



Page 2 **Meatworks**



Page 15 **Netball**



TIME FOR A FIX: The most recent damage on the Wairoa to Gisborne section of the railway line was here at Beach Loop, where engineers say a tunnel could be built to bypass this trouble spot. The region's three councils want Government buy-in to a \$6.38 million business case to reinstate the line to Gisborne.

New bid to fix Gisborne line

THE bid to reopen the Wairoa to Gisborne section of the railway line is gaining traction.

Wairoa District Council, Gisborne District Council and Hawke's Bay Regional Council are working together to lobby the Government to look again at reinstating the damaged and abandoned line to the north of Wairoa.

The three councils hope the Government will support a \$6.38 million business case.

The controversial line has lain abandoned for a decade since a damaging storm in 2012.

Over those years, argument for and against restoring the line has occupied the headlines and opinion columns, with calls for a greater level of support to save the line for commercial reasons, social reasons and to take pressure off the highway.

A 10,000-signature petition was presented to Parliament a decade ago. Gisborne Rail Action Group has been vocal and the region's mayors have supported the call.

The Napier to Wairoa section of line has since been reinstated and carries logs from this area to Napier port.

Now the councils say it is time to complete repairing the line through to Gisborne.

They have sent a letter to relevant ministers outlining the benefits of reinstating it.

Their assessment report says major producers and transport operators have been calling for the railway line to be fixed for

the past 10 years, on the back of growth in freight and an increasing strain on trucking infrastructure to handle that growth.

Hawke's Bay Regional Transport Committee chairman Martin Williams, in a response to a letter on page 12 today, says experienced engineers have spent a great deal of time going over the railway line on a number of occasions before putting pen to paper.

The assessment project team has tested all the key conclusions of the original BERL report and confirmed that reinstatement of a line that remains 90 percent intact is feasible, at a projected cost of \$80 million.

This includes a tunnel option to bypass the November Beach Loop washout.

"If the business case confirms the findings of the project group's reports and the Government invests in the project in line with its own funding priorities for better freight connections, the dividends to the regional economy and environment will be substantial."

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little has expressed support for a new study.

"I would love to see it open again and also honour those who worked on the line and those who gave their lives building it."

"My dream would be to see the Gisborne-Wairoa-Napier line back with a passenger and freight service, and the big picture should be restoring a passenger service through to Wellington from Gisborne."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

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HB freezing works exhibit opens

A BLOODY Business — an exhibition of the history of five Hawke’s Bay freezing works — includes Wairoa which is the only one of the group still operating.

Once the lifeblood of the region and still critical to Wairoa, the meat works are celebrated in an exhibition at Taonga Maori, MTG Hawke’s Bay, Napier until July 24.

Te Hira Henderson, curator Taonga Maori, MTG Hawke’s Bay says A Bloody Business explores the effect the frozen meat processing industry had on Hawke’s Bay, with Tomoana (established in 1884), Hawke’s Bay and North British (est 1887), Thomas Borthwick and Sons Limited, Pakipaki (est 1906), Wairoa (est 1909) and Whakatu (est 1913).

“The freezing works employed a great cross-section of people, including servicemen from both world wars.

It was “a bloody business” and freezing workers contributed to life economically, politically, socially, and religiously — positively participating in life and building capacity in the communities of Hawke’s Bay.

Each of the freezing works were a big whanau — any differences were left outside the gate, and there were big differences.

Freezing workers reflected the United Nations inherent in Hawke’s Bay’s community, in both race and religion.

There were Maori, Pakeha, as well as Pasifika, Chinese, Dutch, Arabs, Muslims, Irish, Italian, Christians, Protestants, Rastas, atheists along with others.

For women, entering the freezing works was absolutely a man’s world, staunch with prejudice.

A place where physical prowess, with a language of its own, was threatened by the



STILL THRIVING: Affco Wairoa is the last remaining meat works in Hawke’s Bay. Five freezing works are explored in MTG Hawke’s Bay exhibition, A Bloody Business.

presence of a woman venturing out of her “station”.

Although they were the homekeepers of the whanau — the wives, mothers, sisters, aunts and nieces — women were the victims of male backlash.

Intimidation was relentless and not for the faint-hearted. Treatment by the men was demeaning and the point was further rammed home by being paid lower wages.

Women were treated as second-class citizens, often without facilities such as toilets or a place to eat.

In the late 19th century some women were employed as “bag room girls” and during WW2 in canning departments.

In the 1970s, women were restricted to jobs in departments such as casings, lamb cuts and offal.

In 1978 three women laid a discrimination complaint with the Human Rights Commission against the leadership at Whakatu, who refused to allow women to become butchers.

The Human Rights Commission ruled in their favour, changing the lay of the land, and

ensuring women were considered purely on their ability to do the job.

Financially the freezing works gave families the opportunity to participate in life to the full.

With their families and children, freezing workers travelled the country socially, playing sports under the banner of their freezing works name.

They also travelled the country to bury each other in their places of origin and regardless of religion they prayed for each other and with each other — a lot.

They supported each other on big occasions such as birthdays, weddings, christenings, or to simply just party with each other.

A number of freezing works across the lower North Island closed — signalling the decline of rural towns for many.

Hawke’s Bay and North British Freezing Works collapsed under stiff competition from other works.

Thomas Borthwick and Sons Limited was destroyed in the 1931 earthquake. Whakatu and Tomoana closed following rationalisation and downsizing that began in 1984.

Whakatu Freezing Works closed October 10, 1986, followed on August 19, 1994, by Tomoana Freezing Works.

Thousands of jobs were lost, which had a significant economic impact on Hawke’s Bay.

The effects were all-encompassing and gut-wrenching — the loss of income, a workplace, community and identity.

Today, of the five in the exhibition, only Affco NZ Ltd, Wairoa, remains in operation.

A Bloody Business closes July 24. Don’t miss a moving insight into Hawke’s Bay’s history.

Gardening with George

Protect your winter plantings



Protecting My Vegetables: At a time when Kiwis need easy access to fresh, high-nutrient veges at the drop of a hat, I feel for gardeners when insects decimate their backyard food sources. After all the money and labour, we invest in our vegetable gardens each season, it’s important we keep those sucking, chomping, chewing critters away. Here’s how I do it.

No 8 Wire & Mesh: I cut wire pieces to size, from a roll of No.8 wire and arch each one over my wooden container gardens and secure them with staples or nails. I then stretch a store-bought length of ‘white insect mesh’ over the hoops, securing it on one side with staples and the other with clothes pegs so I can lift the mesh when I need to get access. This insect mesh keeps white butterflies, aphids, and UV rays out of your garden (and possibly frosts) and if slugs and snails manage to find their way in, I apply a light shake of Quash (pet friendly) pellets to the ground once a week.

Other ‘Pest Freeing’ Options: If you have an open-ground garden, check out the ready-made range of ‘insect protection tunnels’ and ‘vege cloches’ available in garden supply stores.

One range of vege cloches comes with copper strips around the base and the directions say it repels snails and slugs. I haven’t trialled these strips but some gardeners I know, swear by them. Alternatively, you can smother brassicas with Derris Dust regularly (needs to be reapplied after rain) or apply Pyrethrum Spray or quality Neem oil over those ‘vulnerable’ veges, every week or when needed.

Masses of Marigolds: I plant masses of low-growing French and Calendula Marigolds around my tunnels and through-out my gardens as aphid-detering companion plants.

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