

TE AO MĀORI (/NEWS/TE-MANU-KORIHI) / ENVIRONMENT (/TAU)

Ngāi Tahu and Tiwai Point smelter reach agreement to restore whenua

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Representatives from Murihiku Rūnaka and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu sign the agreement. Photo: Supplied by Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu

P A new partnership with Ngāi Tahu has been set up to restore the whenua at the site of the Tiwai Point aluminium smelter in Southland.

The agreement was signed at Te Rau Aroha Marae in Motupōhue/Bluff by representatives from Murihiku Rūnaka and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

It will see the New Zealand Aluminium Smelters (NZAS) and Rio Tinto work with local rūnaka to remove waste, conduct environmental monitoring, and re-mediate the site.

"We're proud to be working alongside Murihiku Rūnaka and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu in continuing this important mahi," NZAS chief executive Chris Blenkiron said in a statement.

"Their guidance will be invaluable as we progressively re-mediate the site.

"This agreement reinforces the commitments we've made to remove waste and re-mediate the site, irrespective of the smelter's future."

Head of Te Rūnaka o Awarua, the group leading the partnership on behalf of the iwi, Tā Tipene O'Regan, said this was a chance to look at the future of the whenua.

"I have always believed there is a future for this land. Now we can engage in responsible environmental management and look at a long-term future for Tiwai," he said in a statement.

The smelter's future is still uncertain but regardless mana whenua want the site cleaned up and the land restored.

The agreement also represents a commitment by the iwi to share mātauranga Māori and kōrero tuku iho (history and traditions) relative to Tiwai.

This will support the owners to responsibly manage the environment as the future of the smelter is determined, they said.

A report by Environment Southland (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/474768/tiwai-point-smelter-significant-amount-of-contamination-released-into-environment>) last month found ongoing contamination at the site near Motupōhue/Bluff.

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