



## A storybook adventure

If you are looking for adventure and you have small children (or even if you're a big kid), you might like to visit the Martinborough StoryWalk® this summer.

The StoryWalk® is a popular concept overseas which aims to combine physical exercise, nature and a love of reading. Using a series of posts, it tells a story along an established walkway page by page, weaving a narrative for the follower.

One of these walks has been placed in Considine Park. It was funded by The Friends of Martinborough Library, and developed in consultation with the Wairarapa Library Service, with help from the Martinborough Menz Shed.

WLS librarian Sylvia Arnold said that the walk embedded a range of early literacy skills.

"For example, as you move from post to post to read the next page of the story, a sense of anticipation builds. It is a fun activity that increases the joy of reading,"

The first story to be featured is Mr Phelps' Fish Truck, written by local author Phillip Percy and illustrated by Dale Percy.

The walk is expected to get plenty of use from Martinborough School, pool users, and a number of day care centres nearby.

The StoryWalk® project was created by Anne Ferguson of Montpelier, VT and developed in collaboration with Kellogg-Hubbard Library. StoryWalk® is a registered service mark owned by Ms. Ferguson.



## Chief Executive's message



Hello! I hope you have all had the chance to enjoy a bit of sun and a well-earned break, as we head into another year.

I have spent time thinking about the year we've just had. It was a rollercoaster year, with major weather events and its consequences, a new Council with lots of new faces, and, behind the scenes, quiet initiatives and major work that makes our lives better.

One of these initiatives is our long-awaited new animal pound which is being built at the former Featherston golf course. It will be modern and up to date, and we cannot wait to share it with you.

Another quiet improvement were two digital investments – a new building consents platform, and Plotbox, that stores our newly digitised cemetery records and offers plot location details. There is also a lot of work that staff quietly do to maintain and improve our existing parks, pools, buildings and services. New seats, trees, murals and skatepark repairs to name a few. All of them make life just a little brighter.

Covid has heightened our awareness of the need for a well-functioning society, which is where our community development team come in. Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs placed more than 40 young people in permanent jobs last year, and we are also hoping to give youth a greater voice in local government by jointly developing with other councils the Wairarapa-wide Rangatahi Youth Strategy. We also received funding to become one of the 'Welcoming Communities', an Immigration NZ-led programme that will make newcomers to our district feel more welcome and help them settle in better. And for the first time, we appointed a Māori advisor (Pou Māori) Leanne Karauna, who has already been instrumental in strengthening our relationships with our Treaty partners.

It remains to be seen if we will be as battered by difficult weather this year as we were last year. My most vivid memory of this time was the Hinekura Road landslide, and our work continues to support the surrounding householders whose only other access routes are less than optimal. I sincerely thank our customer service and roading staff and contractors who really went above and beyond last winter.

Pressure on our natural resources will continue and so this year there will be a big focus on water conservation and leaks. The water space is very active, with Wellington Water kicking off a new consent process for a new wastewater treatment plant. This is part of Featherston's wider wastewater solution. Featherston is also in the limelight because of the "Masterplan" being done by our planners to cater for its long-term growth. Formal consultation is expected in the first half of this year.

There will also be a variety of opportunities this year for Council to listen to the views and opinion of our community through consultation and engagement.

That's just a smattering of the work that lies ahead of us this year (Three Waters, anyone?) but I have confidence we will handle it well, with your support.

I wish you all a fabulous New Year.

Ngā mihi

**Harry Wilson**  
*Chief Executive*

## Toxic algae - A message for dog walkers and swimmers

Every year toxic algae is a risk that swimmers and dog walkers have to watch for at their favourite river spots.

If ingested, a piece the size of a 50 cent coin can kill a dog.

Toxic algae is monitored during the summer months by Greater Wellington. So far this year, most sites in the region have very low levels of toxic algae cover of the river bed (around 5 per cent).



But as the weather becomes warmer, the algae flourishes and there are many sites - including ones in the South Wairarapa - that can reach "caution" status (20 per cent of toxic algae cover), posing a risk to dogs.

At 50 per cent, the site becomes "unsuitable for swimming".

You can check the status of your favourite river sites at [www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/swimming/](http://www.lawa.org.nz/explore-data/swimming/)

Other factors can also raise the alert level, regardless of toxic algae cover. If algae "mats" become detached from the river bed, they can wash up on the riverbanks where they pose a huge risk to dogs.

And if there has been a heavy downpour, swimmers are advised to wait for 48 hours, in case bacterial contamination has been washed into the river.

If you're a dog owner, it's particularly important to know what toxic algae looks like. Go to GWRC's website [www.gw.govt.nz/environment/freshwater/swimming-water-quality/toxic-algae](http://www.gw.govt.nz/environment/freshwater/swimming-water-quality/toxic-algae)

## Paying online? We need your help!

With more people making electronic payments, it is vital that you use the correct payment references so our system can automatically match and allocate your payments.

There are three fields available when making an electronic payment - Particulars, Code and Reference. We need to streamline the details to show on our bank statement.

This is how your payment details should look

- **Particulars** - this should be your SURNAME or Company name
- **Code** - the word RATES
- **Reference** - this should be your valuation reference number - it starts with 18 and is found under the property details (blue section) on the left-hand side of your rates instalment notice.

If you are paying for multiple properties, please leave the reference field blank and email [accounts@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:accounts@swdc.govt.nz) with the valuation numbers for the rates accounts you are paying. We do need to receive these details as close to the payment date as possible.

If you are making payments for any other service (such as dog registration, water account or a sundry invoice), please ensure you update the payment details accordingly.

Please do not include details such as your address or any other numbers including your customer ID or the old rating unit numbers. Payments for multiple services are manually allocated and unnecessary information increases work leading to processing delays.

If you are unsure what references to use, please call us on **06 306 9611** or email [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz)



## Be a Leaks Detector!

It's surprising that even though we've had a soggy start to summer, water conservation is still required.

Our water services provider Wellington Water uses a restriction levels system from Level 1 to 4 to protect our valuable water supplies. South Wairarapa is always at least at Level 1, which means restricted use of sprinklers every second day between 6-8am and 7-9pm.

This summer major drought conditions are not forecast, but there are other factors that may lead to water restrictions. A key one is water loss: around 40 per cent of our household water disappears back into the ground through leaking pipes. In part, this is due to their age, many of which were installed around the same time and are coming up or overdue for renewal. That is Council's responsibility and in the last year we have made a multi-million dollar investment in the pipe network.

Wellington Water has also increased its focus on leaks. The organisation has dedicated people working on leak detection and repairs.

However, we need your help. Many leaks are on private land and that means we need residents to be on the lookout. If Council staff or Wellington Water find that a leak is on private land, they let the homeowner know so they can fix them, as that is outside Council and Wellington Water's remit.



You can be a leaks inspector as well. Is there a patch of ground that is always soggy, even in dry conditions? Is there a tap, inside or outside the home that leaks? The back of the dishwasher is often a place to look. Is there water seeping through cracks in the driveway or concrete. Can you hear running water inside your home when no taps, hoses or showers are on? You may have a leak.

One of the best tests is to turn your water off at the toby and check whether it's still running when nothing is on. Homeowners have a generous but not unlimited water allowance built into their rates. Going over the limit may incur a water charge after the annual meter read in winter. If you fix your leak, you can use your plumber's bill to request a waiver on excess water charged for as a result of the leak.

South Wairarapa has a comparably small water network, so fixing one or two big leaks or even a series of smaller ones can have a big impact. Two or three leaks of around one litre per second can easily be 10-15 per cent or more of an area's total water supply.

For more on leaks and how Wellington Water prioritises its leaks programme, please go to our website's dedicated leaks page at [www.swdc.govt.nz](http://www.swdc.govt.nz) or visit the Wellington Water website ([www.wellingtonwater.co.nz](http://www.wellingtonwater.co.nz)) under the 'Fixing Leaks' section.

## Rebates 2022/23

The Rates Rebate Scheme provides a rebate of up to \$700.00 for low income earners. Ratepayers must have been living in the home they own on 1 July 2022.

1. Your rebate will be calculated based on your gross income from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, your rates, and the number of dependants you have. The income eligibility for a rebate is \$28,080 - \$42,000.
2. You must provide details of income from your income provider for ALL forms of income, including interest and dividends. If requested by the Department of Internal Affairs you must provide proof of this income. Application forms will be sent to those who have previously received a rebate in 2021/22. Copies of the form can be obtained from the Council office in Martinborough, Greytown and Featherston libraries, or online [www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms) and can be obtained by calling 06 306 9611.

## Get your rates invoice by email

If you wish to receive your rates notice by email contact [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz)

We encourage you to take up this option to allow Council to use the postage savings on projects that benefit the district.

## Having trouble paying your rates?

Please contact us as soon as possible so we can work with you on a payment plan. Council's policy is to approach banks and legal representatives to assist us in recovering arrears at the end of the rating year.

For any queries regarding your rates, please contact our rates team at the following email address: [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz)

## Payment by direct debit

Council encourages ratepayers to pay rates via direct debit as this ensures the correct amount is paid and you avoid paying penalties for late payment.

We offer **weekly, fortnightly, monthly or quarterly direct debit options** to pay rates. Direct debit is the easiest way to pay your rates as we withdraw the funds directly from your bank account at the very last minute. That way you will get the benefit of your funds for the longest time and avoid penalties. If you would like to pay using

this method, forms are available from the Featherston and Greytown libraries, as well as the Council office in Martinborough and on our website

[www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms](http://www.swdc.govt.nz/services/forms). All you need to do is complete the form and send it to SWDC, PO Box 6, Martinborough 5741, or scan and email it to [rates@swdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@swdc.govt.nz) or drop it off at either the Council office in Martinborough or at the Featherston or Greytown libraries.

## Rates 2022/23 Instalment Three

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Enclosed with this newsletter is the rates invoice covering the period 1 January to 31 March 2023.

The last day for payment is 20 February 2023. Please pay by this date to avoid the 10% penalty.

Please help us to process payments by ensuring you include the property valuation number for all properties you are paying for. If paying online please make a separate payment for each property.



GET IT  
SORTED

Something needs fixing?  
Let us know...

To South Wairarapa District Council,  
P.O. Box 6, Martinborough 5741

### From:

First name

Surname

What's the problem?

Where exactly?

Street or Road name and number

Your phone number (Should we need to contact you to clarify the details)