

Introduction

As Museums Liaison Officer at Auckland Museum 1988-1995, author of concept development reports for the Museum Working Party in 2002, Museum Development Manager 2003-2005, and secretary of the Tauranga Moana Museum Trust 2010-2015, I have been involved in one way or another with plans for a museum in Tauranga for much of the last thirty years. This commentary represents my personal and professional opinions, based on both documentary research and direct experience of plans to found a museum in Tauranga. The term ‘Council’ throughout is used to refer to either the Tauranga District Council or the later Tauranga City Council.

1. The Historical Society

The Tauranga Historical Society founded a small volunteer-run museum in a Council-owned house in Hamilton Street in 1969. Control of the museum and collections was placed under Council control in 1972 through a Museum Board, serviced by Council and including representatives from the Tauranga Historical Society and the Tauranga Maori Executive.

2. The Tauranga Historic Village

Established in 1976 by a group of enthusiastic volunteers, supplemented by workers under the central government’s *Project Employment Programme* work scheme, the so-called Historic Village took over control of the Historical Society’s museum, moving the collections to 17th Avenue. Collections were augmented by wide-ranging collecting, with little or no control over acquisition and registration policy, and housed in sub-standard conditions in a range of historic and reconstructed wooden buildings. Once government subsidies were withdrawn, the Village and its infrastructure became unsustainable and was closed in 1998.

Comment:

The Village’s mandate went well beyond that of a museum. As well as collecting individual authentic buildings of historic significance, a range of structures rebuilt from demolished wooden buildings were constructed to form a “village” more reminiscent of a wild west town than of the early Tauranga it was intended to represent. Elements such as a railway and early machinery created more of a theme park than a museum, and collection objects were stored and displayed under conditions unsuitable for their long term preservation. While very popular with volunteers and visitors, the Village did not fulfil the requirements of a civic museum nor its collection.

3. Dive Crescent

With the closure of the Historic Village, Council proposed to build a new museum on land at Dive Crescent. Plans were developed, but the project was shelved through uncertainty over availability and ownership of the land.

Comment:

It is fortunate that the Dive Crescent proposal did not go ahead, since the situation, on reclaimed land adjoining the harbour, was not appropriate for a permanent museum and would now be seen as threatened by sea level rise.

4. Storage

During 1999 most of the museum collections, comprising a very wide range of objects, were moved to temporary storage in a rented commercial building in Tyne Street, at Mount Maunganui. A range of heavy machinery from the Village collections was stored temporarily at Dive Crescent and subsequently disposed of. After five years, the collections were moved once more to a newly-built commercial

warehouse in Newton Street, rented by the Council, with the intention that a new museum would provide permanent storage within a few years. This building is still in use to this day.

Comment:

The Tyne Street storage was completely unsuitable for museum collections – dirty, uninsulated and vulnerable to fluctuating weather conditions. It is a tribute to the three staff who worked there that they were prepared to do so. The episode is indicative of the low value placed by Council on the heritage collections in its care. While the Newton Street storage building was a substantial improvement – fitted out with museum-standard shelving and with a minimal degree of climate control, **it does not meet contemporary standards for the care of museum collections and, at only six metres above sea level on a sand spit, is vulnerable to earthquake, tsunami, flooding and salt spray.** While it was only intended for temporary storage, it has now been in use for 17 years, at a cost of over two million dollars in rent alone. With hindsight, Council could have funded a permanent purpose-built facility, on a suitable site for a similar amount.

5. Museum Definition Study Working Party

In 2000, Council established a Working Party to advise on the nature and interpretive focus of a museum in Tauranga. A *Museum Definition Study* was commissioned to undertake a range of concept testing through public consultation and to recommend a pathway to establish a museum. The study set out major themes for a museum, outlined a scheme for development of a project brief and recommended the urgent appointment of a museum Director. Instead, a further set of detailed concept development reports was commissioned over the next year, resulting in a thematic concept report, *The Way Forward*, and a Museum Development Manager was appointed in 2003.

Comment:

The Council and Working Party lost momentum by focussing too much on the detail of the museum's thematic content, rather than proceeding with appointment of a Director and enabling planning for the building itself to proceed, with interpretive content planned by professional staff. However, *The Way Forward* is still relevant as a thematic scheme for a ~~Western Bay of Plenty~~ regional museum.

6. Museum Project Steering Group

With the appointment of a Development Manager on a two-year contract, three collection management staff and a Project Manager, planning for a new Museum, managed by Council with the guidance of a new steering group, proceeded over the next two years to the stage where a preliminary feasibility study could be prepared and plans for a building firmed up. During this period, the collection was moved to its current storage facility.

Comment:

Project development was hampered by a lack of understanding on the part of Council staff of the processes and philosophy behind the development of a museum and by the degree of control they wished to exercise over the project. Importantly, the Museum Development Manager was involved both with the operational task of finding suitable storage for the collection and with longer-term project-based museum planning. The two did not sit well together. **An alternative strategy of assembling a relatively independent higher-level team of museum professionals to undertake planning might have made more progress.**

7. The Museum on a Pier.

In 2005, a consultant recommended that the new museum should be built on a pier over the water on the Strand waterfront, a proposal accepted by the Project Steering Group and the Council. Planning reached the resource consent stage but the concept was opposed at resource consent hearings in 2006, on the grounds of visual obstruction and inappropriate siting, by individuals who might otherwise have supported the museum. The opposition made it easier for a newly-elected council to abandon the

project at the end of 2007, only a month before the new Art Gallery, promoted and governed by a Council-controlled trust board, was opened.

Comment:

Planning at the later stages of the Pier project, leading to resource consent, proceeded slowly, probably due partly to the fact that Council, lacking expertise, was dependent on a variety of consultants to pursue the concept. This may have left the two successive museum directors isolated, rather than being part of a tightly-knit planning team operating from a single site. It was the pier proposal, however, that allowed political opponents of the museum some encouragement from the public, both from those who were opposed in principle to a museum and those who simply saw the pier proposal as inappropriate. Reservations included obstruction of harbour views, the effect of salt air on the collections, the retention of the ‘temporary’ Newton Street facility for collection storage and staff offices, and potential difficulties in gaining outside funding.

8. The Tauranga Moana Museum Trust.

A year after the decision not to proceed with a museum, Council established a *Museum Steering Group* of six citizens and five councillors, “to progress the community's desire for a regional Museum”. After consultation, the group reported back to Council a year later, recommending that a museum should be “community led”, and that Council’s operational costs for the project should be limited to providing the site (reserve land on Cliff Road was favoured) along with “current budgets for the retention and storage of an appropriate collection”. On the Steering Group’s recommendation, Council established a “community trust”, with funding of \$54,000, to “be responsible for progressing the museum project.”

In the first four years of its existence, the “Tauranga Moana Museum Trust” developed a Business Case for a museum, a Communications Plan and participated, at the city Council’s request, in discussions on synergies between a museum, The Elms Trust and a putative iwi cultural centre. In 2013 the Trust applied unsuccessfully for capital funding from the Regional Council’s Regional Infrastructure Fund and also developed a fundraising brochure setting out its proposals. Without having raised significant funds, the trustees lost momentum and the Trust was effectively supplanted by **an independent** community group, **Taonga Tū | Heritage Bay of Plenty** which lobbied during 2018 for the Council to establish a museum but after the no vote, are now advocates for an independent, standalone regional heritage centre to be established outside of council but supported equally by all three councils

Comment:

The Museum Trust, albeit set up by council, was largely condemned to failure by the Museum Steering Group’s unrealistic recommendation that it be solely responsible for its own operational funding, for raising capital and operational costs for the museum through the community, and that Council operational funding be limited to its existing expenditure on the Heritage Collection. Without significant operational funding, the Museum Trust could not realistically advance the agenda it was tasked with, of raising community support for a museum and implementing its establishment. The Trustees’ one major attempt to raise operational funding, from the Regional Council’s RIF fund, failed, and its only concrete achievement – a substantial brochure intended for use as a fundraising tool – was never utilised. While severely hampered by an absence of staff support, Trustees also lacked the community and business connections, and the commercial experience, to advance the Museum cause significantly-

9. Cliff Road

By 2015, a museum was back on the Council’s agenda, potentially combined with a new City Library. Extensive planning and community consultation, carried out through consultants and existing Council staff, took place over the next three years, a survey finding 64% of residents in favour of a museum.

The Cliff Road reserves, the site of the former Otamataha Pā, were chosen for the museum, with the approval of tangata whenua. Having approved the project in the 2018-28 Long Term Plan, Councillors agreed to hold a referendum, in conjunction with a by-election, to determine whether the community supported a museum. The non-binding referendum resulted in 60/40 vote against the museum, from 30% of eligible voters, at which Council resolved to withdraw capital and operating provisions for the museum from the Long Term Plan. In 2021 the Minister of Local Government replaced the Council with the present Commissioners, their term to end after the triennial local authority elections on 8 October 2022.

Comment:

The two most recent museum proposals in Tauranga have been driven directly by Council, but brought to a halt through the political process, with some election candidates campaigning against a museum. In both cases, Councillors opposed to the project have taken advantage of opposition to it from a vocal, but minority number of the conservative public, in spite of the fact that extensive community consultation and surveys revealed a significant degree of museum support. The 2018 referendum on the museum, combined with a Council by-election, politicised the issue, effectively resulting in the referendum result overriding the LTP consultation process. (The Council's legal advice had made the point that a survey of residents would provide a more valid result, but this was ignored.)

It would seem that, for continuity of planning and operation, an adequately funded body independent of local government political processes would be best placed to deliver a museum or heritage centre for Tauranga, as was the case for the Art Gallery.

Additionally, the choice of the Cliff Road recreation reserves as a museum site, while understandable in terms of proximity to early nineteenth century historic sites, and the support of tangata whenua, may have been an error. The Council's own *Multi-Criteria Matrix* made it clear that a central-city location, taking advantage of the synergies to be gained by proximity to Library, i-Site and Art Gallery, all attracting a similar cohort of visitors, would be cheaper and attract higher numbers. The Cliff Road site, with building height restrictions, would have required a change in the reserve designation, a potentially-lengthy process, and, although potential public opposition during the resource consent process was never tested, it could be anticipated, from citizens concerned at the loss of public open space and from residents opposing increased traffic and loss of views. The M\$55 cost mooted on placards by one councillor during the election process), also appeared excessive to some. Some of the planning documents produced for the latest iteration of the museum also contained some questionable propositions which were insufficiently examined and had already been questioned for the 2005 pier proposal. One such included the nonsensical prediction of 275,000 visitors in the first year of the museum's operation, while the issue of permanent storage was, as in the past, glossed over.

10. Summary

Five attempts over the last fifty years to establish a museum in Tauranga have failed, the first two from naivety and lack of expertise, one from unforeseen circumstances and the two latest from over-complicated extended planning processes, lacking experienced, focussed, paid personnel to drive the project to completion. Above all, control by the Council, subject to the vagaries of the political process and the prejudices of individual councillors, with staff inexperienced in the complexities of museums and museum planning, was a deciding factor in the successive failures.

John Coster
31 August 2021.

Appendices:

1. Timeline
2. Expenditure

APPENDIX 1

TIMELINE – TAURANGA MUSEUM 1969-2021

1969.12.20	Tauranga Historical Society museum opened in Hamilton Street. ¹
1972.03.27	Museum placed under City Council control. Tauranga Museum Board established.
1976.12.11	Tauranga Historic Village opened in 17 th Avenue and took over responsibility for museum management. City Council assumed ownership of collection. Acquisitions ongoing.
1998.08.00	Historic Village closed.
1999.00.01	Feasibility study and plans for new museum in Dive Crescent developed by staff but land became unavailable due to uncertainty over land title.
1999.07.14	Pupils of Bellevue Primary write to Mayor requesting a museum.
1999.12.00	Collections removed from Historic Village and placed in temporary storage (Tyne St.). ²
2000.00.00	Dive Crescent proposal abandoned.
2000.09.01	Museum Definition Study Working Party established by Tauranga District Council.
2000.09.02	<i>Museum Definition Study</i> commissioned – J Cave et.al. – concept testing and public consultation.
2001.02.23	Museum Definition Study and implementation plan for “culture & heritage centre” presented to Council. ³
2002.12.12	Concept development reports presented to working party (<i>He Pataka Iringa Korero; Natural History themes; Post European Arrival themes; Partners and Relationships; Who is Telling our Stories?</i>).
2003.00.01	Tauranga becomes a city (100,000 population).
2003.00.02	Concept report The Way Forward completed. <i>The major and encompassing theme recommended for the museum by the Working Party, is that of the region’s rich natural heritage and viewing this through the relationships of people with land, water and climate.</i>
2003.05.06	Museum Project Steering Group formed, replacing the Working Party. Council takes over museum planning.
2003.06.30	Museum Development Manager appointed ⁴
2004.00.01	"Smartgrowth" (Western Bay of Plenty development plan) "Tauranga Tomorrow" (Community Outcomes Plan) and "Smart Economy (economic development plan) propose development of a museum in Tauranga .
2004.00.02	Museum collection moved into temporary purpose-modified rented 800 m ² storage, to become Tauranga Heritage Collection.
2004.05.00	LTCCP includes a museum to be opened in 2008.
2005.05.05	Gorbey Report: Assessment of Museum Siting (pier proposal)
2005.07.00	“Interim Governance Group” established
2005.10.00	Waterfront museum proposal presented to City Council. ⁵

¹ Davies, Rachel, n.d. Tauranga Museum – History. Report, 3pp. Tauranga City Council.

² TDC file 7440-10 Vol 10'; Cave et al.

³ J Cave & Associates, 2001. Status report the museum definition study... Report to TCC Project Steering Group.

⁴ Project Steering Group Minutes 27 June 2003; letter of appointment JNees/JCoster.

⁵ Jones, C, 2005. Museum Development Project. Presentation to Tauranga City Council, September 2005.

2006.00.00	Museum Establishment Director Mark Clayton appointed.
2006.00.00	Council-sponsored telephone survey to gauge support for museum - 50% favoured a museum, 81% supported 50% of funding from outside Council; 56% opposed \$55 pa running costs through rates. (Key Research)
2006.06.00	TCC hearings on M\$21 pier museum proposal for 10-year plan. Museum opening date deferred to 2011.
2006.12.14	Council resolution that planning for Museum project proceed, opening 2011, 50% of capital costs to be raised outside Council
2007.00.00	Museum Establishment Director Neil Anderson appointed.
2007.06.08	Design Brief for pier museum compiled. ⁶
2007.08.00	Letters to local newspapers regarding museum proposal.
2007.10.00	Museum preliminary design completed, resource consents lodged, some external funding secured
2007.10.13	13 October Council elections
2007.11.14	New Council resolution (Nov 14) to halt all expenditure on museum project. ⁷
2007.11.22	Museum Establishment Director position terminated. ⁸
2007.12.12	Tauranga Art Gallery opened
2008.06.03	3 June - Council Annual plan deliberations. Submissions: Maintain existing collection expenditure 553 (83%) /Reduce collection expenditure 113; Support museum remaining in LTCCP 678 (88%) /Oppose museum 94.
2008.06.03	3 June - "The Council chose to go with Option One for the Museum collection which means no exhibitions, a very limited schools programme, no public access, and no further cataloguing of the collection." "Expressions of interest [to] be sought for appointment to a Project Steering Group, of five community members and five Elected Members...[to] plan for a community led, Council facilitated, new museum proposal." ⁹
2008.11.00	Museum Steering Group established "to progress the community's desire for a regional Museum". ¹⁰
2010.04.00	Museum Steering Group report to Council: recommends museum to be "community led", Council's operational costs contribution limited to site and "current budgets for the retention and storage of an appropriate collection", community trust to be established with funding of \$54,000. ¹¹
2010.05.00	Tauranga Moana Museum Trust established by TCC with a mandate to "progress the museum development project" ¹²
2010.06.18	Museum Steering Group disestablished. A new "stand alone Community Trust" to be established by Council, to "be responsible for progressing the museum project." ¹³
2015.00.01	Museum proposal document completed. ¹⁴

⁶ BECA, 8 June 2007, Design Brief for a New Museum in the Western Bay of Plenty. 31pp.

⁷ Groves, M, 2007. Tauranga City Council Museum Project status report to completion of concept design. Beca November 2007.

⁸ TCC Meeting Agenda 29 January 2008.

⁹ Tauranga City Council, 2008. Draft Annual Plan 2008/09, Draft amendments to the LTCCP.... Notice of meeting & agenda 3-5 June 2008, p.86. Minutes, Tauranga City Council, 3 June 2008.

¹⁰ Jones, C 2010. Museum project and governance arrangements DC138. Report to TCC 18 May 2010. Members of the Steering Group were Colin Bidois, Michael Ludbrooke, Jon Mayson, Susan Northey, Graeme Purchas, Alan Tate, Stuart Crosby, Norm Bruning, Mike Baker, Wayne Moultree, Catherine Stewart and administrator Jo Bond.

¹¹ Museum Steering Group Final Report 2010.

¹² TCC Long Term Plan 2012-2022. https://www.tauranga.govt.nz/Portals/0/data/council/long_term_plans/2012-2022/files/groups_activites_%207-14.pdf

¹³ Jones 2010.

2015.04.17	Community engagement on a museum and the central library in the city centre commenced, continuing until June, on 11 separate occasions. ¹⁵
2017.10.16	Council resolves to proceed with a Museum in LTP. Council to contribute M\$26.3 capital, \$200,000 planning. ¹⁶
2017.11.00	Telephone survey of residents finds 64% support a museum, 41% willing to pay for it. ¹⁷
2018.00.00	GPR Survey and subsequent excavations on proposed Cliff Road site reveal trenches of Otamataha Pā. ¹⁸
2018.01.31	Following the Council meeting on 31 January 2018, Deputy Mayor, Kelvin Clout, proposed that the Council hold a referendum (in conjunction with the by-election) to determine whether the community supports a museum. ¹⁹
2018.02.15	Community group Taonga Tauranga takes over lobbying for a museum with a series of public presentations.
2018.02.20	Council agrees to hold a referendum on the Museum with an April by-election. ²⁰
2018.02.22	The promoter of the referendum, Tauranga's deputy mayor Kelvin Clout, disagreed the referendum displayed a lack of resolve and leadership by the council. "It's an opportunity for democracy in action." ²¹
2018.05.02	Referendum results in 60/40 vote against from 30% of eligible voters. ²²
2018.05.29	Council resolves to make <i>no capital or operating provision in the 2018-2028 Long Term Plan for a new museum</i> and requests <i>Issues and Options paper for partial de-accessioning of the current heritage collection.</i> ²³
2021.02.02	Commissioners appointed to Tauranga City Council. Start 9 February 2021 and end after the triennial local authority elections on 8 October 2022. ²⁴

¹⁴ Tauranga Moana Museum Trust n.d. (2015) Proposal Museum Tauranga Moana. A3 proposal document.

¹⁵ TCC Council meeting agenda 20 February 2018: DC52 - Attachment B - Consultation Summary on Museum & Library.

¹⁶ Tauranga City Council Minutes of Council Monday, 16 October 2017; BoP Times 5.12.2017.

¹⁷ Key Research, 2017. Tauranga City Council exploring willingness to pay for a museum.... Report to TCC.

¹⁸ Phillips, K, 2018. Final report exploratory archaeological investigations within Otamataha pa U14/189 Heritage New Zealand Authority 2018/349

¹⁹ TCC Council agenda 20 February 2018.

²⁰ BoP Times, 20 Feb, 2018. Referendum mooted for \$55.7m Tauranga museum plan - council to decide Tuesday.

Tauranga City Council, minutes of council 20 February 2018.

²¹ <https://www.nzherald.co.nz/bay-of-plenty-times/news/museum-referendum-pitched-as-turning-point-in-taurangas-history/OZ6HNLVSECIT3CZTZNYDOIXFCY/>

²² Voters in the cultural desert that is Tauranga say no to museum Stuff.co.nz 2.5.2018

²³ Minutes TCC Council meeting 29 May 2018.

Sun Live Tuesday 29 May, 2018. No go on Tauranga museum. <https://www.sunlive.co.nz/news/180759-no-go-on-tauranga-museum.html>

Tauranga City Council Long Term Plan 2018-2028

²⁴ <https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/commissioners-appointed-tauranga-city-council>

APPENDIX 2
EXPENDITURE 1999-2021

TCC museum planning & collection management expenditure

Year ending	Dive Cres.			Waterfront					Cliff Road							City				TOTAL				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017		2018	2019	2020	2021
	k\$																							
Salaries (museum staff)	100	100	100	100	140	214	250	316	407	216	145	80	80	80	80	80	80	80	100	100	100	100	100	3,147
Staff support (training, ACC etc.)	4	4	4	4	4	4	6	15	21	11	8	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	145
Allocated (HR, IS, general expenses) (TCC)	30	30	30	30	30	39	102	120	78	41	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	15	725
Storage facility (rent)	50	50	50	50	50	40	75	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	140	2,605
Operations, occupancy & Admin	10	10	10	10	10	30	40	51	50	48	48	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	40	797
Collection Management,	5	5	5	5	5	22	22	34	30	34	34	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	261
Repairs & maintenance, cleaning	5	5	5	5	5	8	12	17	17	17	17	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	173
Capital, planning, consultation & special projects	10	10	50	50	50	190	298	215	193	193	75	75	0	0	0	0	0	40	0	250	0	0	0	1,699
Total	214	214	254	254	294	547	804	908	936	700	482	365	290	290	290	290	290	330	310	560	310	310	310	9,552

Green: actual
Blue: TCC budgets
Black: estimate
Red: guess

[2008 budget total 600 500]
Steering Group 75 75 Archaeology 50 Planning 200

