A letter to the community from Mayor Alex Walker:

Stay Home, Save Lives: Unite to Eliminate COVID-19

We’re in the midst of what is an entirely unprecedented time in Central Hawke’s Bay, and the whole of New Zealand. Many of you while reading this letter will be hunkering down in your homes. Some of you will be in the company of your family. Some of you will be alone. Some of you will be out in the daily battle to manage water and feed to stock on your farms as drought continues its grip.

And some of you as our essential workers, are bravely continuing on, in a weird, and sometimes scary new-norm. Whether you are a doctor, nurse, pharmacist, care-worker, police officer, supermarket operator, a farmer, or on the production line at the meatworks, you guys are our new heroes and I thank you, and all of the others, who are keeping Central Hawke’s Bay afloat in our true time of crisis. You are the heroes of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Monday 23 March we heard a bold and brave announcement from our Prime Minister, for the protection of all of our people during the threat of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are now a week into a national level 4 lockdown and State of Emergency. I continue to spend many hours working with Elected Members, Council Officers, regional Mayors, Civil Defence and the District Health Board via digital meetings and phone calls. The system is working as hard for you as it can and if you need us we are there for you. If you are unwell you will be looked after by our health system. If you need food you will get it. If you are lonely someone will talk to you.

Please read all information provided with this letter to know exactly where you can get help in our amazing community.

Often though, in times of darkness, glimmers of light shine the brightest. Already, we’re seeing such an incredible amount of kindness, generosity and willingness to adapt throughout the community. There are teddy bears up in front windows. There are Facebook groups of volunteers ready to respond if needed. There are community online videos of support and inspiration for our essential workers. There are neighbourhood phone-trees in place. I’ve had countless calls from people who want to know what they can do to help. But right now, most simply put, my answer is – stay home and be kind.

The Prime Minister has told us that for at least four weeks, every New Zealander, aside from those who provide an essential service, must self isolate. This means staying home, and stopping all interactions with others outside of your household. I understand that this has been, and continues to be a huge ask, however it is a vital step in eradicating the virus that otherwise has the potential to kill thousands of Kiwis. By staying home for four weeks, you are quite literally saving lives.

Please be kind. Reach out to your friends and your neighbours and assure them that they aren’t alone. In the last week or two you will have received a set of ‘community postcards’ from Council, encouraging you to introduce yourselves to those isolated around you, from afar. If you’re able to lend a helping hand to those who are living alone, or who might be unwell and therefore unable to leave the house for essential supplies, pop one of these cards into neighbouring letterboxes, offering to deliver groceries, or provide company by chatting over the phone. Civil Defence has provided guidance on how to do this safely. We might be physically separated from one another, but now more than ever we need each other to get through!

Be kind not only to others, but to yourself too. Try to stick to a routine and call or Facetime whānau to stay in touch. Get some fresh air and exercise. If you’re well you can take a walk or go for a bike ride – just make sure you keep a two metre distance from any person outside of your isolation circle all times. If you feel you aren’t coping, you can call or text 1737 for free, 24/7 to talk to a trained councillor for support with anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing.

If you’re feeling financial pressure due to COVID-19, please contact Work and Income who will be able to discuss your eligibility for support through the Government’s COVID-19 recovery package.

Right now, please be calm. Reach out to your friends and neighbours. Continue to wash your hands – we know that soap kills COVID-19. Most importantly, stay home, and look after one another.

Together we thrive. E ora ngātahi ana.

We’ve got this Central Hawke’s Bay!

Alex Walker
Mayor Alex Walker
Central Hawke’s Bay District Council’s response to COVID-19

31 March 2020

KIA KAHĀ - STAY SAFE CENTRAL HAWKE’S BAY!

Covid-19 is a continuously evolving situation, requiring our whole community to stay focussed on following the advice from Government Agencies including the Ministry of Health and District Health Board. Central Hawke’s Bay District Councils focus is on supporting response efforts, as we do everything we can to slow down the virus.

We want you to have confidence in what we’re doing. We’re treating this virus with the seriousness it deserves and as a community, and we implore you to do the same.

Now more than ever, our community needs to come together so we as a Council can put energy into what’s most important – the security of our services, and the protection of our most vulnerable people.

If you have internet access, the best website to head to for accurate and timely information relating to COVID-19 is www.covid19.govt.nz. Please be assured that our business continuity plan is robust, agile, and committed to ensuring your access to essential services.

Together we thrive. E ora ngātahi ana.

WHAT WE KNOW:

• The government has put a four-level COVID-19 alert system in place, specifying public health and social measures to be taken against the virus.
• We’re at level four – Eliminate. This means people are instructed to stay at home, educational facilities and businesses are closed except for essential services and lifeline utilities.
• Council facilities including the libraries, playgrounds, swimming pools, community halls and museums are closed until further notice. However, core services like rubbish collection, water and wastewater will continue.
• Supermarkets and essential services are to remain open, please shop sensibly.

WHAT WE NEED YOU TO KNOW:

• We’re closely following the guidance of the New Zealand Government Ministry of Health, Hawke’s Bay District Health Board and Hawke’s Bay Emergency Management Group and are building a local plan in support of the national and regional response.
• Our emergency response team has been activated, and this group is now wholly focused on actioning this plan.
• We’re taking steps to protect our staff and your services. The government has instructed people to stay at home and this means our office staff are home too. Until we are advised otherwise, you won’t be able to visit our office in person, however you can phone us on 06 857 8060 to speak to our customer service team who will advise you on what facilities are available to you over the course of the shut-down.
• The Government has announced a COVID-19 recovery package to support New Zealand business, boost incomes, and support households. For more information about financial support go to workandincome.govt.nz or phone 0800 559 009.
• Council are working in partnership with Te Taiwhenua o Tamatea.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS

• Wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds), then dry.
• Cough or sneeze into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues.
• Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.
• Don’t touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
• Put used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately.

Stay home
COVID-19: Facts for essential and non-essential business

At 11.59pm on Wednesday 25 March, all of New Zealand entered Level Four of the COVID-19 alert system. Level 4 will be in place for a minimum of four weeks.

Whether or not the Level 4 restrictions remain in place after the four-week period will be largely determined by how effective the restrictions are. In other words, if we follow the rules – we should get through sooner.

As a national state of emergency has been declared, Council will not be the regulator of essential and non-essential businesses. This power belongs with police who will be enforcing regulations put in place by the Government.

What does Alert Level Four Mean for Businesses

Non-Essential Business

All Non-Essential Businesses must close, or implement alternative working with everyone who can to work from home.

More information about essential businesses can be found at www.covid19.govt.nz.

DO NOT ASSUME YOU ARE AN ESSENTIAL BUSINESS. IF YOU HAVE NOT BEEN TOLD YOU ARE YOU PROBABLY NOT.

You should either receive this information about your status from your industry body or from MBIE.

If you have any queries around essential services you can get in touch MBIE at 0508 377 388 or email essential@mbie.govt.nz but expect delays.

Essential Businesses

If you are an essential business you may operate but you will need to put public health protocols in place and you may be asked to reduce or curtail aspects of your business. For example, a petrol station can remain open but cannot sell hot food. Hardware chain stores can remain open to trade customers only.

For advice, businesses can contact essential@mbie.govt.nz.

Essential businesses which will remain open in Central Hawke's Bay can be found on our website.

Financial support for businesses:

The Government has announced a COVID-19 recovery package to support New Zealand business, boost incomes, and support households. For more information about financial support go to workandincome.govt.nz or phone 0800 559 009.

Hawke’s Bay Business hub have created some great factsheets outlining these funding schemes for business. Go to www.hbbusinesshub.nz and select response.

Shopping for food:

Can I still shop at my supermarket?

• Yes, supermarkets will remain open through the course of the lock down. Please shop sensibly.

Can I still shop at my dairy?

• Yes, dairies can choose to stay open but must have a ‘one in, one out’ rule, and cannot sell food prepared on the premises.

Are food delivery services (eg subscription food boxes and takeaways) considered essential services?

• Takeaway operations and premises, as well as cooked food delivery services must shut down at level 4. We cannot guarantee social distancing in every kitchen or that everyone who works in a kitchen is well.

• Meals on Wheels has been granted an exception to this restriction due to the social service it provides.

• Subscription food boxes are considered an essential service.

• Whole food delivery services (eg subscription food boxes) and supermarket delivery services can continue to operate but must use non-contact delivery measures ie online and phone orders and contactless delivery.

This information is subject to change. Check www.covid19.govt.nz daily for updates.

If you’re worried you’ll run out of books while the District Libraries are closed, don’t be!

We have a fantastic range of eBooks and eAudiobooks on offer via our eBook apps. All you need is internet access, a library membership and a pin number.

No membership? You can now sign up for the Digital Only Membership which will allow you to access these resources – https://ent.kotui.org.nz/client/en_AU/chb/ then choose Join the Library.

If you already have a card but don’t know your card number or pin, keep an eye on our Facebook page, @CentralHawkesBayDistrictLibraries – we are working on a way to be able to sort this out for you!

Happy reading!
The 2020 drought has hit our region hard and we are preparing for the dry spell to continue throughout Autumn.

Central Hawke's Bay District Council are working closely with Hawke's Bay Regional Council, Central Government Agencies and Emergency Management Agencies proactively respond to the consequence of ongoing dry weather. We know that many of our local farmers and growers are struggling and ask you to look out for each other in what is a very tough time.

If you are struggling to deal with water restrictions, lack of stock water, lack of stock feed or other associated pressures from the dry please reach out to your neighbours, a friend, a farm professional such as your vet, or call the Rural Support Trust.

The Ministry of Primary Industries co-ordinates Government recovery assistance measures for farming families. There is help available, to find out contact the Rural Support Trust on 0800 RURAL HELP or visit the Central Hawke's Bay District Council website and search Drought to be directed to the right place.

Rural Support Trust
Your local Rural Support Trust is a great place to start for free and confidential support and advice. This nationwide network is run by local people to help farming families and rural communities.

They work with government, industry and support agencies, helping with information and recovery measures.

The Rural Support Trust can help put you in touch with services, including planning and management advice and mentoring, health information, Work and Income, or financial support.

They also have facilitators trained in helping people in stressful situations like a drought.

Do you rely on tank water?
Now is a great time to check and ensure you have enough in the tank to meet your needs. If your tank levels are low make sure you book in with the Otane District Water tanker. They are currently busier than usual and may take up to 7 days to reach you.

Phone 027-5564-563 or 027 WATER 4U to book in a tanker refill.

COVID-19: Primary Industries
The primary industries have been included on the list of essential services in the COVID-19 response. You must register as an essential service in order to continue operating during the lock down period.

For more information and to register as a safe practice online, head to the MPI website and search COVID-19.