

PROPOSED PLAN CHANGE – KAREWAREWA URUPA – CHRIS TURVER

Thank you for the opportunity as an immediate neighbouring resident of the Karewarewa Urupa to state that your proposals for a Wahanga Tahī and Rua are fully supported, subject to clarification on:

- who would own the site
- what use would the land be put to protect the site
- who would manage the site

Background

When Waikanae formed part of Horowhenua County Council the Karewarewa block at Waikanae Beach was listed in its district scheme map as a 'Maori Cemetery' and still described in its 1968 valuation roll as an urupa

Use of the land has legally been in contention since 1969 when the Waikanae Land Company purchased the 20-acre urupa block for \$31,555 from some of the Maori Trustees in contested circumstances.

The Waikanae Land Company currently owns the Karewarewa block, its last remaining landholding in a large residential sub-division at Waikanae Beach.

It is immediately surrounded by 50 homes in Victor Grove, Queens Road, Barrett Drive and Morewa Place and connects with the two man-made lakes adjacent to Waikanae estuary.

The 80-page Waitangi Tribunal report on Karewarewa Urupa in 2020 makes it quite clear that – while a final decision has yet to come - the historic block should be preserved in perpetuity to recognise the tangata whenua's kaitiakitanga and the site's waahi tapu.

Separately, the Historic Places Act was used to prevent further development when kōiwi were exposed by diggers in 2000 and since then Heritage New Zealand has undertaken archaeological investigations

For many years the land was maintained in good condition by the Waikanae Land Company, presumably in expectation it would eventually get resource consent to extend its large residential sub-division into the Karewarewa block.

By 2020, regular maintenance and mowing of the entire site had ceased when the Company realised it was unlikely to get resource consent, and the land reverted rapidly over the last three years into unsightly overgrown scrub.

Critically, fire hazard conditions developing on this large site for the residents and Fire & Emergency was called in to determine whether there was a fire danger..

Currently, Waikanae Land Company has further appealed to the Environment Court, seeking to free up the land for residential development and, coincidentally, the Company called back contractors two months ago to clear the site before a further hearing.

Historic and Cultural Value

The Karewarewa block and surrounding land once hosted Maori Pa's, agricultural sites, and middens and this specific block was the site of a fierce battle, Kuititanga, in 1839 with many warriors reputed to be buried there only 183 years ago.

For its historic and cultural values alone, the site should be retained in perpetuity as an urupa and any development should be guided by Maori.

While the Waitangi Tribunal's full report has yet to be completed, it has made recommendations under the Heritage New Zealand Act to prevent "the recurrence of prejudice in the event of future applications relating to Karewarewa urupa or other wahi tapu."

In its Summary of Findings, the Tribunal recommends amendments to the Heritage New Zealand Act to require decision-makers to take Maori values (and impacts on those values) into account for wahi tapu.

Future

Looking to the future, the KCDC has few undeveloped sites left in the District to protect the historic and cultural remnants of a different way of life.

Potentially, a well-managed block of land in the heart of Waikanae Beach and close to waterways, the sea, and Kapiti Island, could be a welcome environmental, cultural, and recreational asset to the District.

There is a huge opportunity, through the tangata whenua, to tell the story of the development of Kapiti through a piece of undeveloped land with so much history.

If left with no surety of tenure and no management system are put in place, the worst outcomes would be an overgrown fire hazard in a well-populated area - or wall-to-wall residential development on sacred Maori burial grounds.

It is heartening that the Waitangi Tribunal report has been found by this Council to be robust enough to propose Karewarewa be protected under draft Plan Change 2 as a qualifying matter area where development is less enabled,

Summary

It would be unreasonable to expect ratepayers to approve this departure from the District Plan without first determining solutions with the tangata whenua for its use, and some surety for ratepayers that those uses will be well managed.

There is an opportunity here for all parties to work together to build something special. Kia Kaha

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21 March 2023

