

# Palmerston North's Blair Tennent Hall demolished



Murray Wilson/ Fairfax NZ

Blair Tennent Hall has been demolished ahead of a transfer of ownership to Rangitaane o Manawatu.

The unsightly shell of Palmerston North's Blair Tennent Hall has been knocked down after standing derelict for a decade.

Demolition work began this week on the Fitzherbert Ave hall, which was deemed a health and safety risk after an arson attack in November.

The building, a former student hostel, is one of eight Manawatu properties managed by Land Information New Zealand that will be transferred to Rangitaane o Manawatu over the next two years as part of a treaty settlement.

Land Information New Zealand crown property acting deputy chief executive Mandy McDonald said the Crown had agreed to demolish the building before transferring the property to the iwi.

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The iwi was expected to take full ownership of the site within the next few months.

Rangitaane Settlement Trust chairwoman Danielle Harris said the iwi were glad to make some progress at the site.

"We're looking forward to doing something positive with the site which will benefit both iwi and the city."

Rangitaane was weighing up options for the building's replacement, and the development was still in the early planning stages, Harris said.

Many of nearby business owners were also happy to see the derelict building go.

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Palmerston North City councillor Leonie Hapeta, who owns the Hotel Coachman across the road from the site, said they'd been frustrated because the building had largely been left to rot for more than 10 years.

"It's going to be great for Fitzherbert Ave when [the hall] comes down. It wasn't a good look."

Cornwall Motor Lodge owner Esther Seymour said she was thrilled something was finally being done with the derelict site.

The hall had decayed considerably in the four years since she opened up next door, and had become a magnet for squatters and vandals.

"It'll definitely be a much nicer view for our guests out their windows with it gone, whatever goes in there."

But, Seymour said it was still a shame no-one had been able to maintain the building.

"A lot of people have very fond memories of the place.

"It's amazing how many people stay here who used to live in the hall, and we often see people taking group photos in front of it."

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