

# Notes of the Waioeka-Otara Rivers Scheme Advisory Group meeting held at Ōpōtiki Golf Club, Opotiki, on Wednesday 28 September 2022, commencing at 10 am

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- Chair:** Councillor Bill Clark
- Advisory Group:** Barry Hennessey, Dave Wilson, Dean Petersen, Robbie Petersen, Nathan Hughes (Ōpōtiki District Council – standing in for Stace Lewer), Councillor David Moore (Ōpōtiki District Council)
- BOPRC Councillors:** Councillor Toi Iti
- BOPRC Staff:** Chris Ingle (General Manager Integrated Catchments), Kirsty Brown (Rivers and Drainage Assets Manager), Bruce Crabbe (Rivers and Drainage Operations Manager), Tony Dunlop (Area Engineer), Mark Townsend (Engineering Manager), Laura Boucher (Communications Partner), Pete Hennessey (Communications Partner), Mereana Toroa (Finance Support Team Lead), Charles Harley (Team Leader Eastern Catchments), Jo Heath (Rivers and Drainage Coordinator).
- Public:** Maude and Chris Maxwell (Otara River Mana Whenua Collective), Sarah van der Boom, Malcolm Campbell
- Apologies:** Jessica Wiseman, Stace Lewer (Ōpōtiki District Council), Kim Douglas
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## 1 **Welcome**

Councillor Clark welcomed everyone to the meeting and Councillor Iti opened the meeting with a karakia.

Councillor Clark introduced Sarah van der Boom and Malcolm Campbell who are running for Regional Council Eastern Bay of Plenty General Constituency.

## 2 **Apologies**

Apologies received as recorded above.

## 3 **Notes of previous meeting held 6 April 2022**

**Resolved**

**That the Waioeka-Otara Rivers Scheme Advisory Group:**

**Confirm the notes of the meeting held 6 April 2022 as a true and correct record.**

**Clark/D Petersen  
CARRIED**

#### 4 **Matters arising from previous meeting**

Kirsty Brown advised that the interest on reserves, which was not included in the Finance Report to 31 December 2021, had been rectified and included in the end of year report provided in the agenda pack.

There were no other matters arising.

#### 5 **Scheme annual report 2021-2022**

Kirsty Brown spoke to the annual report provided in the agenda pack.

##### **Key points:**

- The maintenance programme was delivered generally on budget and to programme.
- The capital programme budget was underspent with several projects delayed, on hold or involving ongoing consultation with stakeholders.
- There is no work planned on the Peterson-Connor stopbank in the immediate future as there are other higher priority stopbank remediation areas being investigated within the urban area.
- Operating revenue was \$1,738,000 (\$41,000 higher than budget of \$1,696,000)
- Operating expenditure was \$2,142,000 (\$7,000 higher than budget of \$2,135,000)
- This resulted in an operating deficit of \$404,000
- None of the budgeted capital revenue of \$107,000 was received as the Waioeka Restoration Proposal that was to receive CIF funding was cancelled
- Capital expenditure was \$138,000 (\$216,000 lower than budget of \$354,000) - with one project on hold and others underspent
- Total reserve fund opening balance of \$896,000 and closing balance of \$1,047,000 (increased by \$151,000)
- Internal loan opening balance of \$4,974,000 and closing balance of \$4,700,000 (decreased by \$274,000)
- Asset valuation as at 1 July 2021 of \$52.4 million

#### 6 **Capital programme**

Mark Townsend referred members to the Capital Programme report in the agenda pack, outlining the Waioeka-Otara capital projects for 2022-2023 with a budget of \$91,000, and delivered a presentation focusing on climate change resilience for the Waioeka-Otara scheme.

##### **Key points:**

- The climate change resilience programme has four phases prior to the physical work programmed to start in 2023-2024 – capacity review (completed), geotechnical investigations (initial testing completed in 2021, further seepage investigation required), looking at options, engaging with stakeholders and communities.
- Geotechnical testing, involving transects through the floodwalls, has shown that the floodwalls are generally structurally sound, and nothing needs to be acted on immediately.
- Geotechnical testing of the stopbanks, at seven sites on the Otara and eight sites on the Waioeka, has been undertaken to identify the stopbank construction material. The banks were constructed in the 1960s and 1970s and often the construction

specifications were very brief and no 'as built' information provided post-construction. The stopbanks are regularly visually inspected however this is the first underground investigations to be undertaken. Testing showed that the stopbanks are generally constructed out of appropriate stopbank material.

- Two workshops have been held with Ōpōtiki District Council and iwi/hapū representatives:
  - Introductory workshop held 22 June 2022 set the scene by presenting the capacity review results which identified sections of stopbank where the current level of service is lower than the stopbank upgrade trigger.
  - Optioneering workshop held 22 August 2022 established principles and ways of working and identified high level options.
- The following four principles were agreed to at the August workshop:
  - Consider the affordability of flood protection for our communities and recognise the link to wider community outcomes.
  - Take a whole of catchment approach and consider how to provide for the natural character and life support capacity of the awa.
  - Ensure the community can actively understand, participate, and be involved in solution development.
  - Make allowance for the impacts of climate change and take a long-term view.
- Regional Council committed to communicating in plain language, being transparent, taking time, and being courageous.
- The next steps are to analyse and refine options, undertake option modelling as required, assess options, and engage with wider community.
- Councillor Iti commented on the spectrum of relationships with iwi and hapū saying that equitable relationships are important, and it is necessary to recognise and acknowledge that mana whenua is not tangata whenua is not hapū is not iwi.

### **Discussion:**

- In response to a question Mark Townsend explained the modelling scenarios undertaken and how climate change predictions were incorporated, including changes to river flows and the impacts of sea level rise.
- The 2022-2023 budget of \$16,000 was queried as not being enough to match the scope of the work being undertaken. Mark responded that the modelling of options and community engagement takes time, and this presents challenges for budget forecasting. In this case Council has opted for putting the bulk of the budget into the 2023-2024 financial year with the option to bring money forward if needed.
- Central Government investment in flood protection infrastructure was discussed. Staff advised there is currently \$150 million per year of government Climate Resilience funding available across New Zealand. Several projects in the Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme have received some of this funding. In addition, the Rivers Managers Group is actively building a case to central government for funding for river schemes.
- Mark Townsend responded to a question about any effects of the Harbour Project sea walls, explaining that the project's resource consent requires no detriment to river capacity and this was checked and confirmed through the detailed design and modelling phases of the project.
- Nathan Hughes and Mark Townsend explained that District Council and Regional Council are working together on building requirements in flood prone areas. The planning mechanism for dwelling floor levels is the District Plan. District Council are

undertaking stormwater modelling for the urban area between the rivers and moving towards providing a 1% AEP (annual exceedance probability) level. This does rely on the stopbanks providing the 1% AEP level of service. Mark noted that the difference between the agencies' modelling is that Regional Council recognise the residual risk and factor in a stopbank breach scenario.

## 7 Maintenance programme

Bruce Crabbe spoke to the agenda pack report, and Tony Dunlop showed drone footage of both rivers highlighting a range of work being undertaken within the scheme.

### Key points:

- The annual flood allowance for 2022-2023 is already over allocated.
- Condition assessment defect repair work is high priority however there is currently no dedicated budget for this work.
- Seventeen sites programmed for beach maintenance (de-armouring, beach shaping, overflow cut maintenance)
- Collaboration with hapū on both rivers is building positive relationships and paving the way to achieving beach maintenance and gravel management through gravel extraction allocations, and at no cost to the scheme.

### Discussion:

- The contribution of forestry operations to gravel in the river was discussed. Staff advised that the river cross-section surveys every 2-3 years should pick up any obvious changes and nothing significant has been observed.

## 8 Asset management planning

Kirsty Brown spoke to the agenda report signalling that how Regional Council will deliver on flood protection and land drainage services is changing. The way river works are managed will focus on climate change adaptation and maximising natural river processes, while continuing to meet flood protection levels of service. Future solutions may involve providing more room for the river (wider flood fairways) and using nature-based flood risk management solutions.

This approach will be incorporated in the Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan review in 2023-2024. Workshops with advisory groups on the implications of these proposals will be valuable.

Kirsty also spoke about the National Adaptation Plan released in August 2022. The Plan looks at the impacts of climate change now and into the future and sets out how Aotearoa New Zealand can adapt. The Plan recognises that councils have functions and duties in relation to natural hazards, civil defence and emergency management, and improving community resilience. All councils are required to consider the National Adaptation Plan in their planning processes from November 2022.

Bruce Crabbe provided additional information about the 'making room for the river' approach:

- Historically the Waioeka and Otara river channels have become confined resulting in bank erosion and a subsequent cycle of erosion repairs using rock, followed by further

erosion occurring at the end of the rock-lined areas (end effects). This approach is becoming expensive and is not financially or environmentally sustainable.

- Two independent consultants, Gary Williams (Waterscape) and Kyle Christensen (Christensen Consulting), have recommended that a 'room for the river' approach is needed for the rivers to adapt to the frequency of flooding that is currently occurring and forecast to continue with climate change predictions of more frequent and intense rainfall events.
- Iwi and hapū prefer the rivers to be allowed to 'speak for themselves' and behave more naturally.
- River management work in the future will be guided by river corridors or fairways, where the rivers will be allowed to move laterally without being fixed by hard engineering structures. In these corridors there will be less intervention in terms of erosion control and instead a focus on careful gravel management, weed control to allow gravel to move through the system, and overflow cuts to draw flows away from high erosion areas. This approach is going to be challenging for staff who are used to 'fixing' areas of erosion, and for landowners who may lose some productive land.
- Pampas is a problem along the rivers. They hold gravel and sediment and if not kept controlled on a regular basis can become a huge problem.

## Discussion

- Members agreed that no one wants a rock lined channelised river. However, questioned the cost of turning away from many years, and millions of dollars, of effort protecting erosion prone areas only to have to then provide erosion protection at the next level beyond the identified river corridor.
- Staff assured members that this approach is one management option being considered and it requires further investigation, and discussion with the community, to assess impacts.

## 9 General business

### 9.1 Gravel management report

Mark Townsend took the agenda report as read and there were no questions.

### 9.2 General business report

Kirsty Brown took the agenda report as read and highlighted a few key points.

#### Key points:

- The advisory group Terms of Reference Review is progressing with a draft issued to group members for feedback. Review process is on hold until the new Council has formed post local body elections in October.
- The next round of flood protection and drainage infrastructure assets condition and performance assessments are due to commence. Asset condition is a measure of the physical state of an asset which is visually assessed by staff/contractors and graded from 1 (very good) to 5 (very poor). Condition assessment looks at the physical state of an asset and performance assessment is a 'whole picture' analysis assessing required service levels, asset condition, intrinsic strength, capacity, geology, and the potential risks to communities.

- Local Government elections are being held for Regional Council's 14 councillor roles. Postal voting opened on 16 September and closes 8 October 2022.
- Councillor Clark is not running for re-election and Kirsty Brown thanked him for his service to the community and the environment.

### 9.3 **Communications update**

Laura Boucher and Pete Hennessey from the Communications Team introduced themselves and discussed working with the Advisory Group to help provide information that would be beneficial to their community.

Members provided feedback that there appeared to be a lack of understanding in the community around Regional Council collecting their own rates and there only being one annual rates invoice.

Councillor Clark thanked members and the Ōpōtiki community for their support during his six-year term on Council. He enjoyed representing the community and working in river scheme management.

Councillor Iti closed the meeting with a karakia.

**Meeting closed at: 12:12 pm**