

View from the Chair – Pete Taylor



Village with a vision and a view

For Birkenhead Town Centre Association Chair Pete Taylor, *pictured*, governance is about setting a strategic direction that plays to your strengths.

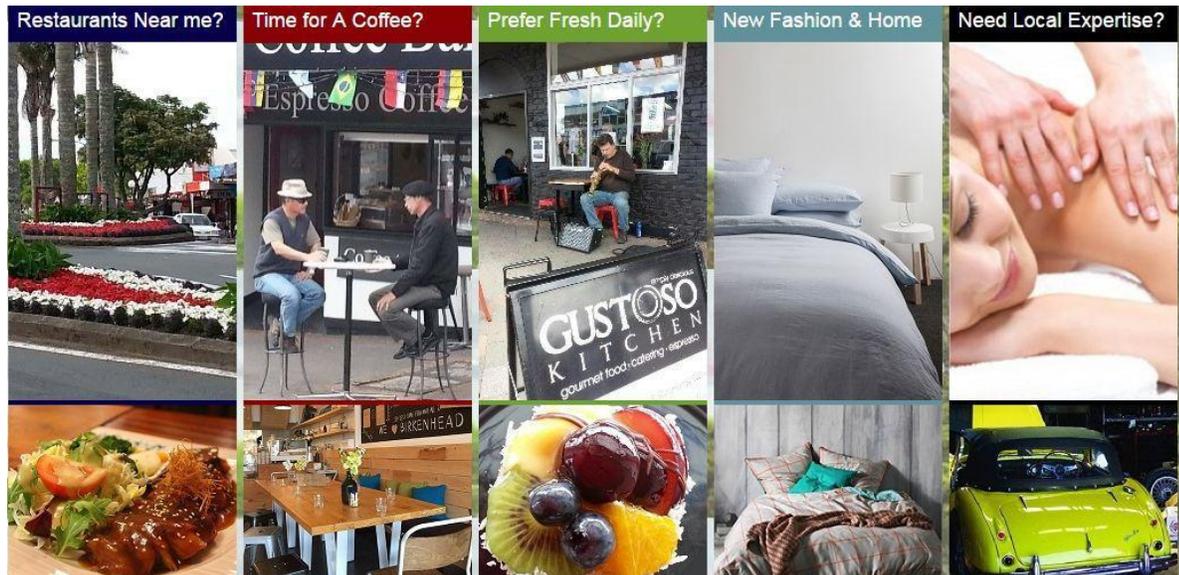
For Birkenhead on the western side of Auckland's North Shore, those strengths are reflected in the business improvement district's bold brand: [Birkenhead – village with a view](#) (of the Waitemātā Harbour).

Pete acquired his current role when the previous Chair resigned mid-term and Pete agreed to fill in. He's been happily holding the reins now for the last couple of years and leads a strong, well-established committee which knows where its governance role finishes and the BID's operational side (through Town Centre Manager Kae Condon) begins.

"The role of the chair is not about running things," says Pete. "I help set the strategic direction which then leads to our brand identity. Kae has completed thorough market research including our location and its history, and our marketing programmes then leverage those points of difference."

In the case of Birkenhead, the committee had the vision while the village has the view.

"The whole idea was to revive the destination with the focus on our environment and heritage, including our rich Māori history, and to rebrand the town centre as a village," he says.



“In Le Roy’s Bush (*O Wai Manawa*), we have Auckland’s only urban rainforest. We are highlighting our natural advantages through online video and incorporating them in our marketing.”

The town centre’s mix of retail, hospitality, professional services with some light industry combine well to make it an attractive place to visit.

In line with Auckland’s changing demographics, Birkenhead is a growing multi-cultural community which is reflected in events such as April’s inaugural [Day of the Chilli](#) Festival.

Pete acknowledges the strong support the BID programme has received from the Kaipātiki Local Board and local councillors who have worked well to share the vision of the village.

“Our elected representatives have been fantastic in working alongside us, however, our concerns about the loss of parking spaces (on Birkenhead Ave and Mokoia Road) are not being treated with the commercial sensitivity deserved. Based on our research, each carpark is worth \$3,000+ per week to our local businesses and a further seven are about to go in a ‘mainstreet upgrade’. We risk losing quality tenants as a result and are probably not alone across Auckland.”

Pete and his fellow committee members appreciate that the business environment is ever changing and Birkenhead needs to acknowledge and adapt to the threats and opportunities.

“Through Marketview data and other research, we’re as aware of what we’re competing against as what we’ve got to offer. For our centre to survive we need to compete both in the digital world and on the street. Innovation is the key to sustainability and we’ve been working with ATEED on tourism initiatives that seek to bring lucrative trade to our shores.

“Cruise ship passengers who come to Auckland often want to go over the bridge on half or full-day trips. Many want to shop and dine while others want to see the bush and explore our heritage. In Birkenhead, we offer a wealth of experiences within minutes,” he says.

Branding and the basics: together they sum up Birkenhead’s focus according to Pete Taylor. While *Village with a view* is the promise, the strong attention to the basics of cleanliness, safety and access help Birkenhead fulfil that branding proposition – and pull the punters.