

Council moves on internet initiatives

WAITOMO District Council is applying for funding to make Ultra Fast Broadband (UFB) available to more local residents.

The Government recently announced an extension to the Ultra Fast Broadband (UFB) and Rural Broadband Initiative (RBI) which aims to deliver faster broadband to 98% of New Zealanders by 2020.

Between \$152 million and \$210 million has been committed for the UFB extension which will deploy fibre to additional towns and urban areas outside of the existing UFB footprint, to achieve at least 80% population coverage.

In 2013, the census recorded that only about 50-60% of households in Te Kuiti had access to the internet.

The Government has also committed an additional \$100 million to extend the RBI initiative in rural areas where connections fall outside the UFB footprint.

The council will submit a Registration of Interest (ROI) which, following a competitive bid process, will help the Government decide which areas receive a UFB extension.

With the RBI programme, the Government will seek input from communities, councils and service providers, and the fund will be allocated through a tender process.

In a report to the council, corporate services manager Helen Beever said UFB will assist with economic growth in the district by encouraging new investment into all aspects of business.

"Broadband improvements can provide the district with better access to services that can be delivered remotely [i.e. medical and education services], provision of first world services to international visitors and an empowered and enabled community," she says.

"This initiative also has the opportunity to provide better connectivity to our two key industries – primary and tourism."

She says visitor experiences, in terms of connectivity, at the district's key tourist location of Waitomo Caves is reportedly "poor" and "very slow".

"These visitors are our best means of 'word of mouth' advertising.

"It is in our best interests to improve services to this group as what they communicate to their friends and family is important in securing future business to the district.

"Increased connectivity also enables the take up of new technologies, which can increase productivity.

"UFB could add to the value of our economy and ensure the district is a vibrant place to live and work."

The ROI deadline is July 3.

Speakers inspire kids

MORE than 90 North King Country young leaders were told "life is like a car" when they attended the National Young Leaders Day in Rotorua this month.

"If you don't steer it, you won't go where you want to," guest speaker, double amputee Tony Christiansen told the nearly 1500 primary and intermediate school students who were at the annual event on May 4.

Students from 116 North Island Schools converged on Rotorua's Energy Events Centre for the event.

Mr Christiansen's legs were amputated in 1967, aged nine, after he was hit by a train.

He has since become an internationally acclaimed motivational speaker.

Mr Christiansen, who is the author of three best-selling books, a Tauranga City councillor, a lifeguard, a world-class athlete and the first disabled New Zealand pilot to fly solo – emphasised the importance of self-belief.

"When we are born, we don't know negative words like can't, shouldn't, couldn't, we are taught all of those words by other people," he said.

"It's up to us to choose whether we want to use those words. Believe in yourself and you will break through barriers."

He was joined by other speakers including former All Black captain Buck Shelford, World Vision youth partner manager Chris Jupp and singer-songwriter Jamie McDell.

They all shared stories and insights from their own leadership journeys.

The annual event, run by non-profit organisation – The Parenting Place – aims to spark students' leadership potential.

Since 2001, more than 110,000 Kiwi students



EMPOWERED: Arohena School leaders Paige Roycroft (top left), Leegan Kingi, David Sedicolo, Sophie Gray (front left), Kaine Lasona and Mitchell Jefferies were inspired by motivational speakers at this month's National Young Leaders Day. PHOTO SUPPLIED

have attended National Young Leaders Days.

Other young leaders events are also being held in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, Dunedin and Palmerston North throughout May and June.

For Arohena School principal Rose Symes, sending her students to the event was an easy choice.

"We wanted to further develop our students' leadership qualities, and ultimately, it is a great way to inspire them to good things."

She says speaker William Pike, who was severely injured in a volcanic eruption on Mt Ruapehu in September 2007, was a highlight for the seven year 6-7 students who attended.

"[Mr Pike] was one speaker in particular who stuck out for our students because of what he could achieve no matter the obstacles he's faced," says Ms Symes.

"That's the kind of message we want our youngsters to take away, that they can achieve anything they set their minds to."

Survey out now

WAITOMO District Council (WDC) is seeking feedback from local residents to find out how they would benefit from a better level of internet coverage.

The council is encouraging residents to complete a survey aimed at identifying what services are used at home or at work and the issues people experience with their internet connection.

The information will be used in the

development of a registration of interest to the Government, aimed at prioritising the extension of broadband and mobile coverage for the Waitomo district. The survey was published in the *Waitomo News* on Tuesday (May 19) and is open until May 28.

Survey forms can be returned via WDC's freepost address or by delivering it to the council's Queen St offices, the Waitomo District Library, the i-SITE or by completing it online.

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