

# Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme Advisory Group

## Meeting notes

<b>Commencing:</b>	Wednesday, 13 September 2023, 10.00 am
<b>Venue:</b>	Committee Meeting Room 1, Whakatāne office, 5 Quay Street, Whakatāne
<b>Chairperson:</b>	Cr Toi Iti
<b>Members:</b>	Peter Askey (Rangitāiki Plains), Alan Law (Rangitāiki Plains), Shona Pedersen (Galatea/Waiohau), Heyden Johnston (Urban), Cr Tu O'Brien (Whakatāne District Council), Cr Wilson James (Whakatāne District Council), Terewai Kalman (Rangitāiki River Forum Chairperson)
<b>BOPRC elected members:</b>	Cr Ken Shirley, Cr Malcolm Campbell
<b>BOPRC staff:</b>	Chris Ingle (GM Integrated Catchments), Kirsty Brown (Rivers and Drainage Assets Manager), Dan Batten (Rivers and Drainage Operations Manager), Mark Townsend (Engineering Manager), Andrew Pawson (Area Engineer), Cleo Hanlon (Rivers and Drainage Coordinator), Loris Hastie (Management Accountant), Laura Boucher (Comms Partner), Hemi Barsdell (Asset Management Specialist) and Paula Chapman (Projects Manager - contractor).
<b>Public:</b>	Scotty Muir, Colin Holmes
<b>Apologies:</b>	Linda Virbickas, Michael Van Tilbury (WDC)
<b>Absent:</b>	Leeann Waaka (Urban)

### 1. Opening

Cr Iti opened the meeting. The following items were tabled:

1. Email from Shay Dean, Environmental Scientist regarding forest monitoring.
2. Updated finance report.
3. Letter from the Greig Road communal pumping scheme residents.

## **Apologies**

Apologies were noted as above.

## **2. Previous Meeting Notes**

### **2.1 Resolved:**

**That the Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme Advisory Group:**

**Confirms the notes from the previous meeting held 22 March 2023 are a true and correct record.**

**Johnston/Campbell  
CARRIED**

### **2.2 Matters Arising:**

- Salinity results will be addressed in the Capital program discussion in Item 6 of the agenda.
- Update on the Aniwhenua Dam re consenting provided. Legal advice is currently being sought on Rivers and Drainage statutory parameters in the re consenting process.

## **3. Agenda items**

### **3.1 Long Term Plan 2024-34 and Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan 2024-74**

Presented by: Kirsty Brown, Hemi Barsdell and Laura Boucher.  
Agenda report taken as read.

#### **Key Points:**

- The proposed budget figures are currently in their initial stages and will undergo further refinement following group feedback.
- External pressures such as Central government regulations, inflation and climate change contributing to unavoidable cost increases.
- Budget forecasts aim to achieve an appropriate balance between affordability and service provision, including appropriate risk management and alignment with national standards.
- Proposed operational expenditure is comparative to previous years, with proposed increases for asset defect remediation, Bylaws compliance and monitoring, ecological offset work, electricity, and diesel.
- Potential future financial impacts to be aware of:
  - The review of BOPRC's Regional Natural Resources Plan to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management may impose significant additional expenditure requirements for the scheme, particularly regarding drainage water discharge quality and scheme maintenance.

- Aon Ltd has indicated that there could be a significant increase in infrastructure insurance premiums due to recent national and international weather events.
- Detailed comprehensive budgets with rating implications will be presented to the Advisory Group during the March 2024 meeting.
- Overview provided of the LTP communication and engagement process with emphasis on community affordability.

**Discussion:**

- Efficiency gains include adjusting rock replenishment rates for non-critical areas, changes to the initial Bylaws budget and savings within the Operations program.
- Members agreed that there is concern about increasing costs in the current economic climate, and that any efficiencies are to be prioritised, and costs to ratepayers must be kept at the forefront. The LTP process is ongoing and other costs are still unavailable.
- There have been some underspends in this year's budget, mostly due to weather impacts and consent application process timelines.
- ORC flood gate structure is in poor condition and is currently undergoing a detailed design and remediation process.
- Fish passage enhancement is a statutory requirement and must be considered in all works moving forward.
- Tarawera River stopbanks do not currently meet design level in some areas mostly due to subsidence. There are two options to be considered:
  - Maintain the current level of service and top up the stopbanks to meet that level of service (recommended).
  - Reduce the current level of service, removing the requirement to top up stopbanks (not recommended).
- The possibility of deferring any planned works to save some costs was suggested but noting there are risks involved with this approach. Reviewing levels of service will be a point of focus moving forward.
- Noted that there is an option available to review current insurance policies, the excess on cover, policy types and assess whether some assets require coverage.
- Members expressed the need for increased community engagement including face-to-face and public meetings.
- Room for the Rivers principles are currently being trialled, in collaboration with landowners in some upper catchment areas. This includes the use of nature-based solutions and soft-engineering techniques such as tree planting and buffer area establishment for erosion management.

**Item for staff follow up:**

- A more targeted public engagement process is to be considered by staff, to occur before the next round of Advisory Group meetings in March 2024.

**3.2 Capital Works Programme Update**

Presented by: Mark Townsend  
Agenda report taken as read.

**Key Points:**

- The College Road Floodwall is substantially complete and has come in under budget.
- Recent results from salinity piezometers have varied greatly from the first round of results, due to the current high water table. An indicative schematic cross section near Bennett Road shows saltwater intrusion from draw-in by land drains.

**Discussion:**

- There is no current estimate of hectares of land affected with salinity. Trends will be monitored before predictions can be formed.
- A good range of salt water intrusion data is required. This can be affected by weather and rain and drought conditions.
- Peat settlement - There are two sources of information to draw from - the GNS report and resetting the monitoring network in the plains to monitor peat settlement. Setting up of the monitoring network is underway.

**3.3 Maintenance Works Programme Update**

Presented by: Dan Batten and Andrew Pawson.  
Agenda report taken as read.

**Key Points:**

- The Operations team has experienced a busier than normal period, with heavy rainfall events bringing significant challenges. The recent break in the bad weather has been welcomed.
- A recent inspection of the Tarawera River has uncovered approximately 36 erosion damage sites, varying in size from 10m to 150m. A variety of remedial solutions are being investigated, including letting some sites heal naturally.
- Operations continue to look at cost saving measures where possible. The team currently has a full complement of staff, and a lot of physical works can be completed inhouse, including building of floodgates and operating machinery, reducing the need for contractors.
- The airboat is proving successful and is being well utilised.
- Fish passage enhancement is being considered at all times, particularly when designing and building floodgates.
- The fish pass at Tarawera is seeing a lot of wildlife, which is a good sign that it is working efficiently.
- A recent planting day with Galatea School on the Horomanga River was successful.
- Stopbank damage continues to be an issue, both from stock damage or uncontained animals.

**Discussion:**

- Where stopbank damage is investigated and responsibility found, a notice to repair can be issued under the Bylaws process. If damage is not corrected, then Council will repair and pass those costs on to those responsible.
- There has been comms around stopbanks damage and the do's and don'ts around these assets.

### **3.4 Finance Report Update**

Presented by: Kirsty Brown

Tabled report (including reserve and loan information)

#### **Key Points:**

- Revenue and expenditure update for the 12 months ending 30 June 2023. Draft until adoption by Council.
- Total operation revenue \$3.8 million higher than budget.
- Total operation expenditure was \$1 million lower than budget due to an underspend in predicted flood damage.
- Resulting in a total operating surplus of \$4.8 million.
- Total capital revenue \$3 million higher than budget due to the final settlement for the April 2017 floods.
- Total surplus of \$7.9 million
- Total capital expenditure was \$6.6 million lower than budget.
- Noted that the reserve information presented at the March meeting was incorrect.
- Total reserves (\$1.2 million).
- Internal loans closing balance as of 30 June 2023 \$40 million.
- Asset valuation as at 1 July 2022 of \$87.6 million.

#### **Discussion**

- The Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme is running at a high debt level as a result of significant capital investment since the 2004 flood, the benefits of which will be realised well into the future. The Rangitāiki Spillway project is the final significant capital investment arising from the 2004 event.
- All finance reports are audited by Audit NZ. Financial prudence is included in the Audit report.

#### **Items for staff follow up:**

- Audit report to be circulated with members.

### **3.5 Rangitāiki River Forum and Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group Updates**

Presented by: Chris Ingle.

Agenda report taken as read.

#### **Key Points:**

- The report included in the agenda was for the June meeting. At the time this agenda was produced, the most recent meeting had not yet been held.

- The most recent meeting included a presentation from Fonterra on discharges to the river; whitebait regulations; discussion on the freshwater policy programme; and a presentation from Charles Harley on the Catchment Programme and the work report from the last year.

### **Discussion**

- Terewai Kalman noted that the Catchment Programme was well received. Local Authorities presented their LTP drafts, noting that ongoing work is required for Taupō District Council's proposed LTP.

## **3.6 Gravel Management Update**

Presented by: Paula Chapman.

Agenda report taken as read.

### **Discussion:**

- Further updates since the agenda report was written, dated 24 August.
- Gravel extractions on the Horomanga River reduced in 2021/2022. There were some concerns from Ngāti Manawa about extraction practices, and the methodology. A lot of work has been put into collaborating with Ngāti Manawa, around gravel extraction and other Rivers & Drainage operational works.
- Extractions out of the Kopuriki have increased.
- Contractors extracting gravel across the Eastern Bay of Plenty must ensure that ecology, fish and tuna spawning and historic/wahi tapu sites are accounted for appropriately. Contractors are encouraged to build relationships with hapū and iwi, and to have conversations with those groups prior to their applications. This has been working successfully.
- Discussed the current gravel market and the costs associated with transporting to market. Cr Shirley inquired about the possibility of transporting gravel by rail.

### **Items for staff follow up:**

- Investigate the feasibility of transporting river gravel by rail.

## **3.7 General Business**

Presented by: Kirsty Brown

Report taken as read.

Tabled item: Greig Road Communal Pumping Scheme residents' letter.

### **Key Points:**

- 2023 Terms of Reference for all river scheme advisory groups was adopted at the 9 August 2023 Council meeting.
- Second three-year term of ratepayer membership is due to conclude in October 2023. The public nomination process is scheduled for November.
- Residents from the Greig Road Communal Pumping Scheme recently met to discuss communication problems and clarify responsibilities between the councils. It was also noted that repairs on Smith Road are currently in progress.

## **Public Forum**

### **5.1 Scotty Muir & Colin Holmes - Aniwhenua Dam Consent Renewal**

- Scotty Muir discussed the dam's impact, highlighting the build-up of the delta and debris causing water issues. He mentioned Tonkin & Taylor hydraulic model showing significant effects in 2007 and proposed redoing the model.
- Colin Holmes shared farm impacts, noting sediment issues moving upstream and requested more frequent updates for affected residents.
- Terewai Kalman emphasised iwi concerns, mentioning yearly flooding and ongoing communication with Southern Generation.
- It was noted that the consent renewal will likely look at retaining the current environment, not necessarily restore the river. Flooding impacts related to the dam may lead to new consent conditions.
- Collaboration between Scotty, Colin, and Terewai was encouraged to address concerns.

**12.20 pm - the meeting closed.**

**CONFIRMED**

**Iti/Shirley  
CARRIED 06/03/2024**

# Action Sheet

## Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme

### Advisory Group Meeting

13 September 2023

Action	Person Responsible	Completed	Comment
1. Targeted public engagement process is to be considered by staff, to occur before the next round of Advisory Group meetings in March 2024.	Kirsty Brown	Completed	Request was forwarded through to Community Engagement team. Community events and webinars have been programmed for LTP consultation.  Rangitāiki River Festival – 16 March 2024 Rivers and Drainage staff will attend.
2. Audit report to be circulated with members.	Kirsty Brown	Completed	Audit NZ has now completed their review and the Independent Auditor's Report has been circulated to the members on 8 February 2024.
3. Investigate the feasibility of transporting river gravel by rail.	Paula Chapman	Completed	The use of rail to transport gravel resource is constrained by the need to load and unload the material. This additional cost means rail is seldom viable for the transportation of gravel. According to info from the Infrastructure Commission the only situations where it has proved viable is where the product is used for ballast for rail lines. Currently rail transport is not considered a viable option due to cost related factors.  A recent study undertaken by the commission indicated the ideal distance to market for gravel resource is approximately 32kms.



**Action Sheet**  
**Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme**  
**Advisory Group Meeting**  
**13 September 2023**

Action	Person Responsible	Completed	Comment
			Investigation into river gravel availability has been conducted with NZ Infrastructure Commission Te Waihanga - Aggregate Research Opportunity.