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Late for school



Ready to go: Bus and turning bays, footpaths, landscaping and crossings are all in place ready for the school opening.

Photo: Mary Anne Gill.

By Mary Anne Gill

"Fiscal constraints" have delayed the opening of Cambridge's new primary school by two years, The News can exclusively reveal today.

Despite the infrastructure outside the school now largely in place, no buildings have gone up and the only sign of any activity on the 4ha greenfield site are masses of green grass and huge clumps of dirt moved into place by diggers.

Bus and turning bays, footpaths, crossings and landscaping are all completed outside the school's entrances in the Bridleways Estate west of the town while stormwater infrastructure has been built and the neighbourhood reserve land ready to be developed as a playground.

In a cryptic response to The News for an update,

new Education minister Erica Stanford said the school's construction was included in a review of the property delivery schedule before the coalition government was formed.

"The ministry will keep me updated on its priorities for their property delivery schedule," said Stanford.

Taupō MP Louise Upston told The News she understood there was strong community support for the school to be opened as soon as possible.

"I appreciate this new timeframe will be frustrating for some.

"I believe this new school will be an important asset for Cambridge to help manage the demands of a growing population, and I will be doing everything I can as local MP to advocate for its delivery."

Ministry property head Sam Fowler said other Cambridge stakeholder schools and the

community have been told the school's updated delivery timeframe is now term one in 2026.

"This timeframe remains conditional to securing necessary funding."

No costs have been finalised yet.

Then Education minister Chris Hipkins announced in July 2021 the new school for years one through to six would open in 2024 catering for 300 students and expanding to 650 within the decade to match Cambridge's projected growth and demand.

Annual operational costs were estimated at \$2.682 million with money for the project coming from \$428.1 million set aside in Budget 2021 for new schools.

Final gazetting for educational purposes occurred later that year and an establishment board

established.

In November 2022, the ministry announced a tight construction market and supplier resources challenges had delayed the opening until term one next year.

A contract to design the project was awarded to Auckland company Form Building & Developments Limited in March last year with completion scheduled for November.

The design was to include a two-storey 1354m2 building with 13 teaching spaces, an administration building, library, resource room, hall, four spaces for learning and behaviour specialists, a learning support unit, caretaker's shed, hard courts, playground and fencing.

Waipā council approved building consent for stage one enablement and earthworks and is reviewing stage two.

Good Local heads south

Good Local Media – the company which publishes The News – has added another masthead to its portfolio.

Owner David Mackenzie announced this week he had purchased the King Country News, which had been part of the Beacon Media Group based in Whakatane.

In November he extended the company's footprint north by buying the Waikato Business News.

Mackenzie said the King Country publication was a natural new sister operation to the Te Awamutu News and Cambridge News and it would continue to drive local news and issues.

He was "delighted" to have the King Country News and all its staff as part of Good Local Media.

"The King Country News has been publishing for over 110 years and is respected and well read in Te Kuiti and Ōtorohanga," he said.

The King Country News – formerly known as Waitomo News – also produces the King Country Farmer, a website and app.

"King Country News will continue to serve these communities alongside Te Awamutu News and Cambridge News, with no cross over of distribution," Mackenzie said. "No other media has this reach and readership across the Waipā and King Country regions."

Good Local Media brings a raft of experience to the King Country News.

Advertising and commercial activities will be led by advertising director Janine Davy.

"We have customers who have business interests in Te Kuiti and Ōtorohanga so by adding the King Country News we are able to provide great advertising solutions assisting them with their marketing needs," Mackenzie said.

Good Local's editorial is headed by Roy Piltot and includes highly experienced journalists Viv Posselt and Mary Anne Gill.

"We see a strong future for community newspapers, and will continue to stand up and be voice for our communities we serve," Mackenzie said.

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