

## Don't feed the gulls

The Blenheim Business Association and Council are leading the call to encourage people to stop feeding seagulls in the town centre.

“People should not feed the gulls and take care not to leave food unattended,” said Blenheim Business Association chair, Lynette Rayner.

“This will help the situation on the ground and hopefully reduce the attraction of the CBD to the birds in the long term.”

“Over the last three years the BBA has contacted all cafés and food premises in the Blenheim CBD requesting better management of waste food. This has improved, with retailers using wheelie bins instead of rubbish bags, for example.”

“We’ve since seen a reduction in the gull population as a result of everyone’s efforts so far – we just need to keep the pressure on and try to reduce their numbers further.”

She said the BBA and Council would continue to work together and is considering a ‘Do Not Feed the Gulls’ campaign through media and social media, and signage could be installed



*Blenheim’s seagull population has reduced over the past few years, but the public are being encouraged not to feed them or leave food unattended*  
Photo Credit: Dan Burgin

so that both locals and visitors were aware of the issue.

Council and BBA had also met with the Department of Conservation (DOC) because the two species - red-billed and black-billed gulls - are both protected under the Wildlife Act.

The nesting season is August to December for the red-billed gulls and October to February for the black-billed.

A number of CBD building owners have systems in place to deter the birds - such as sprinklers, lasers and spikes.

## Kina removal reaping rewards in Tōtaranui/Queen Charlotte Sound

Removing kina from sites in Tōtaranui/Queen Charlotte Sound has encouraged the recovery of many significant rimurimu and kelp species, the Environment and Planning committee heard recently.

Council’s Nautical and Coastal Science team have been working with the University of Auckland who are monitoring experimental sites in the Sound. In a report prepared for the committee, Council’s Senior Coastal Scientist Katie Littlewood says rimurimu and kelp are both critical for ecosystem function and health as they create habitats for numerous marine species and also sequester carbon.

“Kina are endemic herbivorous grazers that feed on important rimurimu

and kelp. An area can become overpopulated with kina, leading to kina barrens, which are areas completely cleared of seaweed and kelp due to over grazing,” Katie said.

Dallas Lafont from the university research team spoke to the committee about their research.

“Seaweed species have been declining for 50 years due to overgrazing by kina, warmer sea temperatures and sedimentation,” Dallas said. “Species that predate on kina, such as large blue cod, snapper and crayfish, are low in number which allows kina to overpopulate and clear areas that were once full of healthy kelp and seaweed species.”

Four areas in Tōtaranui were selected

to be part of the project and the extent of recovery and re-establishment of seaweed has been noticeable. “After 18 months of monitoring the four experimental sites we have observed some degree of recovery at all sites. In particular, the return of hundreds of giant kelp (*Macrocystis pyrifera*) at one site,” Dallas said. “While these results are exciting and kina removal is one useful tool to kickstart the recovery, the larger goal is to ultimately make these kelp forests self-sustaining, which will require further measures.”

This research has been carried out with support from Te Ātiawa and the Tē Taiuhu Iwi Fisheries Forum and has been funded by Sustainable Seas and Port Marlborough.



*Kina removal at an experimental site at Motuara Island has seen excellent results for recovery of kelp species – before (left) and after (right)*

## Checking the health of our town centres

A spot check of the health of our town centres is the focus of Council’s ‘Marlborough Town Centre Health Check’, the findings from which were presented at this month’s Economic, Finance and Community committee meeting.

Every two years since 2011, Council has produced a report on the health of the Blenheim and Picton town centres. Statistics such as the composition of the town centre, state of the environment and the results of a pedestrian survey are all included.

Economic Development manager Neil Henry says there is now a reliable body of evidence that provides a comparative study to identify trends and changes over time. “This is one of the benefits of doing this survey regularly so we can see how our CBDs have changed.”

“Since 2011 there has been a noticeable change with a lot more cafés and restaurants and less retail in Blenheim. This shows the changing nature of how people are spending, with more online shopping and leisure activities in town centres,” Mr Henry said.

Data for the new study was collected in December from 297 people. Some of the key findings were:

### Blenheim

- Spend in the Central Business District: \$296.8M (\$10M more than in 2022)
- Fewer vacancies in Queen Street
- Reduction in retail shops from 92 to 84
- Increase in vacancies from 20 to 27
- Sixty four per cent visit the CBD for cafés and restaurants

Mr Henry said the reduction in retail shops likely showed the impact of online shopping and e-commerce.

“This is an international trend. However, the town centre continues to perform well across most measured categories including transport, pedestrian route quality, state of the environment and street vitality.”

### Picton

- CBD spend: \$94.3M (\$15M more than in 2022)
- Strong return of visitors, both domestic and international
- Vacancies similar to 2022 at 7 per cent
- Food and entertainment the most common drawcard (23 per cent)
- Seventy five per cent visit the CBD for cafés/restaurants

“Overall, Picton CBD is performing well. The state of the environment, street vitality, pedestrian routes and transport options all continue to be maintained at a desirable level. We’ve seen a strong return of international visitors and transaction rates have gone up,” Mr Henry said.

The report will be published on Council’s website.

### Opening Hours

Mon to Fri: 8.30 am - 4.30 pm  
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