



Renovations now complete

THE wait is over for Waitomo residents to finally see inside Te Kuiti's newly restored railway buildings.

For the past four years, Waitomo District Council (WDC) has been carrying out extensive restorations and strengthening work to the three historic buildings on Rora St as well as the track-side canopies and surrounding plaza.

The aim of the council's Te Kuiti railway building restoration project is to re-invigorate and showcase the railway heritage of the town, as well as creating a vibrant central hub for the community.

It features a modern meeting room and office space (brick building), a cafe/bar (building two) that opens out onto the railway platform and community space (building one connected to the i-SITE) which can be used for meetings and/or public displays.

OPENING TOMORROW

The official opening of the renova-

tions is being held on-site at 1pm tomorrow to celebrate the completion of the external restoration phase.

Mayor Brian Hanna says it is an exciting time to at last allow the public inside.

"I'm really pleased to see it finally all come together.

"It has taken time because we wanted to get it right, but we also needed to meet all the standards from a heritage point of view and ensure the renovations were in keeping with what was there originally.

"I'm absolutely rapt with how it looks."

Mr Hanna says the overall goal of the project is to attract more business to Rora St.

"We have a lot of traffic going down state highway three so we needed something to create a destination in Te Kuiti and draw that traffic through the main street.

"I think in time we'll find with the new business opportunity and the



OPEN TO VIEW: Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna (outside the Te Kuiti railway buildings) and councillor Lorrene Te Kanawa (below, outside the relocated Te Kuiti Community House) are proud to finally welcome the community inside the recently renovated properties.



whole community hub feeling that this project will go a long way to achieving that.

"The whole idea is to help our retailers and make Te Kuiti a true destination where people want to stop, stay and spend time visiting."

HERITAGE SITE

The original Te Kuiti Railway Station was built in the early 1900s at the time that the North Island Main Trunk Line was completed and when Te Kuiti was first developing as a provincial town.

It is one of very few large wooden stations in the country featuring an extensive veranda and elevated platform.

Due to its rarity and rich history, the NZ Historic Places Trust (HPT) has registered the buildings as a category 2 heritage site of district significance.

Highlighting its significance, the Rail Heritage Trust of NZ considers it the finest surviving example of a standard class B station in New Zealand.

So to ensure it retained is historical features such as the brick chimney, HPT guidance and approval was sought during all restoration work.

COMMUNITY HOUSE

Coinciding with the railway buildings launch, the council is also opening the recently relocated Te Kuiti Community House.

The shift was deemed necessary as the house's previous property in Jennings St required considerable works to repair structural damage and was therefore considered not fit for purpose.

RESTORATION COMPLETE - P5
EATERY OWNERS STOKED - P5

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ORDER UP: HUHU Cafe owners Abi and Andy Rawles are looking forward to opening their newest venture – Stoked Eatery –inside the recently renovated central Te Kuiti railway building on Rora St.

Eatery owners stoked!

HUHU Cafe owners Andy and Abi Rawles are ‘stoked’ to be opening a new eatery in Te Kuiti.

Building off the success of their Waitomo Caves restaurant, the couple are now only days away from opening their newest business Stoked Eatery in Te Kuiti.

As the centrepiece of the newly restored Te Kuiti railway buildings, the cafe, bar and grill is still undergoing the finishing touches, but is expected to open this month.

Impatient customers will be able to have a glimpse of what Stoked Eatery will look like when Waitomo District Council officially opens two of the three renovated railway buildings on Rora St tomorrow. The Stoked team will cater at the opening.

IN LIMBO

As for the new buildings and eatery not opening simultaneously, Mrs Rawles says they were expecting to get the keys to the building on Tuesday, but were told by the district council on Friday that because of construction delays they wouldn’t be given the keys to open the business until the works were complete.

“The plan was that we had staff starting next Monday with the view to opening mid-week sometime.

“But we don’t know if we’ll even have the keys by then because of the hold up on the building works so we’re in limbo at the moment.

“Even though we would have got ready as much as we could for tomorrow’s function, I wouldn’t have been totally happy with opening at that point anyway.

“So we’re a going to close the doors again just to make sure the place is at a standard that we are completely satisfied with.

“We want to open as soon as possible but we can’t get in there to make the place our own until we get the keys which is a bit frustrating.”

Despite not having a confirmed opening date, Mrs Rawles says the new venue looks “amazing”.

CASUAL VIBE

When open, Stoked’s menu will consist of homemade burgers, fish and chips and steak and seafood dishes to the same quality HUHU Cafe regulars are familiar with.

A wood fire pizza oven with chimney was originally considered by Mr Rawles to enhance the railway theme, but due to the narrow nature of the cafe and Historic Places Trust guidelines to maintain the building’s original exterior, the idea was discarded.

“There will be a bit more of a casual vibe where you can come in after work have a drink with some bar snacks and watch the rugby on the big screen,” says Mrs Rawles.

“And I reckon the seating out on the railway platform which seats about 40 people will be a prime spot during summer because it catches all the evening sun.

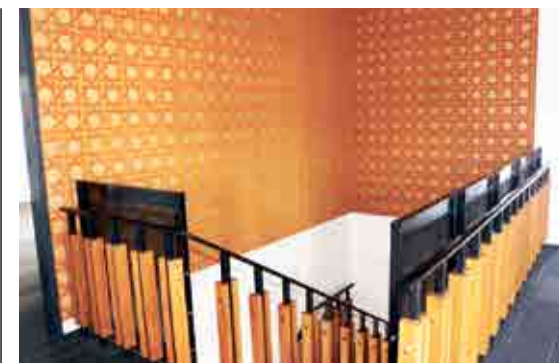
“Well . . . that’s the atmosphere we’re trying to create anyway.”

She hopes to “wow” customers when Stoked Eatery opens its doors.

“Seeing the progression from four months ago when we first walked in to what it is now is just amazing.

“When I first had the image in my head it didn’t look anything like it does now – it really is beautiful.

“I can’t wait to show to everyone what it looks like.”



RELOCATED: An interior view of the stairwell in the revamped and relocated Te Kuiti Community House which is now above the Waitomo District Library on Taupiri St.

Renovations now complete

FROM P1

With the majority of the \$510,000 cost coming from the Lottery Community Facilities Fund (\$346,345) the shift to the first floor of the Waitomo District Library in Taupiri St was completed last month.

The finishing touches were added earlier this week and the facility will be officially opened at 10am tomorrow.

“I think people will find the new location so much easier to get to and all of the activities that have previously been co-ordinated by the community house will now be run out of the Taupiri St premises. I’m really pleased with it,” says Mr Hanna.

The community house is a not for profit organisation set up and funded by WDC to provide educational, social and recreational services to the community.

Interim chairwoman Lorrene Te Kanawa says utilising the empty space above the library was a good decision.

“It’s more centrally located and there’s more space as well so more community groups can apply for the rental spaces,” she says.

“I think it looks fresh and clean and that it is a great asset for the community.”

The public are welcome to attend both openings.



PLACE TO MEET: The Te Kuiti Community House which has several rooms to provide educational, social and recreational services to the community.

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