**Tupuna Wāhine Pou Whenua – Baylink Project Tauranga Moana**

Over the past 10 years NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi, supported by Beca’s Urban Design and Landscape Architecture team have collaborated with representatives and artists from the three hapū of Ngā Pōtiki, Ngāi Tukairangi and Ngāti Tapu. Together we have developed a suite of prominent mahi toi on the SH2 Baypark to Bayfair Link (Baylink) project in Tauranga Moana, Bay of Plenty.

This submission speaks to three special elements from that larger suite and the broader infrastructure project, unveiled on the new SH29/SH2 roundabout in December 2023; Kiritāwhiti, Te-Aho-o-te-Rangi and Kahumoeangi - the three pou whenua that stand proud at the southern end of the project and give people a metaphorical karanga, that first call of welcome, before they travel through this area.

These three female figures made of carved timber and shaped/laser cut steel stand 6m tall and represent several important elements for hapū, including the patterns and symbols they bear, the combined strength of the three hapū and most notably the significant role wāhine have then and now. The pou whenua stand as the predominant marker and mahi toi on the project and are a great example of innovation, blending tikanga with contemporary artform and engineering.

This has been a fulfilling journey to be a part of – one that extends beyond the project itself to individuals and teams involved, gaining a better understanding of Te Ao Māori, and building important and meaningful connections with mana whenua.

For the conference, we see a unique opportunity for a joint story telling session with artist Linda Munn and Beca landscape architect Chris Judd with the potential for sharing korero from the project journey around transport and landscape as a means for connection to place, whanaungatanga and Te Ao Maori – all of which is well is aligned with this year’s conference theme.