



## **Media release – 10 November 2010**

### **World class rowers in Wanganui for the Billy Webb challenge**

Wanganui will be playing host to a number of world class rowers, including Mahe Drysdale, Alan Campbell, Louise Ayling and Rebecca Scown this weekend, who are in town to compete in the third Prospace Billy Webb Challenge.

The event was first held in 2008 to mark the centenary of Billy Webb's epic defence of his world sculling title on the Whanganui River in 1908 and the races have been viewed worldwide via television coverage.

This year's field features a number of rowers who have come to the rivercity directly from the recent rowing World Championships at Lake Karapiro.

The action starts at 5.30pm on Friday evening with the Lion Foundation Night Sprints. Single sculls will race over 500m at the City Bridge. The men's races will form the knock-out 'wild card' competition which doubles as a qualifier for Saturday's men's event. Corporate 8 teams, from local businesses and organisations, will also be competing on Friday evening.

The winner of the 'wild card' sprints will have the opportunity to race against Mahe Drysdale, Alan Campbell, Duncan Grant, Jon Winter and Robbie Manson in the Billy Webb challenge race, on Saturday, November 13.

"The Billy Webb challenge is an event which provides a significant link to our rowing history and is a great opportunity to view the top rowers in the world as they compete on the Whanganui River," says Mayor Annette Main.

"This year locals and visitors will have plenty to keep them occupied as they gather on Saturday at the riverbank viewing locations, such as our recently opened waterfront Visitor Centre and new café, and the vibrant weekly River Traders Market.

"This is the third time the annual Billy Webb challenge has been staged with the support of locals, business and the council. The media interest generated by this event reinforces Wanganui's positive image as it showcases the Whanganui River and our community to the rest of New Zealand and the world."

The main events on Saturday are the women's and men's races, over a distance of 5km, starting at Aramoho and finishing by City Bridge.

The women's race starts at 10.30am and features Louise Ayling, who recently won silver in the 2010 World Championships in the single scull. She will be competing against World Championship pair gold winner Rebecca Scown, Harriet Austin, Emma Feathery and Ursula Grobler.

The men's race starts at 11.30am and Mahe Drysdale will be defending his Billy Webb challenge title, which he won last year racing against Tim Maeyens and wildcard race winner Nathan Cohen.

Viewing for the race will be along the riverfront boardwalk and also on City Bridge, which will be closed to traffic from 6.00am to 1.00pm on Saturday. The action will be screened live on a big screen at the City Bridge enabling viewers to see the whole race.