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Sent: Thursday, 1 May 2025 9:55 am
To: Charmaine Ellery; Rajeshwari Mahadevappa
Subject: FW: 20250430 Waitomo District Annual Plan Submission Timber Trail NZ Funding Support
Attachments: RDC_to_WDC_Timber_Trail_Submission_Letter.docx
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Shaping our District together

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Importance: High

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I am attaching our submission to the Annual Plan for consideration with regard to funding support for the Timber Trail.

Ngā mihi

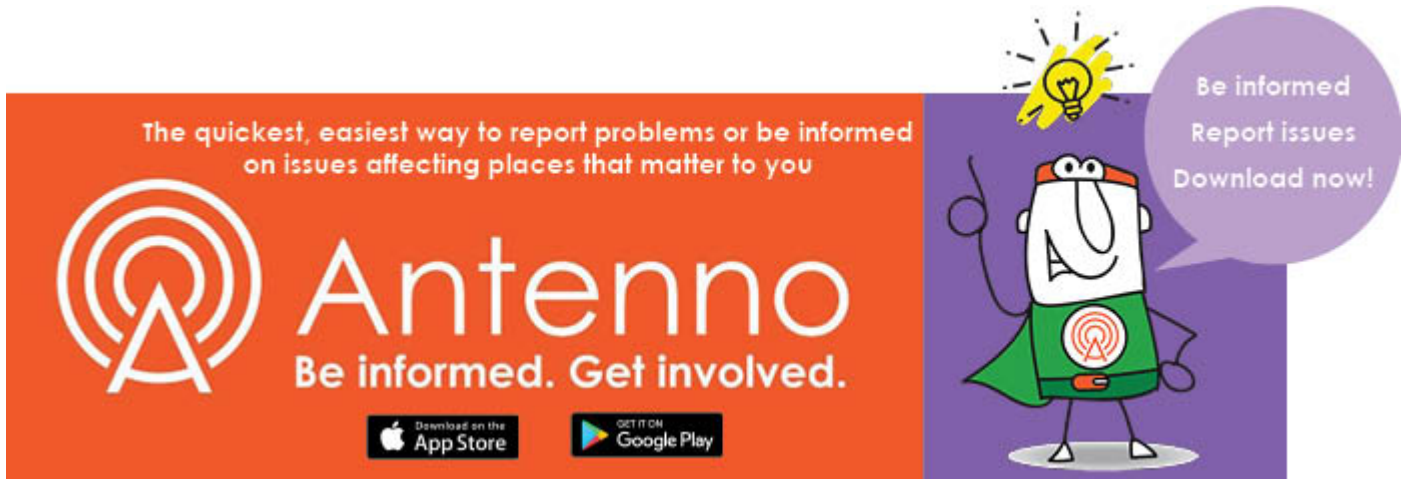
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Mayor Weston Kirton and Councillors
Ruapehu District Council
30 April 2025

To: Mayor and Councillors
Waitomo District Council

Via Annual Plan Submission

Subject: Reinstating Support for the Timber Trail Marketing Stakeholder Role

Tēnā koutou katoa,

We write to you as the Chief Executive, Mayor and Councillors of the Ruapehu District Council, in strong support of the Timber Trail and the important regional partnership it represents between our two districts.

We respectfully request that Waitomo District Council reconsider and reinstate its annual contribution of \$15,000 to the Timber Trail Marketing Stakeholder Support position.

This funding forms part of a shared regional investment of \$45,000, with Ruapehu District Council contributing \$30,000. Together, this co-investment enables access to significant external funding from commercial operators and central government — all of which is dependent on meeting co-funding thresholds. Without Waitomo's contribution, this threshold is at risk.

The Timber Trail is a nationally significant Great Ride. In 2024, it recorded 15,177 journeys. Based on the average reported visitor spend of \$588.60 per person, this equates to an estimated \$8.93 million in direct economic contribution to the region. This includes spending on accommodation, shuttles, trail experiences, food, and local services.

These benefits are shared across Te Kūiti and the wider Waitomo District. Visitors stop in town for fuel and supplies and stay in rural locations such as Pureora and Piopio, where accommodation and shuttle services are based. This helps distribute economic activity to communities with fewer tourism levers, building resilience and supporting local enterprise.

Feedback from local operators consistently reinforces this value: "The Timber Trail brings guests who stay for two nights, eat locally, and tell others about us." "Without the trail, we simply wouldn't have enough visitors to stay open all year."

The Marketing Stakeholder Support role is more than promotional. It provides advocacy, iwi and stakeholder coordination, and leadership during a time of uncertainty, including the Department of Conservation's current review of its role in trail access and infrastructure.

The return on investment is compelling. For a \$15,000 contribution, Waitomo shares in a regional benefit of more than \$8.9 million — a 600-to-1 return. This is exceptional value, without Waitomo bearing operational or infrastructure costs.

We therefore respectfully request that the Waitomo District Council recommit to its \$15,000 annual contribution. This helps maintain a balanced and fair partnership, secures external funding, and ensures the Timber Trail continues to deliver shared economic, social, and environmental value for our region.

Nāku noa, nā



Clive Manley
Chief Executive



Mayor Weston Kirton
On behalf of the Councillors of Ruapehu District Council