

Urewera boss leaves suddenly

Karla Akuhata

Maori affairs reporter

FOUR months after Tuhoe took control of the Department of Conservation workforce within Te Urewera, the man the tribe, in consultation with DoC, appointed to manage those workers is gone.

And no one is prepared to talk about the apparent road bump in the agreement between Tuhoe and DoC, which aims to improve the care of Te Urewera and shift control of it further toward Tuhoe.

In August, it was announced Willie Shaw would manage the workforce for Te Urewera in what was described as a "true partnership".

"I never thought I would see this kind of working agreement in my lifetime," Mr Shaw said then.

"It is a very special opportunity and it is not going to be straight-forward. There are going to be many challenges, but it is something I am very much looking forward to."

Last week, Mr Shaw, a director and principal of ecological services consultancy Wildland Consultants, would not comment about the departure from

his role.

In August, Tuhoe's governance arm, Te Uru Taumatua, assumed control of DoC staff working in Te Urewera until at least next year.

Te Urewera was a national park but control of the land changed when the Te Urewera Act took effect on September 22, 2014. Tuhoe now co-governs the area with the Government through the Te Urewera Board and the agreement with DoC is an outcome of the new and growing relationship.

Under the agreement, DoC maintained its budget for Te Urewera, including the money allocated for employees, but the staff would be responsible to Te Uru Taumatua, through Mr Shaw.

An offer of a 12-month secondment was outlined to DoC staff working in Te Urewera and came into effect on August 3.

At the time, Te Urewera Board chairman Tamati Kruger said the board would consider the next steps and work on the future agreement over the 12-month period with Te Uru Taumatua and DoC.

When he took on the role as Onukurani group manager for Te Uru Taumatua and the Tuhoe tribal biodiversity managers, Mr Shaw said the agree-

ment would facilitate a true partnership where resources, costs and decision-making would be shared.

Last week, Mr Shaw confirmed to the *BEACON* he no longer worked for Te Uru Taumatua but would not comment any further on the situation.

Te Uru Taumatua chief executive Kirsti Luke also declined to comment, referring inquiries to Mr Shaw.

DoC would not comment on the employment issue but spokesman Des Williams said the aspirations behind the co-management agreement would continue, even though Mr Shaw was no longer working for Te Uru Taumatua.

"Delivery work in Te Urewera is managed by Tuhoe Te Uru Taumatua on behalf of the Te Urewera Board. This is carried out by a mix of seconded DoC employees and staff directly-employed by Tuhoe Te Uru Taumatua.

"DoC works in close partnership with Tuhoe Te Uru Taumatua who have our ongoing support and confidence."

The *BEACON* asked conversation minister Maggie Barry's office what Mr Shaw's departure might mean for the relationship with Tuhoe but did not receive a response.