

Community

Pānui Update

7 APRIL 2026



Ministers turn out in force as Kawerau cements its clean energy position

Government ministers were out in force in Kawerau recently as Conservation Minister Tama Potaka cut the ribbon on Cool-Safe's new refrigerant destruction facility while Minister of Trade and Investment Todd McClay inaugurated Eastland Generation's TOPP2 geothermal power plant.

Eastland Generation, Tuwharetoa mai Kawerau ki te Tai-owned Ngāti Tūwharetoa Geothermal Assets Ltd and Cool-Safe are helping cement Kawerau's position as a centre for sustainable energy and kaitiaki taiao | environmental stewardship," said Kawerau Mayor Faylene Tunui.

In 2025, Kawerau District Council adopted a regional economic development plan alongside Whakatāne District Council and Ōpōtiki District Council. The plan's ambition was to position Kawerau as a leading centre for clean energy generation, emissions reduction, and value-add manufacturing.

Cool-Safe's facility, a first for the Southern Hemisphere, is capable of removing 1.5m tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions per annum – the equivalent impact of taking approximately 600,000 cars or all the cars of the Canterbury region off the roads each year. "This contribution made in Kawerau helps New Zealand meet its international obligations to reduce emissions," said Mayor Tunui.

Eastland Generation's partnership with Tuwharetoa mai Kawerau ki te Tai-owned Ngāti Tūwharetoa Geothermal Assets Ltd demonstrates the potential of collaboration. Our iwi-owned company provides the geothermal fluid to the station and whenua, and Eastland Generation converts it to electricity for New Zealand.

Eastland Generation is co-owned by Tairāwhiti Investments Limited and Obayashi Corporation.



Above left: Cool-Safe's new refrigerant destruction facility is declared open, PyroGenesis Canada Lead Process Engineer Jean-René Gagnon, Trust for the Destruction of Synthetic Refrigerants Chairman Richard Lauder and founding director John Bowen, East Coast MP Dana Kirkpatrick, Kawerau Mayor Faylene Tunui, Minister for Conservation Honourable Tama Potaka and Chemical Destruction Services Director Clifton Madgwick cut the ribbon

Above: TOPP2 geothermal power plant inauguration, Eastland Generation Board Chairman Matanuku Mahuika, Reverend Amorangi Graham Te Rire, Tuwharetoa Mai Kawerau ki te Tai Former Chair Bev Adlam and Current Chair Karilyn Te Riini cut the ribbon



Four councils investigate best future water options for region

Kawerau District Council, Rotorua Lakes Council, Whakatāne District Council and Ōpōtiki District Council are working together to investigate the next best steps forward for community water services in the sub-region. The councils have been meeting regularly since the pōwhiri and heads of agreement signing last year.

Last week, the mayors, chief executives, councillors and technical experts met in Kawerau to outline the process and set the framework for the formal report. The report is being prepared for later in 2026 to outline the long term financial and non-financial savings and costs, levels of service, resilience and sustainability and capability that would be associated with any potential move to a shared water entity.

Kawerau hosted this month's meeting, and Mayor Faylene Tunui said it was a valuable opportunity to continue the discussions on water services between the neighbouring councils.

"Each of us spoke to our respective communities last year and here in Kawerau we got a very clear direction from that feedback. We have taken that feedback on board and are currently changing our internal processes to ensure we can keep water services in house while meeting the requirements of national legislation and guidance.

"What was reiterated by the four councils is this this is an investigation, not a decision. We are committed to keeping everyone up-to-date and will continue to have more in-depth conversations with our communities and iwi partners over the coming months," Mayor Tunui said.

You can find out more about Local Water Done Well on the council website.

Thank you for your 41 years' service Richard "Biggsy" Biggs

Recently, Council farewelled one of our longest-serving employees, Richard "Biggsy" Biggs, who has dedicated an incredible 41 years of service to Kawerau District Council.

Biggsy has spent his time with Council as part of the Turf and Trees team, contributing to a wide range of work across the district. Over the four decades of service to Kawerau, our community will have seen him maintaining berms and fields and helping to keep Kawerau looking its best.

Thank you Biggsy for your long-standing commitment, hard work, and dedication to both Council and the community, and we wish you all the very best for the future.

Mā te wā, Biggsy. Thank you for your years of service and your contribution to Kawerau. We hope retirement brings you plenty of rest, enjoyment, and fish!

BELOW: Council staff farewell Biggsy



Residential Development Community Open Day

Council are pleased to advise neighbours and the community that having obtained the final resource consent for earthworks, the development will be progressing shortly. An open day for neighbours and the community was held on Wednesday 25 March 2026 to advise the timeline for works, new subdivision plan, and the process for renaming the development.

The original namesake Roy Stoneham, on request from his family, will be changed. This announcement will come shortly, once the naming process has been considered by Council's Iwi Liaison and Cultural Advisor, Tangata Whenua and resolved via a Council meeting.

For more information, please visit our website. or phone 07 306 9009

Asbestos

Asbestos is not accepted at the Kawerau Transfer Station as it needs to be disposed of correctly and safely in approved asbestos disposal facilities (there are some nearby in Whakatāne, Rotorua and Tauranga).

In the past, asbestos was often used for heat retardant building products, but these and any products containing asbestos **must not** be dropped off at the Kawerau Transfer Station.

What is asbestos?

Asbestos is a naturally occurring mineral mined from the earth made up of tiny fibres. There are six types of asbestos.

If products or materials containing asbestos are removed from homes or transported, it can release fibres into the air.

All forms of asbestos fibres can be harmful to humans if inhaled.



Old Decramastic Roof Tiles made with asbestos material

What was asbestos used for?

Asbestos is resistant to heat, fire, and chemicals and does not conduct electricity. It is not harmful if it is immersed in water and can carry water safely. For these reasons, asbestos was used widely in many industries, including construction, manufacturing, and textiles. It was a popular material for a lot of products, such as:

- Cement cladding and roofing
- Roof tiles
- Floor tiles and vinyl sheeting
- Insulation board
- Textured ceilings and sprayed-on wall surfaces
- Insulation around pipes, heaters, and hot water cylinders
- Vehicle brakes and clutches

How do I dispose of asbestos containing products?

Contact a licenced asbestos removal specialist who can safely remove and transport the asbestos products to the nearest facility. Check out the licenced providers at [worksafe.govt.nz](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz)

Draft Kawerau District Plan Change 5

Submissions are now open for our Draft Kawerau District Plan Change 5, which addresses the necessary updates to the Kawerau District Plan following the April 2024 boundary reorganisation that transferred land from the Whakatāne District to the Kawerau District.

Council is legally required to rezone this newly acquired land by September 2026 and to include Significant Natural Areas (SNAs) from the Whakatāne District Plan affected by the boundary change. Although the Government issued a “plan stop” directive in August 2025, Kawerau District Council successfully applied for an exemption to continue this work, which was approved in December 2025.

The scope of the District Plan Change 5 review is limited to re-zoning land transferred in the boundary reorganisation;

a new Māori purpose zone and recognising the significant nature areas that come into the Kawerau District from Whakatāne.

Conversations and consultation have been carried out with the registered landowners of all the land parcels which were part of the boundary reorganisation. This includes consultation with Ngati Tuwharetoa (Bay of Plenty) Settlement Trust on the Māori purpose zone.

Submission forms and more information are available on our website [Kaweraudc.govt.nz](https://www.kaweraudc.govt.nz), submissions close Thursday 30 April 2026.

Drop-in session at 2pm, Tuesday 14 April in the Concert Chamber



Maurie Kjar Aquatic Centre transitioned to winter hours

The Maurie Kjar Aquatic Centre transitioned to their winter hours on Monday 30 March 2026.

The pool's opening hours are now 9am - 6pm (please exit the pool by 5:30pm).

Winter hours will be in place from now until after the Maurie Kjar Aquatic Centre's annual maintenance closure in October.

2026 General Elections

General Elections are taking place this year to decide which political party or parties will run Aotearoa New Zealand and how many seats each political party will have in parliament for the next three years.

How do I check to see if I am enrolled or if my information is up to date?

Check you are enrolled and your details are up to date at www.vote.nz/enrolling/enrol-or-update/enrol-or-update-online/

If you are already enrolled, select 'I want to check or update', put in your details and then select 'I want to review and update' and verify your identity. Once verified, you can change any of your enrolment details, including your personal information and your roll.

Once you are happy, click declare and then click finish! You have now updated your roll or information.





Māori roll or general roll?

If you're Māori you can choose to be on either the Māori electoral roll or the general electoral roll.

If you're on the Māori roll, you'll vote for a candidate in a Māori electorate. If you're on the general roll, you'll vote for a candidate in a general electorate. Your roll choice doesn't affect your party vote.

If you want to change rolls, you need to make your choice by midnight, Thursday 6 August. You can't change rolls in the three months before election day.

Where can I enrol?

-  Online vote.nz
-  Phone 0800 36 76 56
-  Text 3676
-  Or pop into the Council Office and fill out an enrolment form

Key dates

- Midnight, 6 August** Last day for Māori who are already enrolled to change roll types
- 4 October** Anyone who enrolls after this date will have to cast a special vote
- 21 October** Overseas voting starts
- 25 October** Last day to enrol to vote in the election
- 26 October** Advance voting starts
- 7 November** Election Day
- 27 November** Official results for the 2026 General Election declared

Annual Plan Consultation Dates

Nau mai haere mai | All welcome

-  **Monday 13 April, 1pm - 2pm**
Public Meeting KADAP, Concert Chamber
-  **Friday 17 April**
Annual Plan submissions open
-  **Wednesday 22 April, 11am - 12noon**
Public Meeting, Rautahi Marae
-  **Tuesday 28 April, 11am - 12noon**
Public Drop-in session, Rangi Delamere Centre
-  **Thursday 30 April, 10am - 12noon**
Public drop-in Session, Kawerau Community Markets
-  **Wednesday 6 May, 5:15pm - 6:15pm**
Public Meeting, Concert Chamber
-  **Friday 8 May, 2pm - 3pm**
Public Meeting Grey Power, Concert Chamber
-  **Monday 18 May**
Annual Plan submissions close



Important dates and meetings

- Tuesday 14 April, 2pm**
Drop-in session for the Draft Kawerau District Plan Change 5, Concert Chamber
- Wednesday 15 April, 9am**
Regulatory and Services Meeting
- Wednesday 15 April**
Extraordinary Council Meeting
- Friday 17 April**
Annual Plan 2026/27 submissions open
- Wednesday 29 April, 9am**
Ordinary Council Meeting
- Wednesday 13 May, 9am**
Regulatory and Services Committee Meeting