

## COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the world's situation dramatically. This newsletter went to print on 16 April 2020 and we had just finished week three of a nationwide lockdown under COVID-19 Alert Level 4, with the lockdown expected to be in place for a minimum of four weeks.

The NZ Government were due to make a decision on 20 April 2020 on whether the Alert Level 4 lockdown would be extended or if New Zealand, or parts of New Zealand, would move to a different alert level. Whatever the situation is at present, remember to stay safe, be kind and look after each other.

When the restrictions are eased, there will be a long road ahead of us. It is likely we will be doing things differently for a while yet. We will also have a lot of work to do in terms of economic recovery; we can all help by shopping locally and travelling within our own slice of paradise, New Zealand.

Council staff played, and continue to play, an important role during these difficult times. Councils are responsible for providing a number of services that are essential to keeping people healthy and safe throughout the Level 4 lockdown and beyond. These services include ensuring households have safe drinking water, that the wastewater system keeps operating, rubbish and recycling is collected, burials can take place, essential roading and safety repairs are made and ensure emergency services (Civil Defence) are on hand.

We would like to say thank you to the West Coast Emergency Management Group (Civil Defence) who have been working closely with the West Coast District Health Board to actively plan for and respond to COVID-19. The Civil Defence Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) has been set up at the Westland Recreation Centre since Monday 30 March 2020. Council employees and many volunteers from our region have worked together in the ECC to ensure our residents have been kept up to date with information on COVID-19 and to establish help such as the COVID-19 household goods and services number. And lastly but not least, a big thank you to everyone who has helped out during this challenging time, whether it's working in essential services, checking in on and shopping for family and friends and just generally staying in your bubble and following relevant alert level guidelines.

The Council website and Facebook page are being continuously updated during the COVID-19 situation, including links to support, wellbeing tips and activities. Please also see inside for more on COVID-19 and where to find information or assistance.

# Unite against COVID-19

## Mayor's comment



As I write this, we don't know what the situation will be on COVID-19 and what the lockdown status will be by the time this is delivered to you.

We are all in an unprecedented time and wondering how and when we will emerge from this lockdown. It

is clear to me, though, that the way to beat this is to stay at home and break the chain of transmission.

Over this period, I have been trying to contact as many people as I can via social media and phone to keep you as informed as possible. It has been great chatting to our residents in our pensioner housing. I have had many conversations and enjoyed how you were taking it all in your stride, enjoying time sitting in the sun and talking to your neighbours from a safe distance.

I have also heard that with the good weather we are having, there is some serious DIY and yard work going on around our District, so our

community will be looking great. When the Council's full workforce is deployed again, there will be a lot of work to catch up on and that will be put straight into action.

A big thank you goes out to all our essential workers over this time. Our medical employees, supermarket staff, pharmacists, freight carriers and all the other industries involved - you have provided a great service and have had to adapt quickly and efficiently to changing circumstances. Let's not forget our volunteers and the Greymouth COVID-19 Vulnerable Support Group delivering supplies to people in need and our Civil Defence team who have never seen a situation like this one but had plans in place to look after our community.

One thing for sure is that there are many community leaders having discussions about how we are going to emerge from isolation and how we can kick start the West Coast's economy and get people back into work. The Government has also sent out the call for shovel ready projects that they may help fund to get the workforce active immediately. At Council we are ready with many ideas and projects.

Tourism is one of the main industries that is more heavily hit than others so we need to look at ways to quickly retrain people into other industries until tourism can fully recover. There have also been discussions around domestic tourism to rebuild this industry as international travel will take a while to recover.

The good news is that when we did go into isolation, I talked to many companies who were busy and had work streams ready to go. Many are to essential services and are still being productive throughout this time. I would also like to shine a light on our primary industries that have been a big contributor to keeping the country running. For some time, many of those industries have had a hard time and have now proven how valuable they are to New Zealand, our region and our export.

Coasters are resilient - we have seen many good and bad times but we will get through this. My message all along has been where would you rather be in the world to ride this out? We live in the best place and this lockdown has confirmed this to me. We are very lucky.

*Tania Gibson*

# Unite against COVID-19

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a type of coronavirus. Symptoms include a cough, a high temperature (at least 38°C) and shortness of breath. These symptoms do not necessarily mean you have COVID-19. The symptoms are similar to other illnesses that are much more common, such as cold and flu. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions can be more vulnerable to COVID-19.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) are the lead agency. The main message from MOH is for people to stay calm, stay up to date and follow their advice to protect yourself and your families at all alert levels.

The first port of call for accurate information about COVID-19 are the following official sites:

- COVID-19 website, [www.covid19.govt.nz](http://www.covid19.govt.nz)
- COVID-19 Facebook page, [UniteAgainstCovid19](https://www.facebook.com/UniteAgainstCovid19)
- Ministry of Health website, [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)

## Alert levels

An alert level system was introduced to help New Zealanders see and plan for the kinds of restrictions we may be required to put in place. This includes increasing or decreasing limits on human contact, travel and business operations. The alert levels may be applied at a town, city, territorial local authority, regional or national level.

All of New Zealand went into Alert Level 4 at 11.59pm on Wednesday 25 March 2020 for a minimum of four weeks. The purpose of Alert Level 4 is to eliminate the disease by requiring all New Zealanders who are not working in essential employment to stay home, except for essential trips only, and to stop all interactions with others outside of your household (ie outside of your bubble). Essential services such as supermarkets, petrol stations and pharmacies remain open at Level 4.

## Keep yourself and your family safe

You can protect yourself and others from COVID-19 at any alert level by:

- Washing your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds). Then drying them.
- Coughing or sneezing into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues.
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.
- Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Putting used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately.
- Staying home if you feel unwell.

## Need some help?

### Financial support

If you've been affected by COVID-19, financial support may be available. You may be self-isolating at home or your work may be affected.

#### FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers are able to access two payments to support employers affected by COVID-19. They are:

- COVID-19 Wage Subsidy is to support businesses impacted by COVID-19 and face laying off staff or reducing hours.
- COVID-19 Essential Workers Leave Support for essential businesses to pay their employees who can't come into work because Ministry of Health guidelines recommend they stay at home and they can't work from home.

<https://workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/covid-19-support.html>

#### FOR INDIVIDUALS

If you need assistance but are not sure if you can get assistance and are struggling to support yourself or your family or even if you would just like more information, please contact Work and Inome New Zealand (WINZ). Even if you don't think you qualify, call them on 0800 559 009 (Monday to Friday 7am–6pm, Saturday to Sunday 8am – 1pm) to check your eligibility. There may be other options available and they might be able to point you in the right direction.

### Household goods and services number

If someone has an urgent need for food or essential supplies, then they can call **03 900 9329** and they will be directed to the appropriate service to provide assistance. The number is operational 7 days a week between 7am to 7pm and covers the whole of the West Coast.

The support service is for people who do not have any other means of getting goods or services, for example through friends, family or neighbours that can provide assistance. Remember, if people are able to help those in need, then please make sure you maintain a 2 metre physical distance from others, wash your hands and do not offer assistance if you are unwell.

People are allowed to go to the supermarket on their own and it is okay to do this for someone else as you can drop the supplies at a doorstep or letter box (eg for an older person who can't go out).

### Looking after your mental health and wellbeing

Looking after our mental health and wellbeing at a time like this is essential.

For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text the 'Need to talk?' service on 1737. This service is free, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and gives you the chance to talk it through with a trained counsellor.



# RESIDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Council received the results from the independent 2019 Resident Satisfaction Survey earlier this year. This year we used a hybrid approach to interviewing - the normal telephone interviews and a new online survey option.

This change in data collection, together with the survey being done soon after the local body elections, did result in some difference in 2019 satisfaction levels being recorded. In many instances a reduction in satisfaction is matched by an increase in don't know responses, rather than an increase in dissatisfaction.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the survey. Here are some highlights from the report.

- Two thirds (63%) expressed satisfaction with the overall performance of Council in the last 12 months. This is lower than 2018 (74%). Those who responded to the survey online were less satisfied than those who took part in a phone interview. The main change in satisfaction rating in 2019 is the proportion who don't know how satisfied they are, 11% in 2019 (2018 - 5%).
- Overall service received from Council offices - satisfaction is 76% (2018 - 81%).
- Satisfaction (77%) with the information received from Council in 2019, is marginally lower than earlier years (78% - 85%). It was highest in Greater Greymouth (81%) and lowest in Kaiata/Dobson/Taylorville/Stillwater (55%).
- Performance of the Mayor and Councillors (59%) - satisfaction is lower than 2017 and 2018 (77% and 76%, respectively). Those who responded to the survey online were less satisfied than those who took part in a phone interview. The level of dissatisfaction with the Mayor and Councillors (19%) is marginally lower than last year (21%). The main change in this level of satisfaction is an increase in the proportion stating don't know, 22% in 2019 (2018 - 3%).
- Of all Council services, residents are most likely to have used or visited a park or reserve (78%), followed by a rubbish dump/recycling facility (72%) or a public toilet/rest room (71%) in the last 12 months.
- Parks and Reserves - 85% of residents satisfied with our parks, reserves and tracks (2018 - 90%).
- Other services or facilities with high satisfaction included Cemeteries 77%, Swimming pools 75% and Libraries 72%.
- Overall satisfaction is lowest with the maintenance of footpaths, 43% (2018 - 52%).
- Over three quarters of participants (77%) agree the District is a great place to live, however, this proportion is significantly lower than in previous years (86 - 94%) and those who responded to the survey online were significantly less likely to consider the District a great place to live.
- 81% have visited or spent time in Greymouth Town Square in the last 12 months. Reasons for visiting revolved primarily around attending events/functions/concerts/entertainment/rallies/gatherings, for food and beverage, the market and walking around or passing through.
- Having events, entertainment, concerts, activities, music, buskers, markets and making the Square sheltered/protected from the wind/rain/sun and closing the traffic were the main reason stated to encourage use.

The full report is available to read on our website, [www.greycdc.govt.nz/surveys](http://www.greycdc.govt.nz/surveys).



## Rates

Over the past few months, Council has been working on putting together the Annual Plan for the year from 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. This is based on year 3 of the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan. It includes information on what services will be provided, what projects will be undertaken and how all of this will be paid for, ie the mix of rates, user fees and subsidies (where applicable).

Council normally produces a Draft Annual Plan each year for public consultation. Under the Local Government Act 2002 (section 95), consultation is *not* required if the Annual Plan doesn't differ significantly or materially from the relevant year of the Long Term Plan. When the 2020/2021 Annual Plan is completed, Council will compare it against year 3 of the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan to determine if public consultation is required. Council will always publicly consult on its Long Term Plans, which set out its goals, levels of service and finances for the next ten years.

You can stay up to date on our website or Facebook page.

## Rates for 2020/2021

Part of the Annual Plan process involves setting rates for the next financial year, which starts on 1 July 2020. Under normal circumstances, Council looks at what it is going to cost to provide its agreed on services and projects and what proportion of this will be funded from rates. However we are not in normal circumstances and COVID-19 has caused significant disruption to people's lives and livelihoods.

There have been calls to maintain rates at current levels. Whilst this sounds like a good idea initially, it will cost the community more in the longer term. Just like inflation and increases in the cost of living can affect households, these also affect Council's costs for its services and supplies. If we do not recover enough money to pay our costs this year, then we will have to charge more rates the following year.

Council will consider this matter over the next few weeks and make its decision. We are more than aware that many people will be struggling financially at the moment as businesses and the economy are negatively affected from the fallout of COVID-19.

A big part of the 2020/2021 Annual Plan process will involve taking a hard look at our costs, ensuring only essential projects are undertaken, efficiencies are made where possible and additional spending is only authorised where there is a clear benefit or no other option.

We also understand there will be genuine cases where people's situations mean they are unable to pay their rates at present. Council are working on a number of ways in which it can help those who need it, including a Rates Postponement Policy, repayment plans and penalty waivers. If you are struggling, please contact us as early as possible so that we can help you.

Phone 03 769 8600 or email [rates@greycdc.govt.nz](mailto:rates@greycdc.govt.nz).

*Heart of the West Coast*



# Check before you flush!

Are you aware of what you can put down sinks and toilets? Even the smallest of item can cause big problems in not only your wastewater pipe but also our wastewater treatment plant.

Items like rags, tampons and sanitary pads, wet wipes, underwear, dental floss and nappies don't break down in the wastewater network. Instead they clump and block pipes, which cause big issues. Wet wipes, in particular, are a significant and ongoing problem.

We all need to take responsibility for what and how we dispose of that unwanted wastewater and what we put down our drains.

We want to help avoid any unnecessary costs in having your drains cleared. If you have any questions, please feel free to email us on [info@greydc.govt.nz](mailto:info@greydc.govt.nz) and we will be happy to help.



Some unwanted items recently found in our wastewater treatment plant

# ANIMAL CONTROL

A reminder to all Grey District residents that dog registration notices will come out at the end of June and will be due for payment by the end of July.

All dogs must be registered by the time they are three months of age and then must be renewed every year thereafter.

If you have recently moved to a new house or no longer have your dog, please contact Animal Control, phone 03 769 8600 or email [info@greydc.govt.nz](mailto:info@greydc.govt.nz).

Uncontrolled dogs not only present a nuisance but also a threat in the form of attacks on humans and other animals. We deliver a 24 hour service to deal with dog and stock control and our staff are very busy during the day as well as at night, attending after-hour call-outs. These incidents are dealt with on a user pays basis as much as possible and your dog registration fees pay for the balance of the dog and stock control services we deliver, including:

- Promoting better care and control of the dogs in the District.
- Promoting community safety by dealing with aggressive dogs and irresponsible owners.
- Responding to complaints about dogs.
- Re-uniting lost dogs with owners.
- Providing a pound facility (impounding fees pay for pound operation).
- Providing the community with information on dogs.
- Implementing dog control policies and monitoring and enforcing bylaws on dog control.
- Taking legal action against owners of unregistered or problem dogs.
- Advocating on dog matters.
- Protecting dog lovers' rights to own dogs and dealing with dog related problems.

## Library news

### Online resources

Under Alert Level 4 and 3, the Grey District Library is unfortunately not able to be open to the public. But there is no need to panic and miss your reading fix! People can still access eBooks and audio books through:

- OverDrive; and
- BorrowBox.

Using these platforms, users can download fiction and non-fiction eBooks and audio books for adults, young adults or children onto their computer or compatible mobile device. Check out the [eBooks and eAudio](#) section on our website for more Information, [www.greydc.govt.nz/libraries](http://www.greydc.govt.nz/libraries).

### Digital literacy classes

The Grey District Library has teamed up with the 2020 Communications Trust to deliver our very popular FREE digital literacy classes to the community. They cover heaps of relevant topics such as digital photos, introduction to social media (including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+), smart phones, Google and the internet, digital banking and much more.

Classes are open to all ages and are held on a Thursday from 2pm to 4pm in the West Coast Room at the Grey District Library. Registering is easy - either phone the Library on 03 768 5597 or go to <https://2020.arlo.co/upcoming-courses> and select 'West Coast Region'. You need to register for each class you wish to take.

For further information about the Stepping Up programme, please visit <http://steppingup.nz/>.

We are waiting for clearance from the government to be able to reopen to the public. Being ever hopeful, the digital literacy class timetable for term two is available on our website, [www.greydc.govt.nz/libraries](http://www.greydc.govt.nz/libraries). However, please note these classes will only be held when the library reopens to the public as per Government advice.

**GREY DISTRICT LIBRARY**

