

Details released of Russell wharf trust community consultation and process

Public meetings will take place in Russell on Thursday 2 May to discuss plans for the formation of a Trust that will become the entity nominated by Far North District Council to manage Russell Wharf jointly with Council-owned company Far North Holdings.

The meetings will also discuss the proposed management partnership agreement between the new Trust and Far North Holdings. This details the way both organisations will work with each other on a day-to-day basis to co-manage the wharf.

The public meetings will take place at 11am, 2pm and 6pm on 2 May at the Haratu Kororareka Marae, 5-7 Pitt Street, Russell.

Formation of the new Trust, to be called Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust, was one of the conditions that the community and Far North Holdings both stipulated needed to be in place before a transfer of ownership of Russell Wharf from Council to Far North Holdings could take place.

The community also specified that this process should be run by the existing Russell Wharf and Waterside Trust (RWWT) which has had a long-standing involvement in many matters relating to the operation and maintenance of the wharf.

These stipulations were considered and ratified by councillors as part of Far North District Council's formal Long-Term Plan (LTP) process last year. Public consultation around the LTP indicated overwhelming ratepayer support for Council's proposal to transfer the ownership of Russell Wharf to Far North Holdings.

The Russell community meetings on 2 May will be facilitated by lawyers from Chapman Tripp, the law firm engaged by the RWWT to draft the proposed deed for the new Trust and build the partnership agreement. As with other wharf-related community consultation meetings held in Russell in recent years, the three meetings will be identical in terms of format and the core information that is presented.

The new deed being proposed by Chapman Tripp creates the community entity required to manage the wharf jointly with Far North Holdings. It specifies a governance structure that will ensure the Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust is both representative of the wider Russell community and has the necessary competence to fulfil its obligations.

Once community input has been received both documents will be revised as necessary, submitted to the community for final review and then finalised.

Both the proposed new Trust deed and the draft management partnership agreement will be published on local websites by 11 April. These websites include those of the Russell Business Association and the Kororareka Marae Society. Links to all websites hosting these documents will be published on the Russell Wharf and Waterside Trust's Facebook page by 11 April.

A general call for the nomination of Trustees and an introduction of the nomination and voting process will also be published on 11 April.

None of the Trustees of the existing RWWT will be standing for election to the new Trust.

“We look forward to seeing some of the great management and community development talent that calls Russell home becoming involved in both the process and the governance of the new, expanded Trust,” said RWWT Trustee Riki Kinnaird.

The RWWT is in the process of being wound down, in anticipation of the new, more representative Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust becoming established. Mr Kinnaird expects it to be wound down at the end of its current financial year in June.

It has few assets. These will be disposed of in a manner consistent with the Trust’s objectives and deed. By the time of the public meetings it will have about \$10,000 in cash which will be used for professional services.

The Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust will be formed initially as a conventional Trust. It is intended that Charitable Trust status will be applied for as well. Charitable Trust status will give the new Trust the opportunity to apply for charitable funding and to raise funds more effectively from businesses and community groups.

“There will be times when the Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust wants to spend money on the wharf for things that Far North Holdings is not willing or able to fund,” said Mr Kinnaird. “Charitable Trust status keeps these alternative funding options open in a way that an Incorporated Society or other potential governance vehicles cannot.”

The new, fully-representative Kororareka/Russell Wharf Community Kaitiaki Trust will be guaranteed by its joint management agreement with Far North Holdings the second option to buy the wharf from Far North Holdings should the company ever decide to sell it. Far North District Council will hold the first option.

Mr Kinnaird hopes that the new Trust will be formed and Board of Trustees elected by the end of June but said the process will ultimately take “as long as it takes”.

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