

**Subject:** Tairawhiti Heritage Preservation and Restoration Trust

**Prepared by:** Hans van Kregten (Environment and Planning Manager)

**Meeting Date:** 29 July 2010

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## Report to COUNCIL for decision

### SUMMARY

Councillor Cranston has suggested that it is desirable to form a Trust that will assist with the preservation of heritage buildings in Tairawhiti. He is seeking support from the Eastland Community Trust (ECT), and asks the Council to endorse his request.

The importance of Gisborne's heritage has been recognised in Council plans and strategies, and protection mechanisms are in place through the Council's District Plan. These mechanisms essentially place the burden of protecting heritage buildings on the building owner. Demolition of, or changes to, the buildings usually require a resource consent. The cost of preservation and the inherent limits that historic buildings may place on future use can be important factors in Council making consent decisions allowing alterations or demolition.

The availability of a well resourced Trust that could fund preservation and sensitive adaptation could make a significant difference and help to protect more heritage buildings.

The old Gisborne gaol at Churchill Park requires earthquake strengthening before any public use can be contemplated. In 1999, the cost of this was estimated to be \$480,000. These costs would now have increased to \$720,000. Thus far those costs have been a prohibitive impediment to would-be developers. It appears that without any outside funding, the use of the gaol as a public or commercial facility is unlikely. The Waikanae Project currently being contemplated by Council and the ECT could incorporate an investigation in possible future use.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### That the Council

1. receives the report
2. endorses efforts to establish a Gisborne heritage restoration/preservation trust
3. supports, in principle, a feasibility study for future uses of the Gisborne Gaol in Churchill Park as part of the Waikanae Project currently being contemplated by Council and the Eastland Community Trust.



Hans van Kregten  
Environment and Planning Manager

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Councillor Cranston has suggested that the Eastland Community Trust be approached with the view of forming and funding a body that could be called the Tairāwhiti Heritage Preservation and Restoration Trust. He believes that our region is home to some 'awesome' historical built heritage, and that the preservation of this heritage is under threat from development. Councillor Cranston uses examples elsewhere in New Zealand where historical heritage can be used to benefit regions, in particular through the development of tourism.

He believes that the historic gaol in Churchill Park could be a first local project that the new trust could become involved in. Based on the tourism developments related to other famous old gaols around the world, he believes there is potential to redevelop the old gaol into a craft market with indoor and outdoor activity, an art gallery, and/or museum. He says that other developments can also be contemplated.

## **2. CURRENT COUNCIL POLICIES**

Council's Urban Development Strategy, adopted in 2009, recognises the benefits of Gisborne having retained a number of its early buildings in the city centre. It says that "these Edwardian buildings establish a sense of history and a link to early colonial New Zealand. The Strategy signals the review of the City Centre Design Guidelines to consider better protection of the Edwardian character and to promote quality design of new buildings." This project had an indicative start time of 2009-2010. Thus far the project has not yet started because of other work commitments of the Urban Design Planner and the priority for his work to focus on implementation of practical tasks.

The Council's District Plan lists buildings of the A, B and C categories, whereby the A category is of national and the B category buildings of regional significance. The "C" category lists buildings in poor condition and recognises that these may not be able to be preserved.

A range of instruments and interventions is listed in the Plan, including the provision of advocacy, paid professional advice and the requirement of resource consents for actions that involve the alteration or demolition of listed buildings.

There have been some successes (such as the new police station) in retaining and renovating historic buildings but some have been altered, relocated, or demolished. The earthquake and fires have contributed to this. Where consent for alterations or demolition has been granted, the cost of retaining the historic values and the costs of earthquake strengthening have been a factor, and so has the ability to use the older style buildings for modern use.

Heart of Gisborne has taken steps to promote restoration and preservation of heritage buildings in the central city. It has produced a brochure outlining restoration practices which building owners can use to redevelop these properties.

The rationale of the brochure is that proper restoring and maintenance helps to create a local identity. Heart of Gisborne has no funds available to help implement the suggestion in its brochure.

Likewise Council has no funds available for the preservation of historic buildings. Prior to the Millennium celebrations in 2000 Council made available paint to help with the improvement of appearances of historic buildings, but this support has ceased.

The effect of this lack of support is that the responsibility for maintaining, restoring and renovating buildings with historic character rests with the building owners whilst, arguably, the benefits are shared to some extent with the wider community.

The availability of other external funds to assist with the preservation of historic buildings could help to provide some more equity to this process. The extent to which any such assistance would be 'transformational' is not clear without further research, but the benefit of retaining Gisborne's historic heritage has been recognised in Council strategies and statutory plans.

### **3. CHURCHILL PARK GAOL**

The gaol is in poor condition and has been identified as requiring earthquake and structural strengthening before it is capable for public or private use. It has a "C" status in the District Plan, recognising that it may not be practical to save it.

In 1999 Opus International Consultants estimated the cost of such work to be in the region of \$480,000. In today's dollars, those costs would have increased to \$720,000. The costs of this have been seen by Council as prohibitive and no use of the building has been made. The lack of use is likely to lead to further deterioration of the building's soundness and potential for use.

The location of the gaol and its historic character would lend themselves to public use, potentially in relation to other activities and facilities nearby such as current and future sports facilities, the Olympic Pool and the Midway beach. Indications are that the cost of bringing the building up to a safe standard has contributed to it not being used. Funding by a third party to carry out the strengthening work may have the effect of it becoming available for use again. With the possibility of the development of other facilities that will attract people to the area (hockey, other sports facilities, improved pool complex), the commercial viability of using the old gaol may increase. The gaol and its surrounding lands could be investigated within the framework of the Waikanae Project, currently being discussed between Council and the Eastland Community Trust.

### **4. CONSULTATION**

No consultation has taken place.

### **5. COMMUNITY OUTCOMES**

This decision may contribute to a vibrant Tairāwhiti.

### **6. LEVELS OF SERVICE**

None

### **7. FINANCIAL**

No financial effect on Council.

### **8. LEGAL**

None

## **9. POLICY**

None

## **10. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

None

## **11. APPENDICES**

Councillor Andy Cranston's letter to the Eastland Community Trust.

The Trustees

Eastland Community Trust

Gisborne

Dear Trustees

I write to you in the hope that we can begin an initiative which I believe can benefit our region and will have a long term transformational outcome.

As we are all aware, Tairāwhiti is a region of awesome historical significance. We all should seriously consider any opportunity we have to recognise that history but more than that, we should also take advantage of any opportunity to maintain or even enhance that what we have. The most visible manifestation of our history lies in the architecture we so often take for granted. We have a poor record of appreciation of this. Much of our history has been deported in dump trucks and history has become all the more vague as a consequence. Think Opera House, Royal Hotel, and various other Edwardian establishments, etc

Because of the volatile nature of the region, the shaking down of our created environment is problematic. We would be wise not to simply accept that as inevitable demise and take any possible steps to allow our history to be maintained.

There is a world of examples of the extensive benefits of maintaining a built environment and we would do well to acknowledge this. Worldwide tourism is heavily driven by the desire to be involved in the appreciation of architecture.

As we have seen the built environment is often threatened and often the end result of that threat is demolition. This is unsatisfactory.

I believe the Trust is uniquely placed to work in this area and could vastly impact on the retention and maintenance of our history.

Essentially when a building is identified as of due significance and under threat the Trust (or most likely a subsidiary) steps in. The first step is an economic feasibility study to identify a satisfactory outcome. This is important. It may be a requirement to purchase the property. There is no expectation to go out there saving buildings to have them laying idle, incurring further cost and going back into deterioration mode. It is a given that there are commercial considerations to be respected here. The analysis would identify a sustainable outcome. It could be a project to renovate to a high standard and sell it on as a commercial opportunity with caveats to respect the

history which has been reborn or it could be a leasing opportunity. Profits are reinvested to the next project. I don't see this as being solely a Trust project as I would expect each property would attract different partnerships and collaborations depending on spheres of interest. But the trust certainly would need to have a lead role. Done well, it could become self sustaining. There are many examples of this happening throughout the world. The Trust is probably the only entity in our community placed to progress these initiatives. The Trust is the only organisation with the ability to be so "transformational" .

If you were to consider the idea has merit I would like you to consider as a potential first project the City Jail.

I am aware of the mixed feeling on this property and concerned that passionate antagonists may not share the vision of what this could be. It is important to get past the properties current reality and focus on a vision for the future. I am absolutely sure there is an opportunity here.

It is not for me to pre-empt what a feasibility study may turn up but many of us believe there is huge craft market or the like potential with indoor/ out door activity opportunity. Maybe it could be an eatery. Maybe there is museum or art gallery potential . I see the building renovated to a high standard in keeping with the original designers vision. Close adherence to the original is the mode of operation. There would be a larger area of landscaping and incorporation into a general concept. It would become a feature of the overall plan for the wider area.

A very quick internet search brought the following : Crumlin Road (Ireland), Bodmin, Melborne, Alcatraz, Norfolk Island, Tent City, Kali Pani, Leavenworth, Robbin Island. These are all jails which are earning very substantial tourism revenue from their renovation to enable their historic jail identity as a tourist attraction. Some are eateries, some are shops, some are museums. But they all exist because they embrace what they were and are maintaining their "mana" . Our current choice of disregard is not an appropriate option.

While enthusiastic about the jail project but I am keen to see the "Renovation Trust" initiative in general given legs. I would not like a determination that the jail project being deemed not suitable as being an end to it. I would like to see the initiative taken up as a general project with an aim to retain the Edwardian character of our main street character . Even over the last twelve months the main street has suffered considerable losses; -gone for ever. The replacements are at best bland. An existing aware trust may have been positioned to take more appropriate action.

Two great examples of these initiatives in action are The Highland Buildings Preservation Trust in Scotland which up to its tenth project and closer to home the Oamaru Whitestone Civic Trust which has transformed an important sector of Oamaru and restored its full architectural glory.

Thank you for considering the above matter.

Yours sincerely,

Councilor Andy Cranston

## **Recommendations**

- **That the council endorse Councillor Cranstons approach to the Eastland Community Trust (ECT) to enable the establishment of a Restoration/ Preservation Trust.**
- **That the council endorse a full feasibility study into the future of the Gisborne Jail as a suitable first project.**