Whakatane-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group

Meeting notes

**Commencing:** Wednesday, 29 March 2023, 10.00 am

**Venue:** Putauaki Room, EastBay REAP

**Chairperson:** Cr Toi Iti

**Members:** Boots McNaught (Whakatāne Urban), Geoff Mercer (Whakatāne Urban), Scottie McLeod (Rangitāiki Plains), Brian Power (Rangitāiki Plains), Fraser McGougan (Middle Catchment Whakatāne River), Councillor Andrew Iles (WDC Councillor representative), Patrick McGarvey (Te Uru Taumata and Te Komiti o Runa)

**BOPRC staff:** Kirsty Brown (Rivers and Drainage Assets Manager), Dan Batten (Rivers and Drainage Operations Manager), Mark Townsend (Engineering Manager), Bruce Crabbe (Principal Advisor), Geoff Stone (Area Engineer), Paula Chapman (Project Manager), Sharleen Augustus (Assets Management Coordinator), Laura Boucher (Comms Partner), Loris Hastie (Management Accountant)

**Public:** Joe Metcalfe (WDC Transport Planner) and Richard Faire (WDC Tourism Product Development Advisor), Cr Wilson James (WDC Councillor, Rangitāiki General Ward)

**Apologies:** Chris Ingle, Karlo Keogh (Finance Support Team Lead), Cr Toni Boynton (WDC Councillor representative), Cr Ken Shirley, Cr Malcolm Campbell, Bernie Clark (Middle Catchment Tauranga River), Jim Finlay (WDC), Glen Cooper (WDC).

1. Welcome

Chair opened the meeting and followed with around-the-table introductions.

2. Apologies

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| Apologies were noted as above. Patrick McGarvey advised he would be leaving the meeting early.  |

3. Previous Meeting Notes

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| **3.1** | **Resolved****That the Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group:** **Confirms the notes from the previous meeting held 14 September 2022 are a true and correct record.** **Scottie McLeod/Brian Power****CARRIED** |
| **3.2** | **Matters Arising:*** There were no matters arising from the previous meeting minutes.
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4. Agenda items

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| **4.1** | **Capital Works Programme Update**Presented by: Mark Townsend. Agenda report taken as read. **Key Points:*** Update on the Rivers Scheme Sustainability (RSS) Project for the Whakatane-Tauranga Rivers Scheme and the Project Future Proof Whakatāne – a programme of work to future proof the lower catchment to 2040.
* Quay Street – plans to install sheet piling to reduce seepage velocity and improve flood protection.
* Kakahoroa Drive – proposing to install sheet piling and raise the flood walls for enhanced flood protection. Consultants have created drawings for reference.
* Yacht club – relocating the road entrance to the west for improved access, with plans to raise the existing ramp.
* Collaborating with Ngāti Awa to enhance the aesthetics of the flood wall.

**Key Points - Members:*** Options for Quay Street floodwall (including Perspex): Currently exploring various options but need to consider District Council requirements.
* Analysis of temporary barriers: further assessment required.
* Concerns for Waimana township and surrounding areas: Ongoing assessment and feasibility studies to address potential implications are being continuously developing through the RSS Project.
* Final concept design for Project Future Proof: Timing of availability questioned, with the importance of ensuring feasible concepts and establishing strong partnerships for successful implementation.
* Community resilience and climate change adaptation: Members emphasised the need for a collective effort, highlighting the need to identify risks and vulnerabilities in small settlements and develop mitigation strategies.
* Ensuring risk management: Highlighted the need for staff to prioritise forestry slash (industrial waste).
* Changing attitude towards nature-based solutions and to advocate for collective solutions.
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| **4.2** | **Maintenance Works Programme Update** Presented by: Dan Batten, Geoff Stone and Bruce Crabbe. Agenda report taken as read. **Key Points:*** Exceptionally wet period extending from June 2022 through to late February 2023. Refer to data on page 12 of the agenda report.
* Overview of key maintenance projects included repairing high priority defects, repairs to eight flood damage sites, native planting and release spraying, replacement of Waioho stoplogs; repair works on the Kopeo and Orini floodgates underway, and trialling of drone spraying for pampas on the Whakatāne and Tauranga Rivers.
* Currently collaborating with WDC and landowners to address private stormwater pipes crossing or through the stopbank at Henderson Street.
* Actively addressing defects discovered on Whakatāne River floodwalls including cracks on the Muriwai Drive wall. Currently seeking geotechnical input.
* Challenges relating to the dumping of rubbish. Had to engage specialised contractors to safely remove drug related waste and vehicles. Currently in discussions with WDC around installing CCTV.

**Key Points - Members:*** Who is looking after the seepage problem? The Bylaws team are looking after this.
* Willows are sprayed and topped in some areas and we manage them but we have to be careful of what type of willow we use.
* Significant gravel has moved and has been taken off the banks, caused by nature.
* Landowners would like to extract gravel and would like there to be more transparency around gravel extraction and who gets the benefit of it. There is distrust with diggers coming to remove gravel, so we have to work on shifting the culture.
* How much rock armour do we have? – In certain areas it reinstates itself and we need to plan ahead for if an event happens too.
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| **4.3** | **Safeguarding our Stopbanks (SOS) Project Update**Presented by: Paula Chapman. Agenda report was taken as read.**Key Points:*** Stage 2 is currently underway. Weather conditions have affected the project’s timeline.
* Resolution of private stormwater arrangements – solutions are being explored in collaboration with WDC. There will be costs to the landowners involved.
* Where problematic trees on private land have been discovered most landowners have been accommodating in their removal.
* Stage 2B floodwall: due to weather delays, remediation will be carried out by two teams to speed up the physical works. Defects have been discovered on the floodwall and will be repaired.
* Communication efforts: monthly newsletters have been sent to residents, updates published in the Whakatāne Beacon and project webpage. Engaged with real estate agents and other groups to share information about the project. Contractors onsite are also distributing flyers.
* Stages 3 and 4 of the project involves the stopbank behind Riverside Drive. This work is schedule for 2023/24 and 2024/25.
* Feedback sought from the group members regarding the proposal to allocate capital funding for Stage 3 in the 2023/24 Annual Plan. The proposal can be found on page 16 of the agenda.

**Discussion:** * Planting along property boundaries: Plans are in place to educate residents about the Flood Protection and Drainage Bylaws, with the goal of promoting awareness and understanding. Any problematic plantings and/or structures will be picked up during condition field inspections
* Fences have been installed back along the legal boundaries.
* Trees and stump removal: Rehabilitation is planned for areas near floodwalls and stopbanks. If necessary, filter drains may be installed. Council has been disposing of the green waste as part of the project.
* Property market considerations: Currently, people may avoid buying properties near stopbanks due to market conditions or concerns about potential flooding risks.
* Proposed funding options: Initially, project works were funded through the operations budget. However, as the project has progressed and the extent of the encroachments has been discovered, rehabilitation of the stopbank has been necessary therefore is more suitable to be included in the capital programme, in accordance with the Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan. This was supported by the advisory group members along with transferring previous expenditure into capital funding.

**Items for staff to follow up**:* Explore the possibility of including SOS Project flyers with Council’s rate invoices.
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| **4.4** | **Cycleways on BOPRC Stopbanks in the Eastern Bay** Presented by: Kirsty Brown, Richard Faire (WDC). Report taken as read. **Key Points:*** Whakatane District Council has obtained Government funding for cycleway construction.
* Funding relates to three cycleways which are situated largely on BOPRC managed stopbanks.
* Staff are supportive in principle, recognising the primary purpose of the stopbank is flood protection.
* Next stage is engagement with hapū and the community.

**Key Points - Members:*** Tāneatua to Whakatāne – the potential for a cycle track from Taneatua to Whakatāne should be considered in the future.
* Consultation to be completed within the next 3 to 4 months.
* There is currently no plans to utilise the old rail tracks.
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| **4.5** | **Finance Report Update**Presented by: Kirsty Brown. Agenda report taken as read. **Key Points:*** Revenue and expenditure update for the 6 months ending 31 December 2022.
* Total operating revenue is $39,000 higher than budget due to grazing licence fees and WDC’s contribution towards the SOS Project.
* Total operation expenditure $650,000 higher than budget.
* Total operating deficit of $611,000.
* Total capital revenue $445,000 higher due to final insurance pay out for the April 2017 flood event.
* Total capital expenditure was $2.9M lower than budget.
* Total funds available in reserves as at 31 December 2022 was $878,000.
* Internal loans had a closing balance as of 31 December 2022 of $7.3M.
* Asset valuation as of 1 July 2022 of $99M.

There were no matters arising. |
| **4.6** | **Upcoming Long Term Plan, Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan and Infrastructure Strategy Review**Presented by: Kirsty Brown. Agenda report taken as read.**Key Points:*** Three yearly reviews of Council’s Long Term Plan, Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan and Infrastructure Strategy due to commence.
* Central theme will be supporting communities to be more sustainable and resilient.
* Requires shift in thinking for ongoing and future flood and river erosion works to enable the river to behave more naturally.
* Sought feedback from members how they would like to contribute to proposed draft plans and budgets.

**In Response to Questions:*** Staff are currently workshopping what “making room for the rivers” means for the Council, noting that each catchment, river, and river reach are different.

**Items for staff to follow up:*** Extend 4 October 2023 meeting to include extra time for the draft LTP, Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan and Infrastructure Strategy discussion.
* Provide information regarding “making room for the rivers” at the September meeting.
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| **4.7** | **Gravel Extraction Update**Presented by: Mark Townsend and Paula Chapman. Agenda report taken as read.**Key Points:*** Extraction directed towards locations where it is beneficial for river management.
* One allocation approved in December 2022 at Owhakatoro Bridge because of gravel build up at Bridge 105.
* No extractions on the Whakatane River have been approved since 2018, due to declining bed levels above Ohutu Bridge.

**Discussion:*** CFL Ltd application to extract 20,000m3 per annum from defined locations on the Whakatāne River is currently on hold at the request of the applicant.
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| **4.8** | **General Business**Presented by: Kirsty Brown and Laura Boucher. Agenda report taken as read.**Key Points:*** Expecting significant impact on the cost and availability of infrastructure insurance coverage following Auckland floods and Cyclone Gabrielle. This insurance covers the 40% local authority share of infrastructure restoration following a natural disaster.
* Careful monitoring and analysis of the insurance market and Council’s asset risk is required. Members will be kept informed.
* Open letter from the Eastern Bay advisory group members requesting Council commissions an extensive independent forest condition survey and pest animal inventory of Te Urewera and the adjoining Department of Conservation estate.

**Key Points – Members:*** The circulation of the letter without consulting the landowner was seen as disrespectful. Te Uru Taumatua (TUT) has been actively trying to secure funding for pest control, but they have encountered difficulties due to a shortage of forest caretakers. It has been observed that the younger generation of Tūhoe no longer have an interest in living or working in the bush. TUT is actively searching for solutions and is greatly concerned about the presence of animal pests in Te Urewera.
* Staff recommended the members should engage directly with TUT and DOC to address these concerns. The possibility of conducting a satellite survey of the area was also discussed.

**Items for staff to follow up:*** Explore the feasibility of conducting a satellite survey to gather more information about the upper catchment conditions.

**Additional General Business items:****Kopeopeo Canal** – **Brian Power*** Sheetpiles have been causing constrictions, resulting in restricted water movement. Despite promises made to landowners along the canal, a rate reduction has not been implemented as expected. It was noted that there have been changes in the water dynamics, with higher water tables leading to higher base flows.
* It was suggested that further removal of the sheetpiles should be considered. Recently, the area experienced flooding for the first time, highlighting the urgency to address the issues in the canal.
* Noted the presence of dioxin in the upper drain, emphasising the need for remedial action in this specific section. One suggestion is to dig a trench adjacent to the contaminated area.
* The Whakatāne River level has been consistently high since June. If the marina were in place, it raises questions about accessibility to the other side of the river. Discussion continued with the Whakatāne marina proposal and the need for continuous dredging, with the sandbar near the yacht club serving as an indicator of the river's shifting channel. It is advised that thorough sounding checks be conducted during the marina development process.
* Lastly, there was a suggestion to explore the possibility of a contingency stopbank on private land near the Eastern Drain.
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| **Items for staff follow up:*** Confirm why rates reduction for landowners has been implemented.
* Report back to the October meeting on plans for Kopeopeo Canal, including clarity on levels and historical data.

**Making Room for the River*** The concept of "Making Room for the River" is being proposed as a potential future central government legislation.
* The implementation of this concept for the upper catchments involves identifying river management lines or corridors, allowing the river to shift and move within these designated areas.
* By creating more space for the river to flow naturally, the aim is to mitigate the risk of flooding and reduce the frequency and severity of flood-related damages.
* One of the key benefits of adopting this approach is the potential reduction in maintenance costs associated with traditional flood control methods.
* The focus of "Making Room for the River" is to strike a balance between activities in flood-prone areas and the need for natural river processes to continue without causing extensive harm.
* By allowing rivers to adapt and change their course, it promotes a more sustainable and resilient approach to managing flood risks and river ecosystems.
* Members would like to be educated regarding “Making Room for the River.”

**Comms Update*** Been updating BOPRC website by making it more accessible, Bylaw pages, flood defence overview, capital works going on and sending out mail outs and newsletters.
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**12.27 pm – the meeting closed.**

**Next meeting 4 October 2023**

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**Action Sheet**

**Whakatane-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group Meeting**

**29 March 2023**

| **Action** | **Person Responsible** | **Completed** | **Comment** |
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| 1. Could the Regional Council Quarterly rates invoices include flyers? Send Andrew Iles some flyers to see if these would be suitable to send out with the rates invoices.
 | Paula | Completed | <https://objective.envbop.net/documents/A4343429/details>Email sent to Andrew from Paula  |
| 1. Extend the 4 October meeting to allow discussion of the LTP, Asset Management Plan and Infrastructure Strategy.
 | Sharleen | Completed | 4 October 2023 Meeting time has been extended to allow for discussion of the LTP and RAD AMP. |
| 1. Confirm why rates reduction for landowners has not been implemented.
 | Bruce | Completed  | Email dated 18 July 2023. Discovered rebate had only been applied to one of the scheme rates. The Rates team have now rectified this issue.  |
| 1. Report back to the October meeting on plans for Kopeopeo Canal, including clarity on levels and historical data.
 | Mark | Underway | Update to be provided at October 2023 meeting.  |
| 1. Room for the Rivers - Update members at the October meeting.
 | Mark/Kirsty | Underway | Update to be provided at the October 2023 meeting.  |