

# TE UREWERA

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Te Urewera aims for re-opening late January under pandemic response plan

Te Urewera Board is working towards re-opening Te Urewera to the public and Tūhoe users for a shortened summer season of recreation, including hunting, tramping, boating, fishing, and camping at the end of January, to allow vulnerable local communities the opportunity to prepare for a post-elimination world, Te Urewera Board chair Tāmati Kruger announced today.

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 (visitors).

The Board is responsible for speaking for Te Urewera, which was recognised as a legal personality in its own right by Te Urewera Act in 2014. The Board exercises legal authority under the Act, including responsibilities for health and safety and Te Urewera's pandemic response.

"We are grateful for the patience and sacrifice of the many New Zealanders who love Te Urewera during this time," Mr Kruger said.

"Te Urewera is unique. Unlike New Zealand's national parks, it is the home of Tūhoe communities, including some of the country's most remote and vulnerable populations during the current pandemic. The health and wellbeing of the environment, of Tūhoe, and of our welcome guests have always been, and remain, intertwined."

Mr Kruger said that health and safety would continue to be the paramount consideration in terms of access to Te Urewera during the summer.

Final decisions about re-opening and subsequent access would be made with reference to the comprehensive COVID response plan for Tūhoe communities developed by Te Uru Taumatua (the Tūhoe iwi authority). Factors that will be considered include vaccination levels and up to date information from regional hospitals – Whakatane, Rotorua, Wairoa, and Gisborne – about their capacity to handle active cases.

Te Uru Taumatua, the Tūhoe iwi authority, has developed a vaccination workforce as well as providing transport and drop-in centres in its iwi clinics. It is also investing in dedicated isolation and quarantine facilities and equipment, to match the standards of MIQ facilities.

"We must all play our part during this difficult time," Mr Kruger said. "Our regional health professionals are doing the best they can with limited resources, and Tūhoe are working round the clock to prepare local communities for the country opening up after the end of the elimination strategy. Te Urewera Board is thankful for the continued understanding of the public to keep our communities safe, even if it means a significantly shorter summer season this year than we are all used to."

The period to re-opening will be used by Tūhoe and the Department of Conservation to work together on necessary maintenance and repair of infrastructure to ensure an appropriate standard of care, safety, and experience for recreational users in the summer season.

“Te Urewera Board and Tūhoe remain committed to providing for Te Urewera as a place for public use and enjoyment, for recreation, learning, and spiritual reflection,” Mr Kruger said. “Our journey is towards a better standard of care for nature, which in turn leads to a better experience for manuhiri and the local community by reducing environmental impacts, providing a more authentic experience, and preserving this unique and special place.”

Investments in the continued evolution of Te Urewera include:

- Tūhoe bush crews combining modern conservation techniques with relearning and teaching traditional knowledge of Te Urewera’s unique ecological system, leading to innovations in pest control and research to understand the effects of climate change.
- Successful pilots of tall oil pitch, a sustainable roading material which Tūhoe has developed with WSP to surface the currently-gravel Special Purpose Road 38 through Te Urewera. This will reduce the long-term effects of dust contamination of lakes and waterways, vehicle safety risk, and avoid the need for petroleum-based seals. The “Road to Nature” includes plans to give travelers greater access to heritage adventure, streams, and rivers along the route.
- In addition, Tūhoe is investing in a custom-built electric passenger boat, to replace previous water taxis and reduce fuel pollution on Lake Waikaremoana, the North Island’s purest large lake.



Tāmāti Kruger  
Chair  
Te Urewera Board

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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 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.