

BAY BUZZ

2025
JANUARY
+FEBRUARY
No.80

Amalgamation & dam
Big ideas revived?

Hawke's Bay off the grid?
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More community buzz
and personal connection

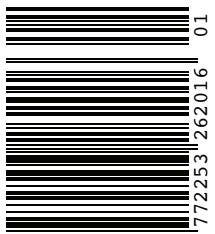
INSIDE:
Readers'
responses
and 'expert'
insights

BIG IDEAS

for Hawke's Bay in
2025 and beyond



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BAY BUZZ
HAWKE'S BAY UP CLOSE, IN DEPTH

SPECIAL OFFER
(for new subscribers)

A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a red one-piece swimsuit, is shown from the chest up. She is holding a dark surfboard in front of her, looking off to the side with a slight smile. The background is a vast ocean under a soft, hazy sky at sunset or sunrise, with distant mountains visible on the horizon.

80

BayBuzz
January +
February 2025

As the region plots its more resilient post-cyclone future, we're in a re-imagining mood. A good time, *BayBuzz* thought, to round up a heap of new 'big ideas' from a wide range of voices in our community. We reached out to some individuals with a knack for making things happen, as well as inviting our readers to toss their big ideas in the hopper. And this edition of *BayBuzz* presents the results. Plenty of intriguing ideas here - some might delight you, some might leave you aghast. Have fun picking through them. And if you feel inspired to offer some more of your own ... send them along to editors@baybuzz.co.nz. We'll keep building and reporting the inventory.

Photo: Florence Charvin



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Cover story

Vincent Michaelsen welcomes competition, believing a rising tide lifts all boats. Creating shared spaces where people want to be attracts traffic in volumes that benefit everyone.

Cover photo by Florence Charvin

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50: "We've got the space to grow," says Alex Walker. Photo: Florence Charvin

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starting with you!

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Winemakers are
experimenters, so
new ideas abound.

80 Lots of little ideas

Jess Soutar Barron

Change can come from
a lot of little nibbles ...
here's 20 to chew on.



From the editor Tom Belford

I hope you've had an enjoyable Christmas, and still have some leisure time ahead to refresh for the new year.

We thought it a good time to stir your imagination with some 'big ideas' that might add excitement to 2025. Some of that excitement should be invigorating but some of it might be, well, irritating.

Not all 'big ideas' start big. As Paul Paynter writes, "...the best thing you and I can do is to come up with, not a big idea, but a small one that's achievable. If we can generate 200 of those, a handful might become big ideas in time."

Lizzie Russell has collected a bunch from readers who offered theirs. Some are quirky, some we'll revisit in the future to encourage more deserved attention.

And indeed, Jess Soutar Barron protests, "Big ideas, blue-sky thinking, outside-the-box, wildest dreams ... it's all too much. We don't have to chew off monster mouthfuls to make change. Sometimes it takes a lot of little nibbles." On the last page, she offers 20 morsels.

Fair points. But I confess a yearn for really BIG, disruptive ideas. In this edition, we've served up plenty for you to dream about, endorse, ridicule or resist mightily.

Thinking about 'big ideas' leads to the question, how do they get achieved? In my article, I mention some of Hawke's Bay's more famous - or infamous - 'big ideas'. Why or how did some succeed? I asked some of those involved to explain.

Of course, the answer begins right there ... 'big ideas' require champions. Individuals with vision, incredible persistence, access to critical skills/

resources, and wiliness. And sometimes they still fail.

One of Hawke's Bay's successful champions says:

"Big Ideas succeed because they meet and satisfy a pressing unmet need, are not controversial and are based on world best evidence and above all else are driven across the line by sheer hard work and persistent determination. Leadership that brings people and a region together to prove that the idea can be realised. This requires the right people in the leadership group, who individually and collectively, have a thorough understanding of the current and future environment in which the project or organisation operates."

Adding, "The Big Projects that have succeeded in HB have all done so because they have fully satisfied the above criteria and have all had futurists and outstanding leadership at the helm. Most have been private enterprise led." On that last point, Rocket Lab comes to mind.

Another 'big idea' champion observes, "...they usually start with a few passionate individuals willing to put in the hard yards and it spreads from there. Doesn't seem like it usually starts with a grand plan and a blank sheet of paper that everyone obeys and supports. It needs a small fire to be lit first."

This individual, noting the poor state of our hospital amidst "blossoming private, independent health centres", would like to see HB become home to "a major central North Island health centre? Maybe focused on a sector like sports medicine or aged care."

And another responder, who wants the region to do much more on climate

change, an issue "overshadowing all else", says, "It takes hard work, a single focus, self-belief and dogged determination. You also need to manage the opposition." Advocates of amalgamation, Ruataniwha Dam 1 and Ocean Beach development would get that last point!

A seasoned politico ticked off a series of big initiatives and the drivers behind them, and again came down to individual vision, commitment, leadership.

And while we've focused on high profile projects here, to be sure, many other champions provide less visible, but critical ongoing support, including financial and volunteer support, to the Bay's pressing community needs.

But going out on a public limb ups the personal stake. Who would you add to the list? And who do you see ready to provide this kind of leadership for HB's next round of 'big ideas'.

Hopefully a 'next generation' of community champions is lurking out there. Because as one responder to *BayBuzz* lamented, "Hawke's Bay is afraid of Big Thinking. Tinkering with the status quo is what it prefers."

Prove him wrong, Hawke's Bay!

Tom Belford



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The BUZZ online
newsletter here

Tom has been a two-term HB Regional Councillor. His past includes the Carter White House, building Ted Turner's first philanthropic organisation, doing heaps of marketing consulting for major non-profits and corporates.

TREAT ALL LINES AS LIVE, TO STAY ALIVE



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The Buzz
Lizzie Russell



DAY OUT

In this series we cast a little *BayBuzz* light on local treasures – places to explore in our own resilient, beautiful backyard. This issue, we take inspiration from the ocean. Photos by Florence Charvin

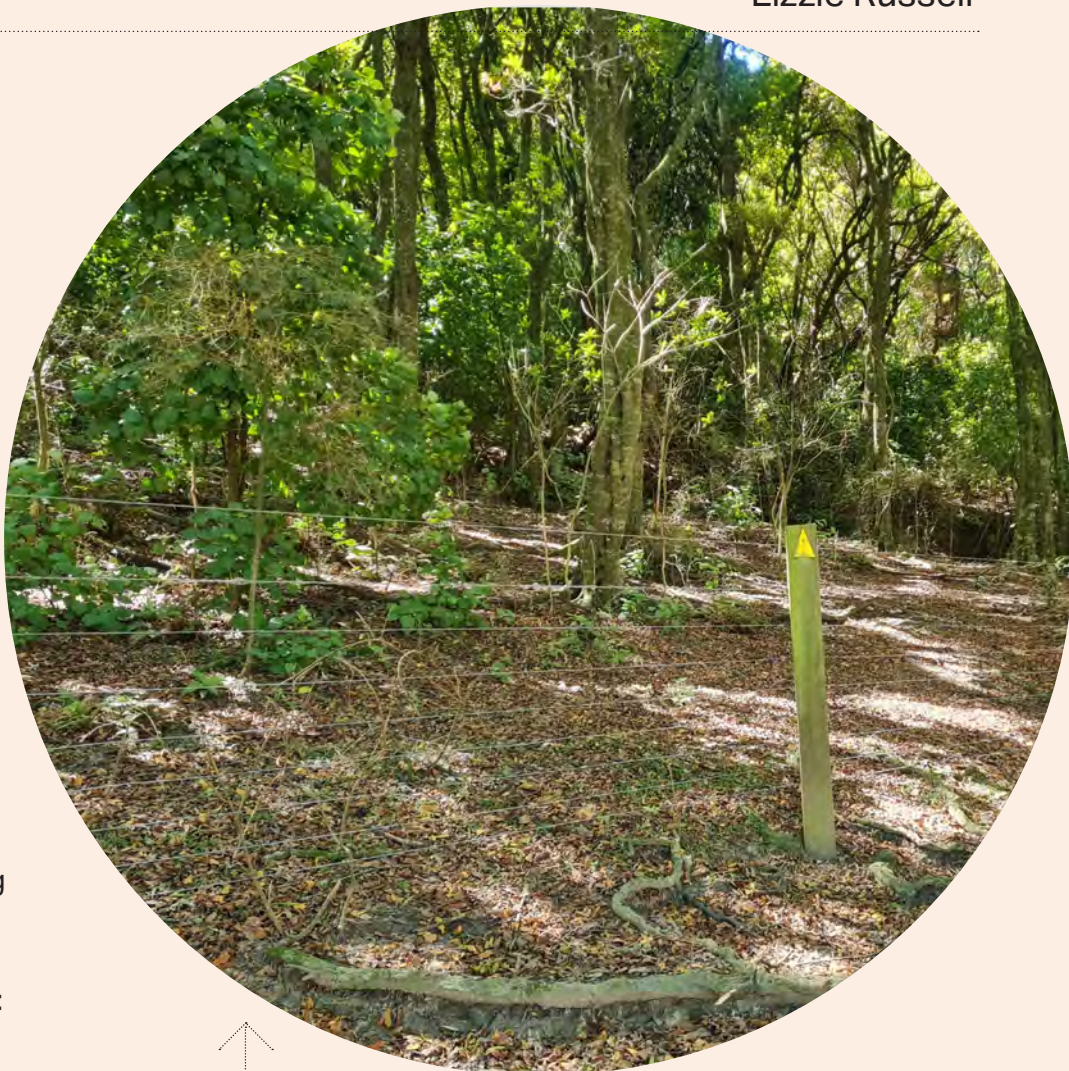
Where else but the ocean? For the ideas. For the dreams and the schemes and the planning and plotting? In we go, into the blue, and out come memories and wonderings, a pang of regret, a reminder, an idea.

Here in Hawke's Bay, the Pacific feels like lifeblood, like a family member. A destination and a home. Comfort and challenge and risk and reward, all the elements, all bobbing together.





YOUR BIG IDEAS



In the last couple of months of 2024, *BayBuzz* put the call out to you, our informed and imaginative readership, asking for your big ideas for Hawke's Bay in 2025 and beyond.

Here's what you came up with:

Marie

Marie Taylor from Plant Hawke's Bay says the areas of the region's natural landscapes which remain in indigenous vegetation are at threat from deer and goats. She calls for enduring solutions to protect the remaining habitats, and this doesn't mean the Predator Free 2050 programme.

"My big idea is to encourage land-owners to work together in groups to deer fence their boundaries and keep deer and goats out of their farms. That way, the deer fencing could go on ridgelines and around catchments so that tricky sites to fence like streams,

are minimised. And when farmers – and catchment groups - know that all the deer are removed, they are in a much better position to invest in repairing landscapes with trees.

So instead of fencing smaller areas, and paying a high cost per hectare for protection, the money could instead have a much wider impact across a larger landscape."



Popular opinion

Amalgamation. The most repeated suggestion for a regional big idea was the merging of the councils. Curbing duplication, streamlining services, common sense ... the reasons were many. But then again, those reasons

were all there in 2014-15 when we last went through the debate. The population rejected it then, but would we get a different result if we gave it another nudge now? What would it take to move the needle in Napier from the

84% No vote in 2015? Would Hastings still marginally vote Yes as they did then? And Wairoa – given their challenges and opportunities – would they be any keener on linking arms with their southern neighbours?



David

David Stoney says it's time we fixed "Napier's cultural heritage once and for all."

He says the mistake that is MTG Hawke's Bay could be fixed using the \$14 million earmarked to upgrade the library, to instead relocate the museum to a purpose-built building next to the Faraday Centre. He envisages council purchasing the land where the Army depot is, to build a multi-story museum building with parking underneath. The art gallery and library would remain at MTG Hawke's Bay, meaning more of the regional collection could be on display.

Rex

At the very least, could the councils come together more meaningfully on climate? Former HBRC Chairman Rex Graham's one big idea is to "Develop a strategic plan that generates action

to mitigate the imminent effects of climate change on our community".

It needs a single focus, he says, "To protect our environment, our economy and our social fabric in the face of climate change.

"This could be driven by a special group populated by elected nominees from our five councils (perhaps two from each) supported by regional parties of interest. But somehow we need to stay focused on the issue which is real and impending... and keep parochial and petty politics out of the discussion."



Anthony

Fresh off a successful pop-up as part of the Fringe in the 'Stings festival in 2024, Anthony van Duuren tells us it's time for a permanent location for a medical cannabis lounge. This harm reduction project is already on the way, currently in the process of gaining the required approvals to

set up in Karamu Road, in the former Spaceship premises.

If it does get the green light, Anthony says, "Dali Susanto's artwork will be back on display in the front windows and the venue will continue to offer a safe space for the Fringe community to gather."

Russell

Russell Maher says we could be looking harder at rail as an idea and a solution. Bolstering rail freight would remove trucks from the roads and a commuter rail system between Waipukurau and Bayview, with car parking at each end of the line, would lessen the number of cars on the roads.

Perhaps we wouldn't need double lanes on the expressway after all!

YOUR BIG IDEAS

Richard

Tourism Big Ideas from Richard Brown include bringing in an international hotel chain such as Accor, promoting Central Hawke's Bay and the more remote beaches, and pushing the luxury lodges of Hawke's Bay. Richard reckons we could also do more to promote the region as a sporting destination, with the Sports Park, cycle trails, golf courses, mountain biking and sea fishing as big drawcards.



Gary

Here's one from lessons learned in Cyclone Gabrielle. Painting house numbers on roofs, ideally bold enough to be visible from the ground and the air. Gary Hinson reckons this is the solution to the problems faced by emergency responders in February 2023.

"Whether on the ground or in the air, the emergency services can waste time and risk their own lives simply hunting for the right place. Acacia Avenue is probably on the map, but which one is 27a? A photograph taken from the road in Google Street View on a lovely sunny day may bear little resemblance to the situation during and following a major storm – just think of the devastation caused to Esk Valley for instance."

Sure, only some people would do this, but even a handful of houses with roof numbers in each neighbourhood would help during a crisis. Useful too, Gary suggests, in other emergency situations – "fires, domestic disturbances, gun crimes, even terrorist attacks - basically any time someone needs to find a specific property in an unfamiliar area, quickly."

Karl

We could be promoting the establishment of "high-tech, futurist development industries, laboratories etc here in Hawke's Bay," suggests Karl Matthys. Cheaper land out toward the airport could be the place for this development.



Chris

Chris Henry is approaching retirement with a focused big idea – the promotion of Western Himalayan Alder as a tree to stabilise eroded land, and to nursery native trees through to permanent forest.

There are 10,000 seedlings coming through Plant Hawke's Bay's nursery to make a decent start on this, as an alternative to planting pines to address soil loss and erosion.

Western Himalayan Alder is a long-living tree growing to 30 metres tall, Chris says. It's categorised as a 'hardwood' under the ETS and is "a nitrogen fixing tree, tolerant of both wet and dry soils of poor fertility and very wind-hardy."

The Himalayan Alder project is in its infancy, but you can learn more about it at www.alders.co.nz. Maybe you can help – the project team is seeking trial sites on farmland.



Margaret

Citizens assemblies are gaining traction, with a water planning example having worked well in Auckland. Margaret offers this as her big idea.

"I would like to see a serious exploration of citizens assemblies as a way to develop a vision for each area, e.g., Napier, Hastings, CHB, Wairoa. A proper sampling of the population of each area is needed, so that voices not usually heard are included. I understand no more than 100 people works well. They meet over several weeks and are sometimes paid for their time or travel."

Vanessa

Vanessa Moon's big, big idea for Hawke's Bay is an ambitious Festival for Life on Earth. Featuring many different art practices and modalities, such a festival would include "theatre, street theatre, theatre sports, dance, music, storytelling, comedy/stand up, poetry (spoken word, slam), mime, puppetry, short film/video, photography, fashion design, the visual arts, co-operative games and other forms of "games/play," and take place right across the region.

As part of the Festival, Vanessa would love to see a Hawke's Bay take on the Climate Change Theatre Action. This international initiative "commissions 50 playwrights from around the world every two years, to write 50 short plays, which are made available free to anyone who wishes to make use of them during a CCTA Festival period."

What a way to bring climate action to the fore, for our art-loving public!

Robyn

Robyn Napier reckons the region is becoming a sea of roofs, and the impact on the environment needs to be mitigated, so the idea is: 'Hawke's Bay – seen to be green.'

"Organic, GMO free and actively mitigating the loss of areas for trees by requiring every new build to contribute to development of native tree planting in designated pockets."

Another from Robyn Napier – get the Bay looking a "little easier on the eye" – with a council-led volunteer army walking the edges of the highways and other high-litter areas.

"Perhaps suited to active retired people, walking groups, or unemployed who share a concern for our clean green image rapidly disappearing. The council could provide fluoro vests, pick-up tools, and bags or something suitable for collection."





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"A wave beach on Marine Parade – make Napier the Surfers' Paradise of Aotearoa!"

"Bring back the tram line between Ahuriri and the Napier CBD – it was there before the 1931 earthquake – and while you're at it, let's see light rail between Napier, Hastings and Havelock."





"It's gotta be time
for a gondola up
Te Mata Peak.
High time in fact."

"Real Housewives
of Havelock North ...
Imagine the ratings!"



BIG IDEAS



FOR

Some people seem to not just ooze ideas, but to make them happen. *BayBuzz* went to a diverse set of such characters to ask what their 'big ideas' might be for 2025. The responses, as you will see in the following pages, are all over the place – from broad visions to quite

specific projects, from large community-scale initiatives to light, individual changes that, if broadly adopted, would make a big difference.

Good on them for 'going public' with their ideas, maybe you'll find one to support!

Photos by Florence Charvin

HAWKKE'S BAY







"Because of its small size, demographics, significant Māori population, strong iwi leaders, the practicality of its people, Hawke's Bay can lead the way, show the country how unity works, that we're a team."
Neill Gordon

Neill Gordon

Barbed wire
or barbecues?

Once Neill Gordon rested easy as tangata Tiriti, assured progress was making glacial pace towards fulfilling promises made to our indigenous people. A local organised effort to recruit white supremacists, led by a National Front member in our midst, burst his bubble and prompted him to action. This February, at Waitangi, *Tangata Tiriti Aotearoa*, was born.

"Tangata Tiriti are annoyed because now they have to speak up. People have to get off the fence on the only plausible side. We signed a deal. We have to honour it. When you trample on the mana of Te Tiriti you're trampling on everyone's mana. Tangata whenua obviously, but tangata Tiriti too," he contends. "To celebrate being pākehā you have to look back at our history, the promises made in 1840 broken over the past 180 years, and confront that we've spent 180 years averting our eyes. We came, we signed, we stuffed up. Now let's sort it out."

He blames a failure of education, noting teaching our history in schools has only been compulsory since 2022. "The same people flailing their tiny dinosaur arms against Te Tiriti struggle with the idea that everyone isn't white and heterosexual - an assimilationist mindset. We should all be the same - like them," he observes. "It's an emotional commitment to ignorance."

His solution, 'kotahitanga...working together towards a common goal, celebrating our diversity, our differences. Because of its small size, demographics, significant Māori population, strong iwi leaders, the practicality of its people, Hawke's Bay can lead the way, show the country how unity works, that we're a team. We're already leading - look at the magnificent

Toitū te Reo, world first Māori language and culture festival, attended by 7,000. Consider our councils' support for Māori wards. We've had co-governance over the Hastings wastewater treatment plant for 20 years. It works. It's good for everyone?

His is one of many Tangata Tiriti groups mushrooming in response to current governmental policies, standing on the shoulders of those whose mahi spans decades, supercharged by 'the kōhanga generation'. The hiko chant *ka whawhai tonu mātau* - we will fight on - became *ka ora tonu mātau* - we will live on, indicative of a willingness to persist.

Rather than being 'radical or subversive', he sees the movement as 'happy honest patriotism,' honouring our history while safeguarding our nation's future. 'The conversations we have ahead of us - Te Tiriti, Māori wards - offer huge opportunities for community building,' he proffers. 'Countries with an awkward history do themselves a favour by confronting it - by looking at it and talking about it. In Aotearoa we hobble along with this stone in our gumboot. How long should you walk with a stone in your shoe? No distance at all. This lump in the carpet, there are bodies under there. I understand why people avoid looking at it - it's tragic - but suppressing it is weak and dishonest. It's not going away,' he maintains, 'the 200th anniversary of the treaty is in 2040. What do people want, barbed wire or barbecues? Definitely barbecues.' ●

Neill is a community builder who imagines creative ways for strangers to meet.

Words by Rosheen FitzGerald



Miranda Smith

Meaningful connections

If we all took a little more time to talk, to connect with the people around us, we could significantly reduce loneliness. That's Miranda Smith's hope for Hawke's Bay.

In New Zealand, according to a 2021 Stats NZ report, 56% of people felt lonely, with 15-24 year-olds and those aged 75 and older, the loneliest age groups.

In spite of being more connected than ever before in the digital age, we are lonelier than ever. And it's affecting our mental and physical health.

Miranda Smith has seen the impact first-hand. As the founder of Miranda Smith Homecare, and having been in the industry for 26 years, she sees the detrimental impacts of loneliness. Older people are often at high risk, given their stage of life. Many have lost spouses, family and friends. Perhaps

they can no longer drive - further adding to their sense of isolation. For some, their carer might be the only person they speak to that day. "They feel embarrassed that they are now lonely and don't want to be a burden to others," says Miranda.

There's strong evidence a lack of social interaction has a huge cost on the health system, causing cognitive decline and increasing the risk of disease. And society loses out as well, says Miranda, as older adults are major contributors to communities through volunteering, mentoring and support for family.

Reducing the burden of loneliness is therefore a win-win. "Older New Zealanders will feel a lift to their health and sense of wellbeing, and they will be much more likely to continue to make an active and valuable contribution to their communities and society."

But they need our help, and it's up to all of us to reach out and help make that difference, says Miranda. Her goal is for every person who reads this, to make time for a meaningful connection

with someone once a month. It could be someone you know or don't know, possibly a wider family member, neighbour or the person standing next to you in the supermarket line. She asks that you spend an extra 10 minutes when someone wants to chat longer than anticipated. "Show that you are interested, be totally invested in the conversation. If it is a fleeting conversation, ensure that it is meaningful as that is what will help combat loneliness."

If it's someone you know, like a family member or neighbour, call them, plan to visit for a cup of coffee, or pop in unexpectedly. It's everyone's job to instigate meaningful connection. The emotional reward is not only for the person you are engaging with, but it will also make you feel grateful you could make a small difference to someone that day. The difference will benefit us all. ●

Miranda is founder of Miranda Smith Homecare.

Words by Abby Beswick

SMALL HALL SESSIONS



Small Halls Sessions are an ode to our love affair with the rural heart of Aotearoa New Zealand, and the small halls that keep that heart beating.

These are the out-of-the-way places, the worth-the-effort places, the you'll-know-it-when-you-find-it and when-you-find-it-you'll-love-it places.

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"What a great formula the sessions are, being intimate, affordable and of extremely high calibre."

"I feel transported to an earlier time when folks gathered more regularly in these places to enjoy music together."

"Friendly, intimate and music-centric with a beautifully curated line-up of incredibly talented musicians from around Aotearoa. The Sessions are firmly entrenched as an integral and necessary part of the cultural fabric of the region."

C.W. STONEKING



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Friday 24 January
Christ's Church, Pukehou

CHARM OF FINCHES



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Otane Town Hall

Thursday 30 January
Te Awanga Community Hall

Friday 31 January
Matapiro Community Hall

ARAHİ

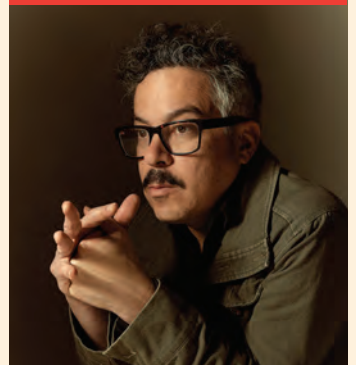


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Vincent Michaelson

More street buzz with pop-up experiences

Vinci's Pizza is iconic in Napier, not just for serving the finest New York slice in town, but for its vibe. Its tables spill out onto Hastings Street, enlivening the environment. Out back, the courtyard is frequently filled with special events - a DJ inviting dancers, a wine launch, a beer dispensing bicycle.

This is entirely by the design of owner and chair of Napier City Business Inc, Vincent Michaelson, who believes the key to a thriving city is to fill its streets with people. 'You never say a city is vibrant because there's stuff going on behind closed doors. It's because people are out there, publicly, enjoying themselves,' he muses.

'The city has a very anti food truck, anti stall approach. Local businesses view food trucks as stealing their revenue. I accept food trucks can be trashy, they're not necessarily the best physical thing for the job,' posits Michaelson. Unlike business owners with a zero sum, deficit mindset, he welcomes competition, believing a rising tide lifts all boats. Creating shared spaces where people want to be attracts traffic in volumes that benefit everyone.

He borrows his vision from Europe, where lively city life is baked into the culture. He dreams of a series of kiosks, council built, in cute uniformity with style as well as function in mind. Fledgling businesses could rent them - on providing a robust business plan, subject to curation. For some, tenure could be permanent - 'there are so many good little ideas that will only work in a very small setting,' he professes, 'a hot dog stand can only sell so many hot dogs.' Others could be

subject to rotation - seasonally, or even shorter terms for pop-up offerings. For some the space could function as a 'business incubator,' a chance to work out systems and processes on a small scale as a stepping stone into larger leased premises. Some could be multi-use, such as, 'a bar that opens only Friday and Saturday nights. I don't see why we need to lock people inside to drink alcohol.' He envisions, 'thriving micro businesses, and people in the street enjoying themselves.'

NCBI received feedback about anti-social behaviour from some Clive Square tenants, which Michaelson sees as a natural consequence of a city which locks life behind both physical walls and paywalls. 'We have these locations where nothing is happening, something is going to fill the void,' he believes. 'Sometimes work has been busy but I walk down the street and there's no one. We don't inhabit the city like it could be inhabited,' he ventures. He would love to see a beer garden and hot dog stand in Clive Square; Marine Parade, Emerson Street and Market Street alive with mini businesses, keeping people in the streets.

So far his indirect pitches to NCC have fallen into the 'too hard basket,' but with the tenacity of a successful business owner and community builder he won't let it go. Michaelson states, 'Council has access to the land. They could make it happen.' ●

Vince is proprietor of Vinci's Pizza and chair of Napier City Business.

Words by Rosheen FitzGerald

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Louise Stobart

Lift the level of hospitality service

Seeing people leave Birdwoods feeling better than when they arrived is what fuels Louise Stobart's drive for what she does. Providing customers with exceptional service is therefore at the heart of her hospitality business, and her big ideas for the future.

Louise and her husband Bruce have spent 20 years building up their multi-faceted and hugely popular visitor destination located just outside Havelock North, which includes a cafe/restaurant, sculpture gardens, nostalgic sweet shop, ostriches and a summer ice cream shop.

Originally farmers in Zimbabwe, the couple purchased a 10-hectare property and established Birdwoods, without any training in hospitality. The seven-days-a-week-operation has been a joyous and tough learning curve.

Staff and the service they provide, are Louise's key focus for the future. Hawke's Bay has been through a tough time with Covid and the cyclone and it needs to bring visitors back by positioning itself as a place where visitors have incredible experiences where they stay, with what they eat, what they drink, she says. Part of that is making sure the region aspires to a high level of service. "We love Hawke's Bay, we know that it's been through a tough time and we really want to support a future where it just gets better and better here and be part of that in our small way."

Louise also wants to lift the perception and treatment of hospitality workers in New Zealand, so young people see it as a career rather than simply a pathway to somewhere else. "It's not given the credit and respect it's due - you have to be good at many things, think on your feet and operate under immense pressure - and you're generally not paid what it's worth." At Birdwoods, new staff undergo rigorous training and leave with a certificate showing their skills. Louise wants to work more in this area so their

staff develop a sense of pride, confidence and communication skills that will last a lifetime.

Long-term, we also need to be creating more experiences around Hawke's Bay, says Louise. People come to Birdwoods to build memories with their family and the plan is to keep creating more opportunities for those experiences. Louise and Bruce are planting a living church (a church-like structure made from trees that people can get married under), looking to expand into events and even trying to source zebras - "these are the things people love".

For their personal future, a succession plan is underway for their eldest son Jack - a successful sculptor and owner of Birdwoods in Arrowtown - to take over the reins. Louise and Bruce would continue to provide support to the business but would have more time to enjoy the life they've built. ●

Louise, with husband Bruce, is owner of Birdwoods.

Words by Abby Beswick



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Driving Miss Daisy Scoops Supreme Franchise Award

Hawke's Bay-founded Driving Miss Daisy NZ Ltd was crowned winner of the 2024 Supreme Franchise System of the Year award at the 29th Annual Westpac New Zealand Franchise Awards in November.

Judges were glowing in their praise: "Driving Miss Daisy ticked all the boxes... They demonstrated a clear strategic plan and exceptional relationships and evidenced how they empower franchisees to accelerate growth... They are an extremely high performing business that continues to show very impressive growth and expansion."

Driving Miss Daisy, New Zealand's number one companion driving service, currently has over 80 franchise territories in operation across New Zealand, each with its own fleet of cars and team of drivers.

Founder and owner Melanie Harper says that the transport industry category of 'companion driving services' didn't exist until Melanie, along with her husband Jack Harper, established the business in 2008.

"Companion driving means that we not only drive clients to their chosen destination, but we also provide assistance when requested, such as help to and from the door; help with the shopping; perhaps being another pair of ears when clients visit the doctor, or maybe just being a friend to share a coffee and a chat at a local café. We describe ourselves as 'family when family can't be there', and we think this expression captures the essence of the relationship that we have with our clients."

Like many of the world's best ideas, the Harpers grew their award-winning franchise system from a simple concept after Melanie started driving her Aunt Trish to appointments in Havelock North.



Above: Driving Miss Daisy NZ Ltd founders and owners Melanie and Jack Harper.

"The vision for Driving Miss Daisy soon became apparent and the concept of being hired to transport *and* help has evolved into the much-loved service and successful franchise operation Driving Miss Daisy is today", says Melanie.

Whilst this award recognises the strength of the franchise system, Jack is quick to acknowledge that their success reflects the dedication of everyone in the Driving Miss Daisy family, including the team at head office and the franchisees delivering the service on the front line across the length and breadth of New Zealand.



Driving Miss Daisy also has franchises operating successfully throughout the UK and Australia.

www.drivingmissdaisy.co.nz



Fiona Fraser

Urban apartments and a tram

Quality inner-city apartments, better public transport and a dedicated multi-day destination cycle tour are all ways Hawke's Bay could become an even better place to live and visit, says Fiona Fraser.

There is so much to love about Hawke's Bay and what it has to offer, but we need to keep thinking big so the region can continue to flourish, says the media specialist, who moved to the Bay from Auckland with her family eight years ago after falling in love with the lifestyle.

Before long, the former *Women's Weekly* editor established her PR and communications business after seeing a gap in the market - lots of remarkable small businesses not getting the media attention they deserved.

Through her work, and community roles as co-chair of the Heretaunga Women's Centre and a board member

for Havelock North High School, she understands many of the challenges facing the region and its potential.

To that end she has three key big ideas for its future. The first is to create high quality apartment living in the inner cities. This would attract more young people, support new retail and hospitality and create vibrant, safer city centres - something she feels is hugely lacking. "When you walk through Napier on a Thursday night at 8pm it's a ghost town because no one lives in the central city."

Fiona also advocates for light rail or a tram between Hastings and Napier, using the existing railway lines. "I know how expensive it can be to get something like that up and running. I'm not saying it would be easy, but our public transport is woeful." This would give locals and visitors access to reliable transport to move within and between the cities, including the airport, and remove the need for everyone to have cars.

Finally, Fiona sees an opportunity to create a unique cycling visitor experience. "We are an amazing hub for tourism and we have amazing events here ... but what we don't have is a dedicated multi-day guided cycle tour."

"We are an amazing hub for tourism and we have amazing events here ... but what we don't have is a dedicated multi-day guided cycle tour."

Fiona Fraser

Think Alps to Ocean from Aoraki/Mt Cook to Oamaru or Mountains to Sea from Tongariro National Park to Whanganui. For example, Norsewood to Napier could be an incredible two-day ride that would take cyclists through the backcountry of Central Hawke's Bay, staying at farm accommodation and historic lodges along the way. We have more infrastructure than some of the other regions, such as the West Coast, that are offering it. If they can do it we can too, says Fiona. "If someone could create that route and bring a business to life that would support all kinds of cyclists, it would give us another offering in Hawke's Bay." ●

Fiona is the director of Contentment PR and Communications and co-chair of the Heretaunga Women's Centre.

Words by Abby Beswick

Kevin Murphy

A dedicated music hub



Kevin Murphy's passion for, and faith in local music permeates his many roles, from coordinating Napier City Council's some thirty annual events, to creating a database for musicians, venues and industry professionals with Hawke's Bay Music Hub. Developing the regional scene and the musicians who populate it is the end goal of the sum of his various projects. 'Music is such a big part of everybody's lives - it maps out memories. Events and music go hand in hand with creating memories, capturing moments,' he asserts.

Like sport, he sees the scene as a pyramid - with a mass of primary kids butchering the recorder at its base, whittled down to those whose music pays for their bread at the apex. 'It's a fairly niche environment at the top,' he admits. 'It's a really hard profession. Most take second jobs to survive.' Backline Charitable Trust's aim is to push local musicians into the point of the pyramid, to catapult them onto the national stage.

They recently announced the fourth volume of *Under the Sun* - a compilation of fresh local music pressed on a record and distributed throughout the industry nationally. Murphy's purpose is to 'shine a light on our Hawke's Bay artists. It's pretty unique. It's not something many could do for themselves.' Once in the ears of touring musicians and promoters, they hope featured artists will be picked up for gigs, projecting them to a still larger audience.

Murphy's dreams to give regional musicians a leg up take concrete form.

He sees a need for locally available producers, particularly since Thomas Oliver left his Treehouse studio for warmer shores. 'In the past couple of years we've really seen the impact he's had on recording artists,' he observes.

Access to a recording studio is a boon for any artist. There are a handful in the region, including those at EIT and Paisley Stage; but while we have recording technicians, the lack of affordable, available production personnel holds artists back from the next level. Murphy laments the loss of local artists who go to big city studios for their final mix. He wants to source and fund guest producers to work with a number of artists right here in Hawke's Bay.

He would love to create a dedicated music hub, in bricks and mortar to mirror the one he has already made online. He sees a gap for a dedicated indoor gig venue - not a bar or theatre or winery or stadium - with a capacity of around a thousand, that could incorporate space for recording and production, and foster a collective of suppliers to the industry.

For now, Murphy is making hay while the sun shines. As well as the record, and a constant stream of summer events, he's launching a series of activations to enliven Napier's Soundshell, harkening back to its heyday, when INXS filled it in the summer of '82. He hopes to put local musicians on stage, making names for themselves, while locals and visitors dance in the streets, making memories. ●

Kevin, NCC events organiser, is a champion of musicians

Words by Rosheen FitzGerald

enlighten

AN INSIDER'S GUIDE TO DENTISTRY
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NEW YEAR, NEW HABITS

Ah, New Zealand. Land of the long white cloud, majestic landscapes, and... blocked sewer pipes? Yes, folks, it's time for a chat about what should – and more importantly, should not – go down your toilet. Spoiler alert: It's less glamorous than you think. But fear not, because we're also throwing in a few eco-friendly bathroom ideas to save the planet while you're at it!

THE GOLDEN RULE: ONLY THREE THINGS GO DOWN

It's simple, really. There are only three things that should be making their way through our delicate New Zealand pipes: Poo, Pee, and Paper. That's it. No fancy tricks.

But what about flushable wipes, you ask? Ah, good try! They may say "flushable," but in reality, these wipes are the sewer system's version of a bad dinner guest – overstaying their welcome and causing all kinds of chaos. Let's keep the "flushables" in the trash, shall we?

And for all the creative types thinking of flushing dental floss, cotton buds, or that mystery thing you found in the shower drain – stop right there. Our sewer systems aren't the superheroes you think they are. New Zealand's infrastructure isn't quite as souped-up as the systems in, say, London or Tokyo. Their pipes are like sports cars – ours are more like reliable family hatchbacks. We get the job done, but only if you follow the rules.

So, whether you're doing your part to keep our pipes clear or making your bathroom more eco-friendly, every little bit counts. Let's work together to ensure our infrastructure – and our planet – stays in tip-top shape. Just remember: Poo, Pee, and Paper. Your pipes will thank you.



ZERO-WASTE BATHROOM: SAVING PIPES AND THE PLANET

While we're keeping the sewers clear, let's talk about reducing bathroom waste. A zero-waste bathroom might sound impossible, but with a few simple changes, you can help the environment without sacrificing your comforts. Here's how:

- 1. Reusable cloths over disposable wipes:** Instead of using wet wipes or disposable cleaning cloths (which we've established aren't flushable), go for reusable cloths. They're washable, eco-friendly, and they won't have your pipes plotting revenge.
- 2. Bamboo toothbrushes:** Ditch the plastic toothbrush and opt for bamboo. It's biodegradable, sustainable, and honestly, it just looks cooler sitting in your bathroom.
- 3. Package-free soaps and shampoos:** Solid shampoo bars and bar soaps are making a comeback, and they're just as luxurious as their bottled counterparts—without the plastic waste. Plus, they're easier to pack when you're off on your next Kiwi road trip.
- 4. Toilet paper consciousness:** Look for recycled toilet paper or those brands that use sustainable materials. You'll feel good about it every time you stick to the golden rule (and no, we don't mean the glittering overseas plumbing).

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Beth Elstone

Use new spaces, new ways

Beth Elstone knows how to throw a party. But to the average event attendee she is invisible, by design. 'I'm so behind the scenes. The beauty of my job is that no one sees what I do,' she notes.

Coming down from the high of her latest baby - the inaugural Collins Street Festival - she's hit the ground running in preparation for Napier's milestone 150th Christmas Parade, Fiesta and Concert. Silly season takes on a whole new meaning for those whose business is fun.

Her event management company, Littlestone's, list of achievements shows, with a brief scroll, her inconspicuous fingerprints over an impressive portfolio on both local and national stages. She's dipped her fingers in basketball, BMX and surf festivals, as well as music - her bread and butter. Behemoths like Art Deco, Church Road Concerts and Sail GP sit beside acoustic gigs from emerging artists.

Managing local success story, Arahi, opened Elstone's eyes to the potential

for 'unique experiences, pushing outside what everyone else is doing.' Together they collaborated with artists, dancers and theatre practitioners, blurring boundaries to make magic.

Working with promoters at established venues is something she can do in her infrequent sleep. To her they feel 'a bit cookie cutter. People are after more interesting experiences - activating spaces in a way that is rich with music and art. It's not just about what you're going to any more, it's about the feelings it brings,' she declares.

Elstone's dream, one she has achieved with Collins Street, is to 'try to use spaces that haven't been used,' in new and diverse ways, 'not telling people everything so they show up and there's a few surprises. It adds a little cherry on the top.'

Collins Street took over the Ahuriri lane adjacent to The Urban Winery and The National Distillery, whose wares featured in the festival's pop-up bars. Guests were surprised by the transformation of the location - one they were used to being used as a car park and loading dock. Stalls sold records and curated vintage clothing. Instead of piped music in the intervals between bands, *Underground's* creamy white baby grand piano invited at random

"The beauty of my job is that no one sees what I do."

Beth Elstone

the many collected musicians to fill the space with joyful impromptu melody, as diverse as the crowd.

'It was a crazy idea but we managed to pull it off,' she says with a smile earned from having autonomy over her product. It's an idea she hopes to expand as it grows, over multiple days with a range of offerings - acoustic music on the waterfront, a dance party on the beach - her imagination is rife with possibility to realise the potential of the environment and the community.

At its core, Elstone's work is gift giving. Her motivation is the people who experience what she creates. Though much of her time is spent curating and managing artists, 'the audience is the best thing about the event,' she attests, 'I believe if you put the audience at the heart of everything the artists will have the best time.' ●

Through her company, Littlestone, Beth creates memorable events.

Words by Rosheen FitzGerald



Bayden Barber

Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi

Unite 100,000-strong iwi

Bayden Barber's big idea is to unite all of Ngāti Kahungunu.

Back in the 1950s Canon Wiremu Te Tau Huata wrote the waiata *Tūtira Mai Ngā Iwi* on a road trip driving past Lake Tūtira. The song has special significance for Hawke's Bay Māori, and its sentiment - "come together as one" - encapsulates what Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc Chair Barber is hoping to achieve on his upcoming road trip across the rohe to establish the next 25 year vision for the iwi.

He wants to see all of the iwi - which at 100,000 population is New Zealand's third largest and has the second largest coastline - thriving.

"We want our people to be thriving in education, excelling in their culture, to be in leadership roles across the country in business and politics, and to be thriving and excelling in all facets of their lives. It's a big responsibility and a big vision."

Barber says that Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc (NKII) is on the up, with an \$11 million turnaround in financial performance, after some bad investments.

"We've been through some struggles financially, but we've cleaned that up, and we've turned the corner."

Key to the future success of NKII is equal focus on *ōhanga* (economic performance) and *oranga* (translation 'life', but relates to iwi development such as education, jobs and training, environmental science, health and wellbeing, housing, culture and language revitalisation). Barber says that

economics power everything else, and only go so well as what you're delivering back to your people.

"When we're looking at economic investments we need to make sure those investments can create jobs and training. Half of our population is under 25, and they need skills and training; education is one of the key pou in our future."

Like many iwi, Ngāti Kahungunu people are spread around the country. Barber says he wants to get iwi closer and more connected to their *turanga-waewae*. "If we can get them home, and bring that intellectual capacity, I'd love to do that."

Barber wants to do more than just bring people home, he wants to bring all of Ngāti Kahungunu together: the Iwi Inc, the six *taiwhenua*, and the seven post treaty settlement groups.

He talks about *kotahitanga* - collective strength, bringing everything together.

"If you look at our collective wealth, there's about half a billion dollars of treaty settled wealth. You've got assets, you've got people. Our biggest asset is our people, so being collective around how we're dealing with the same people, how we collectively use our influence to improve outcomes in health, housing, jobs etc. And we want our people to be able to speak their language.

"If we can have *kotahitanga* it will positively impact the whole of the region. It's a powerful proposition. We have a bold vision and that vision is to be united. We need to be smarter and

"We have a bold vision and that vision is to be united. We need to be smarter and we need to pull together."

Bayden Barber

we need to pull together.

"We're starting to have those conversations with the post treaty groups, and it's a bit testy at times. They're tough conversations but we'll have those conversations and our people expect us as leaders to have those conversations."

Barber says the biggest threat to a united Kahungunu is people pursuing their own agendas.

"We need to look far and wide, and forward another 100 years in terms of what this could be. I think it could be a game breaker.

"We need *kotahitanga* here in Kahungunu and we actually need it on a national scale. Because it comes down to scale, influence, efficiency and good leadership. And all of those are harder when you start filtering it out, when you start watering it down, all of those things become a lot more difficult." ●

Bayden is chair of Ngāti Kahungunu Iwi Inc.

Words by Brenda Newth

Chris Proctor

Get youth better engaged in community



Connections with other people are the foundation of Chris's ideas, whose plans aim to encourage young people in Hawke's Bay to embrace opportunities and vote.

The ideas are borne out of the lessons Chris learnt as a 10-year-old when he immigrated (to the Bay) from Germany and couldn't speak English. It was during those first two years when a young Chris was struggling to communicate that he learnt the power of meaningful connection through joining a photography course. As well as friendship, the experience helped him put down roots and get passionate about something.

That early lesson about the impact people can have on our lives still rings true for the now 17-year-old and the other boys at Lindisfarne College. "That's the most powerful thing I've seen - when there's a person there that looks at you and goes 'Hey, I reckon you can do this'. That connection is pretty powerful," says Chris.

Which brings us to Chris's first big

idea. He and outgoing head boy, Fergus Morunga, are in the final stages of planning a leadership programme for Lindisfarne.

The boys wanted to create something that would leave a lasting, positive impact on the school. The aim is to create a programme that taps into the incredible network of inspirational people in our region, asking them to give some of their time to speak at assemblies and potentially to provide mentorship to students. From business leaders, to community leaders, sports people, to farmers and judges, Hawke's Bay is full of talented people who can encourage the next generation to dream big, says Chris. The boys are working on a booklet to accompany the programme, where students can write down their goals, quotes from speakers and information from mentorship sessions.

In the same vein, connection is also key to Chris's second big idea - to get young people more engaged in the democratic process.

Hawke's Bay is full of talented people who can encourage the next generation to dream big.

As chair of the Hastings Youth Council, Chris has seen first-hand the issues around low voter turnout for local elections, especially among the young demographic. "It's hard to watch only 20% of people voting and calling it democracy." Chris suggests bringing official voting boxes into schools so eligible students can vote onsite, as well as having someone from the Electoral Commission talk to students about why they should vote. It's about helping young people understand the process and showing them that it is relevant to them. "Local elections are so not sexy at all to those boys. It's boring as, like road rubbish and road cones, but once you dig a little bit deeper you actually see there's quite a lot more than that." ●

Chris Proctor is head boy at Lindisfarne College and chair of the Hastings Youth Council.

Words by Abby Beswick

Willie White

Empower rural
catchment groups





Organic dairy farmer and Vice Chair of Hawke's Bay Future Farming Trust, Willie White, has a big idea to improve environmental outcomes for not only our region but New Zealand.

And that's to put more financial resources into catchment groups. For the townies, that means diverting budget away from councils/regional councils and giving farming communities the power and the funding to get things done.

White, who farms 800 hectares in Ashley Clinton Central Hawke's Bay, says that community led action has a lot of benefits.

"You get far better engagement from the people in the community. When you get community level accountability, the efficiency of the dollar is really important. Hawke's Bay Regional Council is trying to do a lot of things over a big area, and I think there's an opportunity to take some of the burden off the council and give more to community-led groups.

"These groups can actually get things done efficiently and get people to come along for the ride. And that's half the battle. It's got to be looked at as a way forward for the country. We used to operate really well when communities had a bit of accountability and empowerment and we need to go back to that.

"Local people understand the issues better in their communities and if you give a bunch of farmers a budget to work with, they'll probably come in under budget."

White says that funding for catchment groups is a challenge and there needs to be a fundamental shift in the way that we manage financial and environmental resources.

"Obviously the regulator or centralised councils are still going to have a place but if the goal is to enhance or protect the environment, I believe we can get there faster, more effectively and have more efficient gains through a community-led focus."

White cites the example of the Tukipo Catchment Care Group, which through the support of MfE funding (50:50 with landowners), Fonterra and HBRC has enabled:

- establishment of a large constructed wetland (soon to have data collected to assess the benefits)
- planting of 75,000 native trees to date and resulting in a native tree nursery being created in the community
- 50km of new fencing (does not include waterways required to be fenced due to regulations)
- establishing ecological corridors targeted for pest control
- a further 22 on-farm wetlands and 200ha of afforestation of sensitive land.

"There's an opportunity to take some of the burden off the council and give more to community-led groups."

Willie White

All with widespread uptake and the ability to pack out the local hall for community days.

Currently the government is funding catchment groups around the country, but the signs are that things are about to change, says White.

"Government likes the catchment group model but they've indicated they want farmers to have some skin in the game, which currently is leaning towards membership fees.

"We can be the organisation that's funded by its members to do really good things on behalf of the whole of the region but it can't be an additional cost to farmers.

"Farmers have proven to be willing to spend money on-farm to enhance environmental outcomes. While I am happy to pay to be a member of a catchment group or collective, on principle that money needs to be a re-appropriation as opposed to an addition. Some of that money should be coming out of regional council budgets and into catchment groups, because they're proven to be effective.

"If we're able to spread some of the responsibility into communities ... we already have real skin in the game as we rely on the land to make a living and the rivers run through our properties.

"I really do believe that would be the best thing for Hawke's Bay and for New Zealand," says White. ●

Willie farms in CHB and serves as Vice Chair of HB Future Farming Trust.

Words by Brenda Newth



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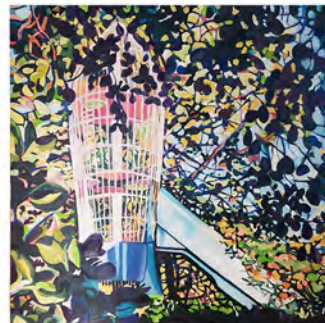


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Hamish White

Solar, service and SaaS

Local telco CEO Hamish White doesn't have just one big idea, he has three. His vision for Hawke's Bay 50 years into the future is a region with a markedly different and much bigger economy. We're still earning export dollars from tourism and the primary sector but have developed significant new industries that are infinitely scalable.

White says: "What sort of region do we need to create for our grandchildren? We need to be quite deliberate about taking steps into that arena."

The first of his three ideas relates to the sun. With one of the country's highest sunshine hours, White argues that renewable solar energy could become an emerging and significant earner for Hawke's Bay. "Why couldn't we become the solar capital of New Zealand, and actually look at developing land in a different way?

"Why couldn't we look at the role that solar could play? It is a natural resource that's only partially leveraged at the moment. We could be feeding into the national grid, and become a centre of excellence for solar innovation and solar electricity generation."

Idea number two relates to service industries. White says there is a resurgence and value put on localised service and opportunity for Hawke's Bay to build a strong industry based on service. Now, the telco White leads, leans heavily into service as a point of difference and has done pretty well by all accounts.

In the past 10-15 years, Hawke's Bay has attracted a number of organisations that have established service centres. Think Kiwibank, Datacom, Xero, Police, and Smith & Smith Glass.

We have land in abundance, we are well placed geographically and we have a growing capability in service, says White.

"We have a proposition in terms of cost of living, in a comparative sense. But there's a number of component parts that need to come together. We need to work with the tertiary sector - EIT and others - to address talent pool concerns and with local government.

"Service evolves into other things. There's a massive support network that sits around it and every single

"Wouldn't it be lovely to think that in 50 years' time, our economic pie is that much bigger and 70 per cent of it is coming from sectors that aren't really present now?"
Hamish White

discipline in terms of technology, finance and culture. Don't think of it as only creating a whole lot of call centre jobs; it's everything else.

"You can't build these ecosystems overnight but the more that exist here, the easier it becomes to attract even more," he says.

Completing the trio of ideas is SaaS, Software as a Service. Hawke's Bay already has successful software businesses such as Fingermark, Magiq Software, and Re-Leased, says White.

"We've got a critical mass and there's some serious talent drifting around.

"The Heretaunga Plains would be a great place to start a SaaS business. We need to think about the ecosystem that we're building for SaaS, in the same way as we do for service.

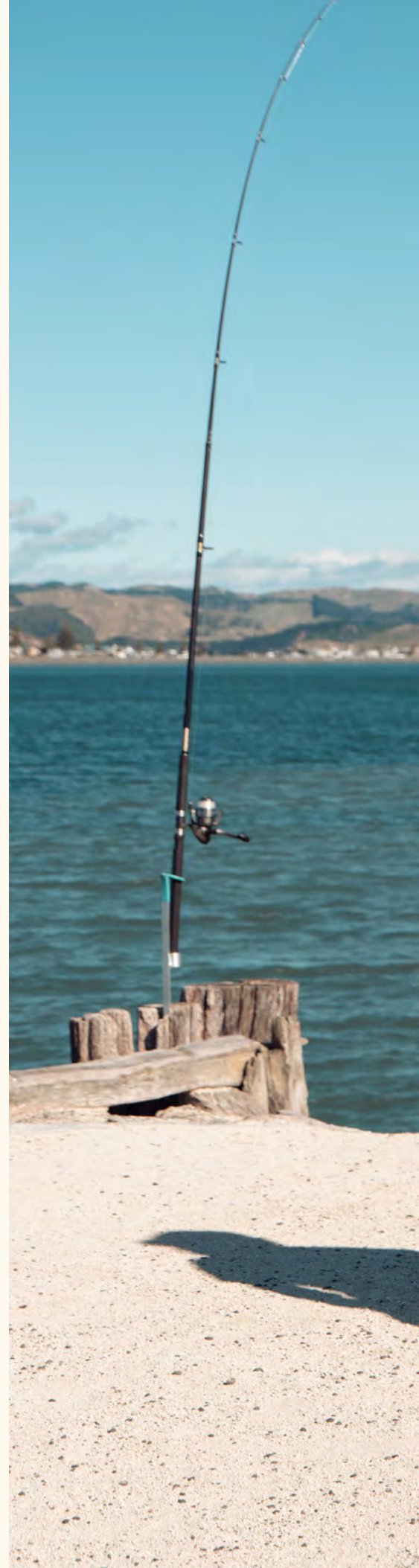
"It's about collegiality and collaboration and understanding what these people (SaaS workers) need to continue to grow and be successful.

"We need to be very clear on what our vision is in terms of these future areas of GDP. But wouldn't it be lovely to think that in 50 years' time, our economic pie is that much bigger and 70% of it is coming from sectors that aren't really present now?

"I'm really excited for what the future holds for Hawke's Bay. I think we are in a really good position." ●

Hamish White is the CEO of Now.

Words by Brenda Newth





Expertly crafted journeys

How Travel Expert is redefining the travel experience in Hawke's Bay

When it comes to planning the perfect trip, having an expert by your side makes all the difference. That's the philosophy behind Travel Expert, a leading travel brokerage in Hawke's Bay led by the experienced and passionate Kate Tawhai. With personalised service, industry expertise, and a commitment to creating seamless travel experiences, Travel Expert is quickly becoming the go-to name for Kiwi travellers across the country.

A personal touch to every journey

Working from her home office in Havelock North, Kate has built her business on the belief that travel is more than just flights and accommodation—it's about creating memories, connecting with cultures, and exploring the world in a way that's tailored to *you*.

Kate and her team pride themselves on offering personalised, custom-made travel planning—a service that goes beyond cookie-cutter itineraries to truly match a client's unique style, interests, and preferences. "No two trips are ever the same," Kate shares. "I spend time getting to know my clients so I can design the perfect journey for them."

From business to bucket list adventures

Whether you're a small business with complex travel needs or a couple dreaming of a multi-stop round-the-world adventure, Travel Expert has the expertise to handle it all. Kate has extensive experience managing business travel for companies such as philanthropic trusts, wineries, and primary industry exporters while also offering expert advice on river cruises, ocean journeys, and expedition trips as a Cruise Lines International Ambassador and CLIA Master-in-training.

For clients looking for leisurely escapes or special bucket list experiences, Travel Expert offers seamless planning for all types of trips—from traditional getaways to far-flung expedition voyages. With travel insights and connections from her global network of partners, Kate makes exploring the world simple, stress-free, and memorable.

An expo that set the stage for discovery

In September, Travel Expert made waves by hosting its first ever Hawke's Bay Travel Expo at Toitoto, Hawke's Bay Arts and Events Centre. The event attracted an enthusiastic crowd of 100 eager travellers exploring deals and offers from top tour companies, airlines, and cruise lines. Events like these showcase Travel Expert's commitment to connecting their clients with opportunities that spark inspiration and excitement for exploration.

The future is flexible—with travel expert on board

In a changing world, where traditional 9-to-5 bricks-and-mortar offices are giving way to flexibility and efficiency, Kate's business model is perfectly suited to the modern traveller. Working by appointment only, she meets clients when and where it suits them—creating a tailored and time-efficient experience. This shift has proven successful: much of Travel Expert's growth has come from word-of-mouth referrals, a clear indicator of Kate's focus on customer satisfaction.

With this demand for her expertise, Kate has recently expanded her team by welcoming Koryn Willan, a local travel expert with over a decade of experience, to bring even more depth to the services offered by Travel Expert.

Experience, expertise, and global connections

Kate's journey into the travel industry began 25 years ago in a retail agency and led to corporate roles across three continents, including London and Vancouver. She later took a maternity leave and reimagined her career, founding Travel Expert to create a better work-life balance and a more client-focused experience.

As a member of a large network of travel professionals, Travel Expert has access to an extensive support team, ensuring clients enjoy 24/7 assistance and expert guidance throughout their journey. With options like digital itinerary apps that sync with your trip—offering real-time notifications for flight delays, gate changes, and more—Travel Expert combines technology and old-fashioned service to provide a streamlined, stress-free experience for every traveller.

A one-stop shop for stress-free travel

Planning a trip can feel overwhelming when you're coordinating flights, accommodation, sightseeing, insurance, and entry requirements. But with Travel Expert, all these complexities are managed with ease. Kate and her team simplify every step of the planning process, offering guidance on visas, entry rules, and insurance from multiple providers—all so you can focus on enjoying your journey.

Post-pandemic wanderlust

Post-pandemic travel has seen Kiwis reconnect with their passion for exploration, and Travel Expert is at the forefront of this resurgence. A recent survey commissioned by NZ Seniors showed that 7 in 10 Kiwis over 50 have no hesitation spending their hard-earned savings to indulge their love

of travel—a trend Kate says reflects a growing desire to experience new places and reconnect with the world.

From riverboat adventures to European city-hopping and multi-stop flights across Asia or the Americas, Travel Expert is helping clients navigate their wanderlust with ease, confidence, and personal touchpoints at every stage.

Passion and Experience

Inspired by her travels as a teenager—studying abroad in Switzerland and exploring 35 countries since—Kate brings a personal, global perspective to the Travel Expert experience. She combines her years of industry experience with the joy of adventure to help her clients unlock unforgettable experiences.

With travel expertise rooted in experience, passion, and care, Kate Tawhai and Travel Expert are redefining what it means to plan a journey. Whether you're setting off on a corporate retreat, a bucket list expedition, or a family holiday, you're in expert hands from the first conversation to the last 'bon voyage!' ●



Ready to plan your next journey?

Call Kate Tawhai
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Koryn Willan
027 869 2437

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Kunjay Patel

Better healthcare for Māori and Pacific Islanders

Kunjay Patel isn't scared to take an innovative approach when it comes to improving healthcare. "You can't complain about the same thing over and over again unless you make a change," he says.

The managing director of Te Mata Peak Practice accepts he can't change government decisions, which he says have routinely let them down, but he and his team can change the way they provide care to patients. "They (the government) don't understand primary care but I can make a conscious choice to run a practice with my team differently, with different views and different focuses than might be traditional. We're free to take a few risks here and there."

Recent changes at the practice include a new triage and appointment booking system, an increased nursing team and different pathways for treatment. Now, nurses, nurse practitioners and extended care paramedics treat

patients where appropriate, to free up GPs to see the patients who really need them. The results speak for themselves. What used to be a 7-day wait for treatment last year (which was very good compared to national standards), is now 0-2 days. He would love to see access times for healthcare reduce for everyone in Hawke's Bay.

Freeing time for GPs also allows them to develop specialist interests and offer more extensive services to patients, such as skin health, an anonymous sexual health service, ADHD, complex health issues, women's health issues and cognitive stimulation therapy for patients with dementia. This in turn encourages GPs to stay with the practice.

Another area where Kunjay would like to see change in Hawke's Bay is Māori and Pacific Islands healthcare. "I would love to see our Māori and Pacific Islands community being able to walk into any health centre and expect excellent care

"If you're afraid to fail then you'll never change."
Kunjay Patel

... I just think there shouldn't be any segment of society that doesn't have access to excellent healthcare." There are some Māori specific providers who do an incredibly good job with very limited funding and support, says Kunjay. "I wish that we could all do that for that community." A lack of cultural understanding, poor education, historical impact and politicization have all contributed to the situation, he says.

Kunjay wants to continue to push for change that can offer better healthcare outcomes for patients and support frontline workers. "You have to accept that when you make a change, that comes with a risk where you may fail, but if you're afraid to fail then you'll never change." ●

Kunjay is the managing director of Te Mata Peak Practice in Havelock North.

Words by Abby Beswick

Nimble thinking nursing



At Royston Hospital, we couldn't be prouder of our exceptionally talented team – and the backbone of that team is our wonderful nurses.

Like us, they are committed to continuing excellence in the health and wellbeing of the people in our care. That's why we'd like to introduce you to Rochelle "Rocky" Holder, the operating-theatre coordinator at Royston Hospital, who shares how she balances her nursing duties in such a high-pressure environment.

"Thinking outside the box is a massive part of my role as Theatre Coordinator – operating schedules and patient conditions don't always go to plan, so it's up to me to adapt and accommodate things to ensure patients get their surgery when they need it."

Rochelle Holder
Royston Hospital Nurse



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Alison Prins

Children should be seen and heard



Alison Prins, General Manager of the Graeme Dingle Foundation Hawke's Bay (GDFHB) has a radical big idea. To listen to young people and act on their ideas.

Giving youth a voice is fundamental to best practice youth development, she says. "They have very little opportunity to have input to decisions that affect their lives, now and into the future. They're super smart, they know what's happening and they can make a huge difference.

"We have this really unhelpful narrative (around young people) in the media, which is particularly damaging to rangatahi Māori. And I think if they (youth) had a stronger voice and we understood what they needed, and gave them a hand in designing the future, we'd get better outcomes for everyone."

Prins explains that it's an arduous process to get youth issues elevated, and to draw the attention of decision-makers in Hawke's Bay.

A lot of work that GDFHB does is with youth that are invisible, or less visible, says Prins. "They're the ones that have a lot to offer, but they're also the ones that have very little voice. There's lots of opportunities to understand it better.

"Youth voice is fundamental, because we're building stuff that works for them, and can get good outcomes.

We've proven that with our Pathways 2 Potential programme and the positive impact on school attendance, engagement and personal development."

Pathways 2 Potential was developed by GDFHB based on youth voice from many schools, including Wairoa College. Prins says staying at school until the end of Year 12 is directly related to reaching potential.

"If we can work with that transition to high school, for those year nines and tens, then that's a huge step."

Pathways 2 Potential's purpose is to improve educational engagement, career readiness, and overall wellbeing (hauora), and help participants to envision a positive future, laying a strong foundation for long-term success. It includes mātauranga Māori (traditional Māori knowledge) elements and youth development best practice.

It has a focus on hands-on interactive learning experiences, which are particularly beneficial for neurodiverse students, and the programme includes practical skills, such as budgeting and teamwork, which are more engaging and directly relevant to students' personal growth, says Prins.

"Wairoa College has been amazing to partner with. They love this mahi and see a meaningful difference in their students and how that has a flow on effect in the school."

"The narrative around our youth has got to be around opportunity and potential, and involving them."

Alison Prins

As well as Wairoa College, Pathways 2 Potential was delivered in five other schools last year; Tamatea High School, William Colenso College, Taradale High School, Hastings Girls' High School, and St Johns' College. GDFHB will be delivering P2P again in 2025, and has the capacity to run the programme in other schools, subject to funding.

By not giving youth a voice we (society) risk putting money and resources into things that are less effective, says Prins.

"And as a result, we don't realise the potential of the rangatahi of our region. They are our future decision makers and our future workforce, which will determine the prosperity of our region.

"But the idea is that it's not just youth organisations doing this. It's every organisation and every decision making body, thinking differently about how they engage with rangatahi and what they can gain.

"The narrative around our youth has got to be around opportunity and potential, and involving them. We've got to stop trying to solve problems for them and they've got to help design solutions." ●

Alison is General Manager of the Graeme Dingle Foundation HB.

Words by Brenda Newth

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Alex Walker

CHB has bigger role to play in HB

Alex Walker, Mayor of Central Hawke's Bay, has big ambitions for her district.

Her big idea sees CHB playing a much bigger role in the future of Hawke's Bay. "There's a conversation that needs to be had in 2025 ... which is how we get Central Hawke's Bay into a clear conversation about the future of Hawke's Bay."

As she sees it, there are many handbrakes to future development on Heretaunga plains land. There's pressure to preserve productive land, pitted against the need for housing and the challenge of getting developments consented in a post Cyclone Gabrielle world.

Walker says that CHB has 2,500 sections - both rural and urban - available for residential development.

"We've spent the last few years putting very clear building blocks in place for growth here to be smart. And smart for us means allowing for growth, but keeping our small town spirit, using our infrastructure smartly and minimising our impacts. We have protected our highly productive soils in our new district plan, we have created an urban growth zone in Waipukurau (50 hectares) in partnership with Tamatea Pōkai Whenua and a variety of private land-owners where there's scope to grow by 950 households in the centre of Waipukurau. We have a plan which clearly delineates growth nodes on the edges of Waipawa and Ōtāne.

Central Hawke's Bay hasn't got to the point of being overdeveloped, like some parts of the Heretaunga Plains, Walker says.

"We have got ahead of that. We have got ahead of the land fragmentation, of the urban crawl onto productive soils. We have got significant areas that are ready and ripe to be the centre of the future of Hawke's Bay.

"I think there is a perception that Napier and Hastings are the story of the region but there is only one district in this region with the words Hawke's Bay in their name."
Alex Walker, CHB Mayor

"This is where the relevance of Central Hawke's Bay to the whole region is so important. It's a space where we can grow not just local, but a regional workforce. And if we are smart about how we place residential development and we strengthen it with a regional spatial plan that connects our water resources, our infrastructure resources, our soil resources, and our workforce together, it will very clearly connect Central Hawke's Bay to the engine room of the future of Hawke's Bay.

"We've got the space to grow and the building blocks in place to do it right."

It's a 10 to 20 year vision, Walker says. "Thriving in Central Hawke's Bay does not include us looking like Havelock North or Hastings. It is about keeping our unique identity, strengthening our hand, bringing great people in, bringing investment in, and creating those opportunities here locally for our people.

"What we're looking for now will be the partnerships to investment that are going to open doors on some of that growth."

Walker warns that a joined up view on what success looks like for the region is needed, for everyone to capitalise on the opportunity for Hawke's Bay. Without it, she says, it becomes a competitive proposition between districts.

"We have to make sure that Central Hawke's Bay's value is really clearly articulated. That's why we have to have a really meaningful place in the economy, so it's really clear what the future that the region supports is going to look like.

"I think there is a perception that Napier and Hastings are the story of the region, but there is only one district in this region with the words Hawke's Bay in their name." ●

Alex Walker is the Mayor of CHB and an aspiring musician.

Words by Brenda Newth



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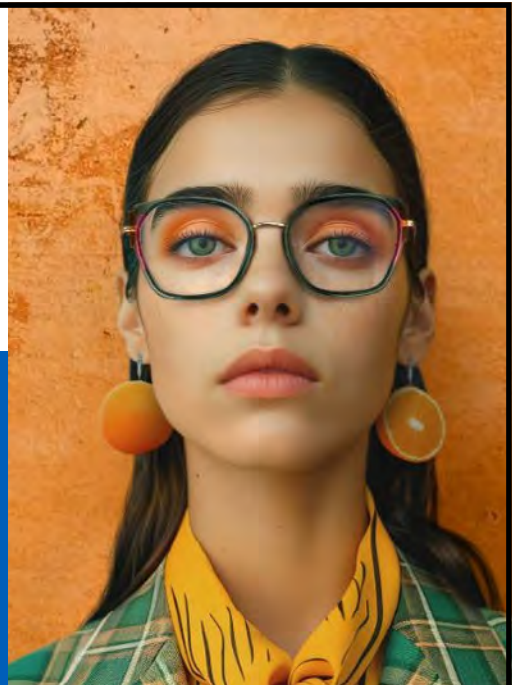
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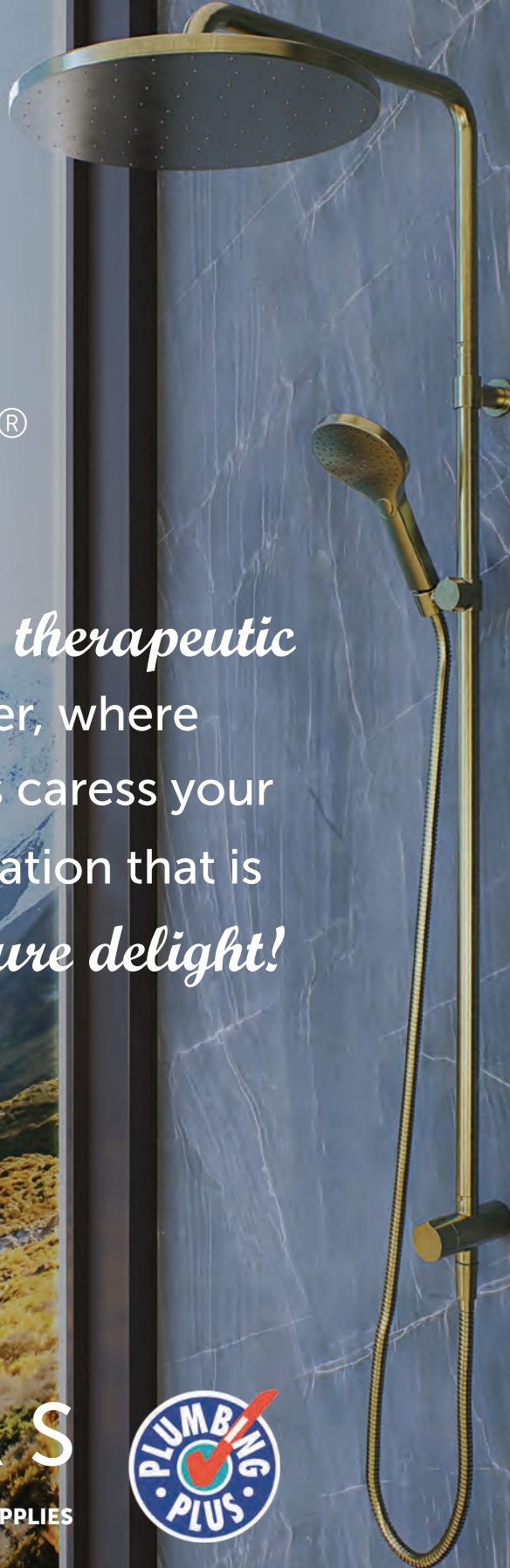
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BIG IDEAS COME AND GO

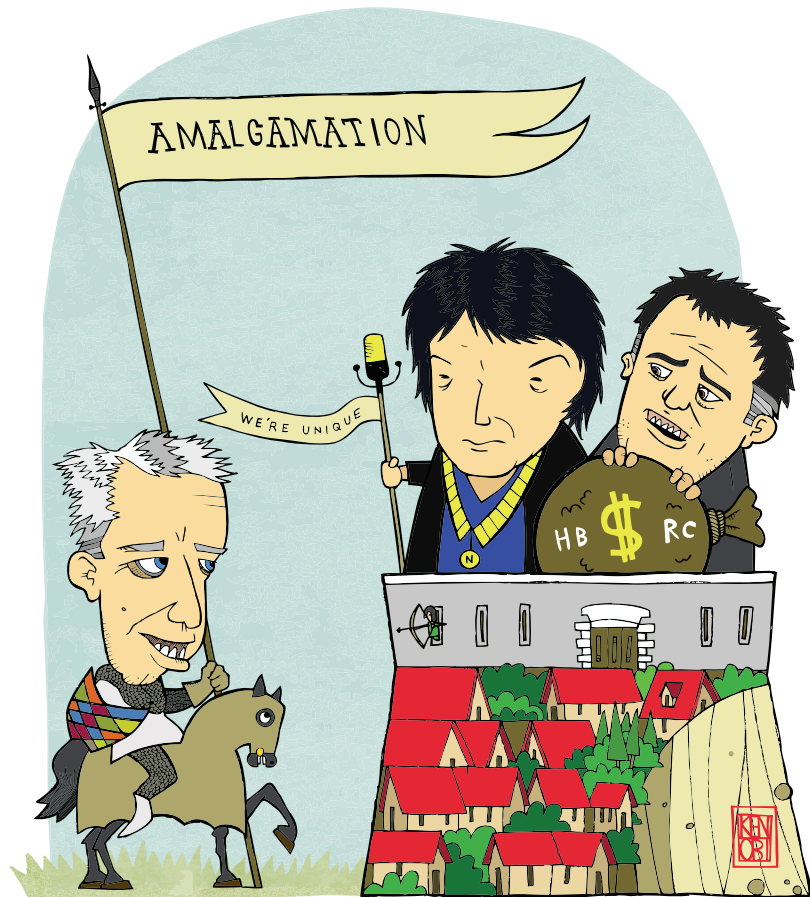


Illustration: Brett Monteith

In recent years, Hawke's Bay has not lacked for 'big ideas'. Some came to fruition, others not. Some died, but could be revived.

And now there's a raft of new 'big ideas' as well, as you will be reading throughout this edition of *BayBuzz*.

For this article, I'm thinking of 'big ideas' as those requiring a considerable amount of resource and/or public buy-in ... and offering considerable change to the Hawke's Bay 'landscape' in one manner or another. Sometimes with disputed benefits.

What have some of these been? What new ones are in the pipeline? What gets a 'big idea' across the line?

The past

Lawrence Yule wanted a **sports park**. He got one, effectively trading some real estate and an antiquated stadium adjoining Hastings CBD for some farmland at the Expressway.

There was opposition. Some believed the money could be better spent on community facilities around the district; some worried that big box retailing would suck customers away

from CBD retailers; others wanted to protect versatile farming soils.

It didn't help that initially the spear carrier for the proposal was Sam Kelt. But he was supplanted by super-sport advocate Sir Graeme Avery and the HB Sports Park came to fruition ... and is now one of the region's prized and most-used assets, including as a venue for national and international sport competitions.

Avery didn't stop there. He had an even larger vision for a fitness centre catering to both (potentially) elite athletes in the region as well as the physical wellness of the community at large. Millions were raised to build what is now the **HB Community Fitness Centre**, including the state-of-the-art **Regional Aquatic Centre**, serving both Olympic level competitors and everyday lap swimmers.

The facility delivers what its website promises: "We deliver a spectrum of services from community health and fitness, athlete development, and high performance sport - all under one roof. Our aim is to improve the health of everyone in Hawke's Bay, as well as grow future Olympians, right here in our own backyard."

And in snuck Bruce Mactaggart,

driving establishment of the world-class **field hockey turf** as part of the complex.

But Avery wasn't focused entirely on sport. Along with Kim Thorp and Rebecca Turner, he championed a pivotal positioning for the region - **Hawke's Bay Wine Country** (perhaps to the consternation of the 'Fruitbowl' advocates). That appellation steadily gained traction, and drew more and more visitors, until recently achieving the region's recognition as a Great Wine Capital of the World, one of just 12 premiere wine districts in the world, and the only one in NZ.

Another 'big idea' connects many of the wineries on which that recognition is based - our robust **cycling network**, starting with Hawke's Bay Trails in 2002, whose tentacles have spread out some 200 kilometers since. The original vision came from then-Mayor of Napier Barbara Arnott, aiming to create a local seaside pathway ... a vision pedaled forward by the Rotary Pathway Trust.

Another seaside vision was not so fortunate. Andy Lowe championed a plan for a massive housing development, some **900 or so homes, at Ocean Beach**, which was initially supported by the Hastings District Council.

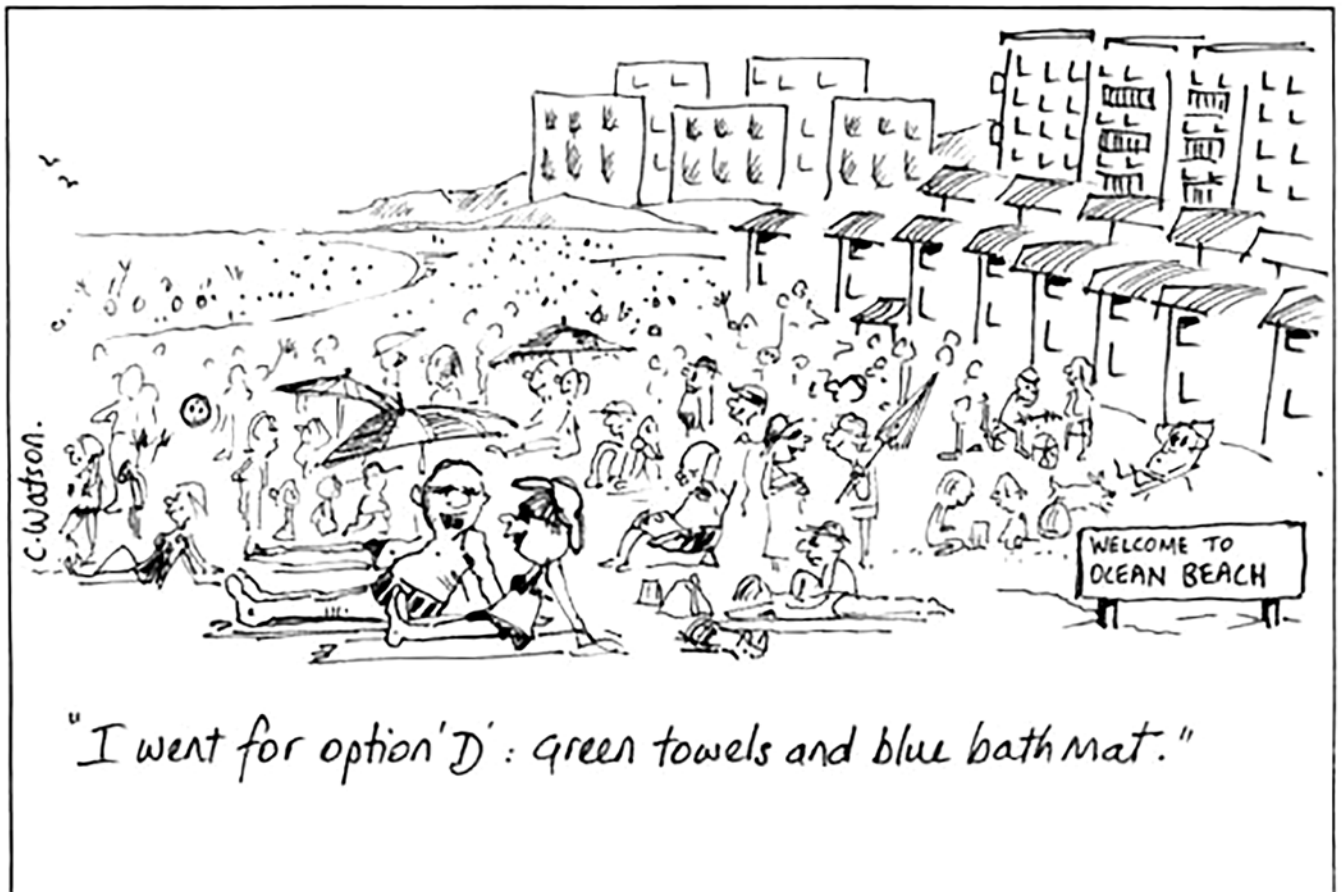


Illustration: Catherine Watson

However, the project ran aground in 2008 when a citizens' campaign, Friends of Ocean Beach, generated over 10,000 names in opposition, complementing a barrage of substantive submissions from the likes of Future Ocean Beach. HDC backed away and the plan was withdrawn.

Lowe, in partnership with the Robinson and Hansen families, then channeled his Ocean Beach energies into the establishment of 2,500 hectare **Cape Sanctuary**, which has become a highly successful conservation initiative. Not without controversy, but with the steady hands-on support from hundreds of local volunteers, Cape Sanctuary, home of the legendary 10.6 kilometre predator-proof fence, has become a regional and national asset focused on bird, animal, plant, tree and dune restoration.

In 2012, another 'big idea' was born - the **Hawke's Bay Foundation**. Rebecca Turner was the driving force. An original donor relates, "She had the vision, she cajoled, she persuaded, and put together a team of ten major donors to act as the example to the rest of the community that it was an idea worth supporting."

The concept is worldwide and simple. Pool money through donations

and bequests, invest it carefully to preserve the endowment, and commit the earnings to deserving community organisations and initiatives. Generous individuals of course do this personally through trusts, but the idea here is to both pool funds and upgrade their management to make significant grants of broad HB community benefit.

Twelve years later, the HB Foundation has recently awarded \$366,000 to 65 local recipients, assisting sectors ranging from health, education, the environment, Te Ao Maori, youth development and arts and social services.

Three blockbuster proposals rounded out the 'teens' decade. The first two failed.

Amalgamation of the region's five councils was hotly debated in the 2014 - 2015 window, with a referendum deciding the matter in September 2015. The proposal, championed by then-Mayor Lawrence Yule and a community group led by Rebecca Turner, would have consolidated our five councils into one region-wide unitary authority, with community boards for CHB, Hastings, Napier and Wairoa. Each of four districts had to approve the measure, and only Hastings did (by

a bare 51%). Across the region, the vote was 66% against, 34% for.

It took the **Ruataniwha Dam** (or at least the first attempt to build it) longer to die. The dam, costing \$300m+ to construct and even more to distribute its water, was sponsored by the Regional Council via its Regional Investment Company (HBRC). The project built momentum through the 2013-15 term of the Council with dam proponents in the majority and receiving approval from a Board of Inquiry in 2014. But the scheme eventually faced opposition from a majority of councillors elected for the 2016-19 term while failing to attract financing or a required level of prospective water purchases. A Supreme Court decision in 2017 blocking the flooding of conservation land behind the proposed dam was the last straw, with HBRC abandoning the cause having spent some \$20 million on it.

In a way, cessation of the dam quest allowed attention to shift to another major project during the 2018-19 window. Napier Port sorely needed capital to increase and modernise its capacity. A plan was put together by HBRC Chair Rex Graham and the Port team to publicly **list the Port** and offer a minority (45%) of its shares for public sale, the

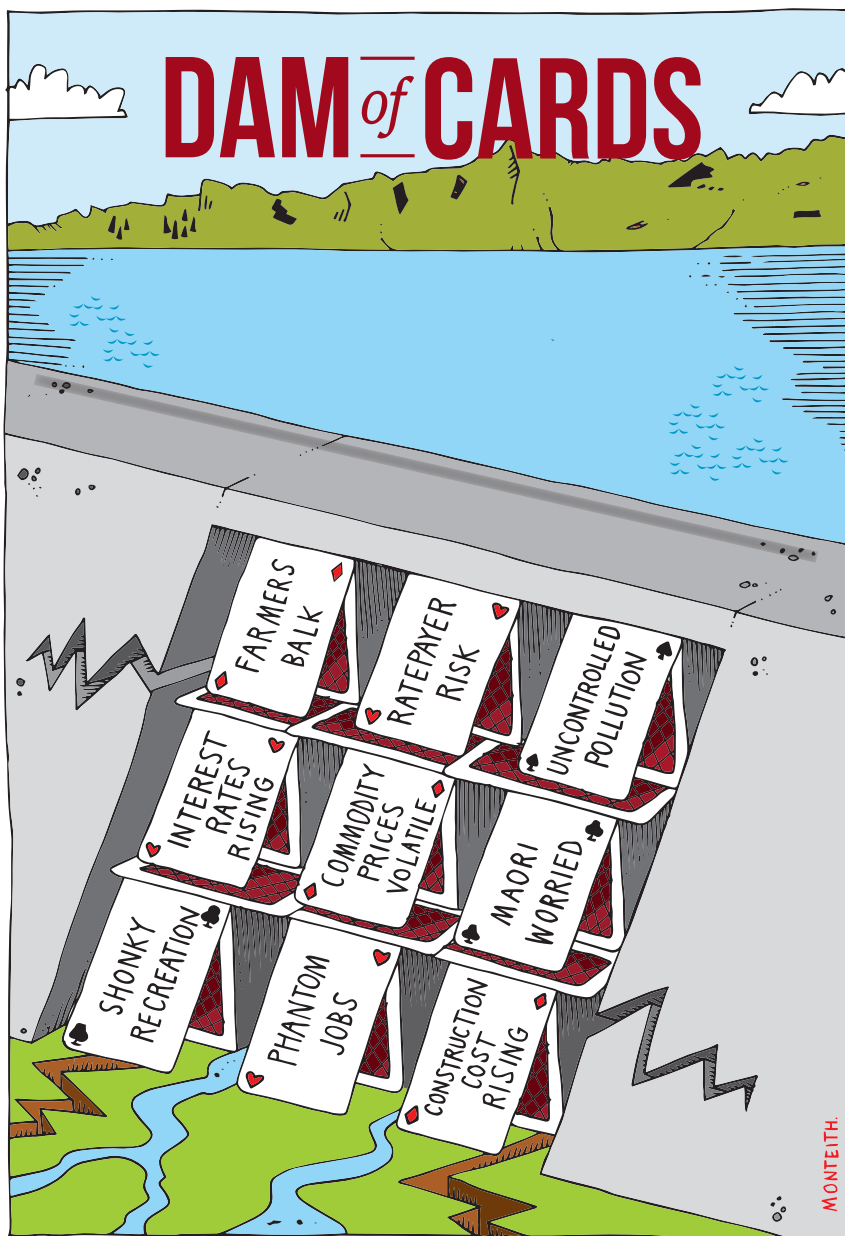


Illustration: Brett Monteith

majority to be retained by HBRC.

With the port officially a strategic public asset, extensive public consultation was required and carried out. With broad public, business and union support, the proposed listing and sale went forward in August 2019. The IPO yielded \$234 million, for construction of a new, large, modern wharf (6 Wharf) and additional port working capital and financing

capacity, plus a \$107.9m contribution to HBRC's balance sheet. There appear to be no regrets on this one.

Meantime, **Rocket Lab** had launched its first rocket from Mahia in 2017 through the drive of one innovator/entrepreneur - and now billionaire - Peter Beck.

So here is a ledger sheet of sorts to the present day.

Winners

Sports Park

Fitness & Aquatic Centres

Hawke's Bay Wine Country

Cycle trails

Cape Sanctuary

Napier Port listing

Rocket Lab

Losers

Ocean Beach Development

Amalgamation

Ruataniwha Dam 1

What next?

Let's assume the 'winners' above continue in their successful ways. What might be built upon those?

Let's start with some former losers.

The most obvious 're-start' is Ruataniwha Dam 2, for which proponents secured fast-track status in the government's new legislation, as well as up to \$3m from the new Regional Investment Fund, which must be matched by dam sponsors, to establish the environmental and financial feasibility of the born-again scheme.

Empowered by the fast-track legislation, it is assumed the government will override the Supreme Court blockage of Dam 1. The new law also gives explicit priority to economic over environmental considerations, so, although a Special Panel will need to confirm the project, it effectively cannot be blocked on environmental grounds, which isn't to say a pitched battle for public 'hearts and minds' won't occur over the environmental issues involved. It would appear that the fate of Dam 2 lies in selling its economic and financial viability, yet to be established.

Ruataniwha Dam 2 is right in our face. Simmering more quietly is the issue of amalgamation, an issue often raised in response to BayBuzz's invitation for 'big ideas'.

Although our five councils have been playing more nicely together lately than they were during the amalgamation debate window years ago, with Hastings and Napier in pitched battle, arguably the case for amalgamation has steadily become more obvious. Our five councils increasingly struggle with costs and issues that are patently regional in scale - weather resilience, civil defence, water services, coastal protection, land use and urban development, and overall cost/unaffordability of services.

And coming to a boil in 2025 will be '3 Waters' reform (or 'Local Water Done Well' as National puts it). Here in HB work is underway (budgeted at \$1.33m) to devise a scheme that would place delivery and funding of drinking water, stormwater and wastewater services under one new regional entity.

How this entity is structured and governed, what its investment and operating costs will be, and how those will be shared and funded across the region will be challenging questions for our local decisionmakers across councils to decide ... and secure public buy-in to. But the die is cast, the government is demanding this outcome, expecting a plan for the region by August 2025,

but offering no financial support for the huge investments ahead.

This article isn't the time and place to litigate Dam 2, amalgamation or water services reform, but you can reasonably expect the debate (and *BayBuzz* coverage) to escalate over these three in the coming year, which of course includes an election.

Which brings us to the first of several 'new' big issues to contend with.

The October ballots will include referenda on Māori wards for four of our councils. Virtually all of our current local elected politicians - led by three of our mayors and our Regional Council chair - are vocal champions of Māori wards. However, it is not at all clear that a majority of voters are ... and let's be frank here, pakeha voters.

Again, this isn't the time and place to litigate the issue. But when candidates must put up their hands in July declaring their intentions to stand, they will be grilled on their positions on Māori wards, and the public discussion will begin in earnest.

The rest of the 'big ideas' I'll mention here are pretty much stolen from the voices *BayBuzz* heard from when we invited ideas from our readers.

Each requires details to be developed, pros and cons to be debated, and leadership if any are to be realised.

Flood resilience

With technical analysis completed, options for protecting HB communities from future severe weather event flooding will be floated for public consultation in the months ahead. Much more than simply lifting stopbanks here and there is required, with huge multi-generational costs attached to any strategy adopted.

Conceivably some homes, businesses and productive lands might be considered for 'sacrifice' in contingency schemes where huge flooding cannot be contained and must be safely channeled. This option is already on the table for Wairoa. Major infrastructure changes - road, bridge, lifeline facility location/design - might need to be considered.

And 'nature-based' river management approaches could be adopted, such as the 'Making Room for Rivers' framework advocated by environmentalists and academic hydrologists who have studied the Ngaruroro in particular. Which might also augment Heretaunga aquifer recharge.

Says Forest & Bird's Tom Kay: "We could be the poster region for

This article isn't the time and place to litigate Dam 2, amalgamation or water services reform, but you can reasonably expect the debate (and *BayBuzz* coverage) to escalate over these three in the coming year, which of course includes an election.

reimagining our river 'management' from the mountains to the sea - predator control and forest restoration in the ranges, replanting erosion-prone land on farms, redesigning our stopbank system (to give our rivers more room), restoring the major wetlands that reappeared during the cyclone (e.g., at Puketapu, in CHB, etc), and supporting home-level initiatives (like stormwater tanks and rain gardens) to reduce flood risk.

Growth at the edges

Both Wairoa and Central HB are asserting themselves as deserving of and capable of playing a much larger role in the Hawke's Bay economic ecosystem.

For Wairoa, the number one enabler would be a reliable road connection to Napier. Says our Regional Economic Development Agency: "...the fragility of State Highway 2 is holding back the Wairoa economy and its general well-being. We, in partnership with Trust Tairāwhiti, have engaged economic consultancy NZIER to investigate the economic cost of the fragile road between Napier and Gisborne and the potential economic value that could be achieved if the road was more resilient."

And elsewhere in this magazine, CHB Mayor Alex Walker presents her ambitions for our southern district, noting its residential housing opportunities and ensuring that CHB has "a really meaningful place in the economy".

Both districts would expect their future water infrastructure requirements to be better met in a regional funding arrangement as contemplated by 'Local Water Done Well'.

More tech ... agritech?

A number of 'big idea' submitters have suggested the region give higher priority to expanding its 'tech sector', both as



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a hedge against such major (and vulnerable) dependence on our primary sector and as an opportunity for higher wage and more scalable business growth.

Elsewhere in this mag, Now CEO Hamish White, pointing to successful HB businesses like Fingermark, Magiq Software, and Re-Leased, says: “We’ve got a critical mass, and there’s some serious talent drifting around. The Heretaunga Plains would be a great place to start a Software as a Service business. We need to think about the ecosystem that we’re building for SaaS.”

Sir Graeme Avery would take this in the direction of agribusiness and sports tech IT products and services.

Wine entrepreneur Steve Smith also offers an ‘agtech’ version of this path. Noting the region’s horticulture depth, he suggests:

“Create a world class Centre of Excellence for Horticulture hubbed around a new campus at the Plant and Food Research Centre in Havelock North. Link in EIT. Bring in Lincoln University and the University of Auckland as partners to run the multi-disciplined Post Graduate Program in Business, Innovation and Science for Horticulture (BISH! Maybe Tony can buy naming rights). The centre is supported by the Tertiary Education Commission with the business community funding key professorial positions in disciplines they need. The top table of governance has business at the core alongside government, academia, research, local government and iwi.”

“Hawke’s Bay becomes for the world of horticulture what Palo Alto and Stanford University has become for the world of innovation and investment in software and technology.”

Is that a big enough idea?!

HB off the grid

Here’s another, again gleaned from suggestions made by several of our ‘big idea’ responders.

A number, like Hamish White, focus on solar: “Why couldn’t we become the solar capital of New Zealand, and actually look at developing land in a different way? Why couldn’t we look at the role that solar could play? It is a natural resource that’s only partially leveraged at the moment. We could be feeding into the national grid, and become a centre of excellence for solar innovation and solar electricity generation.”

And then there’s energy from biomass, starting with the region’s voluminous woody waste. NZ’s Energy

Then add wind power to the region’s solar and biomass potential ... Would it be fanciful for Hawke’s Bay to declare ‘energy independence’?

Efficiency and Conservation Authority (EECA) is investigating this possibility in our region, leading Xan Harding, HBRC councillor and chair of the region’s Climate Action Joint Committee to write:

“...stationary energy accounts for about 30% of our regional carbon footprint. EECA have demonstrated a viable opportunity to develop a regional biomass energy economy, based around forestry waste that, coupled with the development of local wind and solar generation, could completely eliminate these emissions.

“Beyond that, it is not fanciful to expect that the spare capacity in local biomass could become a regional energy export opportunity, perhaps offsetting some of our hard-to-abate heavy transport emissions.”

Then add wind power to the region’s solar and biomass potential. Meridian’s new Harapaki Wind Farm, on the Napier-Taupō Road, can produce a maximum of 176 megawatts of renewable energy, which is enough to power over 70,000 homes - roughly the equivalent of every household in Hawke’s Bay.

Would it be fanciful for Hawke’s Bay to declare ‘energy independence’?

So, quite a menu of ‘big ideas’ here. Some are already in the pipeline. You and our elected decisionmakers will need to make decisions on them. Others are aspirational, for now, awaiting champions. How do they stack up for you?

And do ‘big ideas’ succeed? I address that issue in my *From the Editor* column. ●



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Freenergy Solar Solutions: Paving the Way for a Sustainable Energy Future



The Shining Light for 2025 is Solar Power

As we welcome the new year, the future of the solar power industry in New Zealand has never been brighter. Freenergy is entering his 18th year in the solar industry here in Hawke's Bay, Aaron is more optimistic than ever about reducing our reliance on fossil fuels, cutting national emissions, and alleviating pressure on our overstretched electricity grid.

Solar power has evolved beyond a green initiative—it now offers a real return on investment. Homeowners, small businesses, and large commercial premises alike can reduce their power bills and see a return on investment in under five years. Additionally, large-scale solar farms are being built, and international investors are eager to participate in our energy transition.

After a challenging 2023, marked by flood recovery and significant equipment loss, Freenergy experienced a resurgence in 2024. The company strengthened its in-house installation team and collaborated with local councils and government agencies to deliver grid resilience projects.

Notably, we completed four major projects in Wairoa, where our team lived on-site during the installation and commissioning of Taihoa Marae, Wairoa War Memorial Hall, Tuai Community Hall, and Kotemaori Hall. Back in Hawke's Bay, we successfully commissioned the Hastings Sports Centre, Waiohiki Marae, and are nearing the final stages of commissioning at the Havelock North Convention Centre.

One standout moment came when Waiohiki Marae was tested during a power outage on the morning of a significant tangi. Thanks to the solar system and battery storage, the site remained fully operational, providing seamless service.



Exciting New Products Hit NZ Market!

- **Tesla Powerwall 3:** This eagerly anticipated product lives up to the hype. It's a compact, high-quality solution that generates and stores your solar energy, offering world-class control at your fingertips.
- **Sigenergy:** A new inverter product that fills gaps in the market, particularly for 3-phase battery storage and medium commercial backup solutions.

Freenergy Solar Solutions is proud to have been honoured three times by the Sustainable Energy Association of New Zealand's Industry Awards ('SEANZ'), including recognition as Small Business of the Year and Industry Person of the Year—testament to our commitment to the solar industry.

We offer flexible financing options, with many major banks providing low or zero-interest loans for sustainable energy installations. Additionally, we have access to commercial funding and can install larger systems through a Power Purchase Agreement. This offers financial advantages over outright purchases, turning the system into an operational cost that can often be cashflow positive from day one.

Interested in learning more about how solar can benefit your home or business? We offer free, no-obligation quotes. Our experienced sales team will discuss your needs, guide you through the products, and walk you through the process. Simply email your power bill and energy usage history to info@freenergy.co.nz, and we'll be in touch.

Don't forget to follow us on social media. We're frequently asked about new technology, and following the success of Aaron's popular home show 'Ask an Expert' presentations, we're planning quarterly educational sessions at a local community centre near you.

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RISING STARS





Two rising sports stars are aiming to make their mark in 2025, each with dreams of turning professional.

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu brown belt Oscar Peterson is racing against time to go pro, while teenage alpine skier Olly Wilkins has the years ahead to chase his goal of becoming one of the world's best.

Hawke's Bay athletes are no strangers to success in mainstream sports, but Oscar and Olly are taking a different path — pursuing bold personal ambitions and hoping to inspire the next generation of rising stars along the way.

Story by Damon Harvey
Photos by Florence Charvin

RACE AGAINST TIME

Oscar Petersen's personal vision for the year ahead

Oscar Petersen is on the cusp of what he hopes will be his biggest year yet. At 28, the Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (BJJ) practitioner has set his sights on reaching the pinnacle of his sport—winning a black belt world title in the adult division before time runs out.

In BJJ, the clock is always ticking. Athletes have until the age of 29 to claim an open world title in the adult division before they move to the Masters age group. For Oscar, the stakes couldn't be higher. To even qualify for this elite goal, he first needs to make the leap from brown belt to black belt—a daunting task but one he's ready to face head-on.

"This is my one shot," Oscar says with steely determination. "My final year as an adult before I move up to the Masters division. I've got to make it count."

Oscar's just had his first taste of international competition, taking on the world's best in the under 73.5-kilogram division at the International Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Federation (IBJJF) No-Gi World Championships in Las Vegas.

He won his first two matches, by triangle choke submission before losing his third round by ankle lock submission.

"I had an incredible experience and it lived up to my expectations.

"I got to rub shoulders and bump knuckles with the legends of the sport. I am super happy with my performance, stepping on the world competition mats itself is almost enough for me but I also got to train one on one with a black belt world champion in my weight division in the week leading up to the event too, truly an opportunity I was lucky to be apart of," he says.

Oscar's journey in BJJ began eight years ago and in that time he's blazed through the ranks, progressing from white belt to brown belt in record time. Competing locally and nationally, he has built an impressive record of around 50 tournaments, claiming 20 gold medals. His most recent victory at the Oceania Open in April 2024 saw him secure two submission wins in under 25 seconds each.

The super-confident grappler's hard work has not gone unnoticed and although content with his first world event, he's eager to have another crack.

"It's whoever can apply their techniques faster and with more eagerness," he explains.

"When I'm rolling, I'm in a flow state. It's not about thinking - it's about reacting."

A fight in BJJ is one energy-sapping eight-minute round, requiring intense fitness and mental sharpness.

"You can't afford to slip mentally, even for a second," he says. "Your opponent is always looking for that chink in the armour."

Oscar's love for the sport began in an unlikely place: on a trampoline at age 12, wrestling with his sister's partner, a jiu jitsu practitioner.

"I didn't know what it was at the time, but I loved it," he recalls. "That's when I knew I wanted to do this."

After dabbling in karate and boxing during his teenage years, Oscar found his true calling at Gracie Allegiance Jiu-Jitsu in Hastings, training under Damian Smith. Those early days were challenging, but his determination never wavered.

"You've got to be willing to lose and willing to die on the mats," he says. "That's how you get better."

While Oscar's primary focus is on his world championship aspirations, he also happens to be a successful small



Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ) is a martial art and combat sport that focuses on grappling and ground fighting. Developed in Brazil in the early 20th century, it is rooted in traditional Japanese jiu-jitsu and judo but evolved to emphasize techniques that allow a smaller, weaker person to defeat a larger, stronger opponent through the effective use of leverage, positioning, and submissions.

business owner, running a watch repair shop in Napier alongside his younger brother, Marcus.

The family-owned business has been a part of Oscar's life for the past four years, with the brothers taking over the shop from their parents, who had owned it for many years prior.

"It's something I've been involved with for a while, and it's been a great way to put my attention to detail and precision skills to use."

Those same attributes that serve Oscar so well on the mats - a keen eye for detail, a methodical approach, and an unwavering dedication - translate

seamlessly to the intricate world of watch repair.

"I believe the skills I've developed through jiu jitsu, like learning from my losses and constantly improving, have really helped me in the business as well," he says.

"It's all about identifying what works, doubling down on it, and leaving behind what doesn't."

The shop has also provided balance in his life.

"It's kind of like a yin and yang, you know?" he says. "When I'm on the mats, I'm fully immersed in the physicality and intensity of jiu jitsu. But then when I'm in the shop, I get to tap into a different side of myself, the more meticulous and detail-oriented side."

This dual focus allows Oscar to support Marcus, who is pursuing his own dreams of becoming a successful comedian.

The close-knit siblings make a strong team, with Marcus often performing at local venues and events in Hawke's Bay.

"Marcus is just so naturally funny, and he's got this incredible ability to read a crowd and get them laughing.

"I'm really excited to see where his comedy career takes him, and I'm glad I can be there to support him while also chasing my own goals."

While his immediate focus is on claiming a world title, Oscar's vision extends beyond personal success. He dreams of inspiring the next generation of BJJ athletes in his home

"If I can win this world championship, it'll show the kids back home that it's possible, even if you're from a small place. After that, I want to give back and help grow the sport I love."

Oscar Petersen

of Hawke's Bay, where the sport is steadily growing.

"If I can win this world championship, it'll show the kids back home that it's possible, even if you're from a small place," he says. "After that, I want to give back and help grow the sport I love."

With unwavering dedication, unmatched skill, and a passion that burns bright, Oscar Petersen desires to make history as Hawke's Bay's first adult Black Belt World Champion.

As he steps into the biggest fight of his life, Oscar's message is clear: one year, one shot, one chance. And he's ready to make it count.



Photo supplied

ON THE FAST-TRACK TO DOWNHILL SUCCESS

Olly Wilkins' dream to be a pro ski racer on the world circuit

Fifteen-year-old Olly Wilkins loves nothing more than hurtling down the slopes at top speed. Already, he's clocking 100 kilometres per hour on some of the world's premier ski fields in Europe and North America.

Olly is the youngest of three Hawke's Bay brothers who have represented New Zealand in snow skiing. While older brothers Aidan and Luke are accomplished Alpine skiers, Olly is determined to take things further and carve out a career as a professional downhill racer on the World Cup circuit.

"The dream is to be a pro ski racer on the world circuit," he says. "To get there, I need to stay consistent with my performances and hopefully move up to the Europa Cup, which is the step below the World Cup."

While many teenagers spend their summers at the beach or skate park, Olly is on a different track - training and competing in Italy and Andorra.

Like his brothers, Olly has traded many Hawke's Bay summers for the ski slopes of Canada, the United States, and Europe. For the past two seasons, he's demonstrated his independence and maturity by traveling overseas without his parents, Leah and Tim.

"For the first few days, I feel a bit sad, but once I settle in and meet new people, it's fine," he says.

Olly knows his skiing journey wouldn't be possible without his parents' unwavering support. "I'm pretty lucky they've committed to helping me go overseas to do what I love," he says.

IronMāori returns home

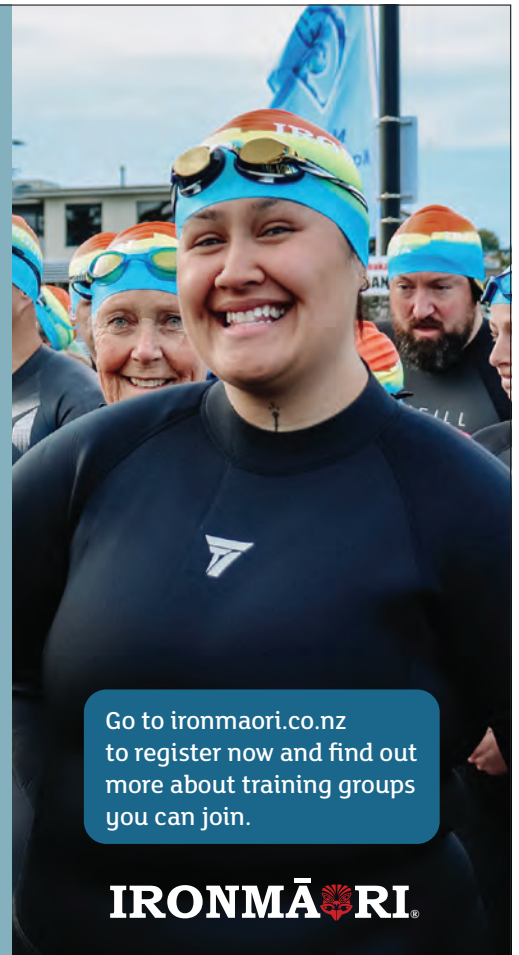
Fifteen years after the launch of IronMāori, the annual indigenous triathlon hosted in Ahuriri returned home to Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga.

The pre-event for kaumātua and tamariki/rangatahi attracted nearly 180 of our precious pounamu who walked up to 3km, and over 200 young people who took part in the boardwalk run.

More than 2,400 participants from Aotearoa, Australia, French Polynesia, and United Kingdom gathered at Ahuriri beachfront on race day. The atmosphere was one of whanaungatanga and kotahitanga with participation being the overall winner.

Proud CEO of Te Taiwhenua o Heretaunga, Waylyn Tahuri-Whaipakanga says, "IronMāori serves as an option for whānau to take small steps towards achieving better health, in the beginning it's as simple as putting one foot in front of the other."

Registrations are open for the 2025 IronMāori Half (2km ocean swim, 90km cycle, 21.1 km run/walk) and IronMāori Quarter events (1km ocean swim, 50 km cycle, 10.5km run/walk).



Go to ironmaori.co.nz to register now and find out more about training groups you can join.

IRONMĀORI



But by the age of six, Olly began to love skiing. “Once I could ski all over the mountain and ski alone, I realised it was actually quite fun,” he says.

Olly’s chosen discipline is alpine skiing, where athletes race against the clock down courses marked by gates. He competes in three main alpine events—slalom, giant slalom, and the high-speed Super G.

“Super G is probably the hardest because you go so fast,” Olly says.

To stay in peak condition, Olly combines rigorous on-slope training with fitness work back home in Hawke’s Bay. He’s part of the Hawke’s Bay Community Fitness Centre Trust’s high-performance athlete program and also works with a personal trainer.

“They both create programmes tailored to my skiing,” he explains.

Olly’s best result so far internationally came at age 12, when he finished 31st in a major international race in Switzerland while competing for the New Zealand team.

His favourite alpine skier is Lucas Braathen, who debuted on the World Cup circuit in 2018, won his first race in 2020, retired in 2023, and made a comeback in 2024 racing for Brazil.

“I like him because he’s a bit different. Besides being a top skier, he also has his

Olly’s chosen discipline is alpine skiing, where athletes race against the clock down courses marked by gates. He competes in three main Alpine events—slalom, giant slalom, and the high-speed Super G.

own fashion label,” Olly says.

Now 16 and part of New Zealand’s under-16 team, Olly is eager to keep progressing. “Next year, I’m hoping to win the New Zealand under-16 title,” he says.

Whether he’s carving turns on the slopes or taking a break with friends, Olly’s passion for skiing shines through. As he pursues his dream of competing at the sport’s highest level, he’s inspiring a new generation of young skiers to chase their own alpine ambitions. ●

Though skiing runs in the family, Olly wasn’t always keen on braving the cold. He first strapped on skis at the age of three, venturing out to Happy Valley for a single run before retreating indoors.

“I used to go to Happy Valley, do one run, and then come back inside because I hated it so much. It was just so cold,” he recalls.



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Electrical student at EIT. Photo supplied

Let's lift our region's productivity by lifting skills and qualifications

"Skills have become the global currency of the 21st-century economies, yet they are unevenly distributed and often undervalued."

Andreas Schleicher, OECD
Education Vice President

No one gets excited about plans, especially Kiwis who see themselves as pragmatic, number eight wire types who just get stuff done.

Raupunga-born Sir Ian Taylor of Animation Research was in the region recently and told a business breakfast his company slogan was "Bugger the boxing, just pour the concrete." But the story he told that morning, for example about developing the world's first live to air GPS ball positioning for golf, kept coming back to having the best and brightest staff and giving them the

freedom to create. It sounded suspiciously like he had a plan after all.

Research that HBREDA commissioned last year identified a regional skills shortage as one of the factors holding back our region's potential. While other regions also face skills shortages, there are several demographic peculiarities in Hawke's Bay that make our skills shortage of particular concern:

- The population is both older and younger than the national average, which makes the working age population proportionately smaller;
- The proportion of the population with no qualifications or low qualifications is higher than the national average.

There's a well-recognised link between the qualifications and skills of workers and both individual and organisational productivity. Our productivity per worker in HB is, predict-

Improving skills and qualifications will not alone lift productivity. Companies also need to foster innovation, adopt new technology, and attract new capital.

ably, lower than the national average. Why does this matter? Because low productivity leads to lower average earnings, which leads to lower household incomes, which leads to lower-than-average wellbeing indicators. This can be seen and felt especially in Wairoa and other areas within the region that rank poorly on the deprivation index. The result is that average earnings per job in Hawke's Bay are approximately 10% lower than in the rest of New Zealand.

Improving skills and qualifications will not alone lift productivity. Companies also need to foster innovation, adopt new technology, and attract new capital.

More broadly, Hawke's Bay needs to be a good place to do business with resilient infrastructure, good connectivity, an attractive lifestyle, and a vibrant business community that shares knowledge and contacts. If it is not, we will see more companies voting with their feet and heading out of town or offshore. This is happening already with many companies telling us that they have moved their operations, not just because of high input costs (such

as energy), but because of workforce challenges. One manufacturer told me that they could pay a labourer \$8 a day offshore where “people line up on the street to get jobs”.

We have, in large part, responded to our skills deficit by bringing migrant labour into the region.

Much has been written and said about New Zealand’s reliance on migrant labour. The New Zealand Productivity Commission described it as an “easy solution” for workforce shortages. The COVID migration restrictions and resulting high employment here brought home how vital the RSE scheme is in ensuring our horticulture sector continues to be viable. Migrants also fill important roles in many of our other industries. They bring fresh perspectives, strong work ethics, and often higher qualifications.

I married and brought a Finnish engineer back to Hawke’s Bay (you’re welcome) and am well aware of the role that international talent has in helping to lift our productivity. Of course it is a “both/and” – we need to both boost the local skill base and attract the best talent from around New Zealand and abroad.

There has been a raft of pro-

grammes and initiatives aimed at getting people into jobs and filling the skills deficit in Hawke’s Bay in recent years. The good news is that it has lowered our unemployment rate and our NEET (not in employment, education, or training) rate compared to the national average. Which is to be applauded, though the wider economic environment post-COVID greatly helped. Getting people into jobs, however, is not enough to lift productivity.

Each industry, and each business, addresses their skills shortfalls through training and targeted recruitment, higher wages, and incentive programmes. Government agencies, like the Ministry for Social Development, use programmes and products to get the unemployed into work. Business support agencies help upskill workers. The Tertiary Education Commission and educational and training institutions, like EIT and the workforce development councils, work closely with industry to try to provide the right types of qualifications and support to meet industry needs.

But it’s still not enough. We need a regional skills plan to look at everything required to improve the skills and qualification profile of our workforce,

from the entry level worker through to the director at the board table. It needs to be ambitious, evidence-based, realistic, and heavy on targets and evaluation. It needs to be properly resourced with the backing of government and business, alongside schools and training institutions, local government, iwi/hapū, and other players.

My sense is that Hawke’s Bay is ready to take on our skills and qualifications gap. But we need a plan. The plan needs to be driven by stakeholders who are so committed to the region’s prosperity that they will stay true despite political changes, and who are willing to ride the inevitable waves of policy and funding reforms. Our plan needs to be developed by us, for us, because we deserve it. We need to build the boxing and then hurry up and pour the concrete because a skilled workforce is the foundation of a productive economy. ●

The Hawke’s Bay Regional Economic Development Agency is hosting a regular column to stimulate conversation about our economy. We will share pieces of work and research that we are involved in and at times will open up this column space for guest writers.

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Paint ... making waste a resource



The 3R Group team are shown around GDB's Nashville, Illinois site.

Did you know you can recycle paint and its packaging in Aotearoa New Zealand? In fact, the country has a scheme to do just that – Resene PaintWise, which is celebrating its 20th anniversary.

If you've ever bought Resene paint you might've noticed a line on your receipt for the 'PaintWise levy' – a small charge which means you can take the containers and any leftover paint back to the store, for free, so it can be recycled or repurposed.

We worked with Resene to design and implement the scheme two decades ago and have been operating it for them ever since. Over the years we started take back programmes for brands like Dulux and Wattyl too.

Since last year, we've been working with more paint industry members

to develop an all-of-industry product stewardship scheme that meets Ministry for the Environment guidelines.

We recently visited the world's biggest paint recycler, GDB, based in the United States to find out how they work, and learn from their 30 years of experience.

Paint recycling, American style

Like so many things in the United States the scale is far bigger than here in Aotearoa, and paint and packaging recycling is no different. While the country doesn't have a nationwide scheme, 13 of its states do, through an organisation called PaintCare. The result is a huge amount of material to collect and recycle.

Each year GDB receives over 37.8 million litres of paint, plus its plastic and metal containers. Selling recycled paint back into the American

market can be challenging, but they have also found markets overseas and send around 4,000 shipping containers of recycled paint to 63 countries each year.

This means the paint not only gets a second life, instead of going to landfill, but offers a competitively priced, high-quality paint to communities where this isn't always an option.

The scale of their operation is also reflected by their team – they employ over 450 people. These range from processors, who get the paint out of the pails, through in-house specialists who test and reformulate it so they can remake and sell it.

A one-stop shop

Something we were particularly impressed with is how GDB tackles waste across the whole paint industry.

They do far more than just process

In the same way weeds are plants in the wrong place, so waste is a resource in the wrong location. With regulated product stewardship we can create a truly circular economy for paint and its packaging, and virtually any other product.

paint left over from DIY and commercial painting jobs. They also deal with raw materials from chemical companies which are used to make paint, off-spec paint from manufacturers, unwanted bulk paint from warehouses and distributors, and damaged or mis-tinted paint from retailers.

They even collect damaged paint products to be recycled or repurposed. In one example they took a batch of damaged nine-inch rollers and simply cut them down to six inches, which meant they were able to sell them on.

The work GDB does isn't just commercially valuable to them, but to the brands they work with too. They have helped a brand save around half-a-billion US dollars in landfill costs over 24 years, by recycling their factories' waste products back into new paint.

Why did we go?

GDB are the world's largest paint recyclers and have a wealth of knowledge and experience we believe we can apply here in Aotearoa New Zealand. We toured their three facilities and spoke directly to founder Sanjeev Bagaria and his senior staff.

It was a fascinating and eye-opening experience, as well as very encouraging to see the scale which can be reached and the positive impact.

It was also great to see that many of their processes are very similar to ours. They've found machines cannot replace people, but to achieve the best results you need a lot of thorough, manual labour to ensure quality standards are reached.

Regulation is the backbone

PaintCare represents paint manufacturers and operates product stewardship programmes in the states which have paint stewardship laws. It's regulation which drives this work and here in New Zealand it's also driving our work to create a nationwide, all-of-industry product stewardship scheme, alongside industry.

The regulation in Aotearoa relates to the packaging the paint is in, but the industry working group we are partnered with agrees the paint itself is an important part of any scheme. Finding circular solutions for the paint, such as a high value use like recycled paint, also reduces waste, saves resources, and creates jobs and economic value, so the work GDB does remanufacturing paint into a product which can be sold again is something we are very interested in.

Product stewardship essentially has two parts to it – recovering products at their end of life so they don't end up in landfill or the environment and developing (preferably high-value) uses for the material so it can become part of the circular economy. It's important that any regulation and the scheme itself is designed to support and encourage this.

Where to from here?

The trip has fed a lot of information into the work we're doing with the New Zealand paint industry to develop a nationwide scheme, particularly around the remanufacture of paint.

It's also clearly shown it's possible to do this at scale and there are markets for the product – whether they are domestic or overseas. There are some exciting things afoot in this area of resource recovery. I look forward to giving you an update in the near future.

In the same way weeds are plants in the wrong place, so waste is a resource in the wrong location. With regulated product stewardship we can create a truly circular economy for paint and its packaging, and virtually any other product. Here in Hawke's Bay, and throughout NZ, let's make waste a resource rather than a problem for the next generations to deal with. ●

3R design, implement and manage product stewardship schemes for individual businesses or industry-wide groups. They also help businesses take a fresh look at their waste to first minimise and then recover what would otherwise be wasted.



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More vim and vinegar

I like to ignore local and central government as best I can. They are infuriating, inefficient and bureaucratic. I can't fix them and I wouldn't fancy the job if I could.

Frustratingly, I've been forced to conclude that NZ will continue its inexorable moral and economic deterioration unless we start getting the underpinning governmental functions right.

From a central government perspective, education and healthcare are paramount and we've been in decline for decades. The cry is that if we increase taxes and fund them better, all the problems will go away. I don't believe it. Large bureaucracies with top-down thinking, no competition and little accountability will never function efficiently. Take the Ministry of Education who increased their staff numbers by 60% over six years of the last Labour government, yet still maintained the educational decline, by all metrics.

If you want me to pay more, you have to outline what the problem is and what you're going to do about it. Governments aren't very good at that and seemingly prefer to operate on a 'trust model'.

Immigration is another subject I've been ranting on about lately. Kiwis need to know that homelessness isn't helped by government policy. The immigration levels are highly elastic and we're heading for net migration of around 120,000 this year. StatsNZ suggest an annual deficit in housing supply of some 14,000 homes.

Unlike migration, the supply of housing is inelastic and the supply of infrastructure more so. What happens with irresponsible immigration rates is that there is intense economic competition for the relatively scarce hous-

On the big issues, many citizens feel let down by our local bodies. Older people talk about the 'good government' of the past, but I think they're really talking about a time when societies were richer than they are today.

ing stocks. Those that can't compete in that economic battle, end up living out of their cars or in the park. This is of little concern to any government because the vast majority benefit from house price increases, feel affluent and re-elect the party in power. Homelessness is a win politically.

Energy costs are also a bitter pill to swallow. While NZ might have many disadvantages internationally, we *should* have cheap and abundant energy. Again the policies of central government have failed and energy companies are maximising profit through scarcity. Here in Hawke's Bay we have abundant, year-round sunlight, and reasonably predictable winds. Surely a regional energy scheme with the right incentives has some merit. Well, it would unless local government led the charge.

I was at an economic development meeting recently and a theme that came to light was 'a lack of confidence in the region'. "Is this a post-Gabrielle problem?" I enquired. "In part, but there is a loss in regional leadership across the board," I was told. That rings true. I have not known a time when the HDC, NCC and HBRC have been so universally reviled. Hefty rate rises may be a good part of this, but in

the last 15 years we've had ballooning debts, leaky homes, the Havelock North gastro crisis and the civil defence failure surrounding cyclone Gabrielle.

The big issue that is currently below the radar is water use on the Heretaunga Plains. The modelling the TANK processes has settled on, is imperfect but a 36% reduction in allocated volumes will soon be imposed, with some suggestions further reductions will be required. Little regard is given to the changing land use that will follow Gabrielle and the frustrating protracted process remains an impediment to investment.

On the big issues, many citizens feel let down by our local bodies. Older people talk about the 'good government' of the past, but I think they're really talking about a time when societies were richer than they are today.

Money doesn't solve everything, but it can sure paper over the cracks. Once we nail down the solutions to governmental problems, we'll need a budget to fix them. That can only be sustained if we grow our local economy. You can't tax your way to prosperity. Every dollar you take off the most productive and give to government to allocate inefficiently, comes at the price of real jobs and a bigger economy.

As a libertarian I've always held that governments – of all stripes – shouldn't run very much. Their job is to create an environment where their constituents can prosper. On that basis the best thing you and I can do is to come up with, not a big idea, but a small one that's achievable. If we can generate 200 of those, a handful might become big ideas in time.

So, in the sure knowledge that you have a better one, here's my humble idea.

What I hope to do is to produce bespoke cider vinegar that can have a demonstrable impact on human health. It will take many years before I can prove the benefits such that a health claim can be made, but I'm up for the journey.

Apple cider vinegar. OK, so I know it tastes terrible and is already widely available, but I can make something that could change the vinegary world. For 15 years I've been accumulating, testing and breeding with a raft of heritage and cider apples. 130 years of modern apple breeding has delivered big, sweet and crunchy, but nutritional power has been diminished.

The healthiest components of apples are associated with acidic, tannic or bitter compounds. In preliminary tests the cider vinegar from my selections delivers more than 13x the polyphenols of the next best competitor. Of greatest interest are the catechin/epicatechin levels, which are 34x greater. Some chains of these compounds exist at 210x and 450x the benchmark competitor. These compounds are called procyanidins and the literature suggests they have anti-cancer properties. 'Search it up'

as my kids so often tell me.

What I hope to do is to produce bespoke cider vinegar that can have a demonstrable impact on human health. It will take many years before I can prove the benefits such that a health claim can be made, but I'm up for the journey. I'll launch it in 2025 and the statistics on ambitious startups like this suggest ... I'll fail. I don't care much for statistics and am undeterred.

Each generation must have the pioneering spirit and to leave the world better than they found it. My

ideas are nerdy and complicated but let's celebrate all those in our society that have the courage to have a go in *any* domain. I don't care if it's just a coffee cart entrepreneur or a weekend print maker.

The only big idea we need is in the hands of the creative and the courageous that already reside in our communities. ●

Paul Paynter is our resident iconoclast and cider maker. Weather permitting, he grows stuff at Yummyfruit.



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Shopping guide

Havelock North boasts an eclectic and enticing mix of boutique stores and providores. From high-end fashion to tasteful homewares and design, the village offers an intimate and unique shopping experience.

Shop local this summer for the perfect gifts, outfits and treats.



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From scratch

It's a huge idea! It would benefit all of us by saving money, making us more healthy, growing biodiversity and driving the local economy. It's not going to happen.

We should commune more frequently with friends and family. Sit, sharing stories, anecdotes and amusing tidbits. But it won't happen.

Cook! That's the big idea. Cook and cook again. From scratch and from leftovers. Banish the packets. Leave the take-aways where they are. Buy fresh food and cook it for yourself, for your whānau and for your friends. Eat the meal at the table and share stories of the day.

Yes, it might seem like a chore or a bore. You don't have time, or know what to buy, or the kids won't like it. But you're wrong. You have time to prepare a good nutritional meal. It's a priority, or should be. You do know how to cook or at least you do know how to learn. Those two hours a day doom scrolling could search out cooking techniques. Sure you'll miss out on the latest mildly-amusing memes and the 'effluencers' latest holiday shots but it'll be worth it.

Much like training a puppy, making the effort to cook fresh ingredients is a little daunting to start but you'll reap the rewards in no time at all. There will be setbacks; occasional bad smells, emergency calls for a pizza as a trial batch of ratatouille is scraped into the bin, or the dog. But you will eventually triumph and be adored for it.

I tell you that it's your duty to cook. I implore you to cook. I want to food-shame you about your choices. I too make poor choices; I'm shorter than my weight indicates that I should be so we're all in this together. Let's get into

the year with renewed energy for feeding ourselves well. When Hippocrates said 'Let food be thy medicine' he wasn't talking about a packet of Doritos and an onion dip.

My go-to for an easy to cook, just because it takes three hours doesn't mean that you have to stand and watch, is a multi-optioned chicken dish that always starts the same way.

I take a whole chicken, Bostock Brothers organic, and I put it in a big saucepan, cover it with water, add herbs, peppercorns, onion, garlic, carrot etc and poach it until just cooked. Remove the chicken and let it cool. Take the meat off the bones and return the bones to the poaching liquid. Simmer slowly for about an hour until you have a tasty stock.

From this point I might make a curry or a chicken casserole or soup. Chicken fried rice and so on. I keep half the chicken stock and some of the meat to use next time. For around \$30 we have a meal for four people plus left-over ingredients. The cooking process gives me great pleasure.

Swap out the chicken for beef or pork bones and add some mince. Recipes are easy to find.

Gently fry those summer favourites, eggplant, tomato, capsicum, onion and garlic in some oil with basil and coriander seeds. Then serve the ratatouille with eggs, bread and butter.

How good would we look! Buying produce from local growers, who in turn widen the range of produce that they grow to feed the locals. Biodiversity flourishes. We would shun the drive-through and the chemical additives. We'd sit, share a meal and talk. We'd be a little smug to start with.

But it won't happen. The horse has

There will be setbacks; occasional bad smells, emergency calls for a pizza as a trial batch of ratatouille is scraped into the bin, or the dog. But you will eventually triumph and be adored for it.

bolted and is thus off the menu.

We are marketed to by processed food suppliers at every turn of the drive-through and of the supermarket aisle. We eat ingredients that we don't recognise supplied to us by people that once told us that smoking was good for us. And we lap it up.

We're an unhealthy, fat population, disconnected from our food source. Illness costs us a small fortune and we're losing the funding battle. We drink too much and spend hours looking at worthless content on screens that control our lives. It's not all doom and gloom.

The big idea of rebooting the food habits of the western world is undoubtedly pie in the sky. So we must change our own habits, our family's habits and then those of our community.

It can be rectified quickly. Sow some seeds. Seeds of revolution and of lettuce. The lettuce needs about two months to grow. Revolution? A year or two. ●

Ian Thomas is a caterer and formerly free range egg farmer, cooking demonstrator, and manager of a commercial food production business. He specialises in cooking paella. paellaagogo.com

Garlic
~~Onions~~
~~Capsicum~~
Aubergine
~~Carrots~~
Fennel
~~Tomatoes~~
Chickens

Chickens
+ Ratatouille

Poach chicken
remove meat
make stock
Cook veg +
tomato
Add stock
with
chicken

Make +





BIG IDEAS IN WINE COUNTRY

So when the theme of “Big Ideas for Hawke’s Bay” was pitched across my desk, the first thing I did was leap up and holler “Monorail!” But no-one in the BayBuzz office thought that would fly. Yet, dear reader, you and I both know that pretty much everything predicted on *The Simpsons* eventually comes true, so all we need to do is wait, right?

One thing I didn’t want to wait for was to learn what big ideas our local wine whānau might have whizzing around in their heads. Winemaking is where art and science collide, so naturally they’re a community of big thinkers, dreamers and doers. So I put the call out and they did not disappoint. Some have been edited for length and flow.

Photos by Florence Charvin

Steve Smith MW, Smith & Sheth Wines

“Rename Roy’s Hill ‘Te maunga mō Syrah’. At the heart of France’s most famous Syrah vineyards sits a hill, the hill of Hermitage. From that hill, and surrounding that hill, some of the most revered and expensive Syrah wines in the world are produced from the appellations of Hermitage, Crozes Hermitage and St Joseph. Now Roy’s Hill may only contain some very small vineyards on the actual hill (La Collina being the most famous), yet surrounding the hill, across the Gimblett Gravels and Bridge Pa, some of the most famous Syrah wines in the Southern Hemisphere are produced. We’re talking Trinity Hill Homage, Craggy Range Le Sol, Smith & Sheth Omahu, Te Mata Bullnose, Church Road Tom, and Stonecroft amongst others.

“Standing atop and walking along Roy’s Hill you can see the vineyards that are home to all of these wines. They are so close you can almost touch them. This truly unique place needs a name from our culture that could allow it to sit alongside the revered hill of Hermitage, and one day have equal status in the world of fine wine and become a true beacon for one of the world’s 12 Great Wine Capitals. Te maunga mō Syrah ... the mountain for Syrah.”

Steve Smith and team at ‘Te maunga mō Syrah’. Photo: Florence Charvin, courtesy of Gimblett Gravels Winegrowers Association.



Karen Fistonich and the Čuvar team

“We see future Hawke’s Bay as a place where visitors can effortlessly cycle or walk between almost all cellar doors and where Hawke’s Bay’s cellar doors unite to create a user-friendly app that makes booking, planning, and building custom itineraries easy.

“Where premium wines are available in innovative formats like cans, eco-friendly pouches, and boxes. This will establish Hawke’s Bay further as a premium, adventurous and progressive wine and wine tourism capital.”

Brent Linn, Wairiki Wines

“We have an extremely talented wine grower and winemaker community crafting super classy wines from the widest range of varietals from any wine region in New Zealand.

“We’re winning on the quality and story front, but where we are challenged is our customers everywhere are being squeezed by the cost-of-living crisis. Here and internationally I’d like to see a massive easing of monetary controls (ie drop the interest rates) so our trade customers and end consumers have the confidence to spend. We have fantastic people and fantastic wines, we just need customers with more confidence.”

Daniel Brennan, Decibel Wines

“Last October we had 10 wineries in 10 different locations across the Auckland region for fun, affordable pop-up events called ‘Radiant’. We also canvassed the region that week with winemakers showing their wines to the trade. We had huge impressions on Instagram and generated quite the buzz across Auckland, showing our great diversity and quality in the wines from Hawke’s Bay. We’re looking to take this concept to Wellington in May.

“It’s essential we expand our reach across New Zealand to show how great the Hawke’s Bay wine scene is. We must make Kiwis our biggest fans so they’ll take that message overseas. Because let’s face it, we must export. There’s too much fantastic wine coming out of Hawke’s Bay even for the whole of New Zealand to consume, but they can become our biggest ambassadors. So that’s our plan!”



Grant Edmonds, Redmetal Vineyards

“It’d be great to see a long weekend harvest festival, incorporating things like Taste Hastings, wine walks, long lunches etc... in one big celebration of Hawke’s Bay wine and food. I know these are done individually across the year to encourage off-peak visitors, but they mostly cater to locals.

“A single big multi-event weekend or week would make more noise and potentially bring in both international and other domestic tourists to support our Great Wine Capital status. And it wouldn’t preclude single events at other times of the year. Just a thought.”

ABOVE: Grant Edmonds from Redmetal vineyards.



ABOVE: Richard Brown at his Tironui Estate vineyard.

Richard Brown, Tironui Estate

“Wineries could open 7 days a week, 365 days a year (or as close to that as possible). Too often I get complaints (especially over winter) that wineries are closed. We could also create a Hawke’s Bay Wine Centre, to serve as a space for wineries that don’t have cellar doors and could allow visitors to experience many Hawke’s Bay wines in one place. Plus have a Hawke’s Bay wine showcase at Napier airport. Can something go in the site just vacated by Bellatinos?

“A national airline that doesn’t cancel flights at its whim would be good. Let’s also remind tourists that you don’t have to drive down the Desert Road to get from Auckland to Wellington and that there is an alternative route. Let’s have more family-focussed activities for people with kids coming to Hawke’s Bay and, at the other end of the scale, create a greater focus on upmarket tourism. Restaurants could also stay open until a sensible time in the evening. How many times have you tried to walk into a restaurant at 9pm and been told, ‘sorry we are closing’?”

Leith and Thalia, Ash Ridge Wines

“We hope that one day we’ll be a region that encapsulates the concept of unity based off its sheer diversity. Chardonnay and Syrah are our flagships, but so many other varieties produce exceptional wines. Why don’t we capitalize on and celebrate this diversity, and showcase that we’re a fabulous fruit salad in terms of wine. It would also be very cool to have a website purely dedicated to Hawke’s Bay

wine, featuring an interactive, educational map of each of the sub-regions and the varietals/wineries found within them. Plus there could be an ‘events’ tab showing a timeline of all the upcoming, wine-related events. This way out-of-town wine fans can see Hawke’s Bay as an ‘always happening region’ and actively choose us as a fun destination.”

Rosie Butler, Lime Rock Wines

“With the warming climate, CHB will become even more suitable for grape growing. There’s land a-plenty, limestone hills, loess and a layer of volcanic ash, stony plains sheltered by the Ruahine Ranges and two wide river beds, we’ve got it all! There’s no room left in Marlborough so come to CHB! Plus Sauvignon Blanc from CHB is low-tonnage and makes a delicious wine without OTT acidity. To encourage young people to drink wine let’s create more low-alcohol and sexy, wine spritzer styles.

The Hawke’s Bay gravels region is going to get very hot and potentially move to Italian varieties. Or plant pineapples. But water is going to be our battleground with dams needed to ensure supply, and grapevines are way more economical on water compared to dairy.” ●

Yvonne Lorkin is a wine writer, the co-founder and CTO of WineFriend (NZ’s No.1 personalised wine subscription service) and she’s a proud, born and bred Hawkesbaylien. winefriend.co.nz or yvonnelorkin.com



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Lots of little ideas

Big ideas, blue-sky thinking, outside-the-box, wildest dreams ... it's all too much. I'll settle for the little things, tiny ideas to get Hawke's Bay cranking.

1. Grow, collectively: Plough up the urban reserves and plant allotments, trade our produce and preserve what's left over.
2. Insider cider: Gather wind-fall pip-fruit for a community cider press. Everyone gets a quota based on their input, then we all get tiddly on shared scrumpy.
3. Shout about it: Don't let the hikoi be a lone voice, find more things to march about. Make placards. Take a stance on something, anything. Forget Farmers Market meet-ups, let's congregate at the Clock Tower every week and protest.
4. Fleece foreigners: Put up a toll booth at Te Mata. Have a tax for tourists wanting to see the gannets. Clip the ticket on our landscapes, our vistas, our iWay, our expressway, our ranges, our coast.
5. Upsell by-products: Push what's seen as waste into premium markets. Big nod to the people behind Tī Kōuka Beef making supplements from their cattle hearts. This kind of nose-to-tail thinking makes the most of every bit of our ag'n'hort production. We need to support more of it.
6. Speaking of which, that money we make from visitors, let's use it on an innovation fund that's run by a citizen's panel. Micro-loans for crazy thinking judged by the people for the people. Socialism with a healthy pinch of capitalism.
7. And we should have scholarships for people who want to study somewhere interesting. But once they're done they have to come back and do good for our community. And they must wear "I'm From Hawke's Bay" tee-shirts every day for three years (or five if they do architecture).
8. Just generally, everyone should give time to the community. Not volunteering should be frowned upon. Whether it's at an op-shop or for Big Brother Big Sister, every one of us should find some time to get involved in a community initiative.
9. And let's get better with our languages. Te reo obviously. Ko tōku reo tōku ohooho, ko tōku reo tōku māpihi maurea*. But also Italian, Portuguese, Hindi, Pijin, Swahili, Mandarin, Basque. Our aural landscape is made more vibrant by hearing all these and more.
10. To do that we need to bring back Night School. If every retired teacher and knowledgeable hobbyist offered an evening class at the local high school, and we all turned up and learnt something new, imagine how brainy the Bay would become. Plus, all those kids who missed out because of Covid could come along and get their NCEA-whatever.
11. Using spaces like schools when they're not being used for their main purpose is something else we should do more of. Let's have chamber music in libraries, roller discos in carparks. Let's do Shakespeare in laneways and have long-lunches down Emerson.
12. It should also become the Hawke's Bay norm to learn people's names. Nothing makes a place friendlier than knowing your local barista's first name, or, even better, nickname.
13. Why can't Hawke's Bay become known as the nice place of New Zealand? We're a small town no matter how big we feel. Let's reintroduce small town manners. If we see a mate walking down the street when we're driving by let's pull over to say 'Hi' ... let's not even pull over, let's just stop in the middle of the road for a 'Holla'. Then invite them round for tea.
14. And when they get there, give them leftovers. We need to get better at eating what's in the pantry. Our food waste is embarrassing. Bit-by-bit, fridge-by-fridge, household-by-household we need to fix that.
15. But we should also eat out properly. Ordering entrees and a 'main to share' should illicit the side-eye from fellow diners. If you're going out, *really* go out, don't hold back. Otherwise, when we're all flush again, that hospo we said we loved but didn't actually support won't be there to pour the bubbles.
16. Same goes for shows. Don't spend \$400 going to see Travis Scott in Auckland, spend \$40 going to see whoever-happens-to-be-playing at Paisley Stage, Cabana or Small Halls. You may not be able to nod in agreement with all the sheeple but you will be able to cut your own path towards new discoveries.
17. We should encourage our own arts practitioners more, and in tangible ways. Artists can't eat praise. Buy the pottery, buy the quilting, buy the mix tape, buy the macrame banana hammock.
18. And when we leave Hawke's Bay, we should make sure everyone knows exactly where we've come from. Let's back the Bay at every opportunity.
19. Not just back the Bay, but brag about it. Tell everyone how good it is here. Marianne Williamson said it best: "Playing small does not serve the world ... there is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you."
20. Then let's buy a retro caravan and a vintage station-wagon. Pack in all our ideas: the big ones, the little ones, the barmy ones, the profound ones. Put in products and by-products, artworks, demo tapes, bottles of cider and jars of chutney, and macrame fruit baskets with nice fat price-tags (15% to local charities). Then we'll do a roadie so we can show off to the rest of New Zealand how awesome Hawke's Bay really is. ●

* My language is my awakening, my language is the window to my soul.

WELCOME BACK, CRUISE SEASON!



Napier Port's 2024/25 cruise season is officially underway, building on the record-breaking success of last year, with 89 vessels calling the port. With 85 ships scheduled to arrive this season, the port is once again set to be a major hub for cruise tourism, bringing visitors from around the world to Napier and the wider Hawke's Bay region.

During the 2023/24 cruise season, New Zealand's economy saw a substantial boost from cruise tourism, with around 350,000 visitors contributing an estimated \$565 million. This season, we anticipate welcoming over 100,000 passengers to the Hawke's Bay region, further supporting local businesses and communities.

The 2024/25 season kicked off in early October with the first vessel arriving and will run through to March, with many busy multi-vessel days planned throughout. Ships will be hosted across four wharves, including Te Whiti (6 Wharf), our multi-purpose berth that increases the port's capacity and provides more operational flexibility.

This season features a number of exciting highlights, including 11 maiden calls from ships such as Le Jacques Cartier, Norwegian Sun, and Viking Sky as well as two brand new ships – Silver Nova and Scenic Eclipse II. The return of 347m Quantum of the Seas, sister ship to Ovation of the Seas, is another standout, along with

The World, which is making a two-night visit to Napier.

Napier Port works closely with partners such as Hawke's Bay Tourism, the Napier i-SITE Visitor Centre, Napier City Council and local tour operators to ensure that cruise visitors experience the best the region has to offer. New for this season is a 20-meter gangway, designed to improve passenger disembarkation and further enhance their overall experience.

As the season progresses, Napier Port remains committed to delivering a world-class experience for cruise visitors, helping to drive both tourism and economic growth in the region.

85

Scheduled
Cruise Ships

17

Multiple
Vessel Days

100k+

Estimated total
passengers

700

Estimated total passenger
buses on the Port

11

Maiden
Calls

2

Overnight
Stays

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**National
Geographic Orion**

Smallest Cruise Ship (103m)





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