

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Peter Chandler

Kia Ora, Knowing that I am on the journal deadline means a call to action, first I would like to compliment Roland Eberhard on his conservation 'Case study of Cave Improoovement!'

To me, Roland's study brings together in an excellent way many thoughts very relevant looking toward the Waitomo conference next May. This is the 'Planet' component of the conference theme 'the triple bottom line' abbreviated to TBL or 3BL. We are people who are, I'm sure, involved with visiting caves, and may gain their livelihood from caves, promote caves, look after caves or even make cases to increase or decrease human visitation with the resulting effects. And I'm sure some members do all these and more!

The statement that caves have historically been promoted as an aesthetic experience....scope for pandering to the faddish and ephemeral. Should a cave be opened or infrastructure changed or some other such action be done, to achieve an outcome, when due to a lack of adequate consultation, planning, peer review, there are unanticipated consequences that make the decision a bad one, and perhaps a very costly one to mitigate.

I believe there are examples of this happening in the here and now, to varying degrees. Optimistically, if those involved in caves read of these studies, the future incidence of them should be decreased.

As with virtually any topic there are huge quantities of information on line about TBL / 3BL, which seems to be good stuff. I'm sure the editor would welcome material on this subject before Waitomo.

Things have been quiet on committee matters at present. Earlier this year Libby and I had thoughts of attending the ISCA congress in Greece & Turkey, in November but for us, alas, it a long way to travel without the justification of staying longer to use resources to travel more sparingly. I wish Dan Cove well at the congress, principally representing Jenolan Caves, but also representing ACKMA.

On the cave visitor scene here at Waitomo, the economic downturn and Christchurch earthquakes have caused ups and downs in visitor numbers that for the most part drive the Cave and Karst work here.

March 2011, visitors leave south island earlier than planned, FIT (free independent traveller) numbers increasing at Waitomo.

September – November 2011. Influx of FIT with Rugby world cup, and 4 extra semi final games moved to Auckland from Christchurch. Some visitors stayed a lot longer. Perhaps some bad publicity about accommodation kept hotel visitors away or moved them into Camper Vans.

Autumn Winter 2012. Big decreases in numbers particularly with accommodation and cave operators who have similar products to others. No figures available but some may have experienced a more than 30% decrease.

And at Te Anau, Neil Collinson reports that Real Journeys is restructuring its operation to run effectively with significantly less patronage. Everywhere this is making things particularly interesting!



Students and Staff of Te Wharekura o Maniapoto during visit to the nearby Mangawhitikau / Spellbound site February 2012 . Photos: Hine Gurl