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Ken hangs up his District Engineer hat



District Engineer Ken Thompson inspects the successful Tetleys Quarry Reservoir one last time.

If residents have comments to make about local roads, footpaths, water, wastewater or rubbish services, District Engineer Ken Thompson will often receive them personally in the street.

It's something he has valued in his 14½-year Council career. "In a small community you feel really involved with what you're doing to keep the public well served with infrastructure," he says. "If you don't hear anything, it usually means people are happy."

Ken, who retires at the end of this month, was first employed with an engineering consultancy company that managed part of the State Highway network when he came to New Zealand from the Johannesburg area in 1998.

He became the Council's District Engineer in January 2001, and the now 70-year-old says the Council has been excellent to work for on a person-to-person level. "We've been more than

a team – almost like a family. That's how closely staff and Councillors work together."

One rewarding project for Ken has been the Paeroa streetscape development, which he was involved in from start to finish. "It has fulfilled its purpose well."

He says it has also been very satisfying to have managed water upgrades at Kerepehi, Paeroa, and Waihi; to have a supplementary water supply underway for Waihi; and to get the Tetleys Quarry reservoir up and running.

When Ken recommended the raw water storage facility to Council, there was a lot of debate and it was a challenge getting agreement to stop quarrying work, he recalls. "But the quarry was losing money as a commercial operation, and the sorely needed reservoir has stood us in good stead for the last two summers."

In roading, too, he has always tried to get the best value for money, both in capital works and maintenance.

While much of his management time has been spent in the office, Ken says there's "no substitute for going and seeing things on the ground, particularly in early planning stages." He has been pleased to see projects completed on time and on budget, and sometimes exceeding what was planned.

After July, Ken intends on "taking a long weekend" – about six months long – to enjoy some woodworking, cycling, walking, extra time with his five grandchildren, and visits to family in Australia and South Africa.

New engineering manager takes the helm



Adrian de Laborde is keen to take on the new challenge of Engineering Services Manager for Hauraki.

Adrian de Laborde thrives on a challenge – an attribute that will be vital in his new role as Council's Engineering Services Manager from 1 August.

"Councils are having to meet progressively higher standards; to do more with less," says the 46-year-old. "Funding issues mean we need to find creative ways to manage projects. Moving into a technological era, there are many challenges and also possibilities."

Adrian gained his engineering degree and a post-graduate educational qualification in his native South Africa, where he lived in the town of Howick in the Natal Midlands area and worked in Durban. He spent a decade teaching engineering at university before immigrating with his family to New Zealand in mid-2006 and joining the Council as a Development Engineer.

At the end of October that year, Adrian became manager of our Technical Services Business

Unit which provides professional in-house engineering services to the Council.

Some of the major projects he and his team have managed include the Kerepehi water treatment plant, Waihi and Paeroa water treatment upgrades, the Tetleys Quarry reservoir at Waitakaruru, the Benner Drive residential subdivision, and the Kerepehi industrial estate. But the most prominent has been the Hauraki Rail Trail, which last year won the MartinJenkins Award for Local Economic Contribution at the inaugural Local Government New Zealand Excellence Awards.

"The trail is very visible, whereas a lot of our work is either buried or hidden in concrete buildings," says Adrian. But it's not where he spends his leisure time – despite an interest in mountain biking – after years of living and breathing it almost every working day.

Rather than the satisfaction of "finished products", he has most enjoyed the diversity of his job and of nurturing a strong team: things that won't change when he succeeds retiring District Engineer Ken Thompson. He says both his current role and his new one "cover a wide engineering field, and need a whole team of professionals. I'm going into a healthy team."

In 2011 Adrian completed a Master of Business Administration degree through the University of Waikato. "I've also gained from Ken's knowledge and guidance as I've worked with him. He runs a tight ship and I'll be looking to build on what he has developed."

Away from the office and project sites, Adrian enjoys the great Kiwi outdoors on his bike, jogging, and hiking; and would like to try his hand at trout fishing. He and his family are proud New Zealanders – and yes, they do support the All Blacks and the Black Caps!

Paeroa's new RV Friendly Village a New Zealand first

Earlier this month New Zealand's first purpose built, Recreational Vehicle (RV) friendly lifestyle village for retirees or over-55s, was officially opened on Taylor Avenue, Paeroa. Just 1100 m from the Paeroa CBD and supermarket, Hauraki Village offers an easy care lock-and-leave lifestyle with RV parking alongside each house, surveillance cameras on the entranceway, and a communal wash down area for emptying RV waste water tanks. The first unit, built as a showhome, has already been sold.

"It's all about peace of mind," says owner and developer Peter Rudkin, "People can escape and enjoy their travels, knowing everything is taken care of back at home. When they are back home they are surrounded by like-minded people to share their travel stories with and their RV can be used as a quiet spare room."

He came up with the idea during conversations with people in what he describes as the "transitional stage" of life.

"For a growing number of these transitional folk, retirement means having the freedom to do the things they've always wanted to do. For many, that's travelling the country in a self contained motor home," he says, "A lot (of these people) have RV vehicles, but find it difficult to find a place where they can keep an RV vehicle."

Doing more homework, Rudkin found lock-up-and-go style villages with provision to park an RV vehicle right alongside homes were not uncommon in Europe and Australia, but to the best of his knowledge no one was offering a similar service in New Zealand. Paeroa was chosen because of its growth potential and central location.

Joining a large crowd at the official opening of the village, Hauraki District Mayor John Tregidga and his wife Evelyn were impressed with the quality and layout of the first of up to 30 homes to be built on the site.

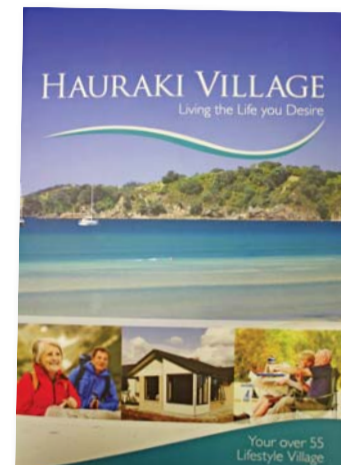
"On the way here, Evelyn asked if I was taking her to see our next step and let's just say, I think it's a great concept that will do very well and I haven't ruled it out," the Mayor said on the night.

"The country as a whole is faced with an ageing population and I think Paeroa is perfectly placed to make the most of that. We're a 90 minutes comfortable drive to Auckland, and even closer to Hamilton and Tauranga. We have a supportive and caring community, and Thames, Tauranga and Waikato Hospitals are all just a short drive away. Lifestylers could sell up in Auckland, buy a home in Paeroa and still have money in the bank to enjoy a great lifestyle," he said.

Rudkin made particular mention at the opening of the progressive, business friendly service he received from Hauraki District Council throughout the project. In particular the planning and engineering staff.

"They don't try to stop you from doing things, they work hard on helping you find ways to do things," he said.

"Creating an enabling environment throughout Council ensuring we roll out the red carpet and not the red tape is part of our Economic Development Strategy," said Paeroa Ward Councillor and Economic Development Committee Chair, Toby Adams, who also attended the opening night. "We've been working really hard to create a business ready, sustainable Hauraki and hearing comments like this one is not only very heartening, it shows we are heading in the right direction."



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