

## **Notes about the Russell Wharf for the Hon. Shane Jones – 30/8/18**

The issue driving the Far North District Councils (FNDC) recent transfer of the Russell Wharf asset to Far North Holdings (FNHL) is its ongoing maintenance at Ratepayer cost.

The decision by planners at the Northern Regional Council (NRC) not to notify the Resource Consents (RC's) applied for by the FNDC to redevelop the Russell Wharf, did not meet the criteria of the Resource Management Act (RMA).

In all cases, if there is an affected party then a Resource Consent shall be notified.

The Russell Community, having had an interest in the Russell Wharf for 100 years are an affected party as are Tangata Whenua when dealing, in this case, within the seabed and foreshore zone. As a Russell ratepayer my comments serve to address the issues that would have arisen if the correct notified process had been followed by our Local Councils.

Mid 2017 a plan was circulated to some of the Russell Community, including the Russell Protection Society (RPS) outlining a proposal to demolish the existing wharf building (the original shelter) and build a new larger building which has morphed into a 28-seat café.

At the LTP meeting I attended in Russell during October 2017, no mention was made of this project nor the RC's and the plans for the wharf rebuild and repairs to the structure.

In fact, the total project was bundled in to the LTP and this was how the Far North District Council (FNDC) eventually justified consultation compliance.

The viability of the on-wharf café is in question, but to date Far North Holdings Limited (FNHL) have refused to reveal any financial details about it. The rental is supposedly 50k per year based on a stated 500k minimum build cost and a turnover of 800k would be required to support the business.

The question of FNHL as to if this is realistic and achievable, has yet to be answered.

The informed view is that it is not viable, so why demolish a perfectly good building that can be cost effectively brought up to code, after all, this is public money we are talking about here.

In addition to the new building, toilets and sewerage connections are proposed and this requirement necessitates pumps and a water supply. It is also proposed to service boats that will bring their waste from outside the area of interest (Russell) into our sewerage system and this, without any consultation. The establishment of any new reticulation will be a ratepayer cost.

This is little different to former FNDC Mayor Wayne Brown who, without consultation with the community, started running truck and trailer loads of waste into our tip.

It was only our blockade and the NRC stepping in, that stopped an environmental disaster.

The other complication with sewerage on our wharf is that a fresh water supply for the toilets and a pump out operation cannot be guaranteed. It will depend on private bore water supplies that are uncertain and are not consented for such a purpose.

In the new era of climate change one can only presume these water sources cannot be relied upon?

Resource consents have been granted and what is proposed now is a hybrid marina which previous reports to Council have not recommended.

From my experience this design is mis-conceived as the wharf is exposed to prevailing Westerlies and rising sea levels and tides which are proving to be a major problem for the existing floating pontoons.

The 6m x 14m 'Fullers' pontoon failed after 10 years and at a cost exceeding 500k, the recently installed replacement pontoon, is supposedly now fit for purpose?

How can the planned 4 x 3m x 14m pontoons, the 1x 30m walkway pontoon and new fixed structures to accommodate the new building including alloy gangways, be constructed for \$1.3m, unless of course the specifications are lower?

The minimum of one public berth is permitted by the current Resource Consent which suggests that FNHL are planning to commercialise the wharf.

The wharf structure was originally built as a destination not a marina and once again, the issue of maintenance arises but the costs associated with the future planned operation are unknown.

As per a FNDC resolution all of this is supposedly subject to an agreement of some kind between a private Trust (RWWT) the Community and Tangata Whenua. To date we have heard nothing more about this but judging by the current performance, we may wake up one day and find that it has all been put in place with Pakeha and Maori none the wiser?

In my view the proposed Trust structure will not be inclusive and fully representative and to say that management will be shared with FNHL is disingenuous, as is the FNDC granting the RWWT an option to purchase the wharf within 10 years and have their charitable donation (100k) to the Wharf, returned.

In short Minister, there is stuff going on here that severely undermines the Community and Tangata Whenua and we can thank Nick Smith for that.

Nothing is what it seems, and you have confirmed this to me by saying you knew nothing of the proposed new building?

We are dealing with public money, a flawed untested and costed concept and still the burning question remains – who will maintain the wharf and how much will it cost per annum?

The Russell Wharf is a strong structure built for purpose in a Westerly aspect. It has been neglected by Council and it is odd that the FNDC have recently found close to a \$1million in a 'depreciation account' and have pledged it to the wharf.

Would it not be simpler to fix our wharf as is, as many people believe is the objective and one way or another put \$1m plus into an interest bearing Charitable Community Trust account to cover ongoing maintenance?

What is being planned here out of sight of the Community is high risk and uncertain, particularly when dealing with a FNHL management who have admitted they know little about boats and marinas unlike myself and many of my supporters.

As such, we would be happy to engage with any initiative proposed by you to redress the wrong-footed approach being adopted here and work out a solution that will ensure that the Community will not have to pick up the tab for failures, further down the track.

We trust this is helpful.

**Best Regards,**

**Doug Owens**

**for Community Kororareka.**