

NWC – Reaching out across New Zealand’s marine environment

A research, sponsorship and curatorial brief – National Narratives

The Picton based NWC has established itself as a hub for quality information sharing and story telling about whales and New Zealand’s whaling history. While a significant portion of the NWC Picton focus is on the whale story of Cook Strait and the Marlborough Sounds, the NWC has also committed itself to presenting a national whale narrative for visitors.

In considering the next phase of NWC development, an obvious opportunity lies in following the whales that move through and around Cook Strait to their other ports of call to tell the stories of their presence in those locations. In reaching out from Picton to those other locations, the logical place for the first NWC satellite hub would seem to be New Plymouth, Taranaki.

It is not only the humpback whales migrating through Cook Strait and making their way north up the Wellington and Taranaki Coastline (en route to the East Coast of Australia) that tell the story of connectivity (and history of whales and whaling) along the Marlborough/Wellington/ Taranaki marine highway. Resident blue whales (http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=11806272) and mysterious beaked whales are all now known to move through the waters of Cook Strait and the Taranaki bight (some, like the humpbacks, having travelled there from Antarctic waters). Recent NIWA research projects have identified both the year-long presence of blue whales in the Cook Strait / Taranaki region, and the presence and movement of other rare and rarely seen beaked whales across the same marine region (<https://www.niwa.co.nz/news/unique-research-records-rare-whale-species-in-cook-strait>). It is no coincidence that the marine environment identified for the Sustainable Seas National Science Challenge extends from the north Taranaki marine region across the Marlborough Sounds and Cook Strait.

The Taranaki region also offers the NWC satellite hub a globally significant storyline around Maui’s dolphins – one of the world’s rarest and most endangered species. Their history and their fate is the kind of storyline that the NWC, given its curatorial commitment to sharing science and information in a non-partisan manner, is well placed to tell.

The story of our ocean is one of connectivity – and the story of whales and other cetaceans is an incredible lens through which to illuminate those connections for the public. Whether it be the annual migration of humpbacks, the krill feeding of blue whales off the Taranaki Coast, the history of whaling and whale strandings, or the movement of beaked whales through Cook Strait, the connection between the marine environment and whale history of the north of South Island and the south of the North, is one that can naturally and powerfully connect our land-based communities.

NWC is proposing to establish a Taranaki Hub in 2017/18. Working in partnership with representative agencies from iwi, marine science, conservation, and history NWC will establish an information and story telling centre in New Plymouth that brings to life the marine and historical connections between Marlborough and Taranaki that whales and cetaceans represent.

Bronwen Golder , CEO, Pew Environment Group’s Global Ocean Legacy Kermadec Initiative

Trustee, NWC April 2017