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Te Whetu Wairoa

Thursday, June 13, 2019



'Correcting view'

TUHOE say they do support roading improvements around Tuai but oppose the "limited approach" proposed by Wairoa District Council.

The iwi has made a stand against finishing sealing State Highway 38 with Government funding, and representatives have responded further to reaction over this stance.

Tuhoe chairman Tamati Kruger says, "we doubly oppose the rape and pillage mentality the council is facilitating, together with its supporters, of unchecked tourism at Lake Waikaremoana with no care or responsibility for tourism's cost on the wellbeing of the lake".

Tuhoe say they have been accused of causing a withdrawal of PGF funding to the district.

Mr Kruger said all Tuhoe did was to correct the view wrongly represented to the Provincial Development Unit that Tuhoe was in support of the sealing of the road.

"We are not opposed to improving the

road," says Mr Kruger.

"We are actively working on improving the quality of the road in a way that protects Waikaremoana's special character, and works in the interests of the local communities, as well as enhancing the experience for visitors.

"The council has been direct about wanting the road sealed to facilitate economic gains for the Wairoa district.

"Accommodation, petrol, alcohol and food sales are benefits for Wairoa, but these benefits never flow to Waikaremoana. Rather, we are left with the cost of clean-up and more. The council contributes nothing."

Waikaremoana Tribal Authority chairwoman Lorna Taylor says, "Tuhoe has been responsible for dealing with illegal taking of native trees, under-prepared manuhiri finding themselves in difficulty, three tonnes of beer bottles at one campsite in one month, complaints of firewood shortage, complaints of poor hut upkeep and numerous other legacy issues inherited from previous

management regimes."

Mr Kruger said the council's PGF proposal had no response for these issues, "and was silent on how tourism impact could be managed on lake infrastructure already struggling to renew itself".

"We see harm for Lake Waikaremoana and worry that, with no matching contribution, increased visitor numbers would crush an already burdened infrastructure.

"We are also concerned the proposal to seal the road with bitumen completely ignores the vision Tuhoe has developed jointly with NZTA and local government agencies to innovate a sustainable roading surface that will enhance the special character of the area."

Tuhoe chief executive Kirsti Luke has been working with NZTA, Whakatane District Council and Wairoa District Council for nearly four years to improve the whole corridor for Special Purpose Road 38.

"It was surprising therefore to see that the Wairoa District Council were ignoring our concerns," says Ms Luke.

"They were very well aware of the Tuhoe trial and investment into Nature's Road, a non-chemical alternative to petro-chemical bitumen.

"Nature's Road has been developed by Opus Wellington and then tested in live trials at two sections of the road, Awaawaroa (Rosie Bay) Waikaremoana and Mangapae Ruatahuna. The live trials have been under way for 18 months and have been regarded as successful, with a second stage of commercialisation now being considered by the iwi.

"There are hopes the new product, which has also been trialed on logging truck roads in Canada, could be fine-tuned here and used around the world," said Ms Luke.

Waikaremoana Te Urewera board member Lance Winitana said Tuhoe remained committed to working with NZTA and friends to bring a sustainable solution to improving access to Waikaremoana.

Wairoa Mayor Craig Little said Wairoa District Council was advocating to have SH38 sealed for the benefit of the community.

"This is a state highway, not a council-owned road. The council is still unsure why Tuhoe is opposing sealing a road that looks after part of their community and it has asked that Tuhoe advise the local community for clarity.

"The council has an obligation under the Local Government Act and four wellbeings of social, cultural, economic and environment for all the ratepayers and residents of our community, including Tuhoe.



□ Railbike Adventures owner Geoff Main with enthusiastic rail bikers Juanita Symes, Wayne Kawana and Pua Taumata, who tried out the bikes last week at Opoutama.

Pedalling the line

A NEW rail bike tourism venture is attracting a lot of interest for an alternative use of the Wairoa to Mahia railway line.

Railbike Adventures owner Geoff Main hopes to see his bikes on the line north of Wairoa from Labour Weekend.

"We want as many people as possible to feed off the line, in a similar manner to the Otago Rail

trail," said Mr Main.

The enterprise began operating for rail bike enthusiasts in Gisborne last year. On Thursday, Mr Main had his bikes on the line at Opoutama.

It has taken just under a decade for the rail bike enterprise to reach this point.

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