

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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In association with the Far North District Council

### **Top Energy hands reserve over to community**

Top Energy's new \$1.2 million Southern Area Works Depot at Puketona Junction is now well under construction. It is being built on land the company owns, adjoining the Waitangi River and fronting Puketona Road, at its junction with State Highway 10.

As part of its resource and building consent application, the company has worked closely with the Far North District Council to include the development of a public reserve on part of the site. The reserve, which offers public access down to the Waitangi River, has been fenced and is to be landscaped as part of Top Energy's overall development. The reserve also includes its own vehicle access from Puketona Road and a car parking area.

Comprising an area of 4,000 square metres, the reserve extends onto a 20metre-wide esplanade area, running along the riverbank. A popular swimming hole can be reached by following the esplanade a little way around the river bend in an Easterly direction.

In a casual, but purposeful gathering of company directors and representatives of the Far North District Council and the Kerikeri/Paihia Community Board yesterday morning, Top Energy officially handed over the reserve, which is to be vested in Council.

Said Top Energy Chairman, Jack Poutsma, "We're very pleased to be at Puketona Junction and are delighted with the facilities we are building here. Top Energy identified Puketona as the right spot to locate our Southern Depot and we've been hoping to relocate here for a number of years now. And, because this property has a significant river boundary, which has been a popular area for local people for many years, it seemed appropriate for us to work with Council to provide this reserve area, with better access to the river esplanade. There are several well-known swimming holes in the area and with the added amenity value of the car park, visitors can now park away from the very busy Puketona Road shoulder and this will also improve road safety. We're now very pleased to be able to officially hand the reserve over to Council."

Responding on behalf of the FNDC, Chairman of Environmental & Community Services Committee, Dugald Macdonald said, "I want to thank Top Energy, on behalf of the Far North District Council, for this excellent development. I can't recall a previous instance where a public

utility has worked hand-in-hand with Council and achieved such a great result. Without Top Energy, this would not have happened. It's often said that big corporates and Councils don't have hearts and souls, but clearly, Top Energy and the Council do. On behalf of residents and ratepayers, thanks again for your generosity. I'm sure this Reserve will be well used and appreciated."

According to FNDC Reserves Policy Manager, Sue Hodge, Top Energy's development of the reserve is a great example of what can be achieved when Council and a developer work together with a shared vision. "We are working on a similar approach with a developer in Russell at the moment, where hopefully another car park area will be built", Sue said.

Top Energy agrees that its contact with Council in working through this project has been enjoyable and rewarding. Said Top Energy Chief Executive, Roger de Bray, "This is a pretty good example of what can be done if you can see past the formalities and the rules that surround a public entity, in an effort to do something worthwhile for the community. We've had our moments in the past. Some things have been difficult and some things have been easy - this one's been easy, thanks largely to Sue Hodge, Anne Court and the FNDC team."

At this stage, Council has no definite plans to develop the reserve further. However, the Kerikeri/Paihia Community Board is currently preparing a public track and walkway strategy which could see the reserve incorporated into a walkway following the river bank from Puketona Junction to Waitangi.

Meanwhile, on the adjoining lot, Kerikeri Construction is well underway with Top Energy's Southern Area Depot construction and building completion is scheduled for late-December. According to Top Energy Southern Area Manager, Geoff Smith, the new depot will be home base for up to 55 employees, including contracting and network maintenance teams and administration support. Geoff's team will service the whole coast-to-coast area from Hukerenui in the South through to the Mangamukas. (Top Energy's Northern Area Depot in Kaitia, services the area North of the Mangamukas, through to Cape Reinga.)

The new Southern Area Depot includes an outdoor yard area, wash bay and concrete apron and the depot building itself features an undercover storage area, loading bays and administration offices on its road frontage. Customer and staff car parking areas are also provided. END.

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Pic. (depot 007) Dugald Macdonald, Chairman of Environmental & Community Services Committee with Top Energy Chairman, Jack Poutsma and Ann Court, Chairperson, Kerikeri/Paihia Community Board.