

New rules for Te Urewera

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IT is the start of a two-year conversation that will give rise to a unique management plan for Te Urewera.

The statement of priorities for Te Kawa o Te Urewera framework was launched on Saturday at Tuhoe's headquarters in Taneatua by Attorney-General Chris Finlayson and conservation minister Maggie Barry.

It includes "principal matters" to be dealt with in a new 10-year management plan for Te Urewera and will be used to collect the thoughts of people who use Te Urewera.

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- Tamati Kruger

Te Urewera chairman Tamati Kruger said previously Te Urewera was controlled by the Department of Conservation using a traditional management plan.

Under new legislation, released last year, Te Urewera became a legal entity in its own right and administration of the area was passed to the Te Urewera Board.

The board comprises joint Tuhoe and Crown membership and its legislated purpose is to strengthen Tuhoe's connection with Te Urewera, preserve the natural beauty of the area and



Tamati Kruger,
Te Urewera
chairman



Maggie Barry,
conservation
minister

ensure public use continues.

Mr Kruger, also the chairman of Tuhoe's governance board, Te Uru Taumatua, said as a result, a new management plan was necessary.

"We have negotiated the return of Te Urewera and the other thing is that we don't think that the DoC management plan will work under the new entity."

He said eventually the plan would outline how things should happen in Te Urewera but the first step was to provide guidance for establishing what should be included through the statement of priorities.

"This is the board having completed their consideration over the past 12 months, combining proposals, values and lessons from DoC and others, and trying to create a framework that encompasses all of those things.

"It will impact on what will be included in the equivalent of our management plan; it will talk about our approach, what the components are and how those changes interconnect."

Mr Kruger said the statement of priorities would be used in conversations, with more than 30 stakeholder groups identified as well as the public to determine what should be included in the plan.

He said interested parties who relied on Te Urewera

for their income and previously had contracts with the Government to use the area, such as possum hunters, helicopter operators and tourism providers, would be included in the conversation.

"We are starting off with a diverse range of interests and viewpoints and we are open to suggestions so long as your ideas don't create harm or injury to Te Urewera."

Tuhoe chief executive Kirsti Luke said the new plan would be vastly different from the previous one.

"[The previous plan] doesn't provide for Tuhoe's relationship with Te Urewera, which is one of the top priorities of the act.

"Our view of biodiversity differs from DoC's because it involves history, heritage and language. You won't find the words indigenous ecosystem, you won't find the history, or the words mana, mauri, rahui, tapu, but in the Te Urewera Act we describe them because they are integral."

Ms Barry said the management plan would be crucial to the ongoing preservation and protection of Te Urewera's ecosystem and native wildlife.

"It will strengthen the connection between Tuhoe and Te Urewera, and allow all New Zealanders to continue to access and experience the region. Inviting public input at this first stage will greatly benefit the overall quality of the plan."

The deadline for providing feedback on the framework for Te Kawa O Te Urewera is February 26, 2016, with a draft plan to be released in April 2017 and the final copy to be confirmed in September of that year.