



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Media release

11 October 2023

Review shows majority of regional rates correct

Following the first instalment being released, Council identified a discrepancy in some of the rates assessment notices. Council engaged external experts from PWC to undertake a review to determine the extent of the issue.

The review has found that rates invoices issued for the Buller and Westland Districts, except for those ratepayers who are part of the Karamea, Punakaiki, Hokitika and Wanganui Special Rating Districts, are correct. Ratepayers in the Buller and Westland Districts are being advised to pay their first rates instalment, however, due to potential confusion, Council is extending the due date from 20 October 2023 to 20 November 2023 to provide extra time for these payments to be made.

For ratepayers within the Grey Rating District two issues have been identified. Further investigation is underway and at this stage it appears that the issue is in relation to the Grey Floodwall Rating District Boundary extension and the capital value of property within this area, and the Redjacks Special Rating District. Further work is being undertaken to determine the issue and the best means of resolving the matter. Council will provide further information on this matter early next week.

For ratepayers identified in any of the Special Rating District Areas of Karamea, Punakaiki, Redjacks, Grey, Hokitika and Wanganui, Council will be writing to you to explain the issue and what will happen next.

West Coast Regional Council Chief Executive, Darryl Lew, was confident that Council had sourced the issue, particularly why some ratepayers had seen steep increases on their invoices.

“We set the rates in June this year which was to result in an average general rate increase of approximately 16.417%. However, changes in capital values, both increases and decreases, can seriously impact year on year comparisons.”

“For properties that have been revalued, the rate is now based on the new valuation and the increase itself will vary from property to property. In some cases, particularly in the Buller District, some valuations have doubled. Unfortunately, these valuations are outside the control of Council.”

“We know that some people are struggling to pay bills at the moment. I would encourage ratepayers in the area identified with issues to contact our office and set up a repayment programme. Any discrepancy will be addressed through the second instalment to be issued in March/April 2024. The repayment programme will help with smoothing out the amount to be paid at any one time.”

For any ratepayer in the areas identified with an issue that have already paid their rates in full then Council will be contacting them to work out a refund or remittance if it is found any is required to be made.

When rates invoices arrive, questions are often raised as to what the Regional Council actually does. The Regional Council manages the air, land, freshwater and coastal resources of the West Coast. This is undertaken through the development of regional planning documents setting out how people can use and interact with these resources through the rules in the plans. Council issues consents for a range of activities and follows this up through a compliance function. The Regional Council also coordinates emergency management and regional land transport planning across the region, enabling services such as Total Mobility. Flood warning systems are maintained across the seven key rivers of the region as well as management of the flood and erosion protection assets for 23 Rating Districts. Other activities include hazardous substance and marine spill response capability, quarry management, pest control and biosecurity.

“I am pleased that we have located the discrepancy and working to put this right.”

“On behalf of Council, I want to apologise to ratepayers for the confusion around this matter. We know that it has been stressful but I am pleased we have got answers for the community. I ask that as you make contact with our frontline staff you are patient with them as they have fielded a lot of enquiries and are doing their best to help each person.”

ENDS

Media Contact

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