will be changes in our district planning around these areas. It will require new rules about building on floodplains, and assets on inland waterways, and along with that there will need to be significant investment. At the time of writing, the Climate Adaptation Bill, the third part of the Resource Management Act reform, is not expected before the end of this year.

The next LTP will be delivered in an even tougher economic climate, and there will be an important conversation about balancing levels of service with affordability.

A review of Te Anau Airport Manapouri is imminent. Southland District Council and the Fiordland Community Board are concerned about the local community's ongoing financial commitment to keep the airport operational.

At the time of writing the implications for ratepayers were still unclear following recent announcements from Wellington about the new shape of the three waters reforms. I expect the new affordable water bill will be introduced to Parliament very soon and in due course we will have some more information for you.

# SDC unveils new website

Southland District Council's new website was launched on 15 March 2023.

The project to develop it took nearly two years of planning, design, painstaking testing and development.

Eighty percent of the project was carried out in-house, by SDC digital communications specialist Yves Broers and digital media administrator Renee Jackman, with support from Queenstown web design specialists Graham and Rebecca from Swordfox.

The project included “probably about a year of looking closely at the data around the old website to try to understand how people use it”, Yves says.

“We used various analytical software to represent visually where people would click on the page and how they interact with the page.

“We used what’s called a heat map to show how the mouse moved around and where most of the clicks go. Over time that would give you a really good idea of how people use the website – especially the front page.”

Then they looked at how people navigated to specific pages on the old website.

“One of the things we noticed was that people wouldn’t use what we’d call the preferred pathway ... because the names of some of the pages weren’t intuitive enough. And when the wording and

structure aren’t intuitive enough, people find other ways to get to the place they want to be.”

A big part of the structural design of the new website is providing more intuitive pathways to specific pages, which was fine-tuned following lots of testing using council staff and volunteers outside the organisation as guinea pigs.

Listing pages and information alphabetically was one of the takeaways from that testing that was implemented in the new website. Alphabetical listings are not used exclusively though. In the building services section, for instance, the order of pages is based on the number of visits to the previous website and user behaviour.

“Once we realised the navigation wasn’t intuitive enough, we started building new navigation structures – a bit like a tree diagram where information forks or branches off in a logical order – and we tested them on as many people, inside and outside of council, as we could to find the most natural and intuitive pathways.”

For instance, if you’re looking for information about animals you start from the home page by clicking on

Home & property. That seems logical enough. Your animals are usually found at your home or on your property.

A tile titled Animals gives you three page options: Animal complaints, Dogs, and Keeping other animals.

Clicking on the Dogs tile, for instance, opens up a further nine options, presented alphabetically, from Change dog or owner details and Dog registration down to Owner responsibilities and Walk your dog, which includes maps of local dog walking areas for 29 townships in Southland district. (Maps feature throughout the website, providing a visual cue for people trying to find the locations of such things as the nearest public toilets, park and reserves, and road closures.)

But if you thought you might find information about animals on the Services page, you’d be right too. The same options are available there. Yves and Renee have created multiple ways you can get to where you want to be.

“It’s a lot less rigid than traditional sites,” Yves says. “We’re no longer limited by the structure.”

One of the biggest challenges of developing a council website is that it has to provide information about a wide array of activities.

“It’s not like a website for a company that sells outdoors equipment,” Yves says. “It isn’t just one business.

“It represents lots of different teams working in completely different activities, so you’re not catering to just one audience. You’re catering to the needs of many different groups of people, all of whom have different reasons for being on your website.”

Yves says it was necessary to build a new website because the previous one was around nine years old and not capable of supporting a major upgrade.

“About five years ago it got a facelift, but the underlying framework, the content management system, hadn’t moved with the times and it was increasingly causing problems.”

It was important for Council to have a new website based on a software platform that could be future-proofed. The result is a website that offers vastly improved functionality and a more intuitive experience for users.

Yves is quick to point out that the project does not end here. Now that the website has been launched and is in daily use, he and Renee will be monitoring the analytics and listening to user feedback to see where further improvements can be made.

“We see the evolution of this website as ongoing.”

## WEBSITE BY THE NUMBERS

**700** pages of data analysed during planning stage

**600** – plus files

**600** – 700 active users per day

**280** unique pages (and growing)



WIN AN IPAD!

# There's a moose ON THE LOOSE!

Will you be joining a long line of moose-spotters, stretching back over a century, and adding to the legend and mystery of these magnificent creatures in the Fiordland wilderness?

Moose sightings in Southland have been causing a stir for many years, with reports of these elusive creatures popping up now and then.

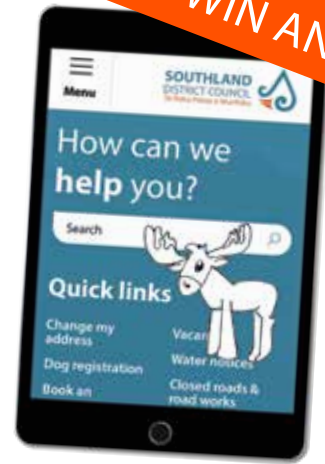
Moose were first introduced to Fiordland in 1910 and once their population was deemed large enough the hunt was on. Over the last century they slipped in and out of popular imagination and sporadic reported sightings have been disputed by sceptics and hailed as proof the moose

remain at large by devotees.

The Fiordland moose have become the stuff of legends and it is the steadfast enthusiasm of a few stalkers that keeps the myth alive.

The most notable proof of their existence was supplied by moose hunter Ken Tustin, who provided hair samples that were identified as being moose by DNA analysis in 2000 and 2002. Many sightings have been captured on film and video but poor picture quality means only the most imaginative and committed moose fans find indisputable confirmation the moose still roam our back country.

To celebrate this fantastic local legend and the redesign of the SDC website we have decided to introduce our own moose into the vastness of the



new online pages. Arguably it isn't a 12,500km<sup>2</sup> wilderness and we have done our best to make finding information on the more than 280 pages of the site accessible.

So if you're looking for an adventure that's equal parts whimsical and historic, head to our website and see how many moose you can spot. The clues are there if you know where to look.

Make sure you document your discoveries and send us a screen grab for each moose you spot and if you find all six of them you will be in the draw to win an iPad!

Happy hunting.

A group of Menzies College students added some community mahi to their annual Menzies Activity Days (MAD). This year, Matai House students got stuck in to tidy up the Wyndham cemetery.

Although some of the students had never set foot in a cemetery before, as part of their annual MAD they got to work filling rabbit holes, pulling out lots of weeds and cleaning headstones.

When they were done they enjoyed sports, swimming and hanging out at Dolamore Park.

"The kids basically got to choose what they wanted to do," teacher Sarah White said. "Some cleaned headstones, some weeded the pathways, some filled

## MENDING THE PAST



rabbit holes with soil and some cleaned the shed and kiosk of cobwebs."

In the 10 years of MAD events, the school

has encouraged students to try new things, and changed it up this year by having the activities completed as whole house groups in the hope of creating more house spirit.





Ardlussa Community Board chair Richard Clarkson accepting the gift of the completed Balfour pump track back to the community board / Council from Balfour Lions Club president John Van Vliet.

# Community pumped for new pump track

A group of eager children wait patiently for the Balfour pump track to be officially opened by Mayor Rob Scott on 4 March 2023. The ribbon is cut, and they're off!

The Balfour Lions Club, with the help of a grant from the Ardlussa Community Board, have worked hard to get this project over the line and now Balfour has a wonderful new recreational facility.

This top-of-the-line pump track has been designed and built by Graded Earth Ltd.

It's close to the existing playground on the corners of Queen, Kruger and Mary Streets – now a hub of activity for everyone to enjoy. This area has plenty of parking and a brand-new toilet facility nearby, a perfect place for the family to hang out and enjoy what the Balfour township has to offer.

The open day saw many happy smiling youngsters out in force to be the first to ride on their new track. This track is for all ages, and Matthew "Milty" Coultas from Graded Earth Ltd was the first to test it out.

Milty kicked off the show with a demonstration of how to use the hills and mounds to pump yourself over the track, using minimal pedal power.

Balfour Lions Club representative John Van Vliet is thrilled to have been a part of this community-led development project.

**"We are so happy to be able to provide a safe and fun facility for our people to ride their scooters and bikes."**

Ardlussa Community Board chair Richard Clarkson said: "The board are pleased to be able to support this community-led project and provided a grant of \$80,000 from the Balfour general reserve."

The pump track is already a hit. The open day saw around 30 kids from the Balfour community out and about enjoying the track. Balfour School has also embraced the new attraction by setting up a bike group that brings kids down to the pump track during the day to give it a go.

The next step to get this project to completion will be landscaping the area. Balfour Lions Club has arranged the planting of natives, which have been kindly sponsored by Reforest Southland from Lumsden, a community nursery and reforestation trust. There will also be a sign put up and sponsored by Canvart, also of Lumsden.

That's not all though. There are also talks of the Ardlussa Community Board and Balfour Lions Club putting in the work to install a half basketball court and some seating, to make this awesome area an even more exciting hub.

Southland District Council is proud to support the community in creating this great asset.

So, people of all ages, go check it out!





# Geoff Scott – WASP HUNTER



“Bee Man” Geoff Scott can’t overstate the dangers posed by wasps.

The past summer saw an influx of particularly aggressive wasps in towns around Southland, most notably Otautau, and he’s worried that someone could die as the result of a wasp attack.

The elderly, children and pets are the most susceptible to being seriously harmed or worse in an attack, he says. “Kids are 10 feet tall and bullet proof.”

A bee or wasp sting is a minor irritation for most people. However, some people are especially sensitive and may develop a severe allergic reaction called anaphylaxis. Call 111 for an ambulance if you or someone else has been stung and has symptoms of a serious allergic reaction or anaphylaxis.

Geoff has personally seen several small dogs killed by wasps. “They actually kill a dog quite fast.”

**The best thing you can do if you came across a wasp nest? “Leave it alone.”**

“But if they’re coming at you stay calm and just walk away from them, slowly. Don’t swat at them or anything like that to agitate them. Just walk away.”

Although the natural instinct might be to try to outrun an onslaught of angry wasps, that’s not possible. They zero in on movement and they can fly faster than you can run.

Trying to kill the aggressive pests as they land on you will also prove ineffective and lead to many more painful stings. Wasps send distress signals to the rest of the swarm, which initiates an all-out attack. Unfortunately, wasps are also excited by adrenaline, which the human body naturally produces in stressful or dangerous situations.



A calm and slow retreat is your best defence, although “it’s not always going to work,” he says.

Geoff says it would take years of dedicated effort killing nests to bring wasp numbers down in Southland. Rather, Geoff is keen to educate people about how to reduce the chances of ending up with a wasp nest in their own back yard.

**The biggest tip is don’t leave piles of green waste on your property. Wasps will seek them out as a perfect place to build a nest.**

He also doesn’t recommend trying to remove a wasp nest yourself. They can be very hard to spot, especially the ones below ground, but if you find one it’s best to call in a professional to get rid of it.



# PARKS WEEK



The open spaces team at Southland District Council have been working hard alongside Active Southland to bring some of our much-loved, quieter spaces in the district into the spotlight. Parks Week aims to do exactly that.

Laura Dowling, open spaces support at Southland District Council, was involved with brainstorming activities for the district's parks week, which ran from 4-12 March. Parks Week is an initiative featured throughout New Zealand (through Recreation Aotearoa) and Australia. The organisations involved aim to promote open spaces and parks in communities to get people involved, active and improve overall wellbeing.

This year, the team of Laura and Jenna Shepherd, Active Southland's district regional activator, decided to try to get the smaller, often quieter spaces enjoyed by the local community through scavenger hunts and photo competitions.

"We wanted to shine the spotlight on one park or reserve for each community board area, along with some additional 'bonus sites' to ensure people from around the district were able to have a fair opportunity to partake in the rock scavenger hunt."

The rock hunt involved hunting out and taking a photo of the rocks that

were hidden at one of the 13 parks and reserves around the district. Being in a district where there is a large number who live in remote rural areas, it was decided to create a photo competition for locations where the scavenger hunt wasn't included.

"We had the idea of a scavenger hunt, and if you didn't live in areas where the rock scavenger hunt was taking place then you could take photos of yourself enjoying your own space. We wanted the competition to be accessible to everyone."

The team were impressed with the images that came through of the community enjoying their open spaces. Gioia and her dad Chris got particularly creative with their photography in the Te Anau Lions Park.

This year, everyone who participated in Parks Week was lucky enough to receive a prize.

"We wanted to give the winners sustainable decent prizes, something that would last," Laura says.

Jenna Shepherd presented the prizes to the winners.

"There was only positive feedback from our rural whanau and tamariki about Parks Week," Jenna says. "Our rural communities don't often have events in their small town or inclusive ways to participate."

"Taking a region-wide approach so everyone had the opportunity to participate in some way was greatly appreciated."

"Tamariki enjoyed getting out into their parks and having something to do after school and/or in the weekend. Getting a prize was the icing on the cake and brought many delighted smiles. Promoting fun and healthy ways to enjoy our parks and open spaces in invaluable for our tangata (people)."

Thank you to everyone who took part in Parks Week and congratulations to all the clever detectives out there who found SDC rocks, and the budding photographers who sent in photos enjoying their local park.



Gioia



Chris and daughter Gioia





I love to go on flying fox with my caterpillar and monkey bars fun as well.  
- Ollie Petries



I live in Winton and did the rock hunt while in Te Anau. - Harrison Petries



Loved the rock hunt at Ivy Russell, it was a fun afternoon activity.  
- Alfie and Harry Burnell



- Ollie Petries



I live in Winton and I did the rock hunt while in Te Anau. - Daisy Futter



Gioia

Gioia and Chris enjoying the playground at Te Anau Lions Park which we love going to by bike or walking with the pram. Especially liked the adult and child swing when Gioia was younger.

The story of Peter Rabbit is famed around the world. Now there is a Southland twist to the plucky little bunny's tale.

For over three decades children have been hopping along to the mythical Peter Rabbit's house, nestled in a secret location near the Garston Presbyterian Church.

It was part of the town's folklore that captured the attention of Southland District Council senior graphic designer Donna Hawkins. Inspired, she initiated the concept of a Peter Rabbit seat to complement the tiny village that had mysteriously emerged to the delight of local children.

The eventual wording etched onto the seat spoke as to its reasons for being.

**"This seat was made with love, for you to sit, share your thoughts, tell secrets, be thankful, or just cry and laugh. Enjoy this moment to remember those who have left us and are now forever in our hearts."**

Community stalwart Pam Naylor sought permission from the Garston Cemetery Trust to have the seat positioned on cemetery land and received the nod of approval.

The biggest challenge to progress from concept to reality proved to be copyright for the famous illustrations created by Beatrix Potter. Emails seeking permission began bouncing around the world for months but to no avail. Turns out, it really is a case of who you know.

A new page was turned when it was discovered Southland district councillor Margie Ruddenklau had a childhood connection to Beatrix through an association with the author's niece Esther Nicholson, who she often visited at her home in Te Anau.

"I remember many visits to Miss Nicholson's home on Mokonui Street when I was a little girl and it ended up

being the point of difference we needed," Margie says.

"I came in at the end really and just connected the dots for the community. I was confident the Esther Nicholson element would drive the publishers to let us have the graphics. It needed that personal connection.

"I'm just so delighted because they had been trying to get an in with the publishers. I have a cousin who owns a bookshop in Oxford, Emma's of Oxford, so I just rang Sara ... within 48 hours we had a reply."

The ball was rolling ... from Southland to Oxford to Penguin Random House in Australia and finally London where the request landed on the desk of Penguin Ventures creative director Thomas Merrington.

With the okay granted to utilise the iconic images, Donna worked her creative magic and partnered with Riki Shuttleworth and his team



A young Margie Ruddenklau with her mother Eileen and Esther Nicholson at her home in Te Anau.

at Creation Signs to produce the Peter Rabbit Thinking Seat. Since it was established on site, the seat has captured the attention of locals and visitors alike, including national media attention.

"It's such a drawcard. What a great community board with their vision for Garston. They've done all the mahi on it and I'm delighted their dream has come true," Margie says.

"Donna is really, really passionate and what a beautiful seat she's made. Pam Naylor is a driving force – every town needs a Pam Naylor.

"Going forward, it would be great to see these amazing storybook seats in our communities because they all have their own unique stories to tell. Imagine if we could have the 'Storybook Seats of Southland' as a driver into our towns – it would be fantastic."

It was a quintessential trip down memory lane for Margie.

"It took me on a personal journey back in time with lots of memories and connections with family," she says.

"So many people didn't realise about the Peter Rabbit house. I've been going there with my kids for over 20 years. We'd stop there on playgroup trips or when we were going through to visit the grandparents in Alexandra so we always knew about it.

"There's something unique about Beatrix Potter which rekindles stories from your childhood and to have her linked to Southland is truly special."

Esther graduated top of her class with a Masters in English from Oxford University, her education paid for by her Auntie Beatrix. It was as part of that elite alumni she became friends with Margie's great-aunt Helen Pottinger and her grandparents and accompanied them to New Zealand when they immigrated to set up a medical practice in Invercargill.

After a stint teaching in Christchurch, Esther was appointed principal of St John's Girls' School in Invercargill, a role she proudly held from 1936 to 1968.

"They were great friends. Every weekend or holidays Ester spent in Te Anau with my grandparents and great-aunt Helen and Uncle John, having lunch with them every day. The Pottingers purchased land there in the 1930s and donated some to the community for the Anglican church and the

wee house behind it was Esther Nicholson's. They gifted her the land," Margie says.

"I remember Esther's little house being tucked away in the manuka and we would have to wander through the trees to visit. It was really special going down there with my mother for a cup of tea. Dotted around the walls were original sketches of the characters of Beatrix Potter. There are letters in the New Zealand Archives from Beatrix Potter to Esther which is testament to their bond.

"Beatrix Potter is timeless. I'm still reading Peter Rabbit now to my little 18-month-old grandson Freddy. He's already fallen in love with Peter Rabbit.

"That seat will stand the test of time because people will still be talking about Beatrix Potter in another 100 years."



# The Tale of Peter Rabbit – SOUTHLAND EDITION

SDC senior graphic designer Donna Hawkins, Northern Community Board member Pam Naylor and Southland district councillor Margie Ruddenklau at Garston's Peter Rabbit™ Thinking Seat.





# Public get to see Te Anau wastewater system

The Fiordland Community Board and Council recently hosted an open day for members of the public to take a guided tour through both the Te Anau wastewater treatment plant and the Kepler disposal fields.

Around 25 people were taken through the two locations and shown the ins and outs of the operation of these sites.

Feedback received from those who attended was positive and people said they were intrigued by the complexity of the systems and equipment.

Geoff Gray, manager operations and programming, said:

**"It's great to be able to showcase this system to the community. It's good to see top-of-the-line technology and for the community to see for themselves how it all works."**



## Key facts:

- Kepler discharge consent limits: 4,500 m<sup>3</sup> or 4,500,000 litres per day
- Kepler land area: 160 hectares
- Land disposal area of 27 hectares for waste water land disposal
- 400km of dripper line installed at Kepler disposal fields
- 700,000 dripper emitters on the dripper line
- Over 10,000 baleage bales made to date off the Kepler disposal fields
- Over a billion litres of treated wastewater have been disposed on Kepler disposal fields to date
- Project started July 2019
- Plant commissioned December 2021
- \$4 million worth of funding from the Tourism Infrastructure Fund.
- 83,000 labour hours in onsite construction of the project
- 15,000m<sup>3</sup> or 15,000,000 litres storage at Te Anau ponds
- Pipeline length from Te Anau to Kepler disposal fields is 19.6km long
- Pipeline holds 1,300m<sup>3</sup> (1,300,000 litres)

Some plumbing fittings have the potential to allow minute traces of metals to accumulate in water standing in the fittings for several hours.

Although the health risk is small, the Ministry of Health recommends you flush a mugful of water from your drinking-water tap each morning before use to remove any metals which may have dissolved from the plumbing fittings.

We are recommending this simple precaution for all households, including those on public and private water supplies.



## The facts don't lie. Southlanders are dying on Southland roads.

Eight dead and 24 seriously injured in just a few months. Undeniably horrific statistics.

Perhaps the greatest reality check stems knowing these fatalities could have been avoided. Sadly, road deaths are like that, nearly always the consequence of decisions made behind the wheel.

Road Safety Southland road user safety advisor Maureen Deuchrass is frustrated key messages are being ignored.

"These are our local people dying on our local roads because people are just too complacent about rural roads. It has to stop," she says.

## "We want people in Southland being 'road to zero' superheroes."

Distraction, fatigue and impairment are the leading causes of crashes at Southland's rural intersections.

"Too often rural people don't expect much traffic, complacency sets in and they are distracted or thinking about other things. When you're behind the wheel, your focus must be on the road."

A powerful new road safety campaign recently launched in the Southland Express newspaper highlights the issue from different perspectives – a police officer, a local woman involved in a near miss and a road worker who is too often tasked with cleaning up the aftermath.

"It's three different points of view but ultimately they all stem from the same problem," Maureen says.

"Take the police for instance. These guys have to work all hours, see terrible things and have to deal with the aftermath.

"They are just sick of having to go out and pick up the carnage. It's such a waste of life."

Another Road Safety Southland initiative at Easter saw over 1,000 drivers stopped at "fatigue break" checkpoints in Athol and Mossburn,

"It's a chance for us to check in with drivers and offer them some water and sustenance – of the Easter egg variety of course – for the rest of their journey ahead, and some good advice of course," Maureen says.

"We joined forces with awesome crews from Fire and Emergency New Zealand and local police and these stops were well received by drivers who appreciated the gesture.

"This year our key messages were about restraints, impairment, distraction and speed so absolutely vital information when it comes to staying safe on our roads."



# We can be HEROES

# Capturing Southland's rural heritage

**A** snapshot in time awaits curious Southlanders.

Nestled just off the Invercargill-Riverton highway in Thornbury, you will find one of New Zealand's oldest vintage tractor clubs, the Thornbury Vintage Tractor and Implement Club.

Also dubbed the Thornbury Rural Heritage Centre, its ever-expanding collection spreads over six buildings with a mix of agricultural equipment and household items – a vast array of rural artefacts encompassing history, agriculture and education. You can bet there's a cracking good yarn behind each piece and, with a club member always on site to show you around, there's no excuse not to learn a thing or two.

Stopping for a comfort break just outside Athol in the early 1950s, local resident Jack McKenzie spotted a 1914 Avery tractor about to be pushed into the Mataura River for flood protection. He

enlisted a few mates and brought the Avery back to Thornbury to restore it.

It ignited the interest of the Thornbury lads and the club was officially formed in 1956, going on to collect a lot of rare machinery from the Otago/Southland area.

From humble beginnings it has been transformed into something truly special. Now proudly adopting the moniker Rural Heritage Centre, it incorporates all aspects of southern rural life. Displays also include Captain John Howell, the founder of Riverton and one of Southland's original farmers whose homestead wasn't far from the centre.

Club president Fraser Pearce reckons it's a snapshot of Thornbury "as it once was".

"It needs to be more than a collection of tractors, it needs to have a purpose and that purpose is to tell the Southland farming story," he says.

"With that idea in mind we have tried to develop different displays telling that story. Being able to expand, we have then been able to set up a building that tells a bit of Thornbury's history, about the horse era and the very early veteran

tractors and then more modern."

Now in his tenth term at the helm, Fraser describes the centre as one of Southland's best-kept heritage secrets.

"I'd like to make Southland aware that we're here and that we have this amazing collection. We are only two minutes off the main highway, it doesn't take long to get here at all."

The task of preserving and sharing the agricultural history of Southland appealed to members, but the camaraderie when working together on restorations is a big part of the club, who are always looking for new machinery-minded members to join.

"It is the importance of treasuring our heritage. We are trying to preserve the history of all aspects of agriculture. There is more to agriculture than the machinery – it's the lifestyle, how they used to do it in our grandparents' time."

The centre is a great place for all with a focus on museum tours. No group is too big or too small, and no person is too young or old to enjoy the heritage.

"We get playgroups coming in and we let the kids climb the tractors with supervision. They really appreciate that and we want that interaction," Fraser says.

"The rest homes go through and reminisce about the tractors they used to own. It brings a lot of memories back of the good old days."

**"The information shared is passed down from member to member, generation to generation. This emphasises the Southland way, trying to preserve past skills and memories."**

During open days throughout the year, the public can witness some of New Zealand's rarest equipment in action. 99 percent of which are in working condition.

The 'History of Southland Farming' display transports visitors back to the early 1800s as the first settlers arrived in Southland and had to figure out how to make a living - whether by ploughing, the use of horses,





farming or forestry.

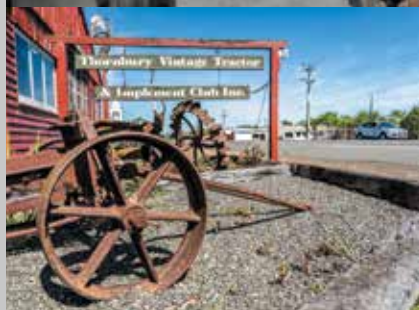
In 2018, the club installed a rare 18-tonne 1910 Garrett stationary steam engine. Originally used by Wright Stephenson to drive a seed cleaning plant, it was on-sold to drive a sluice pump for gold mining at Waimumu and later moved to Progress Valley to power Niagara's sawmill.

After the introduction of new diesel technology, it sat idle until the 1970s when it was rescued by steam enthusiast Keith Simpson and given a new lease on life by the centre's passionate crew to now be used for education and entertainment.

Without community support, the centre would not be the fantastic asset it is today. Funding helps towards new buildings, running the museum and general costs. There's no doubt places like Thornbury keep small communities alive, united in a quest.



Thornbury Vintage Tractor and Implement Club president Fraser Pearce.



The Thornbury Rural Heritage Centre is always looking for new members.

The centre is open every Sunday and public holidays from 1.30pm to 4.30pm or by arrangement on 0210385196. Come in and have a chat with them.



The 1914 Avery tractor with, from left, Jack McKenzie, George Paterson and Jack Anderson. These gentlemen were the club's foundation members and each has a shed named after him.





# Working in the wake of disaster

While Southland was working out how to deal with a water shortage situation, Auckland, Tarawhiti, Hawkes Bay and Northland suffered widespread catastrophic floods.

On 27 January 2023, after one of the wettest Januaries on record, there was rainfall of between 230mm and 260mm. NIWA reported this as an entire summer's worth of rain falling in one day, with over 400% of normal rain for the month.

We could all see the devastation on our televisions and as expected there was an immediate need for emergency management staff from across New Zealand. Emergency Management Southland provided staff to the National Emergency Management Agency, which was deployed to assist Northland and Auckland.

The Auckland response encompassed more than 100 staff from all over New Zealand, as well as the incumbent Auckland Emergency Management staff, and was situated over three levels of the Bledisloe building in the middle of CBD Auckland.

One of our emergency management advisors Mallory Wood was deployed to Auckland.

Mallory says:

"I was deployed in a public information management (PIM) role and was tasked with looking after the Auckland Emergency Management social media pages; Facebook and Twitter; along with their website and daily media briefings. This involved working with other functions within the Emergency Co-ordination Centre to ensure timely communications were released along with monitoring messages coming in from the public.

"I gained some excellent experience and worked with specialist staff from around New Zealand. As I was deployed for the January flood event, I had returned home before Cyclone Gabrielle hit New Zealand.

"My thoughts have been with those

who lost their life, those affected by the cyclone, and everyone spending countless hours responding to and recovering from this event."

On Mallory's return Tracey Fraser, our response advisor, was also deployed to Auckland.

Tracey says:

"My task was to assist in the welfare function, ensuring that people of Auckland had their needs assessed so their basic needs were met, eg, emergency accommodation.

"I was rostered in the ECC for the entirety of my deployment so didn't have the opportunity to see the affected suburbs first hand. However, the contact centre and community support hubs needs assessments were sent into the ECC via my desk. To read the complexity of some of the needs was quite heart-breaking. The response is a great learning environment, but an absolute rollercoaster ride of challenges, frustrations, and solutions. However, what shone through was the teamwork that was exhibited by staff from all over New Zealand."

Also deployed to Auckland were resilience team leader Aly Curd, who arrived in Auckland the day before Cyclone Gabrielle hit, and later group controller Simon Mapp.

Response team leader Craig Sinclair was deployed to Kaikohe and later Hawke's Bay.

Craig says:

"Working at a small council in the Far North like Kaikohe was a very rewarding experience. After 10 days there were still 2000 homes without power. I recall vividly the welfare manager shouting, 'Yes we have power at home' as her area came back onto the grid, after eight days without it.

"I came home for a short rest and then went back to Hawke's Bay as the emergency operations centre liaison. I got to see a number of the Hawke's Bay council staff working very hard to support their very grateful communities."

Craig reflects that "communities activate as soon as they are able to, to help people and they do that very well. The civil defence machine needs time to wind up and get further aid to where it is needed, so the better prepared we can make communities the easier it is to get them to a place where they can recover from that adversity."

Having returned to Southland from around the North Island there are a number of lessons that we learnt that could be adopted here.

One of the most important parts of any response is the correct training of wider council staff. As a shared service of the four councils, EMS provides the emergency management training to Southland council staff. EMS is currently training staff from the four councils with a more extensive training regime than ever before. When there is an emergency in Southland it is council staff who are relied on to respond.





# Community barbecues



Despite being busy Emergency Management Southland has been getting out there in the community, holding barbecues in a new initiative to meet local people in a friendly, non-pressured environment and discuss preparedness and community response planning.

Working with our partners at Fire and Emergency New Zealand and the Rural Support Trust, we have held several barbecues including – one in Tuatapere and one in Edendale – where we had some really fantastic conversations which are kickstarting work to update local Community Response Plans.

Barbecues have also been held in Gore, Mossburn and Wyndham.

## AF8 Roadshow

At the time of writing, the AF8 Roadshow returned to Southland.

Last held in 2021, the AF8 Roadshow is a series of public talks by leading Alpine Fault scientists about the likely hazard impacts of an Alpine Fault earthquake. While we can't predict earthquakes, scientific research indicates there is a 75% probability of an Alpine Fault

earthquake occurring in the next 50 years and an 80% chance it will be a magnitude 8+ event. This is likely to have major short and long-term impacts.

All sessions were free, and everyone was welcome to attend.

The AF8 roadshow started on March 20 in Te Anau, Winton and Tuatapere.



## BE PREPARED

After the deployments in the North Island, Simon Mapp was at ILT Stadium Southland along with the Sunrise Rotary Urban Water Quality Team in the entrance to the Multicultural Food Festival.

With the North Island's weather events in everyone's minds, Simon reminded people to "get the flood out" in times of flood. Get the Flood Out is national messaging that provides guidance for people caught in flooding, such as don't drive through flood waters.

Simon also provided readiness information and advice to Southlanders. He always enjoys hearing what Southlanders have done to prepare themselves for emergencies.

Simon says:

"A lady proudly showed me a copy of all of her medication which was

laminated and in her purse, should she not be able to get home.

"Three young sisters told me they were going home to make a plan with the magnetic emergency management plan that we provide. Two of the girls told me they plan to be teachers when leaving school. The third is destined for Hollywood as an actor. It's great to have plans."

How ready are you? Home, work or community – we can all get prepared.

Having knowledge is empowering and will help with preparedness. Make a plan and check out our website at [cdssouthland.nz](http://cdssouthland.nz) and keep up to date



Group controller Simon Mapp

with the latest information at Emergency Management Southland for hazards from earthquakes, floods, landslides etc to evacuation, no water, roadblocks and caring for your pets. Check out your team at EMS and you will also find helpful links there too.

While books remain the bastion of libraries, the modern version is a revamped world of community engagement and connection.

You'd be hard pressed to find a stern librarian telling you to 'shh' – in fact, singing and laughter often resonates instead.

And that's the sign of a job well done for Southland District Libraries culture and community co-ordinator Tash Edgar.

Since moving to Southland to take up the role two years ago, Natasha has been tasked with initiating a range of programmes at libraries throughout the district, including Storytime, Wriggle and Rhyme, Manga Club, Bookworms, Brick Club, holiday programmes and author or performer visits.

"I truly love my job," she says.

**"It's all about interacting with people in the community. There is a real wellbeing aspect to what we do and we are making meaningful connections with over 500 people in the community per month through our programmes and outreach."**

Programme attendance had grown substantially in recent months.

"The community responses are always so positive," Tash says.

"For example, our Brick Club in Wyndham has been moved to the community hall as we outgrew the space in the library and our holiday programmes are at capacity.

"We engage with 50 kids a week through Brick Club. They are totally without screens for the whole hour and it's tactile fun working with their hands. They share details about their creations and you can see the growth in their confidence – it's fantastic."

Outreach programmes like Wriggle and Rhyme run from Winton Plunket are about community wellbeing as much as parent and child bonding,

# It's a different world in our libraries



Southland District Libraries culture and community co-ordinator Tash Edgar (right) with councillor Sarah Greaney at Te Anau's StoryWalk® opening.

music and learning.

"Some of the most valuable connections happen after the music is over and parents share morning tea together."

Storytime, which started in September in Winton and Te Anau, had already clocked over 500 people.

Designed to promote early literacy and exposure to different texts, along with the joy of being read aloud to, Storytime connects early childhood centres and schools into the library.

"When we take initiatives like Storytime and Manga Club into schools we are exposing young people to library services who may not get the opportunity to visit a library. They get exposure to new and different texts and get to meet and interact with a librarian on a regular basis."

One of the latest projects launched was StoryWalk® at the Te Anau Memorial Gardens, aimed at fostering early literacy skills. It features a picture book story framed page-by-page and mounted on poles along a walkway for families to

discover and enjoy as they walk.

"StoryWalk® is a wonderful way for libraries to promote the joys of reading and explore the great outdoors. The stories are interchangeable so new picture book stories are available to read and discover at different times of the year," Tash says.

**Suzie Burnett**  
– Manga Club at Aparima College

Tash from SDC is a delight. Not only does she bring books to add to our collection, but she also brings a love of books and of reading. Her friendly disposition brings the kids in and it's a delight to do life with her for our Manga Club once a fortnight here at school. I've only got to send word around the class that Tash is here and the kids come in to see what she's bought for them this time. Tash is great at listening to their interests and also in broadening their view of what material they might like.

SDC Libraries through Tash's involvement are a valuable part of our reading community helping our akongā access the materials to enjoy.





**Rochelle Robins**  
– Weka Preschool

Winton Library's Storytime is a true asset and extension of literacy for our Weka children. The warmth and engaging environment makes us feel very welcome to participate. During a learning session the storyteller can judge children's needs, engagement and interaction ensuring she is catering for the appropriate development for the children in attendance. This session is valued by all the Kaiako and tamariki of Weka.

**Nicki Hall**  
– Winton Plunket

Wiggle and Rhyme active movement sessions have been a valued partnership with Plunket in Central Southland for the past five years. It's a wonderful collaboration having Natasha from Southland District Libraries visit our first-time parent group weekly on a Wednesday and delivering these active movement sessions for whanau in our community. The sessions are designed for babies from very young and provide an opportunity for our whanau to practice the skill of serve and return with their babies, encouraging vital brain and physical development through active movement. We know that positive interactions such as these in the first 1,000 days of life form the foundation for a child's entire future, so it's so valuable to have this opportunity available in our rural community for our precious pepi to experience and for their whanau to learn practical and fun ways to support their development.

Alongside this Wiggle and Rhyme creates lovely relationship opportunities for parents and their babies and provides



families attending with vital support and connections with other mums and pepi. At the conclusion of the half-hour session, families are provided with morning tea kindly donated by Country Manor and are encouraged to stay and connect further in the Plunket space with their peers or our Plunket staff for additional support or resources.

Recently we had a pop-up session in the Winton Library, allowing mums to experience the resources on offer in the awesome new space.

The families attending Wiggle and Rhyme love these sessions while the babies enjoy and look forward to engaging in the familiar songs and movements while reaping all the benefits active movement provides.

We warmly welcome any new families to pop along on a Wednesday from 10.30am during term time to experience the fun that is Wiggle and Rhyme.



Sam Hart - Riverton Brick Club

**Shirell Pickering**  
– Brick Club parent

Since our son has been going to Brick Club, which is well over a year, his confidence has increased as well as his independence. I've watched other young ones improve dramatically as well. He loves going there and gets very upset if we can't attend for some reason. My partner summed it up quite well, saying "It is like Toastmasters for six-year olds."

**Gemma Lindsay**  
– Storytime parent

Storytime isn't just about reading books, it's a time when our young ones can come along and explore their imaginations. They love singing to the music with the actions. Tash doesn't just read the books, she has so much excitement to it that the kids just interact with her. You can look and you will see smiles all round. It's definitely a highlight to our week!

## Digital services clicking with customers

Digital library services are also proving very popular as Southland residents get more tech savvy - complementing the range of services on offer to the community.

The digital services provide users with access to thousands of publications from over 100 countries using PressReader and a fantastic selection of eBooks, eAudiobooks and eMagazines using BorrowBox and Libby, and come complementary with every Southland District Library card. Each service comes with its own smartphone app. Training for each of these apps is available in your local library on request.



You may have seen a few surveys floating around the last few months on topics from housing, to tourism, to volunteering. And if you completed one or all of them, thank you!

The data collected will contribute to the Beyond 2025 Southland Regional Long-term Plan, which will be launched on 28 June.

Beyond 2025 is being developed in collaboration with a significant number of stakeholders including government agencies, councils, community groups, iwi, and businesses. Its primary focus is to drive economic development, foster innovation, and create sustainable communities in Southland, all while acknowledging our changing climate and people.

It will set the scene for the next 10 years and shape the future direction of Murihiku Southland, refreshing the Southland Regional Development Strategy (SoRDS), which was released in 2015.

Great South was chosen to facilitate the development of the plan, which was part of the government's Southland Just Transition, preparing the region for the potential closure of



## Beyond 2025 launching in June

the aluminium smelter at Tiwai Point in 2024.

Several long-term strategies, including the Southland Murihiku Regional Energy Strategy 2022 – 2050, which was developed

in partnership with Murihiku Regeneration, will also contribute.

Beyond 2025 Southland project lead Bobbi Brown said the plan was progressing well and discussions around implementation were under way.

## List your event at southlandnz.com

Did you know that if you've got a public event coming up, any kind of event – workshop, exhibition, talk, gig, late-night shopping experience or even a beer-tasting night, you can list that event free of charge on [southlandnz.com](https://southlandnz.com).

Southland NZ is Great South's

Southland promotion brand and where we promote our beautiful region to the rest of New Zealand and the world.

Apart from the fact it is free to list, if your event is there, it could be chosen to feature in one of our newsletters or promotions. We have more than 2,000

visitors to that page each month. It's one of the most visited pages on [southlandnz.com](https://southlandnz.com).

And if you want to know what's on in our beautiful region, the same goes - visit [southlandnz.com](https://southlandnz.com). You'll find more than 100 events of all kinds listed in Your Backyard Events Calendar at any one time. Use this to organise your catch-ups with friends, your work training, and be able to share info with your whanau and friends living afar, to give them more reason to come and visit.

# Events in Southland

Your Back Yard Events Calendar

Check out the online calendar

Discover upcoming events happening in your community!

[southlandnz.com/events-southland](https://southlandnz.com/events-southland)

BACKING EVENTS IN THE SOUTH

**GREAT SOUTH**

Southland Regional Development Agency



From left: Northern Southland College teacher Fleur McKenzie, Southland Youth Futures team manager Renata Gill, Southland District Council Mayor Rob Scott and district councillor Matt Wilson.

# Mock interviews help students prepare for workforce

“Practising being an interviewer is valuable for employers too, and who knows, you may find a potential future employee!”

Job interviews can be nerve-racking for anyone, but Great South's Southland Youth Futures Programme is trying to make it that little bit less scary for those entering the workforce.

As part of activities where students gain a Work Ready Passport, school students have the opportunity to take part in mock interviews to gain confidence and experience before they head out and do the real thing.

Southland District Council Mayor Rob Scott and Councillor Matt Wilson helped out as interviewers of students at Northern Southland College recently.

Southland Youth Futures team manager Renata Gill said students were often pleasantly surprised.

“They can be super nervous when they go in and then when they come out they're like, ‘that was really fun’, or definitely not as scary as they thought it would be.”

As well as being of benefit to students, the opportunity allowed employers to connect with a potential future workforce.

**If you are an employer and would like to help our Southland Youth Futures team with a future event as an interviewer, please contact [syf@greatsouth.nz](mailto:syf@greatsouth.nz)**

# IN FOR THE LONG HAUL



Getting off the ferry in Ship Cove to start the journey



Nevis heading to Garston



Near Athol on the ATMCT

**It's fair to say Erin Keeble loves a challenge, especially when it comes to cycling adventures.**

Her latest achievement saw her tick off the Sounds to Sounds brevet – a 1500km excursion from Queen Charlotte Sound at the top of the South Island through to Milford Sound.

If the length wasn't impressive enough, Erin managed to complete her mission in just nine days.

"A brevet is not a race. It's a ride following a set course which you must complete in between five and 20 days. I was aiming for 10 days so it was definitely a highlight to finish a day ahead of schedule," she says.

"I wanted to see how I'd go biking reasonably long distances for an extended period of time. I love being self-sufficient by having everything you need with you, including clothes and a sleep system, and the added challenge of buying food and drink along the way depending on what's open when you get there – all while biking through some remarkably beautiful places and tough terrain."

Scenic highlights along the way included McKenzie Pass and the Omarama Saddle, mixed in with some tough terrain like the Nevis and remote Molesworth Station.

"It tests your determination and grit. After a while it becomes mind over matter," Erin says.

"The biggest challenge was not looking further ahead than each day, as otherwise it was easy to become overwhelmed. Eating enough can also be difficult."

When she eventually linked with Southland's Around the Mountains Cycle Trail, it felt like coming home.

"I'm still undecided as to whether or not it was better or worse knowing what was coming – particularly the headwind into Mossburn. But being on the trail made it much easier as you didn't have to worry about vehicles."

Together with the Sound to Sound contingent, riders were completing Tour Aotearoa, which utilises parts of the ATMCT.

"There were also many tour groups using the trail. Cycling brings a different kind of visitor to the area – people who stop in the small towns and in between for food and accommodation – which makes it such an asset for Southland."

As for her favourite section of the trail?

"The bridge near Athol is fairly impressive. I've previously done the section between Walter Peak and Mavora Lakes, which is pretty spectacular."

"We have some incredible cycling

assets developed now to enjoy. The Lake2Lake Trail between Te Anau and Manapouri is a great regular ride as well and I loved the Wilderness Trail on the West Coast, which I did as part of a biking trip training for S2S."

Cycling has become a passion over the past 10 years and Erin is already planning the next adventure.

"I first started doing multi-day, long-distance cycling in 2013 with a trip to Georgia in Eastern Europe over the Abano Pass, one of the most dangerous roads in the world," she says.

**"I love that cycling is something everyone can do; it's the best way to travel."**

Erin Keeble





# LET US KNOW

If you have any issue you would like to report to Council, or would like to make a general inquiry or provide feedback, you can lodge a request for service (RFS) with Council.

These requests will be actioned during business hours.

## You can either:

- Do it online:  
[southlanddc.govt.nz/services/do-it-online/requests-and-feedback/](https://southlanddc.govt.nz/services/do-it-online/requests-and-feedback/)
- Phone us on **0800 732 732**
- Email us on [contactcs@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:contactcs@southlanddc.govt.nz)
- Download the Antenno app from your favourite app store to report issues and receive important messages about your area



# FOR ALL BUILDING INQUIRIES

To book a building inspection, contact us 72 hours before you require an inspection.

Email: [building-cs@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:building-cs@southlanddc.govt.nz)

Book online: go to the SDC website and select 'Request a building inspection online' from the home page

Phone: **0800 732 732**

## How it works

If you need an inspection on a Thursday, contact us no later than 5pm on the Monday beforehand, and preferably earlier than this. See the table.

Book inspection no later than 5pm on	Inspection day following booking
Monday	Thursday
Tuesday	Friday
Wednesday	Monday
Thursday	Tuesday
Friday	Wednesday

SDC's building solutions team receives a lot of communication. We highly value our contact with our customers, but so we can efficiently process and record it all we ask that all inquiries regarding inspection notices be emailed to us at: [building-cs@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:building-cs@southlanddc.govt.nz)

# MICROCHIPPING TIMETABLE

AREA	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST
Invercargill Office (car park)	Wednesday, 10th 11.30 – 12 noon	Wednesday, 7th 11.30 – 12 noon	None	Wednesday 2nd 11.30 – 12 noon
Otautau Office (at rear)	Tuesday 16th 11.30 – 12 noon	Tuesday 6th 11.30 – 12 noon	Tuesday 4th 11.30 – 12 noon	None
Lumsden Railway (at rear)	Wednesday 3rd 11.30 – 12 noon	Wednesday 7th 11.30 – 12 noon	Wednesday 5th 11.30 – 12 noon	None
Riverton Office	Thursday 18th 11.30 – 12 noon	Thursday 8th 11.30 – 12 noon	Thursday 6th 11.30 – 12 noon	None
Winton (Wemyss street)	Tuesday, 9th 11.30 – 12 noon	Tuesday, 13th 11.30 – 12 noon	None	Tuesday 8th 11.30 – 12 noon
Te Anau Office (at rear)	Thursday, 11th 11.30 – 12 noon	Thursday 15th 11.30 – 12 noon	Thursday, 13th 11.30 – 12 noon	None
Wyndham Office (at rear)	None	Tuesday 13th 2.00 – 2.30 pm	None	Tuesday 8th 2.00 – 2.30 pm

All dogs eligible to be registered with Southland District Council can be microchipped for free.  
All dogs must be registered by three months of age.

# Better off with funding

A number of community projects will benefit from up to \$4.8 million approved for Southland from the first portion of Better Off funding.

Our nine community boards, together with Southland District Council, have identified a range of projects throughout the region which cover community wellbeing, resilience and growth planning as well as some infrastructure projects.

Projects are all at varying stages of planning and community engagement and we're excited to see them progress.

## NORTHERN

### LUMSDEN PLAYGROUND/SKATEPARK UPGRADE

Upgrade the existing playground and skatepark which sits alongside the railway precinct.

### MOSSBURN TENNIS COURTS

Resurface two existing tennis courts to create multi-use courts for tennis, netball and basketball.

### ATHOL TENNIS COURTS

Resurface the existing tennis court into a multiuse site where tennis, netball and basketball can be played.

### GARSTON BARBECUE

Install a BBQ, shade, seating and interpretation panels at the former Garston Community Hall site to celebrate the history of the area.

### LUMSDEN MUSEUM REDEVELOPMENT

To assist with the design phase of the possible Lumsden museum redevelopment project.

## WALLACE TAKITIMU

### OHAI AND NIGHTCAPS WALKING TRACK INVESTIGATION

Investigate the feasibility of creating a walking/biking track between Ohai and Nightcaps.

### SPATIAL PLAN – MCGREGOR PARK NIGHTCAPS

Develop a spatial plan for McGregor Park to assist with planning around recreational activities and amenities.

## ARDLUSSA

### WAIKAIA FOREST TRAILS

Support the development of the Waikaia Forest Trails mountain bike trail project and associated hub in the Waikaia Forest and Waikaia Village.

### RIVERSDALE TENNIS COURTS UPGRADE

Support the Riversdale Tennis Club to resurface a number of tennis courts.

### BALFOUR BASKETBALL HOOP AND HALF COURT CONCRETE PAD

Install a new half court concrete pad and basketball hoop to be located at the same site as the new pump track and existing playground.

### BALFOUR FESTIVE LIGHTS

Purchase and install new festive lights.

### WAIKAIA WALKING TRAIL INVESTIGATION

Investigate a walking track from Waikaia village to the cemetery.

## ORETI

### COMMUNITY HALL UPGRADES

Upgrade Limehills, Dipton, Ryal Bush and Winton halls. These halls have high usage, community engagement and support.

### WALLACETOWN – UPGRADING/IMPROVING PLAY FACILITIES

Shift the playground from Gwen Baker reserve to the community centre. Install a skate/bike/pump track.

Community engagement about whether this project will proceed is planned.

## What is Better Off funding?

The Better Off package is an 'investment by the Crown into the future for local government and community wellbeing; and, in recognition of the significance to the local government sector (and the communities they serve) of the transfer of responsibility for water service delivery.'

## What projects have been approved?

The table below lists the projects that are to receive an investment from Better Off funding.

## WAIHOPAI TOETOE

### RUSSELL SQUARE DEVELOPMENT – WYNDHAM

Development in Russell Square likely to be community-led with support from the community board.

### TOKANUI SKATE PARK

Stage two development at the existing skate park

### MOKORETA REDAN HALL UPGRADE

Upgrades required to amenities to make it more user friendly and meet the needs of users.

### FOOTPATHS

For the completion of footpath projects that are in the long-term plan but no longer have the funding for the projects that was budgeted for from Waka Kotahi.

## ORAKA APARIMA

### RIVERTON, TARAMEA BAY AND COLAC BAY IMPROVEMENTS

Funding is channeled to projects that support the outcomes of enhancing play and recreation in Taramea Bay, greater access to Colac Bay beach and the enhancement of Riverton's main street.

## FIORDLAND

### PARKS IMPROVEMENTS

Te Anau and Manapouri open space improvements, including replacing outdated play pieces, incorporating new play pieces and providing greater opportunities for active recreation.

## TUATAPERE TE WAEWAE

### TUATAPERE HISTORIC RAILWAY STATION

Upgrading the rail station building to make it visitor safe and enhance the visual appeal of the building.

Landscape the area and connect it with existing local walking tracks, create a focal point and highlight the historic rail building.

## STEWART ISLAND/RAKIURA

### BUTTERFIELD'S BEACH WALKING TRACK

Stage two of the walking track to improve safety for walkers who currently use the road and road shoulders. Butterfields Beach is a popular destination on the island for both visitors and locals.

## COUNCIL

### SPATIAL PLANNING PROGRAMME

Spatial planning will involve aggregating existing data held by council, identifying data gaps, establishing a programme of work to collect new data and the federation of datasets to develop a GIS based spatial plan.

### ASSIST MURIHIKU RUNANGA WITH FUTURE PLANNING SUPPORT

Contract a suitable person to work with the four Papatipu Runanga of Murihiku over the next 12 to 15 months and understand the plans and expectations for the future. The role will also be to facilitate clear and timely engagement between Council staff and the Runanga in relation to the planning of other projects being prepared.



Southland District Council has a range of scholarships and grants available for residents of Southland District.

Full details, criteria and application forms are available on our website:

[southlanddc.govt.nz](http://southlanddc.govt.nz) > My Council > Funding & Grants

For more information on any of these funds and scholarships, call Kathryn Cowie on 0800 732 732.

# SDC GRANT FUNDING

## Community Partnership Fund

Administered by each of the nine community boards and available to support projects in their respective areas. Closing dates and application forms can be found online at [southlanddc.govt.nz/cpf](http://southlanddc.govt.nz/cpf).

## Creative Communities

Available for arts and cultural projects and initiatives which stimulate and strengthen local arts activity and participation.

Applications close 31 March and 30 September.

## Sport NZ – Rural Travel Fund

Available to assist with transport expenses associated with participating in regular local competitions. Ages 5-19.

Applications close 31 March and 30 September.

## District Initiatives Fund

Available for projects of a larger scale which benefit the whole region, or at least two community board areas. Applications close on 31 March and 30 September.

## SDC Scholarships/ Bursaries

### Centennial Bursary

Two scholarships valued at \$2,000 each, awarded annually. Applications close 20 December.

### SDC Eric Hawkes Memorial Outward Bound Scholarship

Two scholarships in this category: one for 18 to 26 years and one for 27 years and over. Applications close 20 December.

### Valmai Robertson Arts Scholarship

Contestable fund of up to \$2,500 annually. Applications close 20 December.

## Other opportunities

### Northern Southland Development Fund

Available for the development of initiatives which benefit the residents of the Northern Southland Development Fund area (represented by the Southland District Council Five Rivers ward and the Dipton Community Levy area). Applications close 31 March.

### Stewart Island/Rakiura Visitor Levy Fund

Available to support activities and facilities for the benefit of visitors to Stewart Island; and activities and facilities that mitigate the adverse effects of visitors on the environment. Applications close 31 March each year.

### Ohai Railway Fund

Available for residents of the former Ohai Railway Board area, for the development of community facilities, programmes and other activities, tertiary education and employment training. Applications close 31 March and 30 September.

### John Beange Fund

Available to support recognised community groups or organisations and individuals within the Wyndham area, or for projects for the benefit of residents within the Wyndham area. Eligible purposes include assistance occasioned by age, illness, congenital defect, accident or other misfortune, as well as the advancement of education and learning. Applications for 2021 close on 31 March.

## Contact us



All offices: **0800 732 732**

District libraries: **0800 732 542**



**[funding@southlanddc.govt.nz](mailto:funding@southlanddc.govt.nz)**



**[southlanddc.govt.nz](http://southlanddc.govt.nz)**

# Scholarship gets gymnast to Hawaii



Amber Horwood

**T**alented Southland gymnast Amber Horwood was awarded the 2022 Valmai Robertson Arts Scholarship.

The scholarship is awarded annually to Southland district residents who participate in a creative field such as gymnastics or dance. The scholarship goes towards helping individuals enhance their creative passions through developing skills.

Amber used the scholarship to travel to Hawaii for the Gymnastics in Paradise

and the Aloha Gymfest competitions earlier this year.

Hailing from Jersey, in the Channel Islands between England and France, Amber and her family moved to the Southland district in 2018, where she started gymnastics at age nine, training once a week. Soon, Amber began competing and training sessions ramped up to an impressive 23 hours a week over five days, with regular competitions.

Finding inspiration in gymnastics superstars Simone Biles and Sunisa Lee, Amber is committed to the demands of the sport, all while managing her fantastic marks at school. "I've developed pretty good time management skills," she says. "I do procrastinate a lot, but I haven't had any issues yet, so far!"

One of Amber's strong points in her gymnastics is the floor routines. "(My favourite) changes a lot but in comp(etitions) I'd say my favourite is floor because you push yourself more. I find it's the most interesting to watch compared to the other disciplines."

While Amber didn't expect to get this far in her gymnastics career, she says travelling and meeting new people who are all in similar situations as her is one of the highlights of her career so far. Getting chosen for the Hawaii competitions and competing in level 9, as the only gymnast from her club in Invercargill, is something to be proud of. "I didn't expect that. It was pretty amazing."

Although the Invercargill Gymnastics Club is smaller in comparison to others around the country, Amber is glad to have their support backing her in her gymnastics endeavours. Her father, Bruce, is also on the board at the Invercargill club.

Amber is in her last two years of school, and is keeping her options open for her future.

"I do a range of subjects so I'm not too sure what I want to go into. All the experience from gymnastics after all these years, I could put into physio. Quite a lot of gymnasts go into that or are in that sort of area."

