

# Whakatane-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group

## Meeting notes

- Commencing:** Wednesday 20 March 2024
- Venue:** Committee Meeting Room 1, Whakatane Office, 5 Quay Street, Whakatane
- Chairperson:** Councillor Ken Shirley
- Members:** Neil Larking (Urban), Allen Wardlaw (Waimana Rural), 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), Tyrone Newson (Ngāti Awa Group Holdings)
- BOPRC elected members:** Councillors Ken Shirley and Malcolm Campbell
- BOPRC staff:** Chris Ingle (General Manager Integrated Catchments), 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), Jenn Goodfellow (Assets Management Coordinator), Cleo Hanlon (RAD Coordinator), Laura Boucher (Comms Partner), AJ Prisloo (Finance Manager)
- Apologies:** Chairman Leeder, Hemi Barsdell (Asset Management Specialist), Scottie McLeod, and Glenn Cooper (WDC staff representative).
- Late:** Councillor Tony Boynton (WDC elected member) and Councillor Iti

### 1 Opening

Cnr Shirley opened the meeting. The following items were tabled:

1. Draft Long Term Plan Handout
2. Long Term Plan Consultation document.
3. Updated Finance Report

No items for General Business.

## 2 Apologies

Apologies were noted as above.

Iles/Shirley  
CARRIED

## 3 Previous Meeting Notes

Resolved

That the Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group:

Confirms the notes from the previous meeting held 4 September 2023 are a true and correct record.

## 4 Action Items from 4 September 2023 meeting

An overview of the action items from the previous meeting was provided and then opened for discussion.

### Discussion:

- Digital pulse survey had not been received by all members.

### Action Item:

- Staff confirmed that the digital pulse survey had been circulated via email. Members will be sent LTP consultation information.

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

Presented by: Kirsty Brown, AJ Prinsloo and Laura Boucher. Agenda report taken as read.

### Key Points:

- Staff's focus has been on balancing affordability and risk while ensuring the continued function of rivers and drainage activities.
- Draft budgets are showing increases in both operational and capital expenditure.
- External pressures such as inflation, increased interest rates and insurance premium hikes contributing to unavoidable cost increases.
- Capital investment in flood protection has boosted resilience but it comes at a cost.
- Loan interest rate is forecasted to move from 2.5% to 4%, resulting in a significant financial cost to the scheme.

- Growing need to prepare for climate change and meeting an increased demand for Rivers and Drainage services.
- Noted that presented budget information based on version 4 of the budget adopted by Council for review by Audit NZ in December 2023 and for public consultation from 8 March to 9 April 2024. Staff are currently working towards version 5 of the budget.
- Detailed budgets with loan and rating implications and property examples were presented.
- Staff are still working towards finding further savings.
- Overview of the LTP consultation process provided.

**Discussion:**

- Concerns raised that the proposed rates increase will make farming unsustainable.
- River Managers across the country have been lobbying central government for funding up to 75% of capital works projects. Decision forecasted to be made late April to early May.
- The timing of the funding decision will be in advance of the LTP adoption in June. Confirmation of funding will alter the LTP and result in an altered financial forecast.
- Prudent assessment of operational works is creating cost savings while maintaining levels of service.
- Query on support available for ratepayers in the form of rates rebates.
- Confirmation that Quayside holdings is an endowment fund, which currently contributes an average of \$350.00 per ratepayer annually across the region, from the dividend. Only the earnings of the endowment funds can be distributed and not the capital.

**Action Items:**

- Rates rebate information to be circulated.

## 6 Capital Works Programme Update

Presented by: Laura Boucher and Mark Townsend. Agenda report taken as read.

**Key Points:**

- Overview of the scheme's website and communications update provided.
- Project Future Proof update: Stage 1 construction works underway. Forecast underspend of \$2.7 million due to more funds budgeted than will be required.

- Trident High School (Arawa Road) Stopbank: a section of stopbank requires upgrading and will include removal of tree roots and stumps. This work has been combined with similar work required on the stopbank adjacent to the Awatapu Lagoon outlet.
- Safeguarding our Stopbanks Project Stage 3: Removing encroachments from adjacent urban development onto council land and stopbanks. Currently 1.5kms of stopbank length has been remediated. Stage 3 will be completed by April 2024 and Stage 4 will begin in October 2024.
- 2017 Flood repair works have been undertaken in the Rūātoki area.

#### **Discussion:**

- Project Future Proof aesthetic considerations outlined. Working with Ngāti Awa on wall designs.
- While there has been some consultation on the wider Project Future Proof project. The main issues of concern will be with the Wairaka community when the project reaches the Mataatua reserve.
- Concerns raised about the psychological effects of the capital works on the community. In regard to the SOS project the council is offering counselling to residents, a Community Reference Group was also set up for the SOS project to support the affected community.
- Concept plans have been created in conjunction with WDC for increasing the height of the wall near the Fishing Club, but no decision has been made for that area.
- Trees on the stopbanks around Trident High School were planted at a time when the bylaw controls in the district were not as stringent.
- Solutions to the Eastern Drain stopbank upgrade are still being investigated.
- Safeguarding our Stopbanks Stage 3 is forecast to be close to budget on completion. There have been some drainage issues that have been resolved with support from the WDC.

## **10 Safeguarding our Stopbanks Project Update**

Presented by: Paula Chapman. Report taken as read.

#### **Key Points:**

- Currently 2.5yrs into the four-year project.
- Unexpected items such as sumps, loose drainage pipes, buried tree stumps, concrete foundations, debris and rubbish in stopbanks have been discovered, these items impacting the project in terms of timing and cost.

- Stage 3 update - Project forecast to be on time and on budget at this stage, despite some surprises. Physical works will be substantially completed by the end of April.
- SOS communications and engagement has been ongoing.
- River berm management plan:
  - Zone 3 – River Edge: Ecological enhancement work achieved at the same time as sourcing geotechnically approved fill.
  - Zone 4 – Plan to permanently retire the fenced off areas.
  - Zone 6 – Persistent Wet areas: BOPRC ecologist assessed the site and recommended that these two areas be fenced off and left for a while to assess suitability of the sites moving forward for possible enhancement or return to cut & carry, Upstream area is 0.23 ha and may be affected by coming stopbank toe loading works.

## 7 Maintenance Works Programme Update

Presented by: Dan Batten and Geoff Stone. Agenda report taken as read.

### Key Points:

- Overview of scheme operational and maintenance works, and programme highlights provided.
- More work is being completed in house to keep costs down.
- Multiple erosion sites and river gravel management works have been carried out on the Whakatāne River.
- Pole planting, trench willows, willow layer and rock groynes works have been completed above the Ohotū Bridge.
- Gravel beach maintenance and overflow depressions to keep gravel mobile and avoid build-up.
- Plantings at Awatapu outlet.
- Focus on pampas control on both the Whakatane and Tauranga Rivers. Drone spraying trials have been completed and have proven to be cost effective.
- Video presentation of river diversion works.

### Discussion:

- Addressing affordability issues: Building flood gates inhouse, using Council machinery, utilising softer engineering solutions, and reducing the use of contractors.

- Removal of logs from the rivers only occurs when required after assessment of downstream risk and flood hazards. Logs are left when they are being used as energy dissipating devices and creating habitats.
- Discussion on process for moving gravel build-up in rivers.
- Some erosion assessments have been carried out using Room for the Rivers principles. Noted that this will be a long process, which will require consultation with landowners.

Scheme assets are assessed and inspected in accordance with the Rivers and Drainage Asset Management Plan. Defect works are prioritised noting that this changes if a weather event occurs.

## 11 Essential Freshwater Update

Presented by: Michelle Lee

### Key Points:

- Changes to the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and Regional Natural Resources Plan (RNRP) which will result in potential rule changes including:
  - Drain discharges regulated to improve water quality.
  - Regulations on setbacks and stock exclusion from rivers and drains.
  - Guidelines for managing stock on steep land.
  - Regulations against grazing practices that lead to bare soil.
  - Control measures for nitrogen and phosphorus fertiliser use.
  - Regulation of scheme works near rivers and wetlands.
  - Amendments to allocation limits and minimum flow requirements for water extraction.
- Council has delayed the release of the draft RPS and RNRP documents due to the recent central government changes.
- Council has extended proposed plan notification date to September 2025 (from December 2024)

### Discussion:

- Currently working on the previous National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) that existed before the election.
- The government has extended the due date for public notification to 2027, but the Council recently resolved to set a public notification date of September 2025 due to the expiration of legacy resource consents in October 2026. This decision may be revised depending on the government's review of the NPS-FM.

- Hundreds of water takes and discharge legacy resource consents will expire in 2026.
- There is a lot of uncertainty, but the Council is legally bound to work within the existing law.
- There has been an indication that there could be a greater emphasis on property rights and less emphasis on centralized prescriptive control.

**Action Items:**

- Information including draft changes and options to be shared when available.

## 12 Finance Report

Presented by: Kirsty Brown. Agenda report taken as read.

**Key Points:**

- Revenue and expenditure update for the 6 months ending 31 December 2023.
- Total operation revenue \$3,000 higher than budget due to additional funding received through interest.
- Total operation expenditure \$326,000 higher than budget.
- Resulting in an operating deficit of \$323,000.
- Total capital revenue \$378,000 lower than budget due to the delay in receiving central government funding for Project Future Proof.
- Total capital expenditure \$967,000 lower than budget. Timing issues with the start of the construction season.
- Total reserve deficit available \$338,000.
- Internal loans closing balance as of 31 December 2023 \$8 million.
- Asset valuation as of 1 July 2023 \$106 million.

**No discussed followed.**

## 13 Gravel Management Update

Presented by: Paula Chapman. Report taken as read.

**Key Points:**

- No gravel extraction has been carried out on the Whakatane-Tauranga Rivers. Analysis of recent bed level surveys is underway and there are early indications of gravel build up in some locations.

- Proposed increase to gravel management fee charged to extractors from 90c/m<sup>3</sup> to \$2.70/m<sup>3</sup>. There has been consultation on this change with local contractors and submissions are encouraged alongside the LTP consultation process.
- Proposal to raise the gravel management fee under the proposed Fees and Charges Policy. The current fee hasn't been reviewed in 14 years. The management fee includes the costs associated with surveying riverbeds, conducting site inspections, administration, engagement, and reporting.
- Consultation on the Fees and Charges Policy is being conducted alongside the draft Long-Term Plan (LTP) process. Submissions are open until 9 April.

**Discussion:**

- Confirmation that where there is a current resource consent in place the requirement to pay gravel management fees and other applicable fees are included under the consent.
- It was noted that under the fees and charges proposal there is the ability for fee waiver criteria to be established.
- Submissions were encouraged from members.

## 14 General Business

No staff General Business report to present.

**Discussion:**

- Dumping of material that contains large rocks on the access roadway on the Keepa Road Stopbank.
- Confirmation that the Environmental Code of Practice for River and Drainage Maintenance Activities includes exclusion periods around inanga (whitebait), some works do occur during the season as they are unavoidable due critical works and long-term projects.
- Concerns about the lack of river access for recreational activities.
- Discussion around stopbank ownership and secondary uses

**Action Items:**

- Keepa Road Stopbank access track issue to be investigated.

## 15 Closing

11:55 - the meeting closed.

**CONFIRMED**

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Councillor Toi Iti  
Meeting Chairperson, Whakatane- Tauranga  
Rivers Scheme Advisory Group

DRAFT

# Action Sheet

Whakatāne-Tauranga Rivers Scheme Advisory Group Meeting

20 March 2024

Action	Person Responsible	Completed	Comment
1. Rates rebate scheme information.	AJ		
2. Keepa roadway issues will be investigated.	Dan		