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### EDITORIAL

We welcome your stories and story tips. If supplying photographs we require high resolution (a minimum of 1MB) jpgs. Please note that due to occasional space constraints, sports results/draws may not be published.

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#### LETTER & THUMBS RULES

No Letters to the Editor or Thumbs Up/Down will be published unless the name of writer, full address and daytime contact phone number are included for verification. **Nom-de-plumes/pen names will not be accepted.** Letters and Thumbs Up/Down are published at the editor's discretion and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Waitomo News. In general, Thumbs Up are to acknowledge random acts of kindness while Thumbs Down generally reflect the opposite – they should be 50 words or less. Should you have a complaint regarding a business, please address that with the owner/s rather than via these columns. The editor reserves the right to abridge letters and they should be no longer than 300 words. Letters and Thumbs Up/Down can be sent to The Editor, Waitomo News, PO Box 279, Te Kuiti, fax (07) 878 1187, or email [editor@waitomoneews.co.nz](mailto:editor@waitomoneews.co.nz)

# Youth council for Otorohanga

A GROUP of community-minded Otorohanga youth are meeting today to form the district's first ever youth council.

Designed to encourage leadership, social responsibility and positive action for young people, youth councils also provide those involved with the opportunity to have their opinions heard on local issues, and plan events that benefit the entire community.

The concept has been operating throughout the country since 2009.

Otorohanga's youth council will be led by Otorohanga District Council services manager Roger Brady, mentors Kylie Mouat (Otorohanga District Development Board), Nigel Chetty (Otorohanga Community Board) and Otorohanga's former Tuia rangatahi leader Sashtree Montgomery.

Mayor Max Baxter says a number of meetings have been held recently to gauge interest in the idea with seven young people keen to establish a council.

They are: Bayley Graham, Angeliq Benson, Courtney Lowe, Kasey Toa, Kayla van der Hoek, Santana Winikerei and Tori Koroheke.

"We've decided to give young peo-

ple the opportunity to see how the district council is run, how they can run their own council and how they can contribute to their community," says Mr Baxter.

"Basically, it's about giving youth a platform to have their voices heard while also raising awareness about the contribution they can make in the district, and learning valuable lessons about business protocol.

"And although it's only in its infancy here, Roger Brady's objective is to make the Otorohanga Youth Council one of the best in the country."

Mr Baxter says as the youth council grows he hopes a wide range of young people will be represented around the table including college aged students, tertiary students and those in the work force.

"Once the youth council really gets going I'm sure more and more young people will become involved creating a culture in our district that they are highly valued members of the community," says Mr Baxter.

"The establishment of a youth council will also show young people that they don't have to be the best sportsman or the greatest academic



**TOP IDEA:** Otorohanga mayor Max Baxter says a new youth council for the district is a great concept that has "his full support".

because anyone, if they're prepared to put their hand up, can contribute towards the betterment of the district. It's a great concept that gets my full support."

He says once the youth council is fully established, members will meet once a year with the district council to provide updates on their progress.

# WDC calls for submissions

WAITOMO District Council is now taking public submissions on its 2014/2015 Draft Exceptions Annual Plan.

Released today, the DEAP pertains to year three of the council's 2012-2022 Long Term Plan.

The local Government Act 2002 requires councils to produce a LTP with a 10-year planning horizon and review it every three years.

The key aspects of the plan follow the programmes and projects set out for the coming year including the economic development of the district, restoration of Te Kuiti's railway buildings and core infrastructure upgrades.

Other areas of focus are the upcoming legislative changes to the Earthquake-prone Buildings Amendment Bill, the Local Government Act and swimming pool fencing regulations.

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says the DEAP works towards the council's vision of creating a better future with vibrant communities and thriving business.

"This draft plan forecasts an average rate increase of 2.9 percent for all properties in the district against the original LTP forecast of 7.6 percent for the 2014/2015 financial year," says Mr Hanna.

"This has been made possible by taking advantage of opportunities on various fronts like favourable interest rates, lower

insurance premiums and more efficient service delivery."

In an effort to achieve the council's "better future" vision, he says the council has set out a number of key objectives including being the driver of community connectivity, supporting stakeholder relationships and being a part of regional leadership.

"The 2013 census figures show that the population of our district has decreased slightly since 2006.

"It is crucial for the future of our communities that we create a vibrant and thriving environment where people would choose to come and live, work or visit.

"Some examples of what we're working towards are leveraging arising tourism opportunities like the Timber Trail and Hairy Feet Waitomo by improving signage in the district and promoting the range of job opportunities available here.

"But we all have a role to play in growing and developing our district so you are invited to share any thoughts you may have on the proposals in the draft plan."

Public submissions can be made to council from today until 5pm on May 8.

Hearings will be heard in council on May 22.

For more information about the proposals in the 2014/2015 DEAP or making a public submission visit the website – [waitomo.govt.nz](http://waitomo.govt.nz) or call 0800 932 4357.

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