

CORRIDOR

Cedar, Steam and Cold Water: A New Chapter at Parakai

From childhood hot-pool memories to a grown-up wellness escape, Kaipātiki Ora is putting Parakai on the map for a whole new kind of visitor.

A Walk in the Garden

The Bayly family story behind Kaipara Coast's gardens and sculpture trail.

The Business of Doing Good

From financial adviser to food-tour founder, discover how Malhar turned an unexpected life change into two very different passions.

Markovina Vineyard Estate: Celebrating 60 Years of Family, Hospitality and Memories

Six decades of hard work and a passion for bringing people together have made this estate a true North West family business.

When Lemons Turned into Legends

A heartfelt story of a Kumeū lemon orchard winning every vote in a global Stihl competition.



North West Country
Business Association

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Front Cover Image Credit:
Kaipātiki Hot Springs



Editor's Note

Thank you to everyone who read our first edition of Corridor magazine, and to the tireless team behind the scenes who pulled it together. We have received a lot of feedback about the magazine, and we are really pleased to hear that you liked it.

As readership grows, so does our discounts page, and we have even more businesses offering discounts, so make sure you check out Page 29 and support local.

Our area is moving through significant changes, some of it driven by communities as we grow in numbers, and other changes driven by business.

Business North West commenced a journey to create a Destination Management Plan in December 2025, and with the support of over 70 local tourism operators and Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, we will launch the first version in October. This plan will look to unlock North West Auckland, providing top-quality destinations and service, while maintaining our environment and landscapes. This will be a fine balance of advocacy for infrastructure investment, marketing and support to businesses.

Look out in future editions as we showcase the region and offer a range of visitor packages and itineraries.

Enjoy the read this month. We have a lot of great stories for you.

Danielle Hancock
North West Country Business Association
General Manager

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Chair's Column

There is a lot happening across North West, but for me the common thread is increasingly clear: how do we make this an even better place to do business?

That means advocating for the things our businesses need, promoting our area more effectively, and helping local businesses become stronger and more productive.

One of our key priorities is lifting business capability. Small and medium businesses are the backbone of our local economy, but running one can be relentless. Owners are often managing customers, people, cash flow, compliance and growth, all at once. Being busy does not necessarily mean the business is performing at its potential.

Our work is increasingly focused on helping close that gap, giving businesses access to practical support, better information, stronger networks and opportunities to learn from each other. The objective is not simply business growth for growth's sake. It is better businesses, with stronger margins, better systems, more capable people and owners who have greater control over where their business is heading.

Alongside this, we continue to advocate strongly for North West.

Our area is growing rapidly, and that creates both opportunity and pressure. Infrastructure, transport, access, investment and good planning all matter. We need to ensure the voice of business is part of those conversations, particularly as decisions are made that will shape the area for decades to come.

We also have an enormous opportunity to tell the North West story better.

We have outstanding businesses, hospitality, wineries, activities, landscapes and places that many Aucklanders still know surprisingly little about. Building North West as a destination is not simply a tourism exercise. Every additional visitor who stays longer, eats locally, shops locally or discovers a business here contributes to our wider economy.

None of this happens through the Association alone.

The real strength of North West is the people and businesses within it. Our job is to connect them, represent them and create opportunities for them to succeed.

There is plenty still to do, but the direction is clear: **stronger businesses, a stronger local economy, and a North West that is increasingly recognised as a great place to work, invest, visit and do business.**

Cedar, Steam and Cold Water: A New Chapter at Parakai

Most people around here have a Parakai memory: the mineral smell hitting you at the gate, the walk to the pools in a towel, the drive home with wet hair and that heavy, well-cooked feeling.

Kaipātiki Hot Springs is betting you never really grow out of that. It's also betting you're ready for a more grown-up version of it.

Kaipātiki Ora, located in the former private rock pool venue, is an exclusive wellness space with natural cedar geothermal hot tubs, large steam saunas and ice plunge baths. There's an upgraded dry changing area with private showers, a refreshed relaxation environment, a native garden setting and a wellness and retail offering. It's the kind of setup people currently drive three hours to Rotorua for, and now it's on our doorstep.

"We're respecting what makes this place special and ensuring it remains accessible and meaningful to the local community."

The land and the springs sit with Te Poari o Kaipātiki ki Kaipara, a governance body made up of representatives from Ngāti Whātua o Kaipara and Auckland Council. Te Poari has led the

development as kaitiaki and owners. Belgravia Leisure, who took over running the site day to day, has handled the build and the design of the experience itself.

Site manager Dion Tilson describes it as a first step rather than a finish line. "We're creating a space where people can slow down, reconnect and enjoy the unique qualities in a new way," he says. "At the same time, we're respecting what makes this place special and ensuring it remains accessible and meaningful to the local community."

That matters, because Parakai has always been a whānau place. Kaipātiki Ora is designed to sit alongside that, not replace it. A slower, more restorative offering layered onto the recreation the site is already known for.

Te Poari chairperson Mihi Blair puts the project into a longer-term perspective.

"Kaipātiki Hot Springs is a taonga with deep cultural and community significance," she says. "Our role is to ensure this place continues to serve our people while evolving in a way that respects mana whenua values and enhances the experience for everyone."

She's clear the partnership is what unlocked the next stage of investment. Belgravia brought the operational know-how, while Te Poari set the direction. "Together, we are shaping a future that honours our heritage while welcoming new opportunities for the community and visitors alike."



There's a bigger picture here too. Tilson has been working through the North West Destination Plan discussions alongside Tātaki Auckland Unlimited and the North West Country BID, and Kaipātiki Ora keeps coming up as the kind of visitor experience the region needs more of.

It's not just a pool upgrade; it's part of the case for the North West as somewhere worth staying overnight, not just passing through.

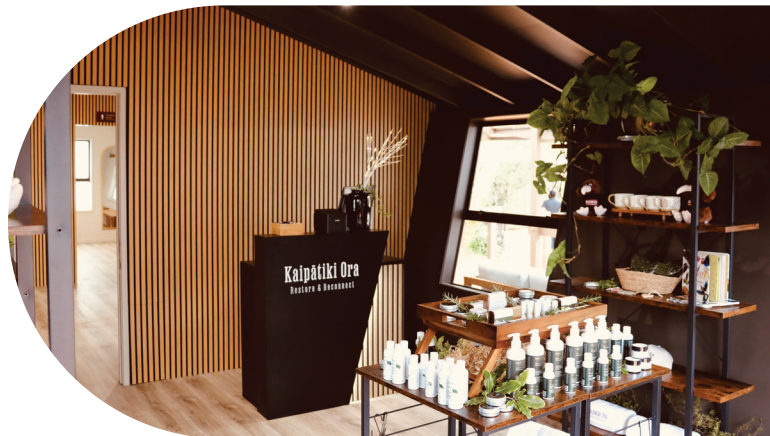
Te Poari deputy chair and Rodney Local Board chair Guy Wishart sees the flow-on effect. "It encourages visitors to stay longer, supports local businesses and showcases a truly unique experience within the Auckland region."



For cafes, accommodation providers and operators across the North West, that's the real story. A wellness destination on the doorstep gives visitors a reason to travel out here, and then a reason to stay put once they arrive.

Bookings are now open, so if you've been waiting for an excuse to try it, this is it. Jump onto the Kaipātiki Hot Springs website for the latest on availability and what's included.

According to Mihi Blair, there's more coming. "This is just the beginning."



Business:
Kaipātiki Ora, Kaipātiki Hot Springs

Location:
150 Parkhurst Road, Parakai, Auckland

Contact:
www.kaipatikihotsprings.co.nz





Killip Builds

Matt Killip, founder and director of Killip Builds Ltd., brings 13 years' experience in the construction industry, 100% commitment and passion to building high-quality homes.

To ensure a seamless construction and delivery experience, Matt says, "Clear communication, integrity, reliability and, of course, quality are some of our core values at Killip Builds."

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Sep 17th
Blue-Ribbon
Fundraiser



Sep 22nd
Riverhead Speed
Networking



Oct 4th
Tē Kete Kai
o Kaipara



AGM
2022
Oct 13th
Business
North West
AGM 2026



Oct 31st
Fundraising
Halloween
Masquerade Ball



Nov 14th
King of the
West Boxing



Nov 27th
Christmas
Parade

Events Calendar

SEPTEMBER

15 (Every Tuesday)

Creative Matters After-School Art - Term 3

Huapai District School
3pm – 5pm

16

Beats by Bingo

The Hive Bar
7.30pm

17

Blue-Ribbon Fundraiser

Country Club Huapai
countryclubhuapai.co.nz

18 (Every Friday during September)

Huapai Community Chats - Come for a cuppa and share your ideas!

St. Chads Church
9.30am – 11.30am

20

The Village Market - Pirate Edition

Helensville Showgrounds
8.30am – 1pm

20

Biodynamics for Tamariki & Whānau

Wild West Organics
10am – 1pm

20 (Every Sunday)

Salsa & Bachata Pure Beginners & Improvers Level One 6 Week Courses

The Dance Shed
11am – 1.30pm

22

Riverhead Speed Networking

The Beekeepers Wife
5.30pm – 7.30pm

29 (Tuesdays and Thursdays)

Creative Matters Art Workshops - Sept/Oct Holidays

Kumeū Arts Centre
9am – 3pm

OCTOBER

03

Morepork Oktoberfest 2026

Kumeū Showgrounds
12pm – 10pm

04

Tē Kete Kai o Kaipara

Te Awaroa Museum
10.30am – 3.30pm

04

Hilarious Comedy Hypnosis Show: Fun for All Ages

Helensville War Memorial Hall
7pm – 8.30pm

10

Original Kaipara Tavern 80s Party

The Original Kaipara Tavern
7.30pm – 11.55pm

13

Business North West AGM 2026

The Riverhead
6.30pm – 7pm

24 – 26

Arts in the Ville 2026

Art Centre Helensville
10am – 4pm

29

Couture and Canapes

Country Club Huapai
6pm – 8.30pm

31

Halloween Hoedown

Shed 16
6.30pm

31

Fundraising Halloween Masquerade Ball

Soljans Estate Winery & Cafe
7pm – 12am

NOVEMBER

08

The Phil Collins and Genesis Tribute Show

Huapai Tavern
3pm – 6pm

14

Massive Pop & Rock Vinyl Record Sale

Riverhead Citizens Hall
9am – 2pm

14

King of the West Boxing

The Original Kaipara Tavern
3pm

14 – 22

The Ninja Run

Kumeū Showgrounds
9am – 7pm
(3pm – 7pm weekdays)

27

Christmas Parade

Commercial Road
6pm – 7.30pm

HELENSVILLE SHOW

Did you know, you can buy a key from the Helensville Showgrounds office to ride your horse on the Helensville racetrack?

The keys are \$150 per year (+ a one-off key bond) and give you access to either the sand or grass race track for year-round riding. Full details at helensvilleshow.co.nz/key-holder-hire or email the office at info@helensvilleshow.co.nz.



HELENSVILLE
SHOW



North West Auckland's Tourism Future Takes Shape

North West Auckland has long been one of Auckland's best-kept secrets.

From the black-sand beaches of Muriwai and the towering forests of Woodhill, to our award-winning wineries, welcoming rural villages, hot springs, harbour landscapes and outdoor adventures, this is a place where coast, country and community come together.

Now, thanks to a groundbreaking local initiative, North West Auckland is taking its next step on the tourism map.

In early 2026, Business North West partnered with Tātaki Auckland Unlimited to begin an innovative Destination Management Plan (DMP) process. What makes this project unique is that it was

developed by the community, for the community. Rather than a plan created behind closed doors, the North West Auckland DMP has been shaped through workshops, discussions and collaboration with tourism operators, local businesses, community representatives and mana whenua.

This approach reflects a simple belief: the people who live, work and invest in North West Auckland know the area best and should help shape its future.

Over the past several months, participants have come together to identify what makes North West Auckland special, what opportunities exist and how tourism can grow in a way that benefits everyone.

The result is a final draft Destination Management Plan that provides a clear vision for the future of tourism in the region.

The plan describes North West Auckland as Auckland's rural, coastal and recreational edge, stretching from Taupaki to Glorit and encompassing iconic destinations such as Muriwai, Kumeū, Riverhead, Helensville, Parakai, Shelly Beach and South Head.

It celebrates the area's unique mix of natural landscapes, outdoor recreation, food and wine experiences, arts, culture and heritage.

Importantly, the DMP recognises that the region already attracts significant visitor numbers. The opportunity is not simply about



Image Source: Kushal Permal (unsplash.com)

bringing more people into the area. Instead, it is about helping visitors stay longer, explore more communities, discover hidden gems and support more local businesses along the way.

At the heart of the plan are three guiding principles: Kotahitanga (we rise together), Kaitiakitanga (we are caretakers) and Manaakitanga (we welcome with intention).

These principles acknowledge that tourism should strengthen our economy while protecting our environment, celebrating our heritage and enhancing community wellbeing.

The vision is ambitious yet achievable.

By 2031, North West Auckland aims to be recognised as Auckland's place to breathe. It's where visitors can slow down, leave the city behind, experience authentic local stories and create meaningful connections with the people and places that make this area special.

To bring this vision to life, Tourism North West, supported by Business North West, will lead implementation of the plan with ongoing support from Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Rodney Local Board, Auckland Council, mana whenua and local tourism operators.

Together, these partners will help build stronger visitor experiences, improve connections across the destination, advocate for infrastructure improvements and develop a recognisable North West Auckland tourism brand.

One of the most exciting outcomes already emerging from the DMP process is the development of new visitor packages and itineraries.

Tourism North West will work with local operators to create one-night, two-night and three-night experiences that link together the region's beaches, forests, wineries, food experiences, accommodation providers, wellness attractions, heritage sites and outdoor adventures.

For local residents, these packages will provide new opportunities to rediscover their own backyard. For domestic and international visitors, they will showcase a side of Auckland many have never experienced before.

North West Auckland has always had the ingredients of a great destination. What has been missing is a coordinated story and a united approach.

Thanks to the leadership of Business North West, the support of Tātaki Auckland Unlimited and Rodney Local Board, and the commitment of local businesses and communities, that future is now taking shape.

Keep an eye out over the coming months as Tourism North West launches its first itineraries, visitor experiences and destination promotions.

The secret is out. North West Auckland is ready to welcome the world.

Business:

Kaipara Coast Plant Centre and Sculpture Gardens

Location:

1481 Kaipara Coast Highway,
Kaukapakapa, North West Auckland

Contact:

David and Geraldine Bayly,
09 420 5655

What they do:

An independent nursery and garden centre alongside a public sculpture trail and gardens, with an annual exhibition changeover each November.

A Walk in the Garden

Three generations of the Bayly family have shaped this land by hand, and after everything, David and Geraldine can't think of a single thing they'd do differently.

The family story starts in 1953, when David's grandfather bought two hundred acres of scrub, about as unpromising a start as land gets.

His father, Don, turned it into farmland through the 1960s. David grew up on the farm, and coming from a family of gardeners, it wasn't surprising he chose horticulture over farming as a career. He studied it, worked in commercial horticulture for several years, and then headed to the UK.

While in the UK, he noticed something New Zealand didn't really have: you could drive along almost any road, stop at a garden, and walk in.

"I realised that in New Zealand you couldn't really do that," he says. "And so I'd always sort of had the idea that we would open our gardens to the public."

When he returned to New Zealand, David took over part of the family farm, planted the gardens, and set up the Plant Centre and Plant Nursery alongside them.

It took fourteen years before they were ready to open to the public.

The sculpture trail that Kaipara Coast is now known for happened almost by accident, out of a job interview that had nothing to do with art.

"I was interviewing a local lady called Sally Lush for an office position," David says. "Very shortly after we started talking about the office position, we started talking about sculptures and sculpture trails, and Sally said, 'Oh, you should do one here.'"

They never hired Sally for the office job.

Instead, they offered her something else: curator of an entirely new sculpture trail. That was late 2007. By the end of a busy 2008, the paths were laid, the gardens were ready, and Kaipara Coast opened to the public for the first time.



Hydrangeas

By: Sarah C

2026 Exhibition



Behind the gardens sit three separate businesses.

Geraldine runs Kaipara Coast Landscape Architecture. David runs the Plant Centre at the entry to the gardens. The nursery and garden centre that employs almost all of their staff, grows plants for the Auckland climate and sells to the public, online and to landscapers.

Together, David and Geraldine also run the Sculpture Trail.

"The Plant Nursery and Plant Centre is our core business," David says.

"We're pretty much one of Auckland's last independent garden centres. There's certainly no one else in Auckland doing what we do the way we do it. So we're quite unique in a way. We've got our little niche there."

It's a business that's spent the last six months rebuilding its shop area from the ground up: a new walkway, a glasshouse, a pergola, a dedicated fruit tree area. Add a working farm running beef stock, and an overflow paddock where self-contained campervans can stay the night, and the property adds up to a lot more than a garden with sculptures in it.

No one on either side of the fence seems to mind having a garden and a nursery next door. "No, it's all favourable," David says. "There's no real issue with running a business like ours. It's very low impact. We can have hundreds of people in the gardens, and you wouldn't even know that they're there."

"We wanted the gardens to be something that young families can really enjoy"

The sculptures themselves get a full changeover once a year, anywhere from forty to forty-five pieces depending on the season.

It's a process built around an annual theme and a call for artist proposals, sent out each mid-year by Shea O'Neil, who has been curator of the gardens since the 2019 exhibition.

A 2018 family trip to France pushed the collection in a new direction: less serious, more playful. "We wanted the gardens to be something that young families can really enjoy," Geraldine says. "It's not a scary place; it's not a serious place. It's a fun and interactive place."

That's where the musical bridge came from, a crossing that plays sound underfoot, alongside a run of bigger, hands-on pieces built for kids as much as for art lovers.

The gardens keep changing in less visible ways too.

"We tend to work out what the least exciting part of the garden is, and then fix that up," Geraldine says. A tired vegetable patch became a set of built-in garden beds.

In 2019, an overgrown stand of old pine trees, one of the least-loved corners of the property, came down entirely, making way for what she now calls a living amphitheatre. A stage-ready clearing that became one of her favourite spots on the whole property, the one she's proudest to show people when they visit.

More recently, an arborist has been reworking the hydrangea walk, which is lined with trees that have helped bring kererū back to the property.

Twenty years ago there were none. Now four or five live there year-round.

November brings the exhibition changeover that the magazine's timing this piece around: new sculptures in, an opening afternoon with food, music and the artists themselves invited to bring friends and family.

Ask David and Geraldine if there's anything they'd change and they struggle to find one. "We look back at what we have done and what we've got here, and we can't really think of anything we would have changed," they say.

Their three children grew up working weekends at the Plant Centre and in the gardens.

Geraldine's father does track maintenance well into retirement. David's father, before that, cut bush tracks by hand with a spade into his seventies and eighties. It's less a business than a property that's absorbed most of a family's life, one paddock, one pine grove, one sculpture changeover at a time.

Ask Geraldine to pick a favourite sculpture and she resists at first.

"I don't normally like to say that I have a favourite sculpture," she says, however, this year it would be a collection of bright hydrangea panels by Mangawhai artist Sarah C, in an area they call Woodhenge.

"I love colour," she says. "You can probably tell."

It's the same habit that's shaped almost everything else here: find the least exciting part, and fix it. Once, the property was an empty paddock.

Now it's a vibrant Plant Centre with a garden made for all ages to explore, all year long.

Meet Smith and Partners' Litigation Team

Legal disputes can be stressful, complex and unfamiliar, whether they involve a business, an employment issue, a relationship breakdown or an estate.

Smith and Partners' Litigation, Employment and Dispute Resolution team helps clients navigate these situations with clear, practical advice and a strong focus on finding the best way forward. Led by Carolyn Ranson, the team works across civil litigation;

employment matters; relationship property disputes; estate and trust litigation; and independent mediation.

Their approach starts with understanding the issue, assessing the risks and options, and establishing a clear strategy. Clients receive direct communication, realistic expectations and practical guidance to help them make informed decisions, often at challenging or high-pressure times.

Carolyn Ranson



Director Carolyn leads the disputes practice and brings extensive experience across estate litigation, civil disputes and employment strategy.

Her work centres on assessing exposure, developing strategy and helping clients navigate complex and high-pressure situations.

Carolyn's ability to bring structure and clarity to difficult issues also underpins the team's senior-led approach.

Rachael Chandra



Senior Associate Rachael works across employment and relationship property matters, drawing on a background in civil litigation and insurance law.

She advises both individuals and employers, including Australian businesses navigating New Zealand employment law. Her steady, grounded approach places strong emphasis on keeping clients informed, a clear sense of what's realistic and helping them understand the process ahead.

Nathan Tetzlaff



Senior Associate Nathan's practice spans a broad range of civil disputes. Direct and strategic, he focuses on identifying the strongest aspects of a case and directing attention where it matters most.

While Nathan appears in court on significant matters, much of his work involves helping clients manage disputes without unnecessary escalation and making sure decisions are made with a clear understanding of what's at stake and the consequences that follow.

Natalie Miller



Associate Natalie specialises in relationship property and also works in estate litigation.

She supports clients through complex and often highly personal matters, with a calm and structured approach, helping them understand what the law allows, stay realistic about outcomes and make decisions at challenging times.

Bethany Sweeney

Solicitor Bethany focuses primarily on employment law, including personal grievances, disciplinary processes, restructuring and employment agreements.

She advises employees and employers and takes a no-nonsense, straight-talking approach centred on potential pitfalls, process and realistic outcomes. Bethany is also developing her capability in family law.



Deborah Sylvester

Personal Assistant Deborah is often the first point of contact for clients.

She plays an important role in managing enquiries, onboarding and conflict checks, while helping ensure clients are directed to the right support from the outset.



Georgina Inwood

Graduate Law Clerk
Georgina supports the team across family and employment matters.

She brings an interest in Māori legal issues and public law, along with strong analytical skills and a commitment to serving her local West Auckland community.



Whether a dispute is commercial, employment-related or personal, Smith and Partners' Litigation, Employment and Dispute Resolution team brings together the experience and specialist capability to help clients understand their options and determine the best way forward.

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L A W Y E R S

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09 836 0939



Business:

Vega (financial advising),
Good Food Journeys

Location:

North West Auckland

Contact:

malhar@vegalend.co.nz
021 587 336

What they do:

Business and residential lending advice; luxury, festival-themed food and cultural tours through India, with a focus on community give-back alongside the experience.



Business Feature

The Business of Doing Good

In the span of a year, Malhar lost his job and both his parents, walked away from two decades in food service, and came out the other side with a financial advising career he hadn't planned for. And finally, the freedom to put real time into the food tours through India he'd already been quietly building since 2019.

He wears two hats, and he's upfront about which one pays the bills.

"I am a financial advisor, and that's my primary source of income," he says. "Good Food Journeys is basically what I call it, my passion project. I love doing what I do. It takes me to a happy place."

Running two completely unrelated businesses isn't always tidy. "You can easily get pulled in three different directions," he admits.

Weekdays belong to Vega, where clients expect answers. Good Food Journeys gets the gaps: evenings, weekends, the hours he spends planning next year's itinerary, unless there's a tour on the ground in India and someone needs help.

Malhar didn't plan this career change. By 2025, there wasn't much of his old life left to return to.

"It was quite a pivotal year for me," he says. It was also the year he decided to leave food service behind entirely and start again. Rather than looking for similar work, he went back to study, completed his Level 5 certification, and joined Vega in October 2025.

First in residential lending, now closer to an even split between residential and business finance. That side of the job, he says, is where he finds the most satisfaction at Vega.

"I can put myself in their shoes," he says of the small business owners he works with now. "I was one, once."

Even his son asked what kind of midlife crisis prompts a total career change. Malhar laughs about it now. "I'm a free bird to do what I want to do, basically."

The Business North West board seat too came the same way most things seem to arrive for Malhar.

Unplanned.

"Change is the only constant.
Expect the unexpected."

"I got a call from Danielle saying, 'We've got a vacancy for the Riverhead region. Would you like to take it up?'"

He joined on 1 July, calling it "training wheels" for governance work he'd wanted to do for years.

Good Food Journeys, however, goes back further, to 2019, and almost didn't survive its own timing. The first tour was booked for April 2020, 'The Cricket and Curry Tour' to catch the IPL in India. Then COVID came in uninvited, cancelling everything. It wasn't until 2023, the so-called 'revenge travel era,' that Malhar tried again, this time with Sid and Chand Sahrawat of Cassia and French Café hosting on his behalf, a tour every year.

The first tour drew four people. Then, it grew from there: twelve, then fifteen, then twenty on the most recent trip.

It's where he can break stereotypes.



"There's a perception that India is poor, when you stay in the Oberoi, or in the palace in Udaipur, it's eye-opening."

Malhar likes to point out that Mumbai's largest slum sits barely an hour from some of the most expensive real estate on the planet, and that guests who've braced themselves for chaos and hardship often end up staying at the Oberoi, or in a palace in Udaipur that once belonged to royalty.

"That disparity, I don't think you can ignore that," he says.

The tours are luxurious and deliberately unapologetic about it. "There's a perception that India is poor," Malhar says. "When you stay in the Oberoi, or in the palace in Udaipur, it's eye-opening."

Each itinerary is built around an Indian festival: Holi in Agra this year, with a private celebration at the chief minister's son's home; an upcoming Lohri tour to Amritsar, timed around the Golden Temple.

The next departure, Flavours, Festivals and Gems of India, is set for January 2027, with a handful of spots still open.

Diwali, however, is off the list for now, after a 2025 tour ran into Delhi traffic jams and a security lockdown caused by a foreign head of state staying at the same hotel.

"Lesson learned," he says, smiling.

Luxury isn't the whole story, though. Every tour builds in a moment of contrast. A meal at Sheroes' Hangout in Agra, a café run by survivors of acid attacks, or simply time spent somewhere the wealth on show elsewhere doesn't reach.

It's part of why every trip includes something given back to a community there, in line with what he says is the Good in the name actually about: doing good, in communities, in India.

Before every departure, Malhar gives travellers the same briefing:

"We're not travelling through Europe, where everything runs to the minute."

It's advice that doubles as his philosophy generally, one he traces back to a year that upended his own plans and forced him to start again.

Asked what he'd tell himself a decade ago, he doesn't think twice: "Change is the only constant. Expect the unexpected."

Two businesses, one instinct: find where someone's stuck, and do something about it.

Malhar just happens to call one of them a mortgage and the other a trip to India.

Either way, he shows up for people when it matters, and that part was never really unplanned.

Connecting North West Auckland: Networking Opportunities That Help Businesses Thrive

Running a business can sometimes feel like a solo journey, but across North West Auckland there are more opportunities than ever to connect with other business owners, share ideas, build partnerships and grow through the power of relationships.

Whether you prefer structured networking meetings, informal catch-ups, industry events or social business gatherings, there is a thriving networking community throughout the region.

The common thread across all of these opportunities is simple: people do business with people they know, like and trust.

The Power of Structured Networking

Structured networking groups provide a regular opportunity to meet with other business owners, develop referral partnerships and learn from the experience of others.

One example is The Networking Group (TNG), a business and professional networking organisation that focuses on helping trades, service providers and professional business owners build strong business relationships and generate referrals through word-of-mouth marketing.

TNG operates with a one-member-per-industry model, ensuring there is no direct competition within a group, and meetings are designed to create a relaxed environment where members can focus on growing their businesses through relationship-building.

The closest group for North West businesses is the Kumeū group.

"Running a business can sometimes feel like you're doing everything on your own. But there are 24 local business owners in Kumeū who are doing things together," says Kumeū TNG group lead Andy Burrows from The Trades Coach.

Every fortnight, members of TNG Kumeū get together at The Beekeepers Wife in Riverhead to connect, share ideas, learn from each other and build the kind of relationships that lead to genuine word-of-mouth referrals.

And it's not all business. There's plenty of conversation, support and a bit of fun along the way.

Any interested businesses can get two free visits to the TNG Kumeū group simply by reaching out to Andy.

Another growing networking option is the Helensville Business Networking Group, operated by local business owner Sam Hayfield from Helensville Mechanical.

Meeting fortnightly on Friday mornings from 8.30am to 9.45am, the group brings together business owners and professionals to connect, learn and support one another.

Meetings focus on practical business topics including:

- Business strategy
- Marketing and promotion
- Systems and processes
- Staffing and leadership
- Health and safety
- Business mindset and resilience.

The group's one-person-per-industry approach means members can speak openly about challenges, share ideas and learn from each other without worrying about a competitor being in the room.

As Sam explains, the goal is simple: for every member to leave having learned something new, gained an idea, solved a problem or made a valuable new connection.

Sam would love to hear from any businesses in the Helensville, Parakai and Kaukapakapa areas that would like to join the group.

Beyond the Meeting Room

While structured networking meetings provide consistency and accountability, some of the most valuable business relationships are often strengthened through more informal networking opportunities.

Recognising this, Rebecca Beavis, Membership Ambassador and Events Coordinator for the Helensville Business Networking Group, is developing a calendar of networking events that will be open to members throughout the year.

The first event is scheduled for 22 September 2026 at The Beekeepers Wife, Riverhead, from 5.30pm to 7.30pm. The evening will combine speed networking with delicious woodfired pizzas, a relaxed way to meet new contacts and strengthen existing relationships.

Additional events are already planned, including:

- An AI-focused networking event in October
- A showcase of the refurbished BNZ branch in Kumeū
- A tradies-focused event

These casual networking events complement the more structured meetings, allowing people to build relationships in a different setting and often leading to conversations and collaborations that might not otherwise happen.

Why Networking Matters

Many business owners initially join networking groups looking for referrals. While referrals are certainly a valuable outcome, experienced networkers will often tell you that the greatest benefits go much deeper. Networking creates genuine relationships. Over time, fellow members often become trusted advisers, collaborators, clients and friends.

To get hold of Andy Burrows and book your free sessions, head to www.tng.org.nz.

Contact Sam to register your interest in his Helensville Business Networking Group at sam_hayfield@outlook.com.

Chat with Rebecca about hosting or attending an open networking event at info@northwestcountry.co.nz.



**LOCAL BUSINESS
NETWORKING: HOW
COMMUNITIES HELP
YOU GROW | TNG**



Pitoitoi: Where River, Forest and Frontier Life Met

Long before it became known as Riverhead, the settlement at the head of the Waitematā Harbour was called Pitoitoi, named after the native pipit bird that inhabited the open grasslands and coastal margins of the district.

For centuries, the area formed part of an important Māori landscape connected to the waterways of the Upper Waitematā.

Although there is no confirmed record of a permanent settlement at Riverhead itself, historians believe Māori maintained a regular campsite on the bend of the river above present-day Wharf Road, near the original wharf site.

Later, the Rangitōpuni area became significant as the location of a peace agreement between Te Kawerau ā Maki and Ngāti Whātua, commemorated in the name "Rangitōpuni", meaning "day of the dogskin cloaks".

By the mid-1700s, the upper Waitematā had become an important water highway linking northern and southern tribal territories.

Unfortunately, it was also a route regularly travelled by war parties in waka taua.

To reduce the risk of attack, many Māori communities moved their settlements deeper into estuaries and hidden waterways where the smoke from cooking fires could not easily be seen from the main river channel.

When Reverend Samuel Marsden travelled through the area by waka in 1820, guided by Te Morenga of Ngāpuhi, he entered a landscape still dominated by native forest and waterways.

Within a generation, however, European settlers would begin transforming the district.

The Riverhead of the 1860s and 1870s was not the quiet village visitors know today. It was a busy frontier settlement built on transport, industry and trade. Before reliable roads and railways connected the district to Auckland, the river was the highway.



Foundations from the Riverhead mills can be seen today along the banks of the river. Photo: L J Hooker.





Riverhead Paper Mill, 1914, Sir George Grey Special Collections.

Steamers and cutters carried passengers, timber, flour, kauri gum, livestock and supplies along the harbour. Pigeons carried messages to Auckland, a much faster alternative to the long horse ride.

To travellers arriving by water, Riverhead was both fascinating and formidable.

Visitors described winding tidal channels bordered by vast mudflats, low hills covered in mānuka and scrub, and long timber jetties reaching across the estuary. An excursion to Riverhead in the late nineteenth century was considered an adventure. Passengers arriving on the steamer *City of Cork* found themselves climbing directly from the wharf up a steep bank to the settlement's hotel, where thirsty travellers crowded the bar before exploring the district.

Behind the settlement stood the forests that fuelled Riverhead's growth.

Vast stands of kauri provided the raw material for milling operations that became the economic engine of the district. The mills employed bushmen, labourers, bakers, sailors and tradesmen.

Among the most prominent was Lamb's Mill, which drew workers from across the colony and helped establish Riverhead as one of Auckland's important industrial centres.

As the forests retreated, paddocks expanded.

Settlers planted potatoes, oats, wheat and barley, believing the future prosperity of the district lay in productive agriculture rather than the fleeting wealth of gold rushes elsewhere.

Gum digging also became an important source of income, with tonnes of kauri gum shipped to Auckland from the district each year. Contemporary accounts describe the gum diggers as independent, hospitable and resilient people who lived simply but valued their freedom.

Today, the mills are silent.

The dams, wharves, tramways and industrial structures that once dominated the district have largely disappeared, surviving only as archaeological remnants hidden among regenerating bush and modern development.

In modern Riverhead, beneath the cafes and riverside hospitality, echoes of Pitoitōi can still be heard in the tides of the Waitematā and the stories of those who came before

The Rangitopuni, facing east from the balcony of The Riverhead. Photo: The Riverhead.



Winning Was Just the Beginning

By David Altena, The Better SMB Ltd

When we talk about high performance, people often assume we're talking about our financial results, business growth or national productivity.

The reality is a bit different.

Most business owners don't get out of bed in the morning thinking about national productivity. They think about creating a better future for themselves, their families, their team and their customers.

They want a business that works. A business they're proud of. A business that gives them options.

That's why the story of Drain Ninjas resonated with me.

When Director Sasha and the Drain Ninjas team received the High Performance Award at Business North West's Business Awards last year, it would have been easy to see it as a finish line.

Recognition received.

Box ticked.

Move on to the next challenge.

Instead, it became the starting point for something bigger.

As part of the process, the business completed a diagnostic

that highlighted opportunities for improvement, and behind the numbers, there was one area that stood out immediately.

Rework.

Like many growing businesses, Drain Ninjas was already doing a lot of things well, but that insight confirmed there were opportunities to improve how work flowed through the business and how consistently outcomes were being delivered.

What followed wasn't a dramatic transformation. It was something much more powerful.

A commitment to continuous improvement.



Over the following months, Sasha began working with a Lean specialist to better understand waste, process design, documentation, team alignment and operational efficiency. Along the way, the business started analysing data more deeply, reviewing marketing performance, documenting processes and looking for opportunities to improve how the team worked together.

The biggest lesson, it turned out, had nothing to do with systems or spreadsheets. It came down to leadership.

During a recent conversation, Sasha told me that winning the award "lit a fire" in her. It gave her a renewed determination to build the best business she could, develop the best team she could and become the best leader she could be.

That mindset is what separates good businesses from great ones.

The most successful business owners I meet aren't the ones who think they've arrived. They're the ones who remain curious. They're willing to ask questions, challenge assumptions, seek help and keep learning.

They understand that improvement isn't an event. It's a habit.

For Sasha, one of the key realisations has been that meaningful change doesn't happen overnight. It happens through small improvements made consistently over time.



A better process here. A clearer expectation there. A conversation that helps a team member take ownership. A decision informed by better data.

Individually, those things can seem insignificant.

Collectively, they become transformational.

The Drain Ninjas story is a reminder that high performance isn't about perfection. It isn't about having all the answers.

It's about having the courage to keep looking for better ones.

And sometimes, the most important thing an award can do is not to recognise how far you've come.

It's to inspire you to see how much further you can still go.



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Markovina Vineyard Estate: Celebrating 60 Years of Family, Hospitality and Memories

This September marks a remarkable milestone for one of Kumeū's most iconic family businesses. Markovina Vineyard Estate is celebrating 60 years in business, a journey that began in 1966 when Croatian immigrant Ivan Markovina Sr. and his family made North West Auckland their home and planted the foundations of what would become a local institution.

Originally from Lumbarda on the island of Korčula, Croatia, Ivan Sr. arrived in New Zealand seeking new opportunities for his young family. After a period in Whangārei, the family relocated to Kumeū, where Ivan saw the potential of the fertile land and established a vineyard that reflected both his Croatian heritage and his passion for growing exceptional grapes.

Over the decades, the vineyard flourished. Ivan Markovina Jr. developed a reputation as a skilled winemaker, earning success at wine competitions

and helping build the family's reputation across New Zealand. But it was the next chapter in the Markovina story that would truly transform the business.

Recognising the beauty of the estate and its potential as a gathering place, Ivan Jr. and his wife Rina began hosting weddings and events. With Rina managing the catering and Ivan overseeing hospitality, the family created something special: a venue where generations of Aucklanders would celebrate some of life's most important moments.

Today, Markovina Vineyard Estate is one of New Zealand's most awarded wedding and event venues, welcoming thousands of guests each year. While many of the vines have given way to stunning gardens, ceremony locations and event spaces, the values that built the business remain unchanged: family, hard work, hospitality and a commitment to creating



memorable experiences. The estate is now proudly supported by the third generation of the Markovina family, continuing a legacy that spans six decades.

To celebrate this significant anniversary, Markovina is giving back to the community and customers who have supported the business throughout its journey. On Sunday 6 September 2026, the estate hosted a special Father's Day celebration featuring a gourmet BBQ lunch and afternoon event. Guests experienced the exceptional hospitality and beautiful surroundings that have become hallmarks of the Markovina experience.

The anniversary celebrations are not only a chance to reflect on the past but also to look to the future. As North West Auckland continues to grow as a visitor destination, businesses like Markovina Vineyard Estate play an important role in showcasing the warmth, quality and entrepreneurial spirit of our region.

Sixty years after a Croatian family planted their first vines in Kumeū, Markovina Vineyard Estate remains a shining example of what can be achieved through vision, resilience and a genuine dedication to people. Here's to the next chapter of a remarkable North West Auckland success story.





When Lemons Turned into Legends

How Recreate NZ Won New Zealand's Only
Centennial Stihl Chainsaw

A once-in-a-century prize. A unanimous vote. A group of young people from a lemon orchard in rural Kumeū.

When Stihl International celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2026, the company wanted to mark the milestone with something extraordinary. The result was the release of the highly coveted 100-Year Centennial Edition Chainsaw, a collector's dream featuring a jet-black finish, matching black scabbard, Rapid Hexa saw chain and a commemorative display stand.

Only a limited number would ever be produced.

To celebrate its centenary, Stihl launched a global competition in January 2026, inviting customers from around the world to submit stories explaining why Stihl was their favourite brand.

The winning story would receive one of the special edition chainsaws.

What happened next surprised everyone.

A Story That Started in a Lemon Orchard

The winning entry came not from a forestry contractor, arborist or professional landscaper, but from the Moxie Orchard crew, a programme run by Recreate NZ.

Based in Ellerslie, Recreate NZ supports young adults with intellectual disabilities, helping them gain work skills, confidence and independence through hands-on experiences and meaningful community connections.

One of their most popular programmes is the Moxie Orchard project in Kumeū, where participants care for around 100 lemon trees while learning practical maintenance, horticulture and teamwork skills.

The orchard has become much more than a workplace.

It has become a place where confidence grows alongside the fruit. And central to that journey has been a special relationship with Stihl Shop Kumeū.

The winning letter opened with a declaration that few who knew the crew would dispute.

"You'd be hard pressed to find bigger fans of Stihl Shop Kumeū than the Recreate NZ Moxie Orchard crew!"

"It's Our Mower Shop!"

Every Wednesday, the Moxie team heads out to the orchard. As the vehicle approaches Stihl Shop Kumeū, something happens.

"As we round the bend toward Stihl, a chorus erupts, 'It's our mower shop!'" the letter explained.

The crew's excitement is so genuine that staff sometimes joke the equipment gets a little extra use, just so someone has an excuse for another visit.

What began as a customer relationship has evolved into something much deeper.

"From the first time we walked in, we were welcomed with open arms, and over the years have been guided and encouraged by Craig and his staff," the team wrote.

The support has extended far beyond repairs and servicing.

For the young people involved, the store has become a place where they feel valued, respected and included.

"The genuine interest in and care for our team are why a visit to the Stihl Shop is such a highlight"

Tools That Open Doors

The Moxie Orchard crew takes immense pride in its equipment.

Their three Stihl line trimmers and prized leaf blower have become symbols of achievement and teamwork.

In fact, the team spent nearly a year fundraising through lemon and lime sales to purchase their beloved leaf blower.

The investment was worth it.

The equipment's ease of use and reliability have enabled participants with varying abilities to safely learn new skills while helping maintain the orchard.

But what stood out in their submission was not the quality of the equipment itself.

It was the people behind it.

The letter described how Craig and his team patiently taught

participants how to maintain both ride-on and push mowers, sharpen tools, care for machinery and get the most from their equipment.

There have even been opportunities for hands-on product demonstrations and testing in store.

"It goes deeper than just tools though," the team wrote.

"The genuine interest in and care for our team are why a visit to the Stihl Shop is such a highlight."

A Surprise in Rarotonga

The competition reached its climax during the National Stihl Conference held in Rarotonga in February 2026.

Among the delegates attending were Ben and Rae, from Stihl Shop Kumeū and Stihl Shop Westgate.

After arriving and checking in, conference attendees were given their information packs, which included a collection of the top competition entries selected from around the world.

Each delegate was asked to read the stories and cast a vote for their favourite.

When Ben opened the pack, he was stunned.

"It was shocking for me," he recalled, "when I opened the letters and saw Stihl Shop Kumeū mentioned by name. I looked at Rae and said 'That's our shop they're talking about!'"

Among entries from every corner of the globe was a heartfelt submission celebrating the very store he represented.



The Vote That Made History

As delegates worked through the shortlisted entries, one story consistently stood above the rest.

The Moxie Orchard letter wasn't about chainsaws.

It wasn't about power ratings or technical features.

It was about kindness.

It was about community.

And it was about inclusion.

When voting concluded, organisers discovered something they had never seen before.

The delegates had voted unanimously.

Every vote cast at the conference selected the Recreate NZ Moxie Orchard crew's letter as the winning entry.

In a competition drawing stories from around the world, the young people from Kumeū had captured every single vote.

For Ben, Rae and the wider Stihl network, the result highlighted the power of authentic relationships and genuine community support.

A Partnership Built on Respect

The relationship between Recreate NZ and Stihl Shop Kumeū extends well beyond the orchard.

The staff have taken a keen interest in the achievements of the young people involved.

One story highlighted in the winning letter particularly resonated with delegates.

When Moxie crew member Mitchell was selected to represent New Zealand in skiing at the Special Olympics, Craig presented him with a Stihl beanie and personally congratulated him.

Small gestures like this have left a lasting impression.

"This partnership reflects a genuine commitment to community and empowers Recreate NZ to continue driving positive change across Aotearoa," the crew wrote.

"We're deeply grateful for the care taken to ensure our people and equipment are always treated with the utmost respect and dignity."

Mitchell himself remains one of the programme's most enthusiastic supporters.

"We love the Stihl Shop. We come here whenever anything breaks down and they can fix it straight away. The crew are so friendly, we love it here."

New Zealand's Only Centennial Chainsaw

The winning chainsaw is currently the only Centennial Edition Stihl chainsaw in New Zealand.

While an additional 100 units were later offered through a national ballot process that closed in August, the Recreate prize remains one of the rarest examples in the country.

"We don't need a huge chainsaw. We'll use it as a way to raise funds for the charity."

Despite its rarity, the crew has no plans to keep it hidden away.

Instead, Recreate NZ intends to turn the prize into an opportunity to support even more young people.

"We don't need a huge chainsaw," said Zoe from Recreate.

"We'll use it as a way to raise funds for the charity."

The organisation plans to launch a Trade Me fundraising campaign, offering collectors and Stihl enthusiasts a chance to own this remarkable piece of Stihl history while supporting the important work Recreate does across New Zealand.

And the lucky buyer may receive an extra orchard bonus.

"We can even throw in some lemons for them!" Zoe laughed.



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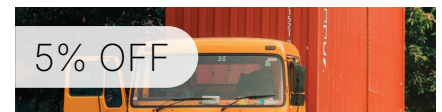


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BUSINESS NorthWest

September 2026

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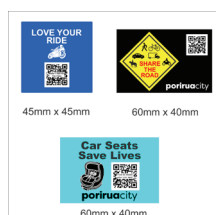
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