Connecting our community: Conceptualising our website as "a virtual community centre"

Context:
The Kawau Island community as a whole is geographically disconnected. It is an island with very few roads and a predominance of non-permanent residents. Our people connect and associate with bays or their location on the Island. Kawau doesn't have a community centre or town hall, or a local community notice board – we don't all shop at the same corner store.

The Kawau Island Facebook group is a fantastic way for the community to connect, share updates and information, ask for advice, sell things, get advice from the community. The KIRRA website (kawauisland.org.nz) is popular with visitors to the Island looking for how to get here, where to stay and what to do on the Island. For the community, there is some basic information, a directory and notices. For businesses and organisations, we have features, accommodation listings, links to their websites like Pohutukawa Trust, Camp Bentzon, Parohe, Doc.   Currently there is a lot of information, everywhere. On Facebook, in Kooka, on the website.. we don't have it in one single hub.

Not everyone is on Facebook, not everyone is on Instagram, not everyone receives the Kookaburra either. But almost everyone has access to the web and an email address whether it is through their smart phone, computer, iPad or tablet.

Opportunity:
Creating a virtual community hub/website that is accessible for all the community is foundational to ensure we have visibility and full transparency of our priorities and all aspects of life on the island, these could include:
- Information and updates about services to and from the island.
- Community events like ANZAC, the Gumboot ball, book club.
- Community news – specific to bays/coves as well as the entire island.
- Local government changes impacting the Kawau community (carparking, rubbish facilities, transport etc).
- Updates on legislation and government/local government decisions impacting transport, building, consents, insurance, wharves etc.
- Updates on the concept of Pest-free Kawau.
- Dynamic advertising space could also be included to provide a value add for Kookaburra advertisers and support the website to be financially self-sustaining long term.

How we could do it:
- We have a sub committee that is still forming – current community members and new.
- Plan our requirements – what do we want/need/don't need.
- Get prices or quotes for any technical website development work that needs to be outsourced. It is envisaged that costs for technical expertise may be between $3-5,000 and there may be some ongoing costs if a new platform is required.
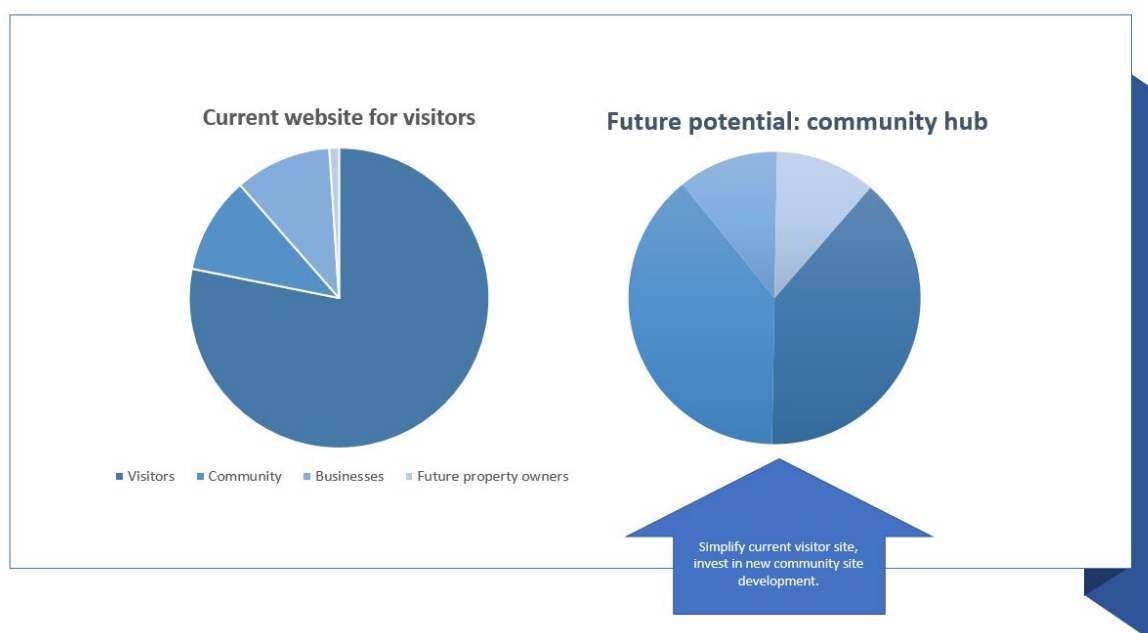- Bring these back to KIRRA Executive for endorsement.

Fig 1. Moving website focus from visitors to a kawau community hub will require technical development of the existing website and