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# Another hitch for council

Lee Scanlon

The West Coast Regional Council's delayed long-term plan (LTP) has hit another hitch.

The council is already a month late adopting its LTP. Today it had to extend the deadline for public submissions because of confused wording in its consultation document.

Submissions were supposed to close on July 26. Corporate services manager Robert Mallinson said the council decided this morning to extend the deadline to midday next Monday, August 6. He said a member of the public had complained the wording in the hard copy submission form, included in the public consultation document, was confusing.

According to the form, the council will only consider submissions on issues identified in the consultation document. Mr Mallinson said that was never the council's intention and it was advertising the extended submission time in all West Coast newspapers.

He confirmed that Audit NZ had previously approved the consultation document, including the submission form containing the confusing wording.

Audit NZ approved the consultation document on June 22 and it was publicly released on June 26.

Mr Mallinson said the council would hold public hearings on August 7, the day after submissions closed.

Audit NZ could take up to two weeks to sign off the full LTP, so it was unlikely

the council would be in a position to adopt the final audited LTP on August 14, as planned, Mr Mallinson said.

The council should have signed off its LTP by June 30, but says it underestimated the resources required to meet increased Audit NZ requirements.

Mr Mallinson said the council could expect to be mentioned in the Auditor-General's reports to Parliament for missing its June 30 deadline.

"Adopting the final audited long term plan in August will not compromise our ability to strike our rates in September," he said.

Council chief executive Mike Meehan told The News in June that the council had missed its LTP deadline for several reasons, including resourcing and the increased focus of Audit NZ in the process.

Mr Meehan said the council would provide more internal resources for future LTPs.

A key proposal in the plan is a uniform general charge of \$50 on all properties.

"A uniform annual general charge is considered the best and most equitable way to smooth out council's finances into the future providing certainty of funding for the delivery of core services," the consultation document said.

The LTP also recommends establishing a new Waiho rating district including the lower Waiho (Waiiau) and Franz Josef rating district and other properties that might benefit from Waiho River flood protection infrastructure.

# Seeing stars after 'miracle' course

Becky Manawatu

Yvonne Roberts  
Seeing stars was a "wow moment" for Westport's Yvonne Roberts.

She had just returned home after three weeks' treatment at a German eye clinic.

She went outside, looked up at the night sky and saw stars for the first time in years.

"How could I not be happy?" she laughs.

Seeing stars again has been one of her many "wow moments". Her vision has improved from 32 to 56 percent and could reach 67 percent.

She can see the transmission tower on Mt Rochfort from her kitchen window, read street signs, and see embossed patterns on wallpaper.

She hopes to pick up a trowel and start gardening again.

"That was also a love of mine, but it just made my eyes throb, I had to give it up."

As a realist artist she's always admired nature, but for years could only see the shapes of the birds in her garden.

"[Now] I can identify the different breed of birds on our lawn or in the trees and see their colours," she smiles.

The eye therapy cost \$8000. It was worth every cent, she says.

"The greatest news is I won't go blind before I die. I've got enough sight to last me out - or see me through," she laughs.

Born blind in her right eye, Yvonne was short-sighted in her left eye by the time she was 10. She was diagnosed with glaucoma in her early forties and her left-eye vision fell to 32 percent.

She says she was "next to blindness", viewing the world as if through a "grubby" net curtain, with "patches of clear sight".

Glaucoma - known as the "silent thief" - would have eventually made her blind.

Last December, Yvonne and her husband Bruce began researching how to slow the disease.

They found out about Dr Bernhard Sabel's research online.

With the blessing of Yvonne's Christchurch ophthalmologist and Hokitika optometrist they decided to "go for it".

The couple travelled to the Savir Vision Restoration Centre in Magdeburg, Germany, in mid-May, for "alternating current" therapy.

Yvonne arrived determined and accepting.

"Pretty much poor eyesight affects everything you do, but it's ok, we adjust



Yvonne Roberts describes the success of her therapy for low vision as a "miracle". Photo: Becky Manawatu and have our own coping methods, quite happily and with humour." The therapy included noninvasive current stimulation. Five days on, two days off, Yvonne wore a band on her

The holistic treatment also featured eye yoga, eye socket massage, nutrition lessons and psychotherapy to increase Yvonne's responsiveness to the electric stimulation.

She found the psychotherapy - investigating how well she was coping with vision loss - particularly interesting.

"I felt that I was [coping], but I found it helpful, to turn around negative thinking when you don't even know you're being negative."

She will never drive a car again (she gave up 15 years ago) but her peripheral vision has improved so much she can now see her husband driving beside her. That was another "wow" moment, she says.

She's been encouraged by Dr Sabel and her daughter, local artist Karyn Roberts, to take up her paintbrushes again and wants to try abstract art.

When her vision deteriorated, she found replacements for what she'd lost. In 2016, she finished a book - a family and local history called From Ballynahinch to Buller. It took her 18 months, printing it by hand, then scanning and emailing each page to her sister to type.

Writing the book would be easier for her now - she's downgraded to glasses she was prescribed nine years ago.

"For myself and Bruce, this is like a miracle and we thank God."

She recalls sitting outside a German cafe before they came home and watching an old woman douse her food in salt - as Yvonne's mother used to do.

She saw the salt granules fall, catching the sunlight, and said to Bruce: "There's a lady over there just pouring salt on, she'd even beat Mum."

Then Yvonne realised that a few weeks earlier she wouldn't have been able to see the salt.

There are many different eye conditions which cause low vision. "My hope is that other people can get help."

July is Glaucoma Awareness Month. New Zealand has more than 90,000 people with glaucoma. Only 45,000 have been officially diagnosed.

For more information go to www.glaucoma.org.nz. For Dr Sabel's research go to www.savir-center.com.

# Marine industry?

Lee Scanlon

A boat building or boat maintenance business are among the proposals for developing Westport port.

Buller Mayor Garry Howard and port manager Jackie Mathers confirmed today that proposals included a marine industry using the BT Mining shed - initially built to store coal - on the Westport wharf.

Mr Howard said the port had received an approach from a company with a fleet of vessels.

Ms Mathers said all the ideas would go forward to consultants appointed to develop a business case for upgrading and developing Westport and Greymouth ports.

Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones recently announced the West Coast port study would receive \$125,000 from the Provincial Growth Fund.

Mr Jones said the redevelopment work was about building resilience and providing for increased economic activity at the ports.

Ms Mathers said she couldn't breach commercial confidentiality by revealing the port proposals.



Garry Howard

"Our aim is to have something, whether it's in the shed or other areas of port land, that's going to be best for the town, the region and ratepayers."

Asked whether boat building and maintenance was among the ideas for the BT Mining shed, she said: "It's something along those lines. In the mix are a number of other projects that involve that [BT Mining] building.

"The building itself is of interest to a lot of different people."

The port owns the land on which the shed is built. The Buller District Council is currently using the shed to store its emergency water supply tanks.

Ms Mathers said the council had had preliminary talks with BT Mining about the building. A consultant had yet to be appointed to develop the ports' business case.

BT Mining managing director Richard Tacon said the company had indicated it was willing to work on the best plan for the port and Westport.

"We have no plans to move export coal through the shed at present and no decision has been made about the long-term ownership."

# Police name 41-year-old Greymouth victim

Teresa Smith

Police have released the name of the man fatally stabbed in Greymouth early yesterday morning.

He was Cyrus Alexis Alupis, 41, of Greymouth.

West Coast area commander Inspector Mel Aitken said a 17-year-old man had appeared in the Greymouth District Court yesterday afternoon charged with murder.

He was remanded in custody until August 21.

Alupis' stepdaughter, Shiann Green, told online news service Stuff that he was "the best dad I could ask for".

"He had such a good personality,

always happy, always making jokes, just a happy, loving person. It sucks that someone's done this."

Green, who lives in Nelson, said Alupis had seven other children.

She believed he was doing a digging course and had recently purchased a house to build on.

Stuff reported that Paula Green, who had four children with Alupis, described him as someone who "just wanted to be loved".

"He always acted tough and all staunch, put on a face, but that wasn't who he really was.

"He had the biggest heart I've ever known, he was always there for me no matter what he was doing he would drop it to be beside my side if I needed

head with very low electrical stimulation which aimed to revive sleeping nerves around her eyes. Therapists increased the electrical current and the therapy time.

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