

Te Ahu Concept Design Review Report 2009

12 February 2009

A new cultural facility, Te Ahu, is planned for the Te Rarawa Runanga / Far North Community Centre site in Kaitaia. Development of the facility has advanced to the point where an architectural Concept Design has been completed and a review of the Te Ahu vision and concept has been initiated. The Consultant's involvement in this review process is covered by the brief attached as Annex 1. Current understandings of the Te Ahu Trust's vision and the Concept Designs were considered and discussed with the Trust at a meeting in Kaitaia Monday 9 February. This final report results from those discussions.

'e kore e ngaro nga purapura i ruia mai i Rangiatea'

The seeds that were sown in Rangiatea will never be lost

Vision

Te Ahu is a cultural hub that embodies the identity of the seven peoples of this unique part of the world, Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish. It will speak of our unique sense of place and self. It will attract, involve, stimulate, excite and connect citizens and visitors. We aim high, to make Te Ahu a national, and even world, leader as an integrated activity-based and fun attraction based on a mix of celebration, learning, performance, and events that knows few boundaries and that optimises the use of appropriate and ever changing information and experience technologies.

Te Ahu – An Extraordinary Experience

An integrated cultural experience of great power will not only offer new levels of service to the people of the Far North – it will engender bright pride among us. We are a cohesive society yet one made up of different peoples. We will build an experience redolent of our pride in people and place – a quintessential expression of our nation.

Te Ahu: Vision

1. The Trust, acting in a community leadership role, envisions Te Ahu as the principal cultural venue for the Northern Ward and a potent educational and experiential resource for all people in the Far North. Their vision for Te Ahu, tested by consultation and now a design process, reflects the unique nature of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish and of the values and tikanga / codes of behaviour and practice of the seven peoples of the area. It is a vision that remains resilient and can be expressed with ever growing conviction and confidence.
2. The Trust's vision and values have been drawn together to direct and give guidance to the design process. These are set out in the Concept Design (December 2008) document.¹ The vision and values arise out of the Trust's ongoing consultation efforts greatly strengthened by three important hui held at Motuti, Kareponia and Kauhanga marae. They are cast in language that arises out of negotiation and accord. They reflect the ideals of a community reaching for shared, as well as culturally specific, aspirations and the stuff that helps build and maintain a cohesive and vibrant society. As is so often the case it is the need to define and form an actual building for a cultural entity that focuses these discussions and negotiations. The Trust's vision for Te Ahu and the values that define its qualities can be drawn together as follows:²

'e kore e ngaro nga purapura i ruia mai i Rangiatea'

The seeds that were sown in Rangiatea will never be lost

Kaipupuri o nga taonga i tuku iho	We are the vessels of the gifts that have been bestowed upon us
Kaitiakitanga o te taiao	We are committed to the guardianship of the environment
ki te manaaki (Tanga) i o manuhiri	We are committed to being exceptional hosts
Mana Matauranga	We accept responsibility for imparting our knowledge

¹ For an initial summary of vision and operational form see Ken Gorbey *Te Ahu: A Feasibility Report* December 2007; for the summation of architectural development see Chow:Hill *Te Ahu Concept Design* December 2008.

² Note that it is the philosophical underpinnings of Te Ahu that are scanned here – specific architectural brief references are omitted.

Te Ahu – An Introduction

Kaitaia is the main town for the ‘real Far North’, steeped in the heritage of Maori settlement, European gum-diggers and farmers, and the unspoiled Northland coast that continues to attract local and international visitors. That rich heritage, particularly the deep Maori culture and established Dalmatian community, is part of the cultural history that Te Ahu will treasure and celebrate. A variety of functions, serving both locals and visitors, will provide a cultural hub for Kaitaia and the Far North. With support from a range of community and financial bodies, Te Ahu will deliver cultural activities to be shared by locals and visitors. The museum, gallery and cultural centre will attract tourists, locals and education groups, and the I-site is a critical part of Northland’s visitor services. Te Ahu will express the past and the future for the local community, and signal to visitors the special qualities of Northland’s people and place. It will be a sustainable place – that works environmentally, socially, culturally and economically now and into the future.

Principles Guiding the Te Ahu Design Process

- **Kua Tika Tonu** – that is to say, is it being developed in accord with Tikanga. This is about doing the right things and doing them the right way. The convening of marae-based information gathering and consultation hui are sound examples of a tika approach;
- **He Pono Marika** – that is to say, philosophy and intent interpretation and representation reflect Maori belief systems in accord with a Maori world view and kaupapa. This is about ensuring the manner in which the design proposition is interpreted, applied, utilised and promoted ‘rings true’; and
- **Me Aroha Noa** – it is inclusive, it extends invitations to others, is it open, like the open-armed welcoming gesture of the whare nui. The full participation of tribal representatives on the design committee is seen to reflect aroha.
- Te Ahu shall achieve manaaki tangata (showing respect, extending hospitality to the visitor); tumanako (engendering a sense of creativity or desire) and whakamana (successfully achieves the projection of a Maori world view as a basis of contemporary expression).

Te Ahu values

The Trust’s values reflect:

- the traditional principle of tukutuku, the needle enabling us to be connected to everywhere;

- the mana of the ancestry of the tribes, their spirituality, and the Trust's role as creator of a future that enables the people of Kaitaia to relate at a central place of expression of their sense of belonging;
- a desire for Te Ahu to be a significant and respected repository and referral source of heritage, taonga, arts and crafts, information and reference material on the Far North; and
- aspirations for Te Ahu to be recognised globally as an authentic cultural visitor experience and cultural entity.

Te Ahu Logo

These values are reflected in the concept behind the Te Ahu logo. The design of the logo combines historical and cultural information pertaining to Kaitaia and the Far North, drawing on traditional Maori art forms, resulting in a contemporary piece. The central kowhaiwhai pattern could be referred to as the manawa line or heart line – symbolic of what we envision the Te Ahu complex to be. It stands at the heart of the community, a central hub/meeting place, from which things flow and into which flows much energy. Again, this is symbolic of the blood of our various peoples, connecting us back to our tupuna/ancestors, to ourselves of today and those yet to be born. The digit like ends of the large koru are as fingers reaching out; to welcome manuhiri, to embrace the locals and stretching up to the heights of Ranginui and are as toes firmly grounding us on Papatuanuku. The logo design pulls together not only the people of the North but their history too, as well as presenting a warm and positive image to visitors to the area.

Te Ahu: Project Vision

3. The Consultant has reviewed the Trust's declarations of vision and value, as expressed above and in various previous documents. They represent a powerful set of statements on which has been founded a concept for Te Ahu as a cultural entity of critical importance to the peoples of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish. Further, he has now had the opportunity to be part of a lengthy and detailed discussion on the aspirations for Te Ahu at a Trust meeting held in Kaitaia Monday 9 February 2009. It is evident that the concept has, and continues to, mature and to respond to criticisms and suggestions from the community. The time is right to bring all together into a form that they can best support the next project phase of action, that is the actual achievement of Te Ahu on the Te Rarawa Runanga / Far North Community Centre site in Kaitaia.

4. In this section the Consultant, as a project developer with a record of clarifying and achieving cultural projects, seeks to compliment the Trust’s vision and values to create a foundation for this project phase. The structured approach that is applied seeks to give clarity and a high level of certainty to all planning, to enable consistent decision making and facilitate effective, and cost-effective, action. This extension of the Trust’s vision covers: Expanded Vision; Public Good (Identity and Economic Growth); Audience; Differentiator; Values; Scope; and Management.

5. Expanded Vision

The vision stated in late 2007 was:

“Te Ahu is a cultural hub that embodies the identity of the people of this unique part of the world, Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish. It will attract, involve, excite and connect citizens and visitors with a stimulating mix of programmes, experiences and services. It will become known as a benchmark for all future cultural institution developments in the nation.”³

6. This vision has been considerably thickened through consultation and as a result of the architectural design work. This expanded vision can be stated as:

“Te Ahu is a cultural hub that embodies the identity of the seven peoples of this unique part of the world, Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish. It will speak of our unique sense of place and self. It will attract, involve, stimulate, excite and connect citizens and visitors. We aim high, to make Te Ahu a national, and even world, leader as an integrated activity-based and fun attraction based on a mix of celebration, learning, performance, and events that knows few boundaries and that optimises the use of appropriate and ever changing information and experience technologies.”

7. Te Ahu is of the seven peoples of this unique part of the world – the place in which we live. The concept recognises that each of the peoples is distinct but fully integrated; they live and work together as whanau. The identity of each, and the broad society that they together have forged, will be found in everything Te Ahu does. In part, the future they envision will be formulated at Te Ahu. Te Ahu is seen to stand at the heart of the community, a focal point for a rich and stimulating mix of learning and cultural pursuits, programmes and experiences. Te Ahu will be a place of activity and of fun. It will become known as a benchmark for all

³ This and all subsequent quotes are from the December 2007 report by Gorbey (footnote 1)

future community institution developments in the nation. Further Te Ahu will offer a unique, world leading, integrated Museum and Library experience. In summary:

- Te Ahu is a place of activity, fun, excitement and involvement;
- Here the seven peoples, each distinct but living together in a cohesive and integrated society, project their mana, strengthen their sense of community and work together as whanau;
- Te Ahu is a focal point of community activity, the principal cultural venue for the Northern Ward and a potent educational resource; and
- Te Ahu is a world leading community facility featuring a unique integrated Museum and Library experience.

8. Public Good – Identity

The 2007 concept for Te Ahu as a place of living cultural identity through experience and activity not only remains valid, but is reinforced. Te Ahu is:

“a place that reinforces concepts of identity among all the people of the Far North. The richness of diversity is honoured; the place and contribution of Maori, Pakeha, Dalmatian, and other cultures is acknowledge and is given expression within Te Ahu; information is made available to all; in this way pride and confidences among the peoples is advanced.”

That is, Te Ahu will be in the first instance be an expression of the identity and cultural needs of the seven peoples, Te Rarawa; Ngati Kahu; Ngati Kuri; Te Aupouri; Nga Takoto; Ngati Pakeha; and Ngati Tarara (Dalmatian), and the society they have together forged and continue to grow. Each of the peoples will have their place to stand, as will Papatuanuku – the place in which they live.

9. Public Good – Economic Growth

It is also envisioned that Te Ahu will encourage tourism by being an attractive destination for domestic and international visitors. It will be an attractor that has the ability to extend duration of stay and spend per head. In this way it will enhance the economy of the Far North.

10. Audience

While the primary propose of Te Ahu is to serve the citizens of the Far North, perhaps best represented by the concept of whanau / family, it is also seen as enhancing the economy of

the Far North by encouraging tourism. The people will both connect with, and express, their sense of identity to, visitors both domestic and international.

11. Differentiator

The Te Ahu concept is driven by a perceptive and thoughtful vision that has the ability to be prototypical – a benchmark for communities seeking to grow their cultural institutions for the betterment of modern society. Drawing on the strengths of tradition, but not stultified by ways of doing things that rest in the past, the new concept fundamentally shifts the idea of the cultural institution forward into the 21st century to draw together information with collections and archives in an environment of optimised information technologies and supporting national strategies. The result is a wonderful, interactive, hands-on, information-rich three dimensional environment, one rooted in the experience and aspirations of the contemporary peoples of the Far North. Te Ahu is concept that has, in a very real sense, few boundaries but instead is one that grows and reforms as the form of its owner communities develop and grow. Further, the expansion of the concept to include the hall and theatre allows a much stronger offering of programmed events. Te Ahu can be an attraction like no other and one that is totally unexpected.

12. This is Te Ahu’s differentiator – the single large demonstrable idea that at a level of public perception sets it off from competitors and all others in its zone of influence. This idea gives marketing advantage. A hypothetical description of the differentiator as experience is replicated here (see para 40 for the full hypothetical experience description) to give a “flavour” of this key element of the Te Ahu concept:

“Directly opposite the main entry is a scene of strong visual and cultural impact. The cultural uniqueness of the North is apparent in the mix of cherished ancient art works and carvings along with contemporary forms that talk of the whakapapa of the seven peoples. This configuration forms part of the tangata whenua’s formal ceremonial progression into Te Ahu. But it is more than this – for the international visitor it is a point of visual splendour that holds within it the cultural strength of the people they have come to meet; for the local people it is an affirmation of identity and place.

This visual and spiritual “anchor” also forms the entry to the experience that differentiates Te Ahu from all others. It is part of what visitors have come to see. Imagine this: the former visit to the library or museum is replaced by a visit to Te Ahu.

The old library services and museum collections are now re-created as a series of powerful themes that are back by staff skill sets. Here is the current temporary offering – the theme is “Catastrophe” (people love catastrophe). The Far North has suffered a few over the last 120,000 years we learn from Auckland University research work. What might we expect in the future? Read this! Follow this line of enquiry on the web! Dip into the Digital New Zealand holdings via the special information station. Speak directly on-line with researcher John Ogden. See the artefacts, old and modern day, that relate to the subject. Learn about Gumdiggers Park at Awanui – how did those Kauri trees fall? Visit it! Come to the civil defence demonstration next weekend – here at Te Ahu.

Or visit (across the cash filter – locals free!) the standing exhibitions, each with its own informational core, featuring and authored by the seven people. The standing exhibitions are an attraction to locals and out of area visitors. The stories of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish are told in an interactive manner that draw visitors into an engagement with peoples with a rich heritage living in a unique environment. The exhibitions arise out of the aspirations of the seven peoples and are not imposed upon them. Each of the peoples has determined what is important and an approach that they are comfortable with. A people’s segment might explore their rich history, their distinctiveness as well as their integration. Some might touch on the more difficult tainted elements of history, sometime termed “dark history.” Segments will examine the land that we live upon, nurture and pass on to future generations. The displays recognise that Te Ahu is a microcosm of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish, and that the real attraction for visitors is out there scattered across the countryside. Te Ahu links people to the wonders of the region and encourages people to journey to see and experience the places that make the Far North unique.

Here is a single, greatly enriched, exciting, enlightening and absorbing experience located in a single large intelligent space. The programmes draw on informational and collection assets. Say, today a school group is doing project work that requires guidance in research skills and discrimination in selecting (and rejecting) and personalising information from different sources. They are using, among other tools, an outreach station of the National Library of New Zealand’s “Aotearoa People’s Network” to bring rich informational and visual resources to their work, as well as

make direct contact with subject experts in New Zealand and around the world. The Conferencing facility is in use so that the lucky class can talk, and do joint research, with colleagues back at school and elsewhere. Note that later in the visit this class will rotate with others of their school who have bussed to Te Ahu, and work in the hall on another activity. In the archive area a person has travelled from afar to research the genealogy of their family. Local people are changing books. Those wishing to “cross the digital divide” are attending a computer course. Staff and volunteers are available to assist.”

13. Values

Te Ahu will operate to a set of shared values – understandings that all involved will embrace and work to as a means of creating something extraordinary. The intensive effort of the Concept Design process has allowed these Values to be grown as people delve deeper into what it is that Te Ahu will bring to the whole community. A “project mode” oriented value set is listed here that compliments, in many cases replicates, those already established by Te Ahu Trust (see para 2 above). It must be stressed that these will continue to be debated and refined, particularly as Te Ahu is established as an actual operating entity and these values are **lived**.

14. *Value 1: we accept and celebrate all peoples and cultures*

Te Ahu strengthens our sense of self by embracing all the peoples of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish, and our visitors. We respect each other, celebrating our differences and yet also strengthening the commonalities that bind us together. We undertake to continue to learn about each other and to grow our sense of cohesive community through ‘hui’, learning and play. We will plan our future together. A key feature of Te Ahu will be the celebration, in the broadest and most encompassing sense, of each people in each of the principal Te Ahu spaces. There will be a broad range of learning mechanisms and opportunities for expression of our different cultures through display of arts and crafts, music, food, dance and other cultural manifestations.

15. *Value 2: we share the ownership of Te Ahu*

We govern and operate Te Ahu in such a way that ownership rest with the people of our community. We build a culture that encourages the people of the Far North to actively influence its direction and operation. We will formally seek ways of receiving feedback

and representation from all the seven peoples in such matters as policy, programme, practice and operation.

16. *Value 3: the tikanga / the codes of behaviour and practice, of the peoples guide us*

We honour the place of our ancestors, our heritage, the beliefs and stories we hold dear, and the tangible products of our creativity and of our life.

17. *Value 4: this is a social space where all peoples and cultures come together and become involved*

We place greatest emphasis on families / whanau learning, contributing, meeting, recreating, resting and engaging. Te Ahu will be a place of gathering. We will identify and grow a broad programme of different streamed activities that might range from highly active festivals, markets and commercial activities through to quiet contemplation, through exhibitions and learning programmes. Te Ahu is a place of celebration, rites of passage, perhaps even mourning. For far flung communities Te Ahu will be a place of contact, not only visiting.

18. *Value 5: we demonstrate and foster leadership*

Te Ahu is a critically important development for the whole of the Northern Ward, both in terms of scale and the impact it will have on the way our community develops into the future. We undertake to govern, manage and act to achieve the best possible outcomes for the community. We will seek to help create and nurture the leaders of the future.

19. *Value 6: responsive and responsible repository*

We continue to build community trust so that Te Ahu can grow as a place where our collections of treasures and records can be displayed and, if necessary, find a proper home. Our archives and records are available for research and are complimented by our growing ability to access on-line data from national and global sources.

20. *Value 7: outstanding customer service*

We acknowledge and act on the ordinary virtue of friendly interaction with all users. We reach out to those not yet involved in what we offer and encourage participation and connection.

21. *Value 8: we strive to encourage high community usage and uptake of leading information strategies and technology*

We make contact with each other and with the world through all technologies appropriate to our needs. We will explore the opportunities present by, and become an active partner in, the Digital New Zealand strategy. The integrated Museum and Library service will be strongly focused on “e-learning” and, defying distance and isolation, will reach out to far-flung schools and communities with our uptake of contemporary communication practices. We commit to being a leader in this field and we seek the buy-in of leading hardware and software providers.

22. *Value 9: Te Ahu is an integrated cultural, educational, recreational and leisure community facility*

Te Ahu is not a re-housing of existing institutions but seeks a dramatic shift toward convergence, working under a single mission and operating culture to find new ways of engaging a greatly expanded audience. All we do is strengthened by a singular idea of self, a brand, that differentiates us from all other places and that allows us to send a consistent message to our community and our users. Te Ahu is strongly led to actively develop the strategies and programmes that make it a “natural” visit for all peoples of the Far North and our visitors.

23. Scope

The potential of the concept of Te Ahu to develop into the future has grown over the last year as community consultation, business case development, architectural design and fundraising work have advanced. Acknowledging that the expansive Te Rarawa Runanga / Far North Community Centre site, and its adjacencies, was the antithesis of a restricted Central Business District site, the original report signalled:

“This is a potentially extensive site and in choosing it the Trust looks to the constant evolution of Te Ahu over the coming decades as a cultural and service facility able to respond to new challenges and requirements. Intelligent planning will allow Te Ahu to remain ever relevant in the light of changing cultural and demographic realities.”

24. The incorporation of theatre, formal meeting and indoor event spaces, being the old Community Centre facilities, offers both opportunity and challenge. Commonly these facilities attract only intermittent use. That is, on the negative side such facilities could have

the effect of deadening the Te Ahu concept. A place that is supposed to be lively, Te Ahu, can have large spaces under-utilised for extensive periods of time. On the other hand, if actively promoted and used as extensions of all the other Te Ahu elements, they can be part of the chemistry that makes Te Ahu a living cultural centre. These theatre and events spaces, with their kitchen facilities, could form an important element of the commercial operation of Te Ahu, the site for weddings, etc, as well as events and performances.

25. In the future it might be that other elements might develop about Te Ahu's powerfully expressed core gathering and ceremonial area / entry place, that is the court fronting the main entry. This is something for the community and prudent long term planning.

26. Currently the scope of Te Ahu covers:

- ceremonial gathering and event;
- informal social gathering;
- library and informational services;
- theatre and indoor event;
- formal meeting;
- museological display and collection;
- genealogical and other research;
- video conferencing and distance learning; and
- functions associated with the Far North District Council Service Centre.

27. Management

It is stressed that to be successful the Te Ahu concept must be actively, not passively, managed to create ever expanding range of usages and a sense of life. Adventurous management can bring to the concept an ever thickening mix of activity wherein the family/whanau and visitor finds constant need to attend and use Te Ahu. Te Ahu will be all the more successful if the discipline of commercial delivery is embraced.

The Te Ahu Architectural Concept Design

28. The Consultant has been asked to review the current architectural Concept Design against the Te Ahu vision and emerge philosophical foundations. In his opinion the Designs, with their clustering of cultural and service facilities, demonstrates the great potential of the Te Ahu concept. Of particular importance is the central placement of the core gathering and entry

place, an area / court fronting the main entry. This space is destined to become the point most associated with Te Ahu both as a place of social gathering and ceremonial. It has the potential with time to be greatly strengthened as other activities become part of the Te Ahu experience.

29. The sense of approach to the building and entry, followed by the clear lateral circulation that binds all elements together, will be obvious to users. This will be an easy complex for first time visitors to relate to, navigate and locate the principal functions.
30. The Library will be the most used of all the facilities. Note that despite Te Papa being one of the most successful new museums of the last decade in the world, Wellington Public Library attracts higher visitation. The Library is well placed at the centre of Te Ahu, where it will create “buzz” – the purposeful usage by human beings that “warms” a building. Its east-facing entry is likely to be the heaviest used, in that most Library, and Te Ahu, users will arrive by car. The Library entry is offset from the main entry. This needs to be reconsidered as there is a great deal to be gained by the main experience entry addressing directly Te Ahu’s ceremonial entry (see para 36 below).
31. The current relationship Museum to Library expresses separateness and not the potential of integration. The placement of the library, informational services, and conferencing and distance learning, on one side of the Foyer Circulation Gallery, and all museum functions on the other severely compromises the integrated nature of the Te Ahu concept. Both are information-rich cultural services; internationally cultural institutions with like missions are converging as the concept of information creation, personalisation and dissemination invades older concepts of both “museum” and “library”. This is a major problem and mitigates against achieving more effective, efficient and innovative service delivery.
32. There is logic in this placement of the iSites at the main entry to Te Ahu, for example shared staffing resource and joint marketing. However, a strategy to have visitors identify the location of the iSites and have good reason to visit it will have to be developed. This will be part of the total offer of the single Te Ahu brand, such as “all forms of information are found at Te Ahu.”
33. The incorporation of the old Community Centre facilities within Te Ahu offers special

challenges and opportunities (see para 24 above).

34. The current architectural Concept Design does not address expansion in the longer term; this is being addressed.
35. This review finds that the Te Ahu Architectural Concept Design expresses the Trust's aspirations with one major exception. This is the current separation of the Museum and Library. Such a separation does not accord with the principle that Te Ahu will achieve benchmark status by being an integrated cultural experience. It is logical that the library, informational, research, conferencing, collection, distance learning and educational skills and resources of each should be merge all into a single, greatly enriched, exciting, enlightening and absorbing experience and service for all residents and visitors. To achieve this, the Library and Museum should occupy a single intelligent space. Further it is suggested that the main experience (Museum and Library) entry should stand opposite and address directly Te Ahu's ceremonial entry.

A Hypothetical Te Ahu Experience

36. The Te Ahu experience will not be that provided by a typical main street shopping visit, with Library as part of the CBD mix. The Te Rarawa Runanga / Far North Community Centre site stands outside the CBD. This constitutes a major challenge. Te Ahu will be accessed, in the main, by vehicle, as is the CBD, but unlike the CBD there will not be the large number of attractors available within walking distance of the parked car. At least in its first years, Te Ahu will not be supported by the imperative established in people minds of "experiencing" CBD shops and food outlets.
37. "Build it and they will come" only works in the films. As well as a building, Te Ahu must create a focused and singular offering of multiple experiences, programmes, activities and images that constitute a compelling idea in the minds of its users that then causes people to visit and revisit, in a manner not dissimilar to CBD shopping and socialising. Architecture, built environment and product are part, but only part, of this offering. Of equal and even greater importance are the intangibles that make a great brand – a set of values unswervingly maintained; a supportive, reliable, and friendly operational culture; a single marketing message of great clarity consistently expressed to the public and visitors by all of Te Ahu from governance down; a shared sense of institutional excitement and innovation; and a

proactive, driving and effective management. These qualities are best encouraged, disseminated and lived when expressed as brand behaviour. Brand, typically associated with the business world, is a practise that is increasingly being adopted in the cultural sphere, and with excellent results.⁴ Te Ahu is already emerging as a vision, and a set of values, beliefs and behaviours that constitute brand.

38. Part of the brand, and perhaps the factor that will make Te Ahu unique, is the way a fringe town site can draw together a multiplicity of offerings targeted at all or different members of the family/whanau, different age groups, educational parties, and out of town shoppers, as well as visitors. With time this will cause it to be regarded as a natural and extended visit for local peoples and the far-flung communities of a dispersed region. In this way that it will attain status nationally as a model of a successful and innovative community facility. However, it should be noted that such a range of activities will only be developed in an active management environment that drives for success, that does not passively wait for people to come, and that makes hard choices. Not all bright ideas can be achieved – the “low fruit” principle must be applied with the CEO and his/her staff making calls on what will constitute maximum gain for minimum outlay.
39. Because of the above factors, this hypothetical experience description places great emphasis on describing a singular branded offering of consistent quality. To simply relocate existing functions and services is to miss the opportunities inherent in full integration of all Te Ahu cultural functions, and will likely lead to valuable money and human resources being misdirected. Each element of the Te Ahu experience will answer the needs of a range of visitors, individuals and groups. These might be scanned as:
- a. individuals and family/whanau groups visiting making use of different elements of Te Ahu’s library, informational, museological, social meeting place, café, and conferencing functions;
 - b. school and community groups from Kaitaia and immediate district and from the outlying communities of the Far North making use of a cluster of Te Ahu’s functions relevant to the particular visiting group (for example, project and information research patched together with other activities offered by the town);

⁴ Te Papa has worked to establish a strong brand – the Te Papa brand, developed early, vigorously promoted, consistently communicated and not diluted by competing messages, is better known in Auckland than is the Auckland Museum brand.

- c. those attending events, theatrical performances, weddings and other rites of passage, and ceremonies made possible by and hosted within the evolving Te Ahu concept;
- d. Iwi ceremonial usage;
- e. genealogical researchers using the Museum archive collections and the informational capabilities and specialist assistance offered by Te Ahu;
- f. distance learning and community communication users; and
- g. international and domestic tourist users of the iSites and the Te Ahu experience.

40. The Te Ahu Experience

Te Ahu will be an experience of identity (it touches our experience as the peoples of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish); learning (immediate and long distant); fun (a great place for the family, and all others); comfort (a familiar place of rest), education (passing on, and forming new, knowledge and values); involvement and empowerment (a hands on place); information (community and global); communication (telling stories, crossing the digital divide and directing visitors); event (from whole day field days to smaller gathering); rites of passage (weddings, mourning, etc); and welcome (a great visitor friendly and barrier free culture). While it is too early to be definite about the nature of this experience, the Consultant here sets out one hypothetical scenario that, in his experience as an international consultant, can be achieved by a strongly branded Te Ahu.

The entry to Te Ahu is marked by a sense of “buzz”. It is a place enlivened by a diverse mix of people and by activity. This activity is that of local people visiting the exhibitions, coming to change books, doing homework, attending educational programmes and meeting friends after shopping; and domestic and international tourists seeking information and enlightenment. The great majority of users will approach by vehicle, as Te Ahu is so sited that foot traffic will be very light. The current Concept Design marks the entry from the State Highway in a strong manner culturally appropriate to the concept of Te Ahu as of the seven peoples.

The status of the entry experience is reinforced by an atea / court fronting the main entry. This is the place of ceremonial, as well as everyday, access. A Maori group might approach according to its tikanga – similarly a school party from an outlying district. Or a wedding party enters; local residents park and approach to change books, to join a programme of activity or to show with much pride “their” Te Ahu to guests;

overseas visitors alight from their camper van and approach, perhaps a little tentatively, but impressed by the cultural expressions around them that mark this as a place of the “other” cultures they have journeyed far to learn more of and meet; photographs are taken.

The doors to the Foyer Circulation Gallery are welcoming, either (seasonally) open or at least attractive to the eye and very transparent. Local people know the place well and go straight to the activity of current choice, whether that be resting on the comfortable seating, taking food, or using the various resources they know to be on offer. For all, including the more tentative overseas visitors, there is much evidence of welcome. The iSites, with its themed presentation, turns a face to the visitor that says “welcome – all forms of information are to be found here.” iSite staff promote the attractions of both Te Ahu and the whole Far North. They ticket the newly developed high value tour of the cultural and natural wonders of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish and even on occasions sell the paintings and art work displayed throughout the Foyer. They generally oversee the Foyer, undertaking duties other than just visitor information – they ticket forthcoming events and explain and direct visitors to different activities within Te Ahu. There is an awareness on the part of visitors that human faces are a strong ingredient of the culture of this place. As well as staff being immediately obvious in the iSites, ahead in the information and learning place [working title] friendly and welcoming staff are marked by the Te Ahu signifier.⁵

A café is well placed. It has an inside-outside presence easily accessible from this bustling entryway.

Directly opposite the main entry is a scene of strong visual and cultural impact. The cultural uniqueness of the North is apparent in the mix of cherished ancient art works and carvings along with contemporary forms that talk of the whakapapa of the seven peoples. This configuration forms part of the tangata whenua’s formal ceremonial progression into Te Ahu. But it is more than this – for the international visitor it is a point of visual splendour that holds within it the cultural strength of the people they

⁵ For example staff at the Jewish Museum Berlin wear their own take on black with a red specially designed scarf worn obviously but in any way the staffer chooses, say about the neck, or in the hair, or hanging from a shirt/blouse pocket.

have come to meet; for the local people it is an affirmation of identity and place.

This visual and spiritual “anchor” also forms the entry to the experience that differentiates Te Ahu from all others. It is part of what visitors have come to see. Imagine this: the former visit to the library or museum is replaced by a visit to Te Ahu. The old library services and museum collections are now re-created as a series of powerful themes that are back by staff skill sets. Here is the current temporary offering – the theme is “Catastrophe” (people love catastrophe). The Far North has suffered a few over the last 120,000 years we learn from Auckland University research work. What might we expect in the future? Read this! Follow this line of enquiry on the web! Dip into the Digital New Zealand holdings via the special information station. Speak directly on-line with researcher John Ogden. See the artefacts, old and modern day, that relate to the subject. Learn about Gumdiggers Park at Awanui – how did those Kauri trees fall? Visit it! Come to the civil defence demonstration next weekend – here at Te Ahu.

Or visit (across the cash filter – locals free!) the standing exhibitions, each with its own informational core, featuring and authored by the seven people. The standing exhibitions are an attraction to locals and out of area visitors. The stories of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish are told in an interactive manner that draw visitors into an engagement with peoples with a rich heritage living in a unique environment. The exhibitions arise out of the aspirations of the seven peoples and are not imposed upon them. Each of the peoples has determined what is important and an approach that they are comfortable with. A people’s segment might explore their rich history, their distinctiveness as well as their integration. Some might touch on the more difficult tainted elements of history, sometime termed “dark history.” Segments will examine the land that we live upon, nurture and pass on to future generations. The displays recognise that Te Ahu is a microcosm of Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish, and that the real attraction for visitors is out there scattered across the countryside. Te Ahu links people to the wonders of the region and encourages people to journey to see and experience the places that make the Far North unique.

Here is a single, greatly enriched, exciting, enlightening and absorbing experience located in a single large intelligent space. The programmes draw on informational and

collection assets. Say, today a school group is doing project work that requires guidance in research skills and discrimination in selecting (and rejecting) and personalising information from different sources. They are using, among other tools, an outreach station of the National Library of New Zealand's "Aotearoa People's Network" to bring rich informational and visual resources to their work, as well as make direct contact with subject experts in New Zealand and around the world. The Conferencing facility is in use so that the lucky class can talk, and do joint research, with colleagues back at school and elsewhere. Note that later in the visit this class will rotate with others of their school who have bussed to Te Ahu, and work in the hall on another activity. In the archive area a person has travelled from afar to research the genealogy of their family. Local people are changing books. Those wishing to "cross the digital divide" are attending a computer course. Staff and volunteers are available to assist.

Te Ahu recognises the needs of its far-flung communities with a sophisticate communication rooms that allows, for example, project groups from different schools to talk and work together and with Te Ahu staff. Iwi committees, business people and Council officers also hire these rooms to contract their business. International visitors find that this is perhaps the best facility in the North for them to link back to their homes and friends around the world.

Te Ahu management work proactively to bring new events to the theatre, hall and meeting complex, as well as continuing existing programmes. This is a place of evening functions, dance, theatre and musical performances, for visiting education tour groups such as University of the Third Age, and of meetings. Given the integrate nature of Te Ahu, class group activity flows into these facilities. On occasions it is a place of formal and impromptu welcome. These spaces, with there associated kitchen and breakout facilities, lend themselves to commercial hiring and so it is that on any particular day a wedding, or a conference is happening.

Each activity contributes further to the "buzz" of this ever growing community facility and marker of community pride.

Spatial Requirements and Relationships

41. The Concept Design document (December 2008: Section 7) sets out the broad spatial requirements to which the building complex has been designed. The building at around 3,600m², is now significantly larger than that envisaged in 2007, almost entirely the result of adding the existing Community Centre hall and theatre to the concept. This addition enriches the Te Ahu concept but also adds significant cost, both capital and operating.

42. With one exception, the Concept Design responds well to the Te Ahu concept and all principal building design implications are dealt with in a quite acceptable manner. The exception is the need for a conjoined Museum and Library to allow future integration (see paras 31 & 35 above).

43. It is likely, indeed typical of a project at this stage in design, to examine the cost of the new Te Ahu facility. If that happens the functional brief and Concept Design is likely to be reviewed and different ways of achieving the Te Ahu concept explored. For example, some functions such as Museum storage could be located in cheaper, say existing, buildings off-site; office and work area functions might be rationalised further; tighter integration; the scope, and cost, of some elements might be reduced; and staging becomes an option.

Realising Te Ahu – the Next Steps

44. The Consultant has been asked to set out the immediate next steps to develop the Te Ahu experience development, including information and education services, so as to ensure that experience implications can inform further design work. These steps are to align with the master programme.

45. The main element of this experience development work are:
 - Experience Interpretive and Programmatic Plan – a structured description of the information, education and exhibition experience and aligned programmes and a brief for building infrastructure and services required to support these;
 - Exhibition and Programme Design – the design and delivery of the exhibition experience and programmes; and
 - Institution Development Plan – the growth of the actual entity (management, staff, policy, etc) that operates Te Ahu.

46. There exists a strong logic in developing an integrated Library and Museum interpretive and programmatic plan to cover long term requirements. There are two reasons for this:
- first, the architectural design will freeze in place a set of spaces and services that it will be very costly to change in the future. Should these spaces be design to current institutional realities and perceptions they will not address the future and, when that future comes, expensive modification will be required. It is best that a broad longer term plan should guide the placement, design and construction of built spaces and services; and
 - secondly, a large part of the expenditures to be incurred by the Te Ahu Trust will be for experience fit-out, including exhibitions and IT, programme development and construction. This is currently estimated at approximately \$1.6m. It is best that this large capital outlay express the Te Ahu concept with its integrated vision for the future. To do otherwise is to build concrete exhibitions and programmes that look back at former institutional perceptions and models, with the very real risk of opening with disappointing and piecemeal experiences and programmes that do not match the rhetoric nor meet the expectations of the community, and that will require expensive modification.
47. Therefore the position is taken here that the creative team that develops the Interpretive and Programmatic Plan and then goes on to design work, will be driven by, and formed around, the following principles:
- integration of library and museum services and potentials to form a seamless experience that can respond to future information delivery developments and community needs;
 - some part of the development will be based on digital delivery with a critical input being from a design person very knowledgeable of IT and the National Library driven Digital New Zealand framework; and
 - the approach to design and delivery acknowledges, and will reflect, the limited nature of the experience budget and will use intelligent cost-limiting approaches to creating the Experience Interpretive and Programmatic Plan and designing and constructing the experience.
48. The steps necessary to achieve the Te Ahu experience in the coming design phase are:
- a. confirm Experience Budget – Te Ahu Trust – best by March 2009;

- b. create an outline Te Ahu Experience Interpretive and Programmatic Plan that sets out experience guiding philosophies and concepts, broad layouts on floor and specifies infrastructural needs – immediate start and completed and approved in time to inform Developed Design, by mid May 2009 – it is suggested that this be achieved by a small creative team of say two external consultants working with Iwi representatives and local experts, and through consulting university researchers;
- c. full Experience Interpretive and Programmatic Plan completed (if deemed to be required) with input of building contractor – start mid May 2009 and completed and approved by mid July 2009;
- d. appoint Experience Designer / Constructor / Installer – search and appoint a contract designer – search through March/April and appoint by end May 2009 (note that the design and construct process will take a full 18 months);
- e. set in place Protocols and Roles (who does what and by what means) for delivery of collections, subject research, etc) – say June 2009;
- f. Exhibition and Programme Design – commonly approved at Concept Design, Developed Design and Construction Documentation – start June 2009 and complete, install and commission by opening December 2010; and
- g. Institution Development Plan – gather information on and detail the nature of Te Ahu as a corporate entity as part of and consequential to design and operational decisions (a task taken over by the CEO when appointed) – paralleling all tasks above.

Annex 1: Proposal: Te Ahu Project Review 22 January 2009

(Note that the Deliverable has varied as the review has progressed with more emphasis placed on the concept of Masterplan as a tool for fund-raising, as well as review, purposes and less on detailed experience descriptions by like user groups and broad spatial relationships. These latter elements will be developed as Developed Design and detailed interpretive and programmatic planning progresses.)

Introduction

The client, aware that Te Ahu Project is approaching a critical point in respect of freezing architectural and business fundamentals, seeks a review of the Project to assess the match of aspiration, concept and visitor/user experience with the emerging concrete design and business realities.

Objective

Ensure that the stated aspirations of the client for a realisable Te Ahu concept are matched by design and business fundamentals within the realities of cultural requirements, site and cost.

Deliverable

Report with recommendations this to take the form of an overview master plan document for the whole facility, this to be able to be used as the key guiding document for the design team, and to have sufficient robustness to meet the requirements for applications to the Lottery Board:

1. to be headed by a plain English Concept Description that reflects the aspirations of the client, this Concept Description to be extended over the original concept to encompass the unique opportunity offered by the Te Ahu site to develop with time not just an innovative Cultural Centre but also an extension in Recreation and Leisure pursuits;
2. review the current architectural Concept Design in the light of the concept Description and comment on the alignment of the Design with the Concept with emphasis on maximizing opportunities;
3. describe the visitor and user experience over likely developmental phases that reflect moves toward integration and new forms of operation and culture:

- a. prior to full integration of all Te Ahu cultural functions;
 - b. after full integration of all Te Ahu cultural functions; and
 - c. with the growth of a full Recreation and Leisure, as well as Cultural, facility;
4. describe the visitor and user experience in terms of like groups (for example):
- h. school and community groups from Kaitaia and immediate district and from the further communities of the Far North;
 - i. those attending events, theatrical performances, and ceremonies made possible by and hosted within the evolving Te Ahu concept; (opening over extended hours)
 - j. individuals and family groups making use of Te Ahu's broad cultural and social offerings, such as library, informational, museological, meeting place / café, etc;
 - k. team and individual sports and fitness users;
 - l. genealogical researchers using the Museum archive collections and the informational capabilities and specialist research assistance;
 - m. distance learning and community communication users; and
 - n. international and domestic tourist users of the iSites and the Museum
5. set out broad spatial relationships and the links between different experiences and spaces, in sufficient detail to be clear on all principal building design implications;
6. set out the steps to develop including a information and education that incorporates Museum and Library and all other aspects of the emerging vision, this to tie into the master programme (Andrew)

Task

Examine and state the client's aspirations for the Te Ahu concept; assess and comment on the alignment of Te Ahu, as expressed currently within a set budget, architectural Concept Design, and Draft Preliminary Business Case, to this broad concept.

1. initial analysis of existing documents and plans (Consultant in Wellington);
2. set brief and preliminary analysis of current design concept and business case with all major relevant consultants (Consultant in Auckland 21 January 2009);
3. analyse existing documents and formulate draft report, this forwarded to client for review and comment by Thursday 29 January (Consultant in Wellington);
4. present draft report to Trust (Consultant in Kaitaia Monday 9 February); and
5. incorporate comments and forward final report.

Timing

Consultant is available in January and February and final report could be delivered by say Friday 13 February.

Recommendations

49. It is recommended that the Te Ahu Trust:

adopts an Expanded Vision for Te Ahu:

Te Ahu is a cultural hub that embodies the identity of the seven peoples of this unique part of the world, Te Hiku o te Ika / the Tail of the Fish. It will speak of our unique sense of place and self. It will attract, involve, stimulate, excite and connect citizens and visitors. We aim high, to make Te Ahu a national, and even world, leader as an integrated activity-based and fun attraction based on a mix of celebration, learning, performance, and events that knows few boundaries and that optimises the use of appropriate and ever changing information and experience technologies.

agrees that the current separation of the Museum and Library in the Concept Design (December 2008) does not accord with the principle that Te Ahu is an integrated cultural and educational (and recreational / leisure) experience and that these components should occupy a single intelligent space;

confirms that, at some time in the future, the library, informational, research, conferencing, collection, distance learning and educational skills and resources of Museum and Library should be amalgamated into a single integrated entity under the Te Ahu Trust; and

agrees that experience planning should begin according to a schedule suggested in this paper.