

Plant benefits don't stack up

FROM PI

"It takes value away from the industry and the community alike.

"I challenge anyone to drive down the main street of Pokeno to get a feel as to how much value the new dairy plant there has placed into the community."

LONG-TERM EFFECTS

Looking ahead, Mr Coull is also concerned about potential long-term effects.

"The regulatory framework in China is tight, especially with infant formula and the Chinese Government actively rationalising the number of participants in this space.

"If this venture is unsuccessful, our community would wear the burden of any infrastructure spend our local council has incurred in supporting this project long after the business has moved on.

"I site the example of a similar organic facility in Okato [Taranaki] that faced serious financial difficulty and went into liquidation within 12 months of opening.

"So we really need to think about what this means for the community as a whole."

MP BACKS PLANT

Despite Mr Coull's concerns, last week's announcement has received the full backing and support from Taranaki/King Country MP Barbara Kuriger and Otorohanga's district development board and business association.

"I think the new dairy factory proposal for Otorohanga is very good news for the district," says Mrs Kuriger.

"I'm a very strong believer in a consolidated

dairy industry and having power in the market, but there are these little competitions popping up and I think for the region having something like this in Otorohanga will help provide jobs and options for the schools, businesses and so on.

"To me, new developments in the regions are extremely important, and places like Waitomo and Otorohanga are what I consider Heartland New Zealand.

"So new initiatives in those areas are always exciting and I fully support this project going ahead."

MAJOR STEP

Otorohanga Business Association chairperson Kylie Mouat says establishing the factory will be a major step forward for potential growth within the community.

"We [the association] think it is fantastic news for the town.

"From an employment perspective it's excellent, and also because if there are more people living and working in Otorohanga all the other businesses benefit as a by-product such as more people shopping, going out to dinner and a potential boost to school rolls.

"Then there's the hope that local tradespeople will benefit during the build of the facility also.

"So on behalf of the Otorohanga Business Association we can't see a negative side."

Otorohanga District Development Board chairperson Deb Pilkington agrees.

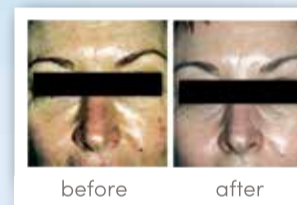
"It is an absolutely wonderful thing to happen especially for economic development and employment opportunities in the district.

"The project most definitely has the full support of the development board."



FULL SUPPORT: Otorohanga Business Association chairperson Kylie Mouat believes the establishment of a new dairy factory in Otorohanga will be a major step forward for potential growth within the community. FILE PIC

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Decision delights critics

THE Waitomo District Council is being praised for listening to its people.

Following a decision to install steel barriers on two pedestrian bridges over the Mangaokewa Stream in Te Kuiti, the council received numerous complaints from residents about restricted access for cyclists, pram pushers and mobility scooter users.

The barriers were installed in early May in response to public complaints about people illegally riding horses and motorbikes across the pedestrian only bridges.

However, by addressing one problem, the council inadvertently created another.

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

Waitomo mayor Brian Hanna says after receiving the negative public feedback, a decision to remove the barriers was made at a council meeting last week.

"They were installed with the best of intentions but in terms of the horses that problem seems to have sorted itself out thanks to the fantastic work done by the Hoiho group with our rangatahi.

"So in hindsight we probably could have looked at the problem a bit more closely.

"The barrier project was initiated several months ago during the height of the problem and took longer than expected to install.

"But the community has spoken and we can see where they're coming from so we felt as a team we needed to reverse our decision."

In regards to any future illegal use of the bridges or nearby council-owned riverbanks, Mr Hanna urges residents to inform the council immediately.

CYCLIST PLEASED

Te Kuiti resident Jeni Tuck, who cycles across the bridges every week day and contributed a thumbs down to the *Waitomo News* about the barriers, was "delighted" with the decision.

"Perhaps they should have discussed the decision to install the barriers more thoroughly before they did it especially considering the number of people that were affected," she says.

"So I don't think they really thought it through.

"But after hearing the news that they will be removed I've been telling everyone that we won.

"Power to the people I say."

Long-time resident Dave Parlane, who regularly crosses the bridges on his mobility scooter, said he had "lost his freedom" when the barriers went up. (*Waitomo News*, May 14)

But now Mr Parlane has praised the council's quick response to the public backlash.

"It's really good, but they should never have been put there in the first place," he says.

"They just came along and made a decision without even considering how it would affect the elderly.

"But I've got my freedom back now and I'm delighted that they listened to the general public and did something about it."