

Mayoral Forum endorses next stage of spatial plan

ESTABLISHING a collective 'voice' for the Waikato took another significant step after the Waikato Mayoral Forum endorsed the next phase in a spatial plan for the region.

Such a plan, covering up to 30 years into Waikato's future, is proposed to be a collaboratively developed high-level strategy.

It would cover a wide range of issues from economic, social, cultural and environmental matters, and also provide a basis for agreeing joint priorities, actions and investment.

At its meeting in Thames on February 17, forum members – comprising mayors and the regional council's chairman – were briefed on the region's headline strengths, challenges, opportunities and key issues. They agreed that a presentation on the proposal should be made to a joint meeting of all the councils on March 17, and work commence as soon as practicable.

The forum also recommended that the best way to progress the project was for a joint committee of all councils to be established.

"ONE VOICE"

Forum chairman Allan Sanson – Waikato district mayor – says council leaders are very pleased with progress.

"It is a great opportunity to have a way for the Waikato to collectively speak with one voice on the big picture issues affecting our region. That's crucially important when we are doing things like negotiating with central government for more funding.

"A collective approach has previously been the key to us securing funding for infrastructure such as the Waikato Expressway.

"The next step is to look at how we can best translate all that information into strategies and actions which help us deliver the best outcomes for the region over the long-term," says Mr Sanson.

"I am very pleased with the level of co-operation between the region's councils on this – it augurs well for the Waikato's collective future."

WAITOMO

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says: "The meeting basically signalled the end of phase one of the Mayoral Forum working parties' projects.

"Much of this work was information gathering from the councils. For three of the work streams – roading, economic development/planning and governance – it was agreed that phase two needs to begin in earnest. For the fourth work stream – water (water supplies and wastewater) gains were only identified for the large metros, so it is likely they will collaborate separately.

"I believe there are considerable benefits for Waitomo district in committing to the next stage, namely the implementation of collaborative work with the other councils in the Waikato region."

Besides the overall spatial plan, the forum is also supporting the development of a ground-breaking regional sport and recreation facilities plan, and a creative facilities plan.

It is intended these will be integrated into the overall plan.

Trucks collides



LUCKY ESCAPE: A man was "pretty lucky" to only be concussed says Te Kuiti Police Constable Peter Olsson after he was thrown from an EnviroWaste truck when it crashed into a stock truck in Te Kuiti on Friday morning. The crash occurred after the man tried to do a U-turn on Waitete and Beros roads. Mr Olsson says the EnviroWaste driver was lucky to escape life-threatening injuries. "As the stock truck went past he clipped the EnviroWaste truck that was doing a U-turn, hitting the rubbish truck on the right front. The driver was thrown from the truck but a witness says they weren't sure if he was thrown from the front window or side window." The man was taken to Te Kuiti Hospital by St John personnel. The stock truck driver was uninjured. As a result of the crash many rubbish bins normally collected early in the morning were still waiting to be emptied at 5pm.

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