

Teen detained over serious police assault

A FIFTEEN-year-old boy is the fourth person police have apprehended after Kawhia Police constable Perry Griffin was allegedly bashed last week.

The teenager was referred to Youth Services on Thursday in relation to the January 11 incident on Kawhia Wharf.

Police say Mr Griffin tried to arrest 19-year-old Kawhia resident Jackie Maikuku, wanted on outstanding warrants, shortly before 6pm.

He was struck from behind, knocked to the ground and kicked by a group of five men, suffering serious bruising and grazing to his face, arms and body.

Three men were arrested at the scene including Maikuku's 49-year-old father Jack Maikuku and a 21-year-old male associate.

They appeared in Hamilton District Court the following day facing aggravated assault and assault with intent to injure charges.

The charges against the 21-year-old were dropped on January 14.

Jackie and Jack Maikuku appeared in Te Awamutu District Court yesterday and were remanded without plea to reappear on March 18.

Western Waikato Area Commander, Inspector Paul Carpenter says

the police investigation is receiving support from not only locals but also the wider community.

"Our enquiry team was in Kawhia last week and the investigation is progressing really well with information and photos supplied by locals and from people as far away as Taranaki, Feilding and Whangamata who were visiting the area at the time of the attack.

"These are assisting us greatly in building an accurate picture of what happened before, during and after the event as we work to build up a case that will have its eventual conclusion in court."

Mr Carpenter says Mr Griffin has been buoyed by the level of public support.

"On the Otorohanga Police facebook page alone, there has been more than 450 get well soon, best wishes or other messages of encouragement not to mention support shown at a public meeting attended by more than 200 people in Kawhia on Tuesday night.

"Such public backing is not just reassuring for the officer directly involved but for Waikato Police in general who will be working with local leaders on developing strategies to assist the people of Kawhia to move forward."



FRESH MESSAGE: Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna is thrilled with his district's new welcome signs erected last week.

Fresh new look for district's entrances

WAITOMO district is greeting visitors with a positive new message for 2013.

Newly designed welcome signs went up last week targeting visitors entering the district via Otorohanga, New Plymouth and Taupo.

The signs feature the strap line 'Vibrant and thriving' with an image of a young tourist inside a glow worm cave. They replace the former 'See what you're missing' billboards erected in 2003.

Mayor Brian Hanna says it's important to refresh the district's welcome messages because attracting visitors is a highly competitive business throughout the Waikato region.

"When driving round the Waikato looking at the attractive billboards erected in other districts, you realise how dull and confusing ours were in comparison," says Mr Hanna.

"I believe our old signs were tired and quite negative.

"They certainly didn't make anyone sit up and take notice, so rebranding our welcome message was long overdue."

He is pleased the positive welcome signage was

achieved at minimal cost.

The 'Vibrant and thriving' strap line comes from his own vision for the community while council staff developed the graphics in-house.

"We've minimised the cost by using our own expertise, with images from our library of photos highlighting the district," says Mr Hanna.

"The new signs are printed on low-cost 'skins' applied to existing billboard structures so we can change them out from time to time within our existing marketing budget."

He says the cost of producing new skins featuring Waitomo's beautiful coastline and other stunning natural assets will also be minimal.

"There's no reason why we can't also change the images to make the most of major events such as the New Zealand Shearing Championships.

"There are a lot of exciting things on the calendar this year like the Pureora Timber Trail and the launch of the Piopio-based Hobbiton story.

"We're looking to market our district as best we can within a limited budget and we've got to use every tool we can to make tourists take note."



ON THE CASE: Public support is helping police track down offenders involved in a pack assault on Constable Perry Griffin in Kawhia (pictured above) on January 11.

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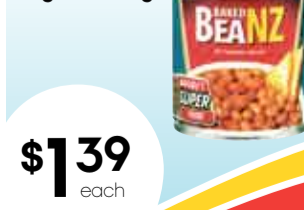
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