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**New Zealand
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Demolition of the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre

The New Zealand Institute of Architects is shocked by the decision of Department of Conservation Deputy Director Mervyn English to begin demolition of the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre at Lake Waikaremoana, a building with a Category One heritage listing.

The building was designed in the 1970s by the late John Scott, a pioneering Maori architect who was one of the outstanding figures in New Zealand's twentieth century architecture.

"Mr English has informed us that demolition of Aniwanuiwa will begin on Monday 5 September," said Institute of Architects President Christina van Bohemen. "We're told the destruction will take five to six weeks."

"The Institute of Architects has tried to reach out to the government, senior Department of Conservation officials and Tuhoe leadership to find a way to save the Visitor Centre," Ms van Bohemen said.

"This precipitate and unilateral decision forecloses all options to preserve an important building by a unique architect. It's shameful that officials charged with responsibility for conserving New Zealand's heritage have initiated the destruction of a valuable part of that heritage."

"What sort of example is this? The only thing that can be said about the Department of Conservation's decision to demolish the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre is that it is entirely consistent with the Department's long neglect of the building."

"This Category One listed building, paid for by all New Zealanders, should have official protectors. What does Heritage New Zealand have to say about this issue? Why has Maggie Barry, who is minister of both Conservation and Culture and Heritage, been silent about the threat to the Visitor Centre?"

"Unless the Department of Conservation quickly rediscovers its conservation mandate the Aniwanuiwa Visitor Centre will join the long list of distinguished buildings whose loss later generations will only regret."

Ms van Bohemen said that many individuals and organisations, including the New Zealand Institute of Architects, have been eager to work with the Department of Conservation and Tuhoe leadership to develop a viable process for saving and maintaining the Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre.

“That goodwill has not been reciprocated,” Ms van Bohemen said. “This decision is short-sighted and ill-considered. But even now, it’s not irrevocable. We urge Conservation officials to remember that they’re not leading the Department of Demolition.”

“They should stop the destruction of the Aniwaniwa Visitor Centre.”

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