

# Notes of the Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group meeting held at Eastbay REAP, Whakatāne, on Wednesday 21 September, commencing at 10 am

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- Chair:** Councillor Bill Clark
- Advisory Group:** Bernie Clark, Brian Power, Fraser McGougan, Jim Finlay (Whakatāne District Council), Patrick McGarvey (arrived 10:50 am), Scottie McLeod
- BOPRC Staff:** Chris Ingle (General Manager Integrated Catchments), Kirsty Brown (Rivers and Drainage Assets Manager), Jo Heath (Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Coordinator), Bruce Crabbe (Rivers and Drainage Operations Manager), Geoff Stone (Area Engineer), Mark Townsend (Engineering Manager), Charles Harley (Team Leader Eastern Catchments), Mereana Toroa (Finance Support Team Lead), Kylie Hendl-Cox (Asset Engineer Bylaws), Laura Boucher (Communications Partner), Pete Hennessey (Communications Partner), Paula Chapman (Contract Project Manager)
- Public:** Paki Nikora (Rūātoki landowner), Sarah van der Boom, Malcolm Campbell
- Apologies:** Councillor Toi Iti, Geoff Mercer, Andrew Iles (Whakatāne District Council), Patrick McGarvey (for lateness)
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## 1 **Welcome**

Councillor Clark welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Paki Nikora to open 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 2 May 2022**

**Resolved**

**That the Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group:**

**Confirm the notes of the meeting held 2 May 2022 as a true and correct record.**

**Clark/McGougan  
CARRIED**

## 4 Matters arising from previous meeting

Kirsty Brown ran through the actions from the previous meeting advising that an update on stopbank raising would be provided in Agenda Item 6. Others matters arising were discussed as follows:

- Chris Ingle provided an update on the Whakatāne Boat Harbour Project. Resource Consent has been issued and one of the consent conditions is the establishment of Te Rāhui Herenga Waka Whakatatane Boat Harbour Reference Group. Chris is the Regional Council representation on this group with Kirsty Brown as the alternate.
- Mark Townsend provided an update on the Kopeopeo Canal channel capacity advising members that capacity reviews are carried out every 15 years on the canals with the Kopeopeo Canal due this financial year. A consultant has been engaged to undertake the assessment. The survey team have completed the long section surveys and are about to do the cross-section surveys.
- Bruce Crabbe advised that a hui had been held with Te Uru Taumatua and the Rūātoki Tribal, including representatives from Rūātoki hapū and marae, on river management in the Rūātoki area. Discussions were at a high level and very positive. Paki Nikora added that not all hapū are represented by the tribal group.

## 5 Scheme annual report 2021-2022

Kirsty Brown spoke to the agenda report highlighting the following points.

### Key points:

- Maintenance programme was delivered generally on budget and to programme, although the Safeguarding our Stopbanks Project works were not budgeted for and resulted in over-budget expenditure.
- The larger multi-year capital works projects are mostly on track with some programme slippage in the Flood Repair Project and the Whakatāne Future Proof Project.
- Operating revenue was on budget, with lower interest rates being offset by higher revenue generated from grazing licenses.
- Operating expenditure was \$2,560,000. This was \$326,000 higher than budget of \$2,234,000 due to the Safeguarding our Stopbanks project work and higher than budgeted overheads.
- Capital revenue was \$652,000. This was \$1,026,000 lower than budget of \$1,678,000 due to delays in receiving CIP funding for the Quay Street/Kakaharoa Drive seepage work.
- Capital expenditure was \$1,522,000. This was \$755,000 lower than budget of \$2,277,000 with the Flood Repair Project significantly under budget due to works being stopped to allow for ongoing engagement with iwi and hapū.
- Total reserve fund opening balance of \$818,000 and closing balance of \$587,000 (decreased by \$231,000), with funds from both the asset replacement and works reserves being utilised.
- Loan opening balance of \$8,141,000 and closing balance of \$8,502,000 (increased by \$361,000).
- Asset valuation as at 1 July 2021 of \$82.5 million

**Discussion:**

- Members requested additional detail about the Eastern Drain stopbank upgrade. Mark Townsend responded that the team is struggling to find a solution with space being restricted by the road and the sides of the drain already being vertical and prone to erosion.
- Geotechnical investigations are scheduled in October to support the development of options.

**6 Capital programme**

Mark Townsend spoke to the agenda report, outlining the Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme capital programme and budget for 2022-2023, and delivered a presentation focusing on Project Future Proof (Whakatāne Town Centre flood defences upgrade).

**Key points:**

- The Whakatāne River capacity review is progressing with both a review of historic flood flows and flood frequency analysis (to determine what constitutes a 100-year flood event) completed. Final report scheduled for completion in September 2023.
- Work on upper catchment flood mitigation options continues with an assessment of the cost of developed concepts in progress and scheduled for completion in December 2022.
- Project Future Proof is made up of two main components – installing seepage control and upgrading floodwall foundations/raising floodwalls (along Kakaharoa Drive and Quay Street, and at the boat ramp), and increasing the height of stopbanks (from McAlister Street pump station to Yacht Club). Discussions underway with Whakatāne District Council and Ngāti Awa on concept designs.
- Seepage control along Kakaharoa Drive and Quay Street is a key focus and will involve driving sheet piles to lengthen the seepage path with trenches to capture the seepage for pumping back to the river.
- Working with Whakatāne District Council to ensure access to the river is maintained, including a wide promenade on the riverside of the Kakaharoa Road and Quay Street floodwalls.
- Working with Ngāti Awa on designs to enhance the look of the concrete floodwalls.
- Engagement with the community on the concept designs to commence in October 2022.
- Detailed design and procurement to be completed by December 2022, with construction scheduled January to June 2023.

*Attendance: Patrick McGarvey arrived at 10:50 am*

Councillor Clark asked Patrick McGarvey for feedback from Te Uru Taumatua on the Waikirikiri Marae risk assessment and the outstanding flood repair works in the Rūātoki area. Patrick responded that Regional Council, Te Uru Taumatua and Rūātoki community members met last month. Iwi are pleased with the discussions and the intent to move away from controlling the river and instead to work with nature. Common ground was found through the discussions and now need to clarify Regional Council and Te Uru Taumatua roles and consider what needs to be done to progress the backlog of work in the area.

Paki Nikora commented from a landowner perspective that working with nature still results in the loss of land and this is a cost to landowners' and remains an issue.

## 7 Maintenance programme

Bruce Crabbe spoke to the agenda report, and Geoff Stone delivered a presentation highlighting a range of operational and maintenance work being undertaken within the scheme.

### Key points:

- The annual flood allowance for 2022-2023 is almost fully allocated.
- The river berm at Awatapu has been retired from grazing and is being trialled as a cut and carry hay operation.
- When planning maintenance work staff consider whether any environmental enhancements could be incorporated. An example of this is the extension of the Ferry Road inanga spawning ponds. The Safeguarding our Stopbanks project work needed good quality like for like soils to remediate the stopbank and the geotechnical consultant identified the berm area by the ponds as suitable for 'borrow pits'. The only cost to the scheme was for plants around the ponds.
- Floodgates on Orini Stream and Kopeopeo Canal have been kept open as long as possible to refresh water quality and to use the salinity of the water to control aquatic weeds. A negative impact is high flow velocities causing bank erosion in some areas. As an alternative to rock erosion protection staff are trialling a soft engineering option of planting salt tolerant sedges to stabilise erosion prone areas.
- Rangitāiki Drainage Scheme annual meeting held in June with useful discussion on drainage scheme issues. Several canals are getting a lot of sediment from the upper catchments and are needing to be desilted more often than staff would like.

### Discussion:

- In response to a query about whether the whitebait fishery is benefiting from the Ferry Road ponds, Bruce Crabbe advised that the ponds were for spawning and a nursery for juveniles and not a place for white baiting. It is expected that providing suitable and safe habitat for spawning will have a positive impact on whitebait populations however it is too early to observe or measure this.
- The correlation between quarrying and sediment build-up in the rivers was discussed. Bruce Crabbe agreed that the effect of quarrying is a valid concern, and the Regional Council Regulatory Team is very diligent at monitoring quarrying operations and their management of site stormwater.
- Saltwater flushing was discussed and there was agreement that it works well for weed control however can be problematic for farmers through the winter period when it can impact drainage. Bruce reassured members that staff were mindful of the balance between drainage and weed control, and that the gates get closed whenever a rainfall warning is issued by MetService.

## 8 Safeguarding Our Stopbanks project

Paula Chapman spoke to the agenda report and delivered a presentation.

### Key points:

- Purpose of project is to maintain community safety by resolving situations where encroaching land use may have affected the integrity and performance of flood protection assets.
- Stage One completed in April 2022 and involved 17 properties from 50 Henderson Street through to 9 Ferry Road. The encroachments were on to land administered by Whakatane District Council and they contributed to fencing costs and green waste disposal. New fencing is on the legal property boundary and fence maintenance will be the responsibility of the property owners in accordance with the Fencing Act. There was no cost to the property owner unless they requested more than a standard 1.8 metre timber paling fence. Fence posts were installed with filter collars to manage seepage risk. The initial cost estimate for Stage 1 was \$300,000 plus contingency and final cost was \$163,713. Private stormwater systems, buried rubbish, dead and rotting tree stumps, and fencing material supply delays were challenges faced by the project.
- Stage Two of the project is currently underway and involves 20 properties from 48 Henderson Street through to 80 Landing Road and 2-6 Mananui Crescent. Expecting this stage to be more challenging and costly with both a floodwall and a stopbank to consider, larger trees, and more private stormwater systems. Arborist and geotechnical assessments are underway, with physical work planned to start in October.
- Stages Three and Four involve the stopbank behind Riverside Drive and this work is scheduled for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 construction seasons. Geotechnical soil sampling work is programmed this summer to inform these future stages.
- Inflationary pressures on the project's budget were discussed with Regional Council panel contractors currently reviewing their rates and the cost of fencing materials increasing every six months.

## 9 Asset management planning

Kirsty Brown spoke to the agenda report signalling that the river management environment and how Regional Council will deliver on flood protection and land drainage services is changing. The way river works are managed will focus on adaptability and maximising natural river processes, while continuing to meet flood protection levels of service. Future solutions may involve providing more room for the river and using natural and 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 implications of the proposals will be valuable as the review progresses.

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:

- Two independent consultants, Gary Williams (Waterscape) and Kyle Christensen (Christensen Consulting who undertook a review of the April 2017 Flood Protection Project), 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.
- River management work in the future will be guided by river corridors where the rivers will be allowed to move. 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 will lose some productive land.
- Discussions on this approach have started with iwi and hapū.

**Discussion:**

- A lot of talking, education and understanding will be required for this approach to be supported by landowners.
- Members asked for clarification of the areas of the river that may be managed in this way. Bruce Crabbe responded that it would be high energy areas - Whakatāne River upstream of Ohotū Bridge and Tauranga River upstream of Waimana East Bridge.
- This approach to river management is being debated across New Zealand, and around the world, and the theme of the 2022 NZ Rivers Group Conference in November 2022 is 'Making Room for Rivers'.

## 10 General business

### 10.1 Gravel management

Paula Chapman took the agenda report as read and there were no questions.

### 10.2 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.

### 10.3 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.

#### 10.4 **Members' forum**

Changes to how Regional Council rates are collected was raised, with members questioning why a quarterly payment option was not offered to match how they have paid rates in the past. Dairy farmers cash flow is tight at this time of the year and a quarterly payment option would be appreciated.

Observation made that with more softer engineering options and 'making room for the river' the scheme should be more financially sustainable and scheme ratepayers should see a reduction in their rates.

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

Paki Nikora closed the meeting with a karakia.

**Meeting closed at:** 12:15 pm