Town Centre Manager's Report for 2025/26

The past year was very busy and productive with new initiatives, events and projects.

We received positive feedback about our new branding, improvements to our website and increased events to activate the town centre in collaboration with the businesses.

We continually receive enquiries for retail space and currently have a very low vacancy rate.

One of our challenges continues to be the level of engagement from members. We hope a new business survey in 2026 will provide some insight on how and when our members want to hear from us, what communication methods they find most valuable and new ways to activate the town centre.

Growth

More new businesses have opened in Waiuku supporting a healthy retail mix, creating interest and encouraging locals and visitors to shop and dine out here. However, economic challenges continue to impact local businesses and sadly some have been forced to close their doors. We continue to work to support and advocate for you all, through various initiatives.

The economic climate has also affected the progress of new developments such as the Fernleigh Business Park on Collingwood Rd. We look forward to welcoming this exciting addition to the local economy over the next couple of years. This promises huge opportunities for local employment, the economy and demand for local business and services.

The WB&DA continues to support and advocate for much needed development where appropriate for our community, improved public transport, infrastructure and community amenities to ensure our economy continues to thrive. Recent upgrades to our roads, pavements and the increased bus services are very positive for our community and businesses.

The huge growth taking place in Drury, Pukekohe and surrounding areas, planned commercial development in Waiuku and predicted growth for the region over the next 10 years, have the potential to bring great benefit to our local economy. To make the most of these opportunities we need to work together to ensure we have a welcoming vibrant town centre, a strong digital presence to attract visitors and new innovative ways to enhance the "customer experience" whilst retaining our unique heritage town identity.

Events

We enjoyed some fantastic events during the 12 months to end of June 2026, which were again well supported by our tight knit community and engaged businesses.

The second **Twilight Eats and Beats** event held in **October 2025** during school holidays was affected by bad weather however local eateries and the community still supported this initiative and winners of the prize draw were rewarded with town vouchers to spend at local businesses.

We held the **NZ Steel Christmas Festival & Parade in Dec 2025,** which was a wonderful day for the community, always very well supported and so much fun to be a part of. We had over 20 parade entries, had great business and community participation. Category prize winners were rewarded with town vouchers. The Christmas market was impacted a little by other local events, however the event still attracted a great crowd who enjoyed fresh entertainment, showcasing local talent.

We had four successful ***Connective* networking events** during 2025/26, hosted by Scott's Steelworkz & Maximum Electrical in August 2025, Connemara Country Lodge in Nov 2025, The Stable Light Gallery in March 2026 and St Andrew's Op Shop in June 2026.

The **Waiuku Steel 'n' Wheels Festival in April 2026** was a great day with fresh attractions including the infamous Jet Car, the Waiuku Volunteer Fire Brigade demonstration and an outstanding *Elvis* tribute band which was a real highlight. The event brought approx. 12,000 people into the town centre, despite uncertain weather conditions and regular consultation with weather experts, resulting in a relatively fine day. We received lots of positive feedback from businesses and the community. Thank you for your support in helping make this happen in our town. Visitors, market vendors and exhibitors continue to make this event a priority, with many travelling from greater Auckland, Waikato & further. This event really puts our town fair and square on the map.

A huge thank you to our executive committee, event sponsors and supporters, the Franklin Local Board and volunteers from the community, who helped make all these events such a success for our community.

Other events supported by WB&DA

We were proud to support some new community events during the year. The *Spring Garage Sale* retailers' market day in Sept 2025, *Christmas Wonderland* held in Dec 2025 at Waiuku War Memorial Hall, the *World Culture Fest* in the town centre and the *Teddy Bears' Picnic at* Keven Lawrence Reserve, both held in March 2026. These events helped bring the community together, forging valuable connections, youth engagement, collaboration between local groups and businesses and meaningful celebration.

Promotions

Winter WINFest and the new Spot Snowy promotions helped boost winter business, generating a healthy number of entries and providing winning shoppers with town vouchers to spend more with our retailers.

Christmas promotions included the return of ***Shop to Win*** which was again very popular and well supported by local businesses. The winners were thrilled to be able to spend town vouchers at their favourite local businesses just before Christmas. **The *Christmas Shopping Day*** event was impacted by bad weather however it still generated lots of interest with extra foot traffic in town. **The giant Christmas Tree** in Norfolk rise was lit up once again and **Santa's Grotto** proved popular leading up to Christmas with festive music and photos with the man in red in the town centre.

Advertising, Website & Social Media

The WB&DA Facebook page is fully utilised with regular posts sharing events, news and updates which we also share to as many local community pages as possible, to increase our reach. We also use these posts to drive readers to our website for all the latest events, businesses, services and community groups.
The WB&DA Members Facebook group helps us and our business members stay in the loop with updates on what's happening in town, special promotions, sales and events which we can then promote further.

Instagram Town promotions and events are shared on Instagram to widen our reach to a younger online audience.

Waiukutown.co.nz continues to improve and progress as we add more information, local events and imagery. The attractive new branding and format has made it easier to navigate and more visually appealing.

Newspapers and Magazines We've advertised events and promotions in local publications including The West Franklin Breeze, Peninsularama and the Franklin Times including digital marketing. Waiuku events and attractions have featured in all three issues of the *Franklin* magazine, a Franklin Local Board initiative.

Waiuku heritage brochure We continue to distribute our town brochure to tourist operators, real estate agents and other businesses, civic centres and Information centres in other regions. The brochure contains information on local eateries, accommodation, attractions, services and maps for

visitors. If funding allows, we would like to create a new Waiuku brochure with our new branding and some exciting new content.

Beautification & Safety Subsidies

offer a one-off lump sum towards building façade cleaning and painting, shop front lighting and CCTV cameras, to protect businesses and help keep the town centre looking it's best. These have been taken up by a small number of business and property owners. This initiative is a key part of improving the perception of our town centre, offering an attractive and safe place to shop and do business.

Safety & Crime Prevention

Upgrades and improvements to our town CCTV system continued, with all obsolete equipment now replaced. Police have had much success apprehending offenders and tracking vehicles of interest. We are very happy to have a robust system in place with great technical support available. Police patrols in the town centre have increased this year which has been received well by the businesses. We continue to support Waiuku Community Patrol to assist with running expenses. We held a Crime Prevention meeting for businesses to engage with local Police, the Police & Community groups pop up day in the town centre and also did wellness check visits to retailers with Police. The Community Cops drop-in sessions were moved from the Information Centre back to the Police station due to low attendance. Our WhatsAPP business security group continues to grow and provide a useful platform for ourselves and the businesses to share and support each other in real time for any safety concerns in the town centre.

Advocating for Local Business

We submitted feedback on the Auckland Annual Plan and Plan Change 120 in support of healthy growth to benefit our town. We continue to work with Auckland Council and property owners to address concerns and find opportunities for local business growth.

Information Centre

We continue to have a dedicated team of volunteers, including some new members who joined in 2025, who help to provide a great service to visitors and the whole community at the Waiuku Information Centre. We promote attractions, events and all that Waiuku and surrounding areas have to offer, to visitors, locals and new residents. Community groups and event organisers regularly approach us to display information. The JP service continues to be well patronised every Wednesday which also offers exposure for businesses and community groups featured at the centre.

In closing, I'd like to sincerely thank the executive committee, the Council Communities team, Franklin Local Board, our Franklin Economic Broker and NZ Police for their wonderful support over the year. There's always more work to do and new challenges to overcome to help our business community thrive. With the current and projected growth for Franklin, we need to continue to work together and embrace the opportunities this will bring.

Vanessa Newman
***Past* Manager,** Waiuku Business & Development Association Inc.