



**Oranjehof**  
Dutch Connection Centre

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## Multi-Cultural Heritage Project Gets Huge Financial Push Happy Clogs Rattling All Through the Country Foxton to Revitalise as Tourism Town

The Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage has decided to assist the build of a new cultural precinct in the heart of Foxton, next to working Dutch windmill 'De Molen', with \$1.25 million from its Regional Culture and Heritage Fund.

The new Te Awahou Riverside Campus will tell a great many stories - all interwoven like seamless tukutuku panels - of local Ngati Raukawa, flax town pioneers, and the Dutch presence in Aotearoa that started with Abel Tasman's arrival 375 years ago. The unique state-of-the-art tourism and community hub will open its doors on Saturday, 18 November, 2017. The new cultural precinct will transform Foxton, and turn it into the tourism centre of the region.

"Last year we received a first major grant," says Arjan van der Boon, Co-Chair of the Dutch Connection Museum Trust. "We were absolutely delighted to receive \$750,000 from the Lotteries Significant Projects Fund, in recognition of the national significance of our Dutch museum Oranjehof.

"To now receive \$1.25 million for the entire Te Awahou project, from the highest cultural authority in the land, is just gobsmackingly fantastic. When I told my team, I could see tears in some eyes. This seal of approval from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage proves that working in true partnership is the right model to make initiatives like this succeed. Mana whenua, local groups, the Dutch community and Horowhenua District Council - we're all over the moon to receive Government recognition for our groundbreaking initiative after 10 years of working things out together. It's as if I can hear happy clogs rattling all over the country."



Historic Foxton is reinventing itself. The heartland township has opted for tourism to fix unemployment and a downward economic spiral that worsened after the Feltex carpet factory closed its doors in 2008.

In November, the unique tourism facility Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom will open its doors for the very first time, to welcome locals and travellers from afar. Well over 40,000 visitors are expected in the first year, making a detour from State Highway 1 to have a short or a longer break. The Piriharakeke Generation Inspiration Centre will showcase local Maori culture and art. A Foxton Hub will tell of the illustrious past of this Manawatu harbour and flax town. And the Oranjehof museum will be the place where all Dutch connections come together - the stories immigrants who changed a nation's tastes with great cheese, tasty salamis and chicken dinners, the arts and agriculture.

"It is so important to tell the story of the Dutch population in New Zealand in this wider context," says Arjan. "We're often called the 'Invisible Immigrants', because we integrated so well into society and simply got on with establishing families and building wealth. We will now have a place to showcase our history and aspirations to the nation - together with Mana Whenua and pioneers.

"With Oranjehof, we're creating a museum that tells the stories of the past, and links us to a culturally rich future," says Arjan. "Foxton truly represents heartland New Zealand. This multicultural initiative will turn the town into a tourism destination in its own right, smack on State Highway 1. It will be a great attraction for local travellers and international tourists looking for an authentic experience - in a revitalised town."

Foxton has been designated as the region's tourism centre by Horowhenua District Council. That choice makes perfect sense for the historic river town, with Foxton Beach close by and a wetlands estuary full of rich birdlife that has rare Unesco RAMSAR status.

“Council has worked tirelessly to attract external funding for Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom,” says Arjan. “Now we’ve received our final accolade. It’s a grand gesture of support from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage that recognises community, partnership and multiculturalism in action.”

The make-up of Te Awahou Nieuwe Stroom represents modern New Zealand. A Whare Manaaki dedicated to carving and flax weaving, a pioneering times Flax Stripper Museum with a loud and grunty early 1900s machine, and a Dutch 17th century design windmill are all part of the facilities.

“This is an example of what is possible if different ethnic groups and cultures put their heads together, work towards a common goal, and create innovation and fresh ideas,” says Arjan.

A ‘Get in Touch with the Dutch’ campaign is raising additional funding for Oranjehof. Anyone interested in contributing can donate on <https://givealittle.co.nz/org/dutchconnectionmuseum>

“We’re asking people to give back something to our cultural heritage. The Dutch have done well in this country. Let’s share that with the nation, and grow our Dutch Connections.” says Arjan.

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