



22 April 2014

BDG 1130, 136 T

His Worship Mayor Glenn Leach  
Thames Coromandel District Council  
Private Bag  
Thames 3540



Dear Mayor Leach,

**KOPU BRIDGE**

State Highway 25, Kopu  
Reg. No. 4681 / Cat.1

This letter is in connection with the future of Kopu Bridge, an important heritage structure which was registered by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust in 1990 as a Category 1 Historic Place in recognition of its outstanding heritage significance. As you will be aware, the structure has many attributes which contribute to its significance including being the only intact swing span bridge left in New Zealand.

There are, in our view, real and potentially rewarding opportunities for the region and Kopu specifically from its future re-purposing, most notably through its possible incorporation into the Cycleway/Rail Trail. A great part of the trail's success can be attributed to the way in which the area's rich history is showcased and experienced, manifested in the historical structures and landscape that one can tangibly observe and experience.

Heritage New Zealand (as the New Zealand Historic Places Trust is now trading as) has been, and continues to be, supportive of the efforts of the Historic Kopu Bridge Society to retain the Kopu Bridge for future adaptive re-use. The business case it put forward to NZTA did not in our opinion get thoughtful or fulsome enough review, and there was not the opportunity given for discussion around the approach and costings until after the decision by NZTA to proceed with its demolition. While there may have been some aspects of the business case to be modified or fully resolved, the costs were prepared by experienced, knowledgeable and appropriately capable and skilled engineers. There is no reason to call into question their integrity with respect to the business case put forward, in spite of the fact that the NZTA costings (based on a desktop study of other, but not comparable, bridges) were considerably higher.

The Kopu Bridge is not a structure that is structurally at risk: on the contrary it is understood to be still a robust structure. The demise of the bridge now would obfuscate any sustainable future it may have or contributions (including its important link to the region's history) that it could make to the community. But the support of the Thames Coromandel District Council is in the first instance critical, as is a subsequent commitment to discussions about how funding might be secured to maintain the bridge and upgrade what is necessary towards its usability without the risk of these costs falling to taxpayers.

In our view there are a number of outstanding issues that need to be discussed, including with NZTA, and agreed amongst the parties towards:

- 1) NZTA undertaking immediate maintenance towards handover to another party,
- 2) Potential for a trust fund from NZTA in lieu of demolition costs, and how this fund or interest earned from the fund could assist item 3 below.
- 3) Costs – on-going operational and maintenance - to be agreed amongst parties,
- 4) Role of Council/s as owner and/or holder of funds
- 5) Role of community groups.

Heritage New Zealand is committed to assisting Council and the community to secure the survival and on-going adaptive re-use of the bridge. We have an MOU with NZTA and our Chief Executive has already raised our concern about the proposed loss of Kopu Bridge with NZTA's Chief Executive Geoff Dangerfield some time ago. We are certainly prepared to continue to advocate for a workable solution that will not only ensure Kopu Bridge's continuing future, but again become an active, integral and valued asset within the region. We would also be very happy to meet with Council to discuss the matter further if you would find this helpful.

Yours sincerely



Sherry Reynolds

General Manager, Northern Region