

## Work under way to highlight sustainable

A collaborative approach to sustainable tourism on Waiheke could make us the envy of the world, according to a group that's met for the first time to carve out a vision for arguably the island's most important industry.

Pam Oliver of Project Forever Waiheke initiated the 5 June meeting and says that one of the most valuable things to emerge was that people with a strong interest in tourism on Waiheke came together, met one another and agreed on the importance of sustainable tourism for the island.

"Out of that meeting already have come a number of intentions to collaborate," says Pam.

"It's vital to take this opportunity to find a balance that will allow the community to thrive and love being in the place they chose to live in for reasons other than it being a tourist destination," Pam says.

She says it's critically important that all the organisations on the island that have a vested interest in tourism are working together to achieve a level of protection that the island needs in order to avoid the negative impacts of tourism.

"The community loved being in lockdown in the sense that it was precious, we could walk around the roads because the traffic levels were low," she says.

"Recognising that achieving sustainable tourism is exceedingly difficult, internationally now the trend is towards restorative tourism to reverse some of the impacts of tourism to date. That is the model that Project Forever Waiheke and the Sustainability Centre would like to see being picked up on Waiheke."

Pam says a vision is needed to drive a strategy that's acceptable to everybody involved - including the wider community.

Bianca Ranson of Potiki Adventures attended the meeting and says Waiheke can be an example for not only Aotearoa but the rest of the world of how to protect our environment and community while also extending our hospitality to overseas visitors.

"There is much work to be done to do this sustainably and it must be done

**"Tourism is an important part of the Waiheke economy and I'm confident a balance can be found so the income of local operators is not compromised."**

**- Bianca Ranson, right**

urgently for the protection and well-being of our environment and the local community," says Bianca. "Tourism is an important part of the Waiheke economy and I'm confident a balance can be found so the income of local operators is not compromised."

Chair of the Waiheke Island Tourism Forum Christina Hyde says sustainable tourism is an important objective for all



Waiheke tourist businesses.

"We need to be sustainable from an environmental sense; our businesses need

## 'Fantastic vibe' expected for On The House weekend

Expectations are high that the On The House event this weekend will bring a much needed financial lift for Waiheke's tourism.

The event is a collaboration between tourism providers and promoters and is expected to bring between \$150,000 and \$200,000 directly to island businesses, says chair of the Waiheke Island Tourism Forum and accommodation owner Christina Hyde. The promotion has raised the profile of Waiheke as a destination at a time when all tourism businesses on the island are suffering, she says.

"This profile is important because it will result in more paid bookings for providers and more ongoing bookings for Waiheke over the coming months."

Christina says the timing of the promotion is critical as this week wage subsidies ended for many businesses and they were

looking to keep employees on over the coming winter months.

On The House sees owners of more than 80 Waiheke houses, hotels, motels and apartments donate the rental fees from their properties towards "Waiheke dollar" vouchers that visitors can redeem over the weekend at shops, cafes, restaurants, activities and vineyards.

Christina is co-owner of Onetangi Beach Apartments and Waiheke Island Motel and says both sites are close to fully booked for the weekend.

"This is a mix of accommodation that we've donated to On The House and paid accommodation so the island should have a fantastic vibe. We hope visitors have a great experience and share that on their social media and word of mouth and that this encourages more people to come and visit."

On The House is the initiative of a collaborative group driven by Kim Rae from accommodation provider Stay Waiheke, Andrew Glenn and Grant Crawford of Tourism Waiheke and has included plenty of professionals from the island donating their time and expertise to get it off the ground.

"Niki Schuck of NSPR has done a fantastic job getting national coverage to the extent that the event sold out within hours." • Erin Johnson

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James Sherer (Director)

## tourism

to be sustainable economically and we need to consider social sustainability and cultural sustainability.”

Christina says the Waiheke Island Tourism Forum is looking at establishing a subgroup to help develop sustainability goals, pool resources and provide educational opportunities for members and visitors. This will be discussed at the organisation’s annual general meeting next Wednesday.

Chair of the Waiheke Local Board Cath Handley was also at the meeting and agreed the time is ripe to focus on sustainable tourism.

“Now is the time to do this work, while the tourism industry is rebuilding and the opportunity is there to work things through,” says Cath, adding that the local board is also working with ATEED and the Waiheke Island Tourism Forum on a model of sustainable tourism for Waiheke.

“It’s something we’ve wanted them to do for a long time. We’ve wanted them to be developing tourism in sync with our community and in sync with our environment, rather than doing it in isolation,” says Cath.

“We run real risks with our environment and our community if they suffer as a consequence of our tourism. Then tourism won’t work as it might,” says Cath.

The 5 June meeting involved Pam Oliver and Gabrielle Young of Project Forever Waiheke, Local Board chair Cath Handley, Grant Crawford of Tourism Waiheke, Michael Maahs of the Waiheke Resources Trust, Professor Robin Kearns, Bianca Ranson of Potiki Adventures, Gavin Oliver from Ecozip and Christina Hyde of the Waiheke Island Tourism Forum.

• Erin Johnson

## Trolley Derby spearheads haul of community awards for Gulf News

The Great *Gulf News* Trolley Derby has been recognised in the Community Newspaper Awards, taking the top prize in New Zealand for community involvement.

The resurrection of the event in September last year marked the 30th anniversary of our first ever trolley derby and saw thousands through the main street in Oneroa to watch young and old hurtle downhill in what was a wonderful Waiheke celebration.

In presenting the award for Best Community Involvement, the judges at this year’s CNA awards recognised that the prize went to a newspaper that “didn’t just report a story, it created an event”.

“Over a period of more than three months they ran stories and did a mountain of organisational work, with advertising manager Tessa O’Shea also becoming the event organiser. Going well beyond normal newspaper work, the *Gulf News* team came up with logo designs, a course map, a health and safety plan, a traffic management plan, event insurance, and found sponsors.”

And that wasn’t the only time that Tessa was mentioned among the prize-winners. For the second year running, she won Best Sales Professional for her work on the *Gulf News* and *Waiheke Weekender* with judges deeming her a “worthy winner” as she “consistently demonstrates a mastery of all the capabilities and competencies across the sales continuum: business development, new business wins, excellent customer servicing and satisfaction, year on year growth, creativity and a ‘can do’ spirit. She is highly regarded by her customers and her colleagues and fully



Trolley Derby organiser Tessa O’Shea with event MC Eric Hillman.

Photo Merrie Hewetson

deserves this recognition.”

In further success at the awards - which are contested by more than 80 publications nationwide - *Gulf News* and *Waiheke Weekender* won Best Marketing Campaign for how we ran and promoted the trolley derby and Michelle Lewis, whose work went a long way towards that marketing award, came second in the Best Graphic Designer - Advertising category. •

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