



Pānui pāpāho

16 May 2019

Progress on talks to secure Central Government funding for Rotorua Museum

Rotorua Mayor Steve Chadwick says discussions with senior ministers to secure Central Government funding for the strengthening and restoration of the city's iconic museum are progressing well.

"I am working closely with senior ministers and am heartened by the discussions we've had to date to secure Government funding for our museum," the mayor says.

"Government MPs will also need to support us as we work through what level of support the Government can provide."

Mayor Chadwick confirmed the progress being made in talks with senior government ministers today [Thursday 16 May], during a briefing at the TRENZ 2019 event which has been hosted in Rotorua this week.

"Rotorua Museum is a New Zealand icon and we have been pushing for Government assistance since we were forced to close it in late 2016. It is Rotorua's priority. Central Government, of course, is very busy dealing with many priorities but we are fighting for our museum and my commitment is that we will get it done."

The Bath House was the New Zealand Government's first major investment in the tourism industry, seen as a way to make Rotorua a world famous spa destination.

"Rotorua continues to play a major role in tourism in New Zealand and our museum is a big part of that," Mayor Chadwick says. "The museum means a lot to our community and getting it re-opened remains a top priority for myself and this council. Partnerships have been key to what Council has achieved in recent years and to the progress Rotorua has been making and that's how we will also get this done."

Rotorua Lakes Council was forced to close the museum in November 2016 after damage was discovered in the historic Bath House portion of the building following the Kaikoura earthquake. The building was found to be below new building standards and is considered earthquake prone and a risk to public safety.

It is estimated it will cost \$45 to \$50 million to restore and strengthen the building and Council has committed \$15 million in its 2018-28 Long-term Plan towards seismic strengthening, with the balance of funds to be sourced externally. Last December Rotorua Trust announced it would support the project with a grant of \$10 million and the Rotorua Museum Centennial Trust, which raised

funds to extend the building in 2011, has committed to assisting with fundraising if needed. Talks with Central Government officials and Ministers have been ongoing.

“It is a complicated process getting the level of funding we require but I am working with senior ministers and the aim is to get the funding lined up so that we can start work on the building later this year, as planned.” Mayor Chadwick says.

Design work for the project is nearing completion and “enabling works” (work that needs to be done to prepare the site for construction) could start as early as July this year.

“I have been just as impatient to see work starting on our museum’s restoration as the rest of the community,” Mayor Chadwick says. “However, we need to understand that the assessments, planning and design work that needed to be done before any work can start have been particularly complex – we are talking about a historic building with Heritage 1 status and every step towards re-opening our beloved museum needs to be taken with great care and planning.

“All of that necessary groundwork, which started immediately after the museum was closed, takes time. Most of it has now been done and we will be ready to go once we have finalised the level of support from Central Government.”

About the Bath House

The Bath House opened in 1908 and is the only surviving building from the first 45 years of Rotorua as a spa destination.

Responsibility for Rotorua, both as a spa destination and administration of the then small town, was taken over by the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts in 1901.

By late 1902 plans had been drawn up for a grand new bath house (now home to Rotorua Museum) although initial plans had to be scaled back as funding ran out.

Prime Minister Sir Joseph Ward felt more overseas tourists could be attracted if the country’s health resorts were promoted. He placed the administration of Rotorua, then a small settlement of just 2,000 people, in the hands of the newly created Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, and in 1907 that department assumed complete control of the town.

By 1922 when the Government relinquished control and the town became a borough, Rotorua had grown into an important tourist town.

In 1963 the Rotorua City Council assumed control of the Bath House and by 1966 the Health Department fully vacated the building.

Rotorua Museum opened in the south wing of the Bath House in 1969 and Rotorua Art Gallery opened in the north wing in 1977. Two licensed restaurants and a night-club also occupied areas of the building until 1990.

In 2011 a major extension completed the building to the original 1902 plans.

Today the building holds a Category 1 listing under the Historic Places Act.

Find out more about the history of the Bath House [HERE](http://www.rotoruamuseum.co.nz) on www.rotoruamuseum.co.nz

Museum project status

Resource consent was issued in March 2019 following extensive structural and geotechnical assessment and design work. This was a prerequisite for some of the potential funding opportunities being pursued.

Asbestos found in the museum roof space and ground is not considered substantial and will be removed by experts once work on the building begins.

The project is now well into the “developed design” phase with architects, engineers and Heritage New Zealand working through design elements and procurement underway for contractors.

Enabling works are still on track to begin in July 2019.

Find out more about the museum restoration project [HERE](#) on www.rotoruaamuseum.co.nz

[ENDS]

For more information email news@rotorualc.nz