

10 YEARS

Te Matau a Pohe

A decade of transformation

Ten years ago

Ten years ago tomorrow our “world famous in New Zealand” bascule bridge Te Matau a Pohe opened to the public with a grand ceremony and parade attended by thousands of people.

At dawn a blessing carried out by hapū from both sides of the Hātea river, included waka gliding under the bridge greeted by haka and the trumpeting calls of pūtātara.

Following this, vessels floated under the bridge and people crossed on foot, followed by a parade of vehicles. A news helicopter captured the event and coverage made it into One News, where it was also featured on Jim Hickey’s weather forecast. It was not long before Northlanders also started seeing the bridge in a Kia cars television advertisement.

At the time the Martin Knight-designed bridge, which has counter-weights in its hooks to make it very energy efficient, also gathered recognition in the engineering and architecture fields around the world.

The bridge today

Te Matau a Pohe has become more popular than ever with runners, walkers, cyclists and others looking to get some exercise by the river.

The bridge made it’s 10,000th lift in January 2018, its 20,000th lift earlier this year, and is now sitting at just over 20,800 lifts.

Initially expected to carry 8000 vehicles a day, it did that from day one, and now carries about 40% more – around 11,000 vehicles a day.

After feedback from users, lifting times were changed to avoid peak traffic hours. To reduce wait times the control programming now allows “half lifts” for vessels with shorter masts. Marine traffic flow has been fairly static – about five lifts/day on average between 2014 and 2019, decreasing to about four lifts a day following the COVID pandemic.



Whangarei
District Council

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Te Matau a Pohe

A name with meaning

The name Te Matau a Pohe was gifted by Whangārei Hapū when the bridge opened. Translated, it is “The Fishhook of Pohe” the Māori chief who welcomed the first English settlers to Whangārei.

Pohe Island was a small piece of land surrounded by tidal mudflats about halfway between the points where Hāhā Creek (Limeburners) and Waioneone Creek meet the Hātea.

Work to reclaim the land in between it and Riverside Drive started in the early 1900s, initiated by prominent Harbour Board official William Fraser. Part of the

reclamation is known as William Fraser Memorial Park on Pohe Island.

The land lies within Ngāti Kahu o Torongare territory. Wiremu Pohe was a chief of Ngāti Kahu. He was also related closely to the hapū of Parawhau whose territory lies on the Port Road side of the Hātea River.

Pohe was very skilled in manufacturing fish hooks using traditional materials and styles.

His hooks were so practical, many of the colonial settlers preferred them to hooks made of steel. Pohe was also instrumental in building bridges between the two cultures during the first years of English settlement amongst Māori.



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A catalyst for development

Te Matau a Pohe has been a catalyst for huge change. The Kōtuitui Whitinga bridge across the Waiarohia Stream opened the following year and multiple facilities from pocket parks to adventure playgrounds, ball clocks to Giraglobs, have popped up on either side of the Hātea River for residents and visitors to enjoy.

These are joined together by the Hātea Loop, Huarahi o te Whai, that runs from the Town Basin (including the new Pūtahi Park and Hundertwasser Art Centre) down to the Te Matau a Pohe bridge and back up the riverside to the Town Basin's Canopy Bridge, weaving past shops, through markets, beside yachts, parks and industrial areas.



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A landfill and a vision

In 1964 the reclamation started to be used as our District's main landfill. In 2005 the landfill was closed and capped, and Council worked with the community to develop the William Fraser Memorial Park on Pohe Island Masterplan. The vision was for “William Fraser Memorial Park/ Pohe Island to provide a variety of marine and land-based recreational and sporting activities and programmes for the well-being and enjoyment of the community, within a coastal reserve environment.”



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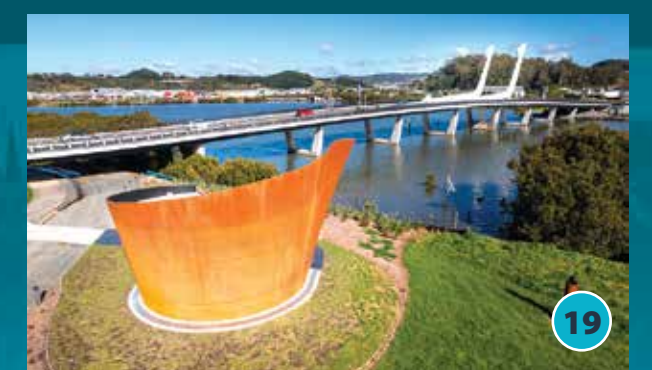
The Hātea Loop – Huarahi o te Whai 2014

The Hātea Loop has seen tremendous uptake and is probably the most used walking/jogging/cycling track in Whangārei.

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| 1. Canopy Bridge and Artisans Fair 2011 | 10. Art Park and Heritage Trail 2011 | 21. Carparks on Pohe Island 2019 |
| 2. Pūtahi Park 2022 | 11. Gym equipment for all ages 2015 | 22. NRU building 2021 |
| 3. Te Kākano (the Hundertwasser concept trial) 2017 | 12. Riverside Theatre 1980s | 23. Skate Park upgrade 2021 |
| 4. Hundertwasser Wairau Māori Arts Centre 2021 | 13. Hihiaua Cultural Precinct new Cultural Centre 2020 | 24. Family BMX Track |
| 5. Te Manawa – the Hub and Whangārei Art Museum 2011 | 14. Waka and Wave Sculpture 2004 | 25. Adventure playground 2023 |
| 6. Clapham's National Clock Museum 2000 | 15. Kōtuitui Whitinga Bridge 2014 | 26. Sportsfields |
| 7. About Time Ball Clock 2022 | 16. Pocket Park 2017 | 27. Dog Park 2008 |
| 8. Children's Playground 2008 | 17. Giraglob 2022 | 28. Bike Park 2022 |
| 9. Reyburn House Art Gallery 1986 | 18. Te Matau a Pohe 2013 | 29. Onerahi Shared Path 2016 |
| | 19. Camera Obscura 2020 | 30. Riverside Reserve |
| | 20. 'Climbin bloqx' play equipment 2017 | 31. Aquatic Centre |
| | | 32. Connection to Hātea River Walkway |



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2023



Whangārei's Deputy Mayor Phil Halse was Deputy Mayor and Inner City Development Committee Chairman when the bridge was first proposed and throughout all the steps of its design development, funding and construction. He said the network of partnerships formed to build the bridge made it an outstanding experience.

“Creating partnerships between Council and tangata whenua; partnerships between contractors and designers; partnerships with marine users and partnerships with the community were critical to its success. It was a joint project in every sense of the word.

“The bridge had to provide boat access to and from the Town Basin so maritime input was vital. Northland Regional Council's Harbour Master, Whangārei and Riverside Drive residents were consulted from the outset.

“The partnership between Ngāti Kahu o Torongare and Parawhau, their input to the design, naming Te Matau a Pohe, and involvement in all aspects including the dawn blessing at the opening was invaluable,” Cr Halse said.

”Council's funding partnership with the NZTA (Waka Kotahi) provided the money, and without their support build would not have been possible.”

He said contractors McConnell Dowell and Transfield Services formed a partnership (Joint Venture) specifically for the job and partnered with Council. Working with Project Manager Trevor Griffiths from Whangārei's Griffiths and Associates, they quickly pulled in knowledge from all over the world. Duncan Peters of Peters & Cheung, the Auckland-based structural engineers to the JV, contacted Eadon Consulting, a UK engineering company which

specialises in moving structures. They contacted designers of the award-winning Gateshead Millennium Bridge in the UK, Knight Architects. Martin Knight visited New Zealand and consulted with hapū, and the bridge's design is the result.

“Finally, the partnership with the community. The project has captivated many and the turn out to the opening was probably the largest gathering of people for any event in our District.

“When it opened, Te Matau a Pohe was considered the largest and most exciting engineering project in Whangārei's history, said to represent a coming of age for our District.

The \$32.2 million two-year build was funded by \$14.5 million from the New Zealand Transport Agency and Whangārei ratepayers funded the rest. Of the total spend, \$17.5 million was with over 50 local companies. Buffering some local businesses against the global economic crisis, it enabled many people to enjoy stable employment and develop and refine expertise. Several construction staff and adult apprentices completed their time during the project. Nearly all of the spend on the bridge was in New Zealand – about 93% – with just over \$2 million being spent off-shore on the hydraulics from Holland and large steelwork for the bascule from China. The bridge is now part of the fabric of our District's history. The people who worked on it, the families they supported, and the teams that gained skills here will all pass their involvement in this project on to future generations.”

The bridge and those who worked on it have gone on to win 13 National, international and Australian design, build and engineering awards.