Inspiring the community

by Ayta Miller

Dargaville and the wider Kaipara have a unique opportunity to revitalise their towns as vibrant places to live, work and visit according to internationally acclaimed town and community advocate, Peter Kenyon who over the last 30 years has worked with 1600 small rural towns in some 58 countries.

This follows a well-attended public meeting at the Lighthouse Function Centre organised by the Dargaville Business Forum, Kauri Coast Promotions Society and the Dargaville Community Development Board. Mr Kenyon spoke to the local community and those from around the Kaipara district about other small towns which focussed on their positive assets and how he had worked with them to create vibrant, attractive and flourishing towns.

“We are empowered by our strengths as a community. We will build a place to live and work that engenders who we are,” he said.

He stressed that ideas were the first step in vitalising a town, and getting people inspired and collaborating was one of the most important stages.

continued on page 3 ...

Inspiring the community

“We don’t want to leave this as a good ideas night. Now we have to come up with a strategy about how we set these plans into action. The majority of people are behind the things suggested, but the question is, how behind them are we?”

He says the next stage will be working with groups to take the ideas to fruition. As the Kaipara moves to elect a new council next year, he says the area is in a unique position to choose leaders who will be a force for change.

“Unlike many places I have worked with, Dargaville is not in trouble, it is just a community that wants to make its town the best it can be.”

He also noted some very strong themes to come out of the discussions.

“Retaining our youth came up many times, and there is a lot of interest in finding out how to get young people to return and settle in the area. It is obvious locally really want Dargaville to be family friendly as well.

“Now it is just about inviting people to join the groups and become involved in getting things happening,” said Mr Kenyon.

“During the discussions people opened up about all the things they are passionate about and that’s what these meetings are all about. Getting people to think about what they would like to see happen,”

Dargaville Business Forum chairperson Peter Boyd says he was very pleased with the feedback he received from the meeting. “I’ve learnt an incredible amount. People really seemed to enjoy the discussions and now it is just collaborating all the ideas, focussing on the key points and deciding where to go from there.”

Peter Kenyon speaks to community members at the Lighthouse Function Centre in Dargaville

“THANKS FOR A GREAT VISIT

“A business forum breakfast meeting, a public meeting as well as meeting council staff and brainstorming with local community leaders, a hectic two days, but an amazing experience visiting your wonderful town of Dargaville, a town with so much going for it, that I am sure with the passion and enthusiasm I experienced here, it is a town with a very bright future.”

— PETER KENYON

To those who could make it to hear Peter, thanks for a great turnout and participation. There is quite a lot of information to be collated and once this has been done, we will be in contact and start putting together some action plans.

If those who attended the meetings but did not leave their contact details, and also anyone that could not make the meetings but is still keen to be involved in some way in our towns future could email their contact details to dargavilleforum@gmail.com we will be able to keep everyone up to date.

Thanks from the Dargaville Business Forum, the Kauri Coast Promotion Society and the Dargaville Community Development Board.