



Mackenzie Councillors support Head Start process

On 5 May, the Government announced a three-month process known as Head Start. This streamlined initiative provides a voluntary pathway for councils that are ready to develop and advance re-organisation proposals, with the aim of establishing unitary authorities across a region.

As part of the process, councils are required to submit an outline proposal by 9 August 2026 and initiate discussions with neighbouring councils to explore new models for governance and community representation.



The Government has also made it clear that councils choosing not to participate in the Head Start process may be subject to a compulsory Back Stop process. This would involve legislated re-organisation, to be implemented after the 2028 local government elections.

During discussions on 12 May, Mackenzie District councillors unanimously agreed to support participation in the Head Start process. Mayor Scott Aronsen confirmed that initial informal conversations have already begun with neighbouring councils and will continue. “We need to move quickly,” he said.

“Council is committed to taking a proactive approach to the Government’s Head Start process, ensuring our district plays a leading role in shaping its future. It is critical that smaller rural councils step forward early to influence outcomes, rather than waiting for decisions to be made for them.

“We intend to front-foot this process. It presents an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and actively contribute to decisions that will impact our communities.”

“For us, this is about ensuring our local voice is heard.

“While we recognise that change is being considered at a national level, it is essential that any future model reflects the needs, identity, and priorities of districts like Mackenzie.”

Annual Residents’ Opinion Survey



It’s time for the annual Residents’ Opinion Survey. The Curiosity Company is conducting the survey on behalf of the Council.

We would like to hear your opinions of our services and really appreciate you taking the time to fill out the survey. The survey will take around 15 minutes to complete, and your answers will remain anonymous.

Complete the survey online via the QR code, or at curiositycompany.questionpro.com.au/MDCROS2026 or pick up a hard copy form from one of our offices.

Summary of decisions from Council Meeting on 5 May 2026

At the Council meeting on 5 May the elected members made a number of key decisions.



Introducing Paid Parking

Parking in the Mackenzie District can regularly cause problems for residents and for visitors. The pressure caused by very high numbers of visitors has led to ongoing issues with illegal and unsafe parking, reduced turnover of parking spaces in town centres, and increased safety risks.

At the Council meeting on Tuesday 5 May, Elected Members voted to progress a feasibility study to develop a parking strategy and detailed case for introducing paid parking and time-limited spaces in key visitor hubs. With the aim of ultimately rolling out a fully enforceable parking framework that improves safety and compliance, generates revenue, and reduces reliance on rates and the roading budget over time.

Sale of 21 Allan Street, Lake Tekapo

Council has been aware of the pressure on housing in Lake Tekapo. At the meeting on 5 May they voted to declare 21 Allan Street surplus to council’s requirements and approve in principle the sale of the property. However, they voted that restrictions should be put in place to prevent the site being used for short-term visitor accommodation, and they wanted a focus on worker/resident accommodation, a transparent sale process, independent valuation, and they had an expectation that development would happen in a short timeframe.

Upgrade of Tekapo Domain Playground

The Tekapo Domain playground is a popular play area that gets a lot of use. However, equipment is in need of attention: maintenance, or replacement, or removal. During the last election period a project was initiated to potentially upgrade the playground and a capex budget was allocated.

However, in the current economic climate, with an emphasis on fiscal prudence, the Elected Members voted to cancel the upgrade project. But, in recognition of the maintenance work required by the existing play equipment, they voted to retain a budget of \$150,000 of the remaining \$616,899, for this work.

Economic Development & Tourism Working Group

Elected Members voted to approve the establishment of a new Economic Development and Tourism Working Group to focus on these aspects of Council business.

Billing for extra water use

Elected Members voted to adopt the recommendations of the Water Committee and revise the allowance of water that is covered by the water rate part of the annual rates a property pays. Until 30 June 2025, that threshold is over 500m3. From 1 July the threshold will be increased to 600m3. Users who consume over these thresholds are said to be extraordinary water users.

They also approved invoicing extraordinary water users (those who have used more than the threshold) for the remainder of 2025/26.

News & Information - Continued

Annual Plan Community Engagement



The Local Government Act 2002 requires each council to have a long-term plan that sets out the council's intentions for a 10-year period. Each Long-Term Plan is reviewed every three years.

In years two and three of a Long-Term Plan, councils produce an Annual Plan. The purpose of the Annual Plan is to identify changes from what was indicated in the Long-Term Plan, review budgets, and set the rates requirement for that year.

The 2026/27 Annual Plan has been prepared in a challenging operating environment for councils across New Zealand, and Mackenzie is no exception.

The draft 2026/2027 Annual Plan reflects a clear and deliberate focus:

- maintaining essential services
- managing and renewing core infrastructure and making disciplined financial decisions while positioning the district for the changes ahead.

We have focused on the "have to haves". We are looking at the necessities not the desirables. Councillors and staff have applied that lens to every spending decision and worked through budget lines in detail.

Some budgets have been reduced and increases restricted. The proposed rates increase is yet to be confirmed however following the Annual Plan workshops to date the rates requirement is currently sitting at 8.6% but is subject to change following the Community Engagement process and the final Annual Plan decisions.

In the budget review process, councillors identified some specific decisions they wished to explain to the community and receive feedback on. These include reductions in community development funding, community grants, and other community activities.

Find out more at letstalk.mackenzie.govt.nz > Annual Plan 2026-27 Community Engagement

We welcome your feedback - please email us at feedback@mackenzie.govt.nz.

Mobile Shop & Traders Licenses

Applications for a Mobile Shop and Traders License for the 2026 to 2027 financial year will open on 1 April 2026 and will close on 31 May 2026.

Applications can be made through Council's website: mackenzie.govt.nz > Services > Food safety

Or alternatively email compliance@mackenzie.govt.nz for an application pack or call the office on 0800 685 8514.



Current job openings

Position	Part time/Full time	Location	Applications Due
Alps 2 Ocean Trail Manager	Permanent, Full Time - 40 hours per week	Fairlie	Tuesday 2 June 2026

Please visit careers.mackenzie.govt.nz for more details and to apply.

Dates of upcoming meetings

Date	Meeting	Time*	Location
Tuesday 2 June	Water Services Committee Council Chambers, Fairlie	9:30am	Fairlie
Tuesday 2 June	Council Workshop Council Chambers, Fairlie	11:00am	Fairlie
Tuesday 9 June	Finance Committee Council Chambers, Fairlie	9:30am	Fairlie
Tuesday 9 June	Council Workshop Council Chambers, Fairlie	11:30am	Fairlie
Tuesday 16 June	Audit & Risk Committee Meeting Council Chambers, Fairlie	9:30am	Fairlie
Tuesday 16 June	Council Meeting Council Chambers, Fairlie	11:30am	Fairlie
Monday 22 June	Twizel Community Board Meeting Twizel Community Lounge	4:00pm	Twizel
Tuesday 23 June	Council Workshop Council Chambers, Fairlie	10:30am	Fairlie

The public are welcome to attend meetings. Occasionally times and venues change so please call and check beforehand. There is a public forum at the beginning of each Council and Community Board meeting and members of the public are invited to address Elected Members on relevant matters.

Agendas for scheduled meetings are available two days before the meeting (with the exception of late papers, which are added to the agenda when available). Agendas for extraordinary meetings are made available as soon as practicably possible. (Extraordinary meetings are meetings held outside the published meeting schedule and are called when a decision cannot wait until the next scheduled meeting).

Once published, agendas are available at mackenzie.govt.nz > Council > Meetings and Agendas

* The length of the meeting will depend on the agenda.

