

Build it, and they will come mentality questioned

TUHOE'S organisation, Te Uru Taumatua, has developed three buildings in its tribal rohe, spending millions of dollars on bricks and mortar.

But the chairman of Te Kohinga o Nga Whanau o Ngai Tuhoe, a group of tribal members calling for a review of the iwi's deed and structure, questions the decision.

Frustrated at not being able to query the decision through the traditional process, Tiniwai Te Whetu has penned the following as an open letter.

IF you build it, they will come – a phrase popularised by fantasy-drama *Field of Dreams* – implies, if you build something people will come to use and pay for it.

It appears, Tuhoe has adopted this questionable business model.

The building programme approved by trustees seems extravagant to those tribal members looking in from the outside and can't get answers from the board (because they can't ask questions at annual general meetings or receive replies to correspondence) on what their rationale is for the huge expenditure on facilities and infrastructure.

It certainly appears disproportionate with the number of people living in the rohe (area).

Taneatua is the location of the main administration building for Tuhoe. Publicly promoted as a state-of-the-art green design. A living building capable of paying its own way. Generating solar power beyond its own needs and selling the excess into the national grid for credits or cash.

Many Tuhoe beneficiaries would like to know how much power has been sold and whether the building is self-



Tiniwai Te Whetu,
Te Kohinga o Nga Whanau
o Ngai Tuhoe chairman

sustaining.

The new visitor centre built at Waikaremoana, unveiled last year, doubles as the administration site for the Waikaremoana tribal authority as well.

The new facility has been estimated to cost between \$6 to \$8 million, but we don't know the true final cost as there is limited financial reporting from Te Uru Taumatua. But more importantly how will it pay its way?

Lake Waikaremoana's well-established track record in tourism makes it a logical place to start the rebuild of visitors into Te Urewera and improve the viability of the local communities.

However, Tuhoe leadership has invested more in Ruatahuna and effectively put it in competition with Waikaremoana.

Ruatahuna is a community of approximately 350 people. It had a small shop and motel for many years that provided locals and travellers with groceries and fuel but struggled for viability.

It lost that battle on more than one occasion, only to be re-floated as an essential community service proportionate to the number of customers using it.

Tuhoe trustees recently unveiled a new \$12 million facility with a fuel stop, cafe, laundry and offices for the tribal authority.

But through-traffic is low during



FIELD OF DREAMS: The new multimillion-dollar visitor centre built at Waikaremoana was unveiled last year.

Photo supplied

winter months and, even during the summer, travellers don't visit in sufficient numbers to generate enough revenue to provide an acceptable return on the millions invested.

The trustees may believe tourism is an answer to the viability question and also suggest other commercial opportunities are now possible for locals to pursue.

However, there are no explanations offered on what that might look like, nor are there any references to a feasibility study to support these strategies.

I believe a more modest development could have achieved the social necessities Tuhoe need.

Especially when 2013 census figures for Tuhoe aged 15 years and over

showed:

- 60.1 percent of Tuhoe were living in households in rental accommodation with 31.7 percent paying \$200-\$299 in rent

- Only 21.8 percent of Tuhoe people owned or partly owned the home that they lived in.

Those figures relate to Tuhoe nationwide – some 30,000 or so who won't directly benefit from the Waikaremoana or Ruatahuna builds.

The rationale for capital expenditure on Te Uru Taumatua's building programme, future costs and how they will be funded are unanswered questions.

They are also more reasons why a review of Te Uru Taumatua is necessary.



Letters

TO ALL CORRESPONDENTS...

We welcome letters of not more than 350 words from all readers but reserve the right to edit them as appropriate. Letters must include your name, phone number and residential address, not necessarily for publication.

Please write to: The Editor, Whakatane Beacon, 32 Pyne Street, PO Box 243, Whakatane. Fax: 07 308 7569 or Email: news@whakatanebeacon.co.nz

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Hospice changes difficult, but time to move on

FOR some, changes are more difficult than they are for others.

I remind you all with love, it's time to move on.

Matthew 7:3-4 New International Version (NIV)

3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?"

4 How can you say to your brother, "Let me take the speck out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?"

Cheryl Dymock
Volunteer support and life story
co-ordinator

Giving away our water

FOLLOWING the article in the BEACON on Wednesday, June 13, I

would like to make a comment.

Worldwide water crisis is looming. Research published in the journal *Science Advances* found that as many as four billion people worldwide, more than half the global population, suffer water scarcity at least one month a year, on December 8, 2016.

As a result, some 1.1 billion people worldwide lack access to water, and a total of 2.7 billion find water scarce for at least one month of the year.

Climate change is altering patterns of weather and water across the world, causing shortages and droughts in some areas and floods in others.

Is there not any common sense in New Zealand?

Can someone please explain the logic of New Zealand giving away our precious water resource?

Surely, with the shortage of water resources around the world, New Zealand could be helping out, but no.

What does New Zealand do? Gives away this water to overseas companies to sell and make huge profits based on the scarcity of other people's

lack of water.

This is happening all over New Zealand and makes me ponder the question: When we have given away all our water, will we have to buy it back?

Jon Burness

Bring out a Dutch engineer

MANY suggestions have been put forward regarding a new bridge to alleviate traffic congestion on the Landing Road bridge.

In response to this, myself and a few others, and anyone else who has written to the BEACON, on this subject should consider putting some funds forward to help towards inviting a Dutch engineer over to consult on finding a viable solution.

The Dutch have been building bridges for hundreds of years and have some of the world's leading experts on water and bridge design, including the Dutch king himself, who is a qualified

engineer.

One suggestion is a second two-lane bridge running parallel to the existing bridge so the traffic flows one way on the first bridge and the other on the second. This would relieve the build-up of traffic during busy morning and evening periods.

Consideration should also be given to the addition of sluice gates to prevent the town flooding due to heavy rain or a tsunami due to earthquakes or volcanic eruption.

This will also stop saltwater going so far up the river that it contaminates the town supply.

The initial cost of this project will be high but will have significant and long-lasting benefits to the future of our town and community.

With regards to cost, perhaps a small toll could be charged for the first few years to help recover some of the expenses; this has been a successful solution in many places around the country.

Theo Hurkmans