



ON THE FENCE: Two sections of safety fencing were removed from around the Te Kuiti Skate Park last week and left outside the Waitomo District Council and Waitomo News office buildings on Thursday.

Damaged fence left at WDC

WAITOMO District Council (WDC) is investigating an incident where a section of fence surrounding the Carroll St Skate Park was removed and left at their front door on Thursday morning.

That same morning another section of the same fence was left outside the *Waitomo News* office on Rora St.

Not willing to connect the two as a "hidden message", WDC chief executive Chris Ryan says the incident is a pure act of wilful damage and vandalism to public property.

"We have investigated the incident and surmise that that particular section of fencing [left at the council's building on Queen St] was removed from the fencing that surrounds the Skate Park.

"Part of the fence has been pulled down and

left in a damaged state and we have since tidied that up.

"We are now looking into whether or not we can identify who did it."

PERSISTENT DAMAGE

Mr Ryan says vandalism of council property is an ongoing problem and council staff is constantly repairing damage be it to safety fencing, gardens and/or public toilets.

"It is very disappointing that this sort of behaviour happens on a regular basis but we do our best to try and identify who is at fault and take the appropriate action," says Mr Ryan.

"However, it is a persistent problem which is very difficult to stay on top of."

Regarding the buildings where the damaged safety fences were left, Mr Ryan says there are better ways for residents to get their message across.

"We know there was widespread community concern about the safety of the rail corridor and that was quite rightly addressed by the owners [Kiwi Rail] but we haven't had any ongoing conversations with anybody about the particular type of fencing around the Skate Park," he says.

"I'm firmly of the view that this is a straight up and down case of wilful damage but if people want to communicate with council there are many, many other ways of doing so in a positive way.

"We are always willing to listen and act so I don't see much point in damaging public property as a means of communicating."

Mr Ryan says there is a proposal currently in front of the council to completely renew the safety fencing around the Skate Park with more effective barriers.

NEWS' RESPONSE

Waitomo News acting general manager Rochelle Wolland agrees with Mr Ryan saying if leaving the fence at the newspaper was supposed to be a message it was a cryptic one.

"The best way to communicate with us would have been to visit our office, or phone and speak with a reporter," she says.

And if it was an act of pure vandalism, Miss Wolland says it was certainly a bold one.

"There were people out on the main street at the time it was left, so surely someone saw the unusual sight of a person walking down the main street with a fence!"

The matter has been reported to police.

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IN BRIEF

Fletcher show at museum

EIGHTY paintings from the rarely seen Fletcher Collection are to be shown at the Waikato Museum for the first time from March 14.

The trust, owners of New Zealand's largest remaining corporate collection, has made its finest paintings available to the museum. The collection includes what is believed to be the very first oil painting made of a New Zealand subject, William Hodges' 1773 sketch A View In Dusky Bay.

Worth in excess of \$6 million, the paintings also include important historical works from the early 19th Century to the most contemporary by Kiwi emerging artists. The show runs until June 21.

SH1 delays

DUE to construction of the Cambridge section of the Waikato Expressway, New Zealand Transport Agency is advising motorists to expect delays. Work will continue on SH1 between the Tamahere Interchange and Duncan Rd tonight.

A 30km/h speed limit will be in place as traffic is switched on to the southbound lanes of the Waikato Expressway and over the Pickering Rd Bridge. Speed limits will be raised to 50km/h on Friday on a 4.5km section of the expressway to allow chip seal to set.



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