

# TE UREWERA

## Te Urewera to re-open in February

Te Urewera Board announced today that Te Urewera will welcome back manuhiri (guests) and Tūhoe users for recreational activity in February, including on Lake Waikaremoana, noting that it will be keeping a watching brief on the developing Omicron situation and any risks for local communities.

It is the Board's intention that access to Lake Waikaremoana will re-open on Sunday 6 February (Waitangi Day) and all tracks, huts and camp grounds, including the Great Walk, will re-open from 14 February.

Te Urewera was closed by Te Urewera Board at the beginning of COVID-19 Alert Level 4 in August to ensure the safety of vulnerable local communities and manuhiri, and remained closed while local vulnerable communities prepared for the Delta variant and remedial infrastructure maintenance was completed over summer.

"We remain grateful for the patience and friendship demonstrated during the past months by the many people who love Te Urewera," Te Urewera Board chair Tāmati Kruger said. "Tūhoe and Te Urewera Board acknowledge the sacrifice of those who have respected the closure, despite foregoing family occasions, regular visits, and annual events such as the Waikaremoana fishing competition."

Mr Kruger said that health and safety would continue to be the paramount consideration in terms of access to Te Urewera during the summer. Te Urewera is home to Tūhoe communities, including some of the country's most remote and vulnerable populations during the current pandemic.

"Anxiety about the new strain of COVID remains, but considering the role of Te Urewera as a unique place of recreation, enjoyment, learning and spiritual reflection to the public who have played their part, and the values of manaakitanga (welcoming), it is the Board's decision Te Urewera should be re-opened."

Mr Kruger added an appeal to guests returning to Te Urewera or visiting for the first time.

"As reported in media, some huts were left in a shocking state by a minority of guests in the winter season. We discovered vandalism, including the removal of water faucets from the hut atop Mount Panekire, a poor welcome for trampers who have scaled 1400m to reach it during the Great Walk around Waikaremoana."

"While there is little we can do to prevent weather damage to tracks and tree falls, there are things everyone can do to respect Te Urewera and ensure they are not hurting the environment or ruining the experience for others."

Mr Kruger reminded guests to pack-in-and-pack-out anything they used in Te Urewera, and avoid plastics, and check boats are clean before going onto the lake.

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# *Notes for editors*

## *Te Urewera*

Te Urewera is the traditional homeland of the Tūhoe people. Legally it is the land that comprised the former Te Urewera National Park, and has its own legal identity as recognised under Te Urewera Act 2014. In effect the land owns itself. It is governed by Te Urewera Board, which speaks on behalf of Te Urewera. Day to day management of Te Urewera is carried out by Te Uru Taumatua, the Tūhoe iwi authority, on behalf of Te Urewera Board.

## *Te Urewera Board*

Te Urewera Board consists of six members appointed by Tūhoe and three members appointed by the Crown. Under Te Urewera Act, the Board represents the interests of Te Urewera itself, as a legal entity, rather than the appointing bodies, and decisions are required to be made by consensus. Te Urewera Board speaks for the legal personality of Te Urewera and exercises legal authority over the area under Te Urewera Act 2014, including discharging responsibilities for health and safety and Te Urewera's pandemic response.

## *Te Urewera Act*

Te Urewera Act sets out the legal personality of Te Urewera. The purposes of Te Urewera Act are to:

- strengthen and maintain the connection between Tūhoe and Te Urewera; and
- preserve the natural features and beauty of Te Urewera, the integrity of its indigenous ecological systems and biodiversity, and its historical and cultural heritage; and
- provide for Te Urewera as a place for public use and enjoyment, for recreation, learning, and spiritual reflection, and as an inspiration for all, subject to any conditions and restrictions necessary to achieve the purposes of the Act or for public safety.