



# Whakatāne District Council wrote to Tūhoe requesting a friendship arrangement with the iwi.

Tūhoe, through its governance structure, Te Uru Taumatua, and council staff have been working toward this outcome to achieve benefits for both parties. We have sought and welcome a friendship with the council because the iwi wants more than the formal, contractual relationship that exists now.

Tūhoe believe the relationship in existence now between ratepayers and territorial authorities limits how the iwi and council might work together to solve existing and foreseeable problems.

Until recent times, Tūhoe's relationship with the council has been utilitarian, devoid of emotion. It has never encompassed the possibility of dealing with matters beyond what is prescribed in legislation.

**Tūhoe envisages friendship** with the council taking us beyond simply being a ratepayer with rights to submit to annual and long-term plans.

We would like to help the council achieve goals that dovetail with ours. For example, the council might one day conclude it cannot afford to renew the Ruatoki water supply so it complies with tougher Government-imposed standards taking effect in 2025.

Tūhoe could react in bloody-minded fashion and point out the supply is a council responsibility the latter is obliged to upgrade. Or, **Te Uru Taumatua might respond by inviting the council's engineers to work with the iwi's to design a supply that meets future requirements, one the iwi would be happy to negotiate owning.**



Co-operation over essential community assets could extend to flexibility on the council's part over developments such as the **eco-villages Tūhoe intends establishing for its people.**

We are not interested in just building houses - **we want to build communities that foster community spirit and people caring for each other. Our eco-villages will create a soft environmental footprint.** Inhabitants will live in beautiful homes, not just affordable homes. The villages will harness the sun for energy and process their own waste water, building on the experience and lessons already learned through significant iwi building projects completed at Taneatua, Ruatāhuna and Waikaremoana.

**Our offer of friendship invites the council to contribute toward this goal, this dream - and we are not asking for money.**

We want the council to accommodate our alternative thinking. And by 2030 Tūhoe would like to be involved in decision-making alongside the council that goes beyond the structured interactions of today. We think we should have a governing role when it comes to our rohe (homeland) and people.

Our friendship commitment invites the council to share power with Tūhoe, rather than consider the iwi to be simply a ratepayer and its people voters.

**Ideally, this friendship will foster neighborliness and familiarity.**

Tūhoe and the council will learn more about each other's talents, networks and abilities. When we speak, people from our two organisations need to be on a first-name basis. We will help each other and share responsibilities.

And while some may see this friendship proposal as a raid on local government democracy, a watering down of the council's power and authority, this is not the objective.



**For Tūhoe, friendship with the council would acknowledge and restore a native government component that was in place long before the Westminster system of government took hold in New Zealand. One based on the virtue of collective decision-making rather than individualism, privilege or entitlement.**

In pre-European times iwi were responsible at the political level for the health, welfare, safety and happiness of its people. During the past 170 years, however, Tūhoe people have experienced being marginalised and devalued, and the view nothing in the iwi's culture is worthwhile, nothing in our traditions or beliefs is proper or decent. Disappointment flowing from that has focused our minds on what works and what does not, and how we may incorporate or return to old ways to improve life today at a personal and family level.

We now think we have a viewpoint that is beneficial to all.

We have lived with district councils and other similar entities for nearly two centuries. We know how they are structured, the way they operate and their risks, benefits and threats.

Today, we do not want the council to think it has to do everything. There are things Tūhoe people believe we can do better than the council in our own rohe, and there are lots of things that can be done better together.

**Tūhoe is committed to adopting eco-villages, solar electricity and other environmental advances to counter threats such as climate change and social neglect.**

We are pushing Tūhoe people to adopt and represent this way of living and we want to know if this is friendly to the council. We're not sure exactly what the council contribution might be, but we have some ideas.

Tūhoe could continue to live in a relationship with the council that is merely transactional, but we prefer and are ready for a deeper one.

**We welcome the council's request for a friendship based on respect and personal connections.**