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New lease of life for town landmark

WELCOME IN: Post Office lessee and Information Centre service provider Michael Tansey, with Positive Paeroa town promoter Jo Tilsley, look forward to getting the information hub up and running.

Michael and Trina Tansey are excited about opening the doors of the Paeroa Post Office building to the public again.

The local residents of almost 20 years are directors of Paeroa Information Hub (2015) Ltd which has leased the Council-owned 1926 building for nine years. This landmark will now be home to Positive Paeroa and to the Paeroa Information Centre. Michael and Trina will run the Information Centre as contractors to Positive Paeroa.

In a venture that Michael describes as a leap of faith, builders have been working hard to transform the old customer service area into an open-plan space that will be ready for use soon. The ground floor will also incorporate a cycle hire facility for users of the nearby Hauraki Rail Trail, and a small retail area selling locally and New Zealand crafted products. JP services will be available, too.

Further visitor and information-focused enterprises will potentially operate from the building once the core services are established. "We want to reinvigorate the Post Office as a fantastic local and regional information hub, open seven days a week," says Michael.

After 17 years of providing unofficial information through their former business Paeroa Take Note, he and Trina have lots of ideas, and envisage that some employment opportunities will be created going forward. "But we're in virgin territory and will be taking things gently, in step

with what's happening and what's wanted in our town."

The internal refit will be progressive, in keeping with the era of the building and its Category 2 registration with Heritage New Zealand. The Council will continue to use upper floor offices there until the new Paeroa Library is built, freeing up space at the main Council office.

Councillor Julie Bubb says the Post Office building's new purpose is a "dream come true. It's easily the most visible building in Paeroa, and its central location makes it absolutely ideal as a promotional hub. I can't think of a better use for it, and having Positive Paeroa and the Information Centre under one roof will streamline the crossover services."

Positive Paeroa town promoter Jo Tilsley can't wait to welcome people into her new office, where the "jail bars" from its banking heyday have been removed from the windows. Most remnants of the past mail, telegraph, telephone and registry office services have likewise gone, but the original customer counter will soon be back in use, and Jo says the Post Office building "still belongs to Paeroa. We're just its custodians."

The Council purchased the building 11 years ago to prevent it falling into decay; and a \$560,000 streetscape enhancement project around it during 2008 and 2009 won a gold award from the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.

New information centre will bring Post Office building alive again

The future direction of the Paeroa Information Centre has been assured under a new Council contract, awarded this month to Positive Paeroa.

The town promotion agency's chairman Thomas Lawlor says he and his committee are excited that the three-year contract has paved the way to a fitting new location just across the street in Normanby Road.

"It will make the old Post Office come alive again. The Information Centre will have very good frontpeople in our contractors Michael and Trina Tansey, and it will be great to have the Paeroa Information Hub open seven days a week."

Positive Paeroa has already been providing a caretaker Information Centre service from pint-sized premises since March. Until then, the Paeroa Cafe and Bar ran the Information Centre in the L&P Cafe building for 6½ years. However, Councillor Julie Bubb says that with the two entities sited at opposite ends of town, they often did each other's work to help

people calling in, resulting in unnecessary duplication and creating a "grey area".

The cafe advised the Council in March that it wished to assign the balance of its current contract until June 2015 to Positive Paeroa – which wanted to take on the role. The ensuing interim contract was extended until 30 September, giving the Council time to consider Long Term Plan submissions on the funding of information services and review how these services should be provided.

The new contract with Positive Paeroa, effective until the end of June 2018, confirms continuing Council support of \$58,000 for the supply of Paeroa Information Centre services over the coming year. The Council believes that combining the two agencies will save on their overhead costs, and deliver good quality services to the District's businesses, residents and visitors. It also means the Council will only need to engage with one organisation for the provision of two services.



LABOUR OF LOVE: the volunteers prepare a new barbecue site.

Heavyweight clean-up at Ray's Rest

When it rains and rains and rains, and there are strong winds to boot, who'd want to camp at the beach in mid-July?

Answer: 46 members of the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association on a weekend mission to spruce up Ray's Rest reserve at Kaiaua. It was the third year running that the Heavyweights (big bus owners) have held the event, and though it was billed as 'Blokes Rally for a Clean-up', women and even some children pitched in.

They came from Auckland, Paeroa, Hikutaia, Katikati and as far as Tokoroa in 23 motorhomes, donned coats and hi-vis vests, and spent a day clearing rubbish from the popular campervan area. "We filled the trailer that the Council provided for the purpose," said one member. There would have been a full tonne of rubbish."

Despite getting a soaking and having three of their gazebos destroyed by a mini-tornado, the group also trimmed trees, planted two pohutukawas to replace specimens that had died, and removed two ageing public barbecues to install new ones in their place.



AL FRESCO DINING: Ailse De Man tests the new facilities.

The barbecues were funded by the Council and custom-made by local company Quinn Engineering, based on a design photographed by a Paeroa NZMCA member at Te Kuiti's Viaduct Reserve. They're mounted on poles and can be rotated 360 degrees to obtain shelter from wind blowing in any direction – as was well tested when the barbecues were put to immediate use.

"We use Ray's Rest ourselves, and helping to look after it is a way we can give something back to the community," says Heavyweights vice chairman Keith Fowell. "It's just what we do, in partnership with the Council, and we love doing it."

In previous Kaiaua working weekends the busmen have dismantled old park furniture, put up new picnic tables and benches, replaced barbecue plates, and brought their own digger, roller and tractor to refurbish the unsealed road within the reserve.

Unsafe alley remains closed

Why is the pedestrian accessway next to 100% Wood Appliances in Paeroa's main street still closed? That's a question some locals have been asking.

The gates of the well-used alley between Belmont Road and Paeroa Domain were locked shut after a fire in the store on its north side in the early hours of 3 June. The roof collapsed and a man living in residential accommodation in the building died in the blaze.

Almost two months later, the front and back of the building look the same as previously, but the unseen middle section was extensively damaged, making the accessway unsafe to use. Inspection showed that some parts of wall were leaning into the alley, and some quite large areas of plaster at first-floor level weren't securely attached to the brickwork of the wall.

Before the alley can be re-opened, a structural engineer's report is needed and any rehabilitation measures detailed in it will have to be carried out by the Auckland-based building owners. Council engineering staff believe it will be necessary to demolish at least the walls at issue, if not a major part of the building – which will keep the pedestrian shortcut off limits for some time.

Dog owners - Get in quick!

The final day for dog registration payments is Friday 31 July 2015.

A penalty fee will be added to your dog registration fees in August if you have not registered your dog(s) in time.

You can pay at any office by cheque, cash, eftpos or credit card, online by credit card or by internet banking (full amount please). If paying by internet banking, please remember to send in your signed dog registration form. Be in quick to avoid that penalty fee!

If you no longer have a dog, or you have any changes, please contact any of our Council offices at Paeroa, Waihi or Ngatea or phone 07 862 8609 / 0800 834 734 (within district), and speak with one of our helpful Customer Service Advisors.

