



Hundreds of jobs for Helensville

A MULTI-MILLION dollar marine industrial park and a 100-berth marina planned for Helensville will create hundreds of jobs.

The Waypoint Industrial Park is proposed for 19 hectares of land bordered on three sides by the Kaipara River at the northwest end of the town near SH16.

Development has started on a \$150 million project that could take a decade to complete.

Developer Waypoint Industrial Park is owned by boatbuilder Craig Ross, whose company Calibre Boats NZ is in Whenuapai. He will be the park's first tenant.

Mr Ross and Calibre Boats chief executive Olaf van Daal share a vision of creating an industrial precinct with a marine theme to bring high-calibre industry to Helensville. Mr Ross



PROJECT UNDERWAY: Ross Hyde, left, and Craig Ross in the Calibre Boats shed at Helensville.

bought the land two years ago and worked with Mr van Daal to develop a long-term plan for the estate.

The \$8.5m stage one building Calibre Boats' new home – two boat-building sheds totalling 4200 square metres – started in August and is due for completion in

February. Costing a similar amount, stage two comprises 22 units covering 4600 square metres, beginning early next year and due for completion later in 2008.

Units will be available for lease to marine businesses. Mr Ross says the project could

have come unstuck but for the help of finance brokers Global Pacific Corporation, which secured the funding, and the Rodney Economic Development Trust and district council, which helped with regulatory requirements.

"The project hit a stumbling block around

February because of the unique financing issues.

"But then we got in touch with Global's Ross Hyde and he threw us a lifeline to access the financing to get the project started," Mr Ross says.

Mr Hyde says it wasn't a straightforward bankable deal but by refinancing debt and revaluing land the project got "back on an even keel".

A loan arranged through Global has given Waypoint the money it needed for development costs, consent applications, site preparation and to build stage one.

Development trust business chief executive Valerie Freeman says it welcomes the prospect of export-generating business.

"We are delighted to have this businesses and the subsequent economic benefits to the district.

"Calibre Boats offers skilled jobs and career pathways, which is especially helpful for Helensville, where there aren't many jobs."

Founded by Mr Ross in 2002, Calibre has grown to employ 40 staff. It will be one of Helensville's biggest employers when it moves.

Mr Ross and his

brother Phil made their first fibreglass launch in a woolshed on their parents' South Head farm, turning the moulded hull over with a farm tractor.

Today the company makes its own brand of deep V hull sports fishing boat, the Tournament 745 – 7.45 metres long, and is about to produce its first 875 – 8.75 metres long.

That boat is designed to handle open water conditions and for crossing harbour bars such as the Kaipara. Calibre also built Earthrace, the biofuel-powered boat that this year came close to achieving a record-breaking circumnavigation of the globe.

The company is building a \$2.5m luxury power-sail yacht intended as a prototype, and is in negotiation with Middle Eastern and Australian interests for fleets of water taxis.

Those plans come on top of a global deal for the marketing and production of an underwater scuba scooter.

"We specialise in fibreglass composite building and we also have an engineering shop so we can take projects from start to finish.

"It's real Kiwi can-do stuff," Mr Ross says.

The company has also recently diversified into camper vans and horse floats. "We have a big picture for Waypoint," says Mr van Daal.

"The park will have a marina theme and the access will be not so much a road as a tree-lined boulevard that visitors can walk down and buy a cup of coffee and cafe food."

Mr van Daal says one of the world's largest marina developers is interested in developing a dry dock and marina.

"Once we have that we can think of refurbishments and refits, which in turn creates more business. Ultimately a ferry service between Helensville and Dargaville is a possibility," says Mr van Daal.

"We aim to create a one-stop shop for boating on the west coast." Mr Van Daal says the project could take up to 10 years to realise.

"We will take it step-by-step but we believe the value of the fully developed industrial estate will be about \$150m."

Late news

THE ELLERSLIE International Flower Show will be held in Christchurch next year after the Auckland City Council declined to help with funding.

The Christchurch council bought the show for an undisclosed sum. The show is worth more than \$14 million annually to the local economy and has been in Auckland 13 years.



DEVELOPMENT SITE: The marine industry park under way in the Kaipara River bow north of Helensville township. Photo Aerial Imagery.



WAYPOINT INDUSTRIAL PARK: The Helensville concept.