

Centre demolition starts

PREPARATIONS for the planned demolition of the former Aniwaniwa visitor centre at Lake Waikaremoana began yesterday.

Yesterday morning a small group, including family members of the late John Scott who designed the building, were taken on site to carry out a farewell.

A karakia was held at the site at 5am yesterday by the Waikaremoana Tribal Authority to clear the way for the work to start and for the workers who will be carrying out the demolition over the next six to eight weeks.

A DOC project team is overseeing the dismantling and working closely with Te Uru Taumatua who are managing the site and surrounds.

An Auckland company was on site making the building and site safe before dismantling began.

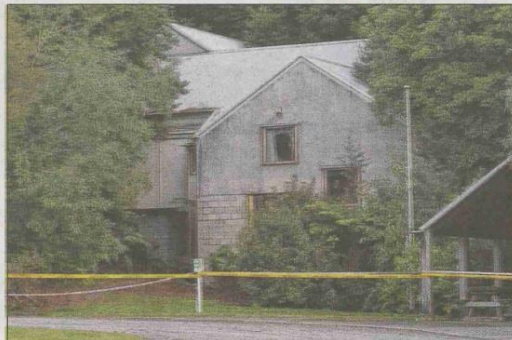
Department of Conservation representatives said the dismantling marks a new era of visitor experience at Waikaremoana.

The cost of dismantling the building, transferring the timber, removing, salvaging and disposing of any material and restoration of the site is around \$180,000.

The building was given Heritage New Zealand classification one in 2012 but is not in the Wairoa District Council's District Plan and schedule of protected buildings, taonga and trees which was created in 2005.

Council chief operating officer Helen Montgomery said the criteria for buildings to be listed in a District Plan varied, but most districts including Wairoa, start by examining the Heritage New Zealand listings and information about those listings.

"The District Plan is currently under review, in accordance with the Resource Management Acts requirements to review the District Plan every 10 years, though it is not yet at the public consultation stage and will not be



at that stage for many months," said Ms Montgomery.

She said a plan change or plan review was not a fast or simple process.

Department of Conservation Operations Director Meirene Hardy-Birch said DOC had

and re-sheathing, the cost was now around \$500,000.

Ms Hardy-Birch said the department was now working with Te Urewera Board and Ngai Tuhoë to enact the spirit of the Te Urewera settlement.

"We are also working with Ngai Tuhoë to ensure the spirit of the old building is brought into the new warehouse currently under construction.

"Some architects have opposed the move, concerned for the legacy of the acclaimed architect of the building John Scott."

Chairman of the Waikaremoana Tribal Authority Lance Rurehe, respects these views but is equally determined to truly reflect a tangata whenua personality to enable a genuine Te Urewera Waikaremoana visitor experience.

"Te Wharehou o Waikaremoana is merely that beginning," he said.

The Department is working with Te Uru Taumatua on the development of Te Wharehou o Waikaremoana, with visitor information located at Home Bay adjacent to the Waikaremoana Holiday Park.

Tuhoë and the Department of Conservation have partnered on the new development, with Tuhoë requiring a lakeside location and setting to house heritage and visitor information, café, and connectedness to landscape, nature, lake, history, community and tangata whenua — a place for the whole whanau.

Chair of Te Urewera Board and Tuhoë Te Uru Taumatua Tamati Kruger said, "the Tuhoë investment in the new build exceeded that of DOC's as a feature of Tuhoë leadership and influence in the new tribal-owned visitor centre.

"As designers of the new build, Waikaremoana people will be free to express their world in the unique way they choose to do that."

"Timber from the old visitor centre will be used in the new warehouse.

"We all have a wish for the collective memory or wairua forged from relationships that have occurred through the old whare as an endowment in the new warehouse," he said.

'Unless the Department of Conservation quickly rediscovers its conservation mandate the Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre will join the long list of distinguished buildings whose loss later generations will only regret.'

— Christina van Bohemen

considered all practical options for the building since it was closed in 2008.

"This has been a difficult decision as so many parties have an interest in the building. We have had to balance those interests and it hasn't been easy.

The 41-year-old building had weather tightness and stability issues for many years. Prior to its closure the Department spent a substantial amount of money trying to maintain the building, including re-roofing and re-cladding which was unsuccessful."

The department and the late John Scott's son Jacob were about \$2.5m apart in what each party thought making the building water tight and secure would cost.

Ms Hardy-Birch said the 2010 estimated cost to bring the building up to current standards and refit it for use was around \$3 million.

Mr Scott said for six square metres of replaced timber framing, relining

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THE New Zealand Institute of Architects is shocked by the decision of Department of Conservation Deputy Director Mervyn English to begin demolition of the building.

Institute of Architects President Christina van Bohemen said they were informed demolition was due to start yesterday and would take five to six weeks.

"The Institute of Architects has tried to reach out to the government, senior Department of Conservation officials and Tuhoë leadership to find a way to save the Visitor Centre," Ms van Bohemen said.

"This precipitate and unilateral decision forecloses all options to preserve an important building by a unique architect. It's shameful that officials charged with responsibility for conserving New Zealand's heritage have initiated the destruction of a valuable part of that heritage."

"The only thing that can be said about the Department of

Conservation's decision to demolish the centre is that it is entirely consistent with the Department's long neglect of the building.

"This Category One listed building, should have official protectors. What does Heritage New Zealand have to say about it? Why has Maggie Barry, Minister of both Conservation and Culture and Heritage, been silent about the issue?"

Ms van Bohemen said many individuals and organisations, including the New Zealand Institute of Architects, have been eager to work with the Department of Conservation and Tuhoë leadership to develop a viable process for saving and maintaining the Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre.

"That goodwill has not been reciprocated," Ms van Bohemen said.

"Even now, it's not irrevocable. We urge Conservation officials to remember that they're not leading the Department of Demolition."

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