

Mayor wants licence testing back in town

WAITOMO mayor Brian Hanna is determined to see restricted and full driver licence testing return to Te Kuiti.

Removed by the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) in 2013, due to lack of variable road conditions (ie: passing lanes, roundabouts, hill starts) local residents now have to travel to Taumarunui or Te Awamutu to sit the tests.

Mr Hanna, however, believes there is enough complexity to test drivers' abilities locally and with a successful learner driving programme operating in Te Kuiti and the Waitomo District Council (WDC) offering to manage bookings, he sees no reason for NZTA to deny his request.

At a meeting with NZTA staff last month, he said there is already enough demand locally to warrant an instructor in Te Kuiti two or three times a month.

"The restricted driver test is a bit more complex now, but as I've said to them [NZTA], if our drivers can work out the intersection by the shearing statue then they can drive anywhere," says Mr Hanna.

"I'm pushing really hard on this because they removed the tests due to lack of complexity, yet they can still be done in Taumarunui.

"We used to do all the bookings. The tester would come down three days a month and be flat stick all day,

which is a system that works better than most other areas.

"So we've said look this is ridiculous, we can't get even get [drivers] into the system in Te Awamutu for up to three months so instead of putting more testers on up there bring it back here."

Mr Hanna says having a driver's licence is critical for a wide range of employment opportunities and to make the testing service available for North King Country residents is "essential".

COSTS

The cost of sitting a restricted licence test (class 1 or 6) is \$134.80 and full licence (class 1 or 6) is \$109.50.

Learner licence tests (class 1 or 6), which are carried out by WDC, cost \$93.90. A resit fee applies for those who fail.

Mr Hanna says due to the tests only being available out of the district, quite often a parent has to take the day off creating extra expenses.

"It's a no brainer.

"It would be so simple to administer for here and I won't take no for an answer."

Mr Hanna says NZTA are currently giving "strong consideration" to his request.

The NZTA had not answered requests for comment as this issue went to print.



TESTING TIMES: Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna is urging the New Zealand Transport Agency to re-establish restricted and full driver licence testing in Te Kuiti.

IN BRIEF

Tractor sales slow

TRACTOR sales dropped by 17% in the first half of 2015 compared to the same period last year. However, the Tractor and Machinery Association (TAMA) predicts a strong recovery over the long term. President Mark Hamilton-Manns says the fall was not unexpected given record sales last year. "While it's a bigger dip than we

expected, we think it's a blip and tractor sales will recover in the second half of the year, although not to the highs we experienced last year."

He says the tractor and machinery industry is in good heart, with companies reporting via a TAMA industry survey that they require nearly 50% more apprentices.

A total of 1465 tractors were brought between January and June, compared to 1770 tractors in the same months last year. The Waikato region saw a decrease in tractor sales for January to June, but still led the way with 238 tractors sold. It was followed by Auckland with 150 purchases and Southland with 125.

"Being tidy is simple"

WHEN asked why being a 'Tidy Kiwi' is important, Keep New Zealand Beautiful general manager Heather Saunderson says the answer is simple.

"It is about social responsibility, and for someone my age, it's about ensuring New Zealand is a better place for my kids.

"Being tidy is simple. It's easy and it's a good way to get stuck in with our communities."

Ms Saunderson is urging North King Country residents to register for the charitable trust's upcoming Clean Up Week from September 14-20.

Now in its fifth year, the inaugural Keep NZ Beautiful Week attracted more than 400 events in 2010. Last year 81,000 volunteers collected 942 tonnes of rubbish, removed 24,300 sq metres of graffiti, cleaned 40kms of highways and shorelines and installed 200 recycling bins.

And, there is a lot more people can do to help clean up their community.

This year Ms Saunderson hopes people will help clean 6000ha of public sites, 25,000m of roads and highways, and 10,000m of riverbanks, lakefronts and shorelines.

Other goals include planting 10,000 trees, 50 gardens and 'green spaces', installing 300 cigarette butt bins and 250 'on-the-go' recycling bins.

"The hours that we have saved councils nationwide, by doing what we do amounts to tens of thousands of dollars. We not only look at litter, we also look at graffiti and planting initiatives – so in a way, we are saving taxpayers' money too.



HEATHER SAUNDERSON

"At the end of the day it's about instilling a sense of belonging and taking care of our community in our children, and about giving us a sense of pride in our own community too."

KNZB provides rubber gloves, and rubbish and recycling bags for clean-up events. Registered events also go into the draw to win one of three iPad mini tablets."

For more information, visit the website – knzb.org.nz



A memorial service for former mayor, Les Munro will be held on

Friday, August 14 at 12 noon

**Waitomo Cultural & Arts Centre
King St East, Te Kuiti**

Everyone is welcome



Afternoon tea will follow the service