

27 August 2018

MEDIA RELEASE

Kaikohe community hub a step closer

Detailed planning for *Te Pū o Te Wheke*, a multi-use community and civic hub destined for the heart of Kaikohe, could be underway soon.

Ngāpuhi Asset Holding Company Limited is seeking funding to develop a project management and business case for the civic hub on behalf of its parent organisation, Te Rūnanga-Ā-iwi O Ngāpuhi, and project partners the Far North District Council and its commercial arm, Far North Holdings Limited.

The business case will investigate the project's commercial and economic sustainability and cost-feasibility. It will also include a detailed business plan and master plan for the hub ahead of funding applications for the construction phase.

Paul Knight, CEO of the Ngāpuhi Asset Holding Company says, "the opportunity to collaborate and co-invest in the regeneration of Kaikohe will help reverse decades of decline in the town. *Te Pū o Te Wheke* (the Heart of the Octopus) will strengthen economic activity and provide stable employment for residents. It will bring local shoppers back to the town centre and help keep visitors here for longer, capturing those using the Pou Herenga Tai Cycle and Pou trails and the numerous tourists driving through town to and from the Hokianga."

The Rūnanga has committed a prime main street site for the project. The vacant lot was formerly the site of the Kaikohe Hotel and was purchased by the Rūnanga in 2013.

Ngāpuhi Asset Holding Company Chairman, Jason Witehira is also optimistic, saying "*Te Pū o Te Wheke* will be a centre of excellence that captures people's hearts and minds. It will restore pride and make a bold, proud and positive statement about Kaikohe as the type of place the North wants to be. We will widely consult with our people, the Kaikohe community and other key stakeholders when we have secured funding for the business case."

Central to the project will be the District Council becoming a key tenant of the building. It plans to move Kaikohe Library and other Kaikohe-based Council operations, including the Customer Service Centre, into the new facility. Other tenants may include an information centre, café and art gallery, a museum to showcase Ngāpuhi taonga, creative and performing arts spaces and other government departments.

Far North District Council Deputy Mayor Tania McInnes says the project has evolved considerably since it was first proposed in 2011 and it is supported by Kaikohe-Hokianga Ward councillors Sally Macauley and John Vujcich. "We recorded strong support for the concept from residents during our recent consultations on the Long Term Plan 2018-28 and the Council has agreed to contribute \$11.8 million towards the project."

She is very confident of the project and believes it will be a catalyst for change, growing confidence and pride in the town. "Te Ahu in Kaitiāia was also built in partnership with local iwi and is now a successful and well-patronised multi-purpose facility."

Using Te Ahu as a benchmark, it is estimated *Te Pū o Te Wheke* will cost \$15-20 million to build.

[ENDS]

Ngāpuhi Asset Holding Company

- Established to protect and grow Ngāpuhi fisheries assets and essential revenue streams
- Monitors and prudently invest assets in the most effective and beneficial ways possible for Ngāpuhi
- Board Chair, Jason Witehira (Ngāpuhi) - Owner/Operator of Victoria Park New World, 2016 outstanding Māori business leader.