

Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme Advisory Group

Meeting notes

Commencing:	Wednesday, 6 March 2024, 11.00 am
Venue:	Committee Meeting Room 1, Whakatāne office, 5 Quay Street, Whakatāne
Chairperson:	Councillor Toi Iti
Members:	Peter Askey (Rangitāiki Plains), Alan Law (Rangitāiki Plains), Shona Pedersen (Galatea/Waiohau), Linda Virbickas (Rangitāiki Plains), Heyden Johnston (Urban), Alison Silcock (Galatea/Waiohau) Peter Flowerday (Urban), Terewai Kalman (Chair - Rangitāiki River Forum)
BOPRC elected members:	Councillors Ken Shirley and Malcolm Campbell
BOPRC staff:	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), Hemi Barsdell (Assets Management Specialist), Jenn Goodfellow (Asset Management Coordinator), AJ Prinsloo (Finance Manager), Laura Boucher (Communications Partner), Paula Chapman (Projects Manager).
Public:	Scotty Muir
Apologies:	Michael Van Tilburg (WDC), WDC Councillors Wilson James and Tu O'Brien, Leith Comer (Chair - Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group)

1 Opening

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

- 1 Rangitāiki Drainage Scheme - Draft LTP 2024-34 Budget.
- 2 Draft Long Term Plan Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme handout
- 3 Updated Finance Report - reserves, loans, and asset valuation.

1.1 Items for General Business

- 1 Trees fallen in the Rangitāiki River – Alison Silcock.
- 2 Gravel buildup in the upper catchment – Peter Askey.
- 3 Communication to members of the Communal Pumping Schemes – Linda Virbickas.

1.2 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 13 September 2023 are a true and correct record.

**Iti/Shirley
CARRIED**

2.2 Matters Arising:

- Confirmation that there were no non-conformities resulting from the official Audit NZ review.
- Smith Road Bridge Project – delays have occurred, and Council has been working with WDC to address these. The work is scheduled to commence in June 2024 and will take approximately 12 weeks to complete. Peter Hay, an external Project Engineer, has been engaged to support the project. Concerns were raised regarding affected farmers.

Action item:

- Updates on the Smith Road Project to be provided to affected landowners.

3 Action Items from meeting 13 September 2023

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

Discussion:

- Gravel transportation logistics and the gravel market. Issues relating to gravel build up and the potential outcomes during an adverse weather event.

Action Item:

- Seek legal advice on BOPRC's current liability and the Scheme's liability if the gravel build-up poses a risk during an adverse weather event or other natural hazard incident.

4 Agenda items

4.1 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:

- 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 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 change climate and meeting an increased demand for Rivers and Drainage services.
- Noted that presented budget information is 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.
- Overview of predicted version 5 budget movements.
- ORC will be removed from Year 1 of the proposed LTP budget as this project will be completed in the current financial year.
- Staff are still working towards finding further savings.
- Overview of the LTP consultation process provided.

Discussion:

- Central government funding of \$2 million will be received at the end of the current financial year (2023/24) which will reduce loans and repayments.
- Feedback requested on the proposed budget of \$90,000 for asset condition defect repairs and \$107,000 for Bylaws implementation. Clarification of defects and maintenance being different line items and separate categories of work. Jobs are prioritised and can be scaled up to be capital projects if required.
- Concerns about the rates increase and the pressure on targeted ratepayers.

- Consultation with community is insufficient, town hall meetings were proposed by the advisory group members.
- Submission support for groups is available through the Council.
- Lobbying for central government funding is ongoing. River managers across the country have put together the 'Before the deluge' proposal, to lobby for central government funding of up to 75% of capital works.

5 Capital Works Programme Update

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

Key Points:

- Overview of the Scheme's web page.
- Rangitāiki Spillway overview. Works are proceeding with earthworks well underway. The capacity review had identified that the stopbank immediately downstream of the spillway was slightly low and so this stopbank raising work has been undertaken as part of the spillway project. Field trip to be planned after the September meeting.
- Lower Rangitāiki Stopbank upgrade (left bank). Had been delayed a year with the consent processing which unfortunately is becoming common. This is a national problem as technical reviewers are scarce. Currently 75% of the work has been completed. Project completion is forecast for the end of April.
- Tarawera stopbank upgrade – Contractor is in place for the first section. Second section is currently in consent process. Third section is out to tender.
- ORC floodgate replacement was brought forward due to a serious concern about asset integrity. There have been good weather conditions for completing the work and project completion is on schedule. Temporary culverts and flood gates were installed upstream these will stay in place permanently as an added benefit.
- Salinity Piezometers have been installed across the Rangitāiki Plains. Staff are seeking approval to also utilise monitoring boreholes that are on private land.
- Rangitāiki Floodplain settlement monitoring. A series of monitoring lines is being set up across the plains to assess peat shrinkage. Intention is to have a 5 yearly cycle of monitoring.

Discussion:

- Email updates on capital works have been very helpful for members.
- Clarification sought and provided on the process for flood protection during the Rangitāiki Spillway construction works.
- Sub soil drainage to protect from seepage - technical specifications explained.

- Confirmation that there is no resource consent breach in the lower Rangitāiki work. Noted that there are Wahi tapu sites and cultural monitoring from Taiwhakaiaea kaitiaki are supporting the project in this respect.
- There are currently no archaeological issues on any of the sites.

Action Items:

- Website hits will be circulated to members.
- Piezometers monitoring drawings to be shared with group.
- Field trip to Rangitāiki Spillway to be scheduled for later in the year after the September meeting.

6 Maintenance Works Programme Update

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

Key Points:

- Key focus for staff has been on efficient use of resources and strong procurement practices.
- 36 erosion sites on the Tarawera River have been identified. Two of these will be remedied this financial year.
- Condition assessment defect repairs of College Road stopbank downstream of new flood wall – tree removal and the chasing of the roots. Pipe removal and sump/septic tank found.
- Stopbank damage continues to be an issue, both from stock damage or uncontained animals and the public.
- Mechanical willow and vegetation management has been carried out in the upper Rangitāiki and Whirinaki Rivers.
- Rangitāiki River, Galatea erosion repairs included consultation with Ngāti Manawa.
- Whirinaki River, Galatea – trench willows work programmed. The river is very close to topping out. Trenches to be established to reduce height in the gravel beach.
- Minor scheme works in the Awaiti Canal where the banks have breached in previous floods.

7 Essential Freshwater Update

Presented by: Kirsty Brown on behalf of Nicola Green, Principal Advisor Policy & Planning

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 Sep 2025 (from December 2024)

Discussion:

- Currently working under the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPSFM) statement that existed pre-election.
- The due date for public notification has been pushed out by central government to 2027 but Council recently resolved to set a public notification date of September 2025. Noting however that this may be revised dependent on the government's NPS-FM review.
- Currently, still working within the existing policy statement.
- 100s of water take and wastewater legacy consents will expire in October 2026 and will need to be reviewed which cannot be pushed out to 2027.
- A lot of uncertainty but Council is legally bound to work within the existing law.

Action Items:

- Draft changes and options will be shared when available.
- Share the web links from presentation with group members.

8 Finance Report Update

Presented by: Kirsty Brown. Agenda report taken as read. Tabled report (including reserve and loan information)

Key Points:

- Total operating revenue \$26,000 higher than budget.
- Total operation expenditure was \$322,000 higher.
- Resulting in a total operating deficit of \$296,000.

- Total capital revenue \$1 million lower than budget, due to climate change resilient funding due by year end.
- Total capital expenditure was \$3.5 million which is \$275,000 higher than budgeted.
- Total reserves (\$1.6 million).
- Internal loans closing balance as of 31 December 2023 \$42 million.
- Asset valuation as at 1 July 2023 of \$160 million.

Discussion

- Confirmation that the climate resilience fund for capital revenue is central government funding. The total of the funding will be \$2 million by the end of the year. The forecast included receiving the first million by the 31 December 2023.

9 Rangitāiki River Forum and Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group Updates

Verbal update presented by: Terewai Kalman, Rangitāiki River Forum (RFF) Chair.

Key Points:

- Next RRF meeting is 15 March 2024.
- Current conversations have been around the LTP planning and freshwater management.
- Discussions with Pioneer Energy on their processes for the Aniwhenua Dam re consenting. Current consent expires in 2026 and Ngāti Manawa have been in discussion regarding their consent renewal application. There are concerns about flooding, mitigation and where the responsibility lies.

10 Gravel Management Update

Presented by: Paula Chapman. Agenda report taken as read.

Key points:

- The Council encourages extraction in areas of rivers and streams that are highly aggraded and perched.
- This summer updated cross section surveys of tributary riverbeds in the upper Rangitāiki have been undertaken.
- Noted that Southern Generation Partnership Limited has lodged resource consent application for removal of gravel material from Lake Āniwaniwa.
- Changes to gravel extraction fee proposed increased from 90c/m³ to \$2.70/m³ to be charge to contractors.

- Consultation is underway with contractors, local iwi and interested parties. Interested parties are encouraged to make submissions alongside the LTP 2024-2034 process.
- The proposed new gravel fee has been calculated by reviewing Council's actual costs involved in gravel management and using historical extraction rates.
- The Fees and Charges Policy allows for waiver of fees, this is yet to be finalised for gravel management.

Possible waiver scenarios include:

- 1) Direct use of gravel, non-profit community initiatives.
- 2) Aggraded riverbeds that in the opinion of the Council, pose a flooding risk.

Discussion:

- Discussion about how the dams affect the gravel movement and the amount of gravel that is entering the rivers due to storm events.
- Upcoming re consenting application for Pioneer Energy.
- BOPRC will be reviewing report from Pioneer Energy.

Action Items:

- Form a subgroup to look more closely at the upper Rangitāiki River gravel issues. Group to meet before the September 2024 meeting. Members to be confirmed, interest noted from Councillor Campbell, Mark Townsend, Terewai Kalman, Scotty Muir and Shona Pederson.
- Distribute to members the examples of gravel extraction fee charges across the country.

11 General Business

Parameters for Aniwhenua Dam Reconsenting

Presented by: Kirsty Brown
Report taken as read.

Key Points:

- Legal guidance statement has been developed to guide RAD input into the re consenting process for the Aniwhenua Dam.
- Pioneer Energy's re consenting application has not yet been lodged.

Discussion:

- Clarification that this advisory group can be involved in the application process.
- Can not address historical issues and can only move forward with future impact.
- The current consent expires in October 2026.

- Advisory group members questioned whether they can input into any submission made by Rivers and Drainage.
- The potential for Pioneer Energy to use the fast track consenting process was noted.

11.1 Alison Silcock - Trees in the Rangitāiki River

Key Points - Members:

- Murray Downie, local fly fisherman, has concerns about the state of the river. Fallen trees and overhanging willows.
- The area is out of the scheme maintenance area (upstream of SH38 road bridge)
-

Action Items:

- Dan to follow up and will ascertain the scope of the issue.
- Provide the boundary map before the next meeting to show the rateable areas.

11.2 Linda Virbickas - Communication around the pumping schemes

Key Points - Members:

- There are no regular updates on the designated caretakers of the Communal Pumping Schemes.
- Need an easier way for the coordinating response when there flooding events etc.

Action Items:

- This will be added to the agenda of the next Communal Pumping Scheme meetings.

14.25 pm - the meeting closed.

Minutes adopted on 11-09-2024

**Campbell/Flowerday
CARRIED**

Action Sheet

Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme Advisory Group Meeting

06 March 2024

Action	Person Responsible	Completed	Comment
1. Smith Road Bridge: Affected Schemes members are sent an update on the project	Laura/Mark		
2. Seek legal advice on BOPRC's current liability and the liability of the schemes if the gravel build-up poses a risk during a weather event or other natural incident.	Kirsty		
3. Communication to community regarding managing pests affecting RAD assets.	Laura		
4. Town Hall meetings were proposed to discuss the LTP with the community.	Laura		
5. Hits from the capital works websites will be circulated to members.	Laura		
6. Piezometers monitoring drawings to be shared with group.	Mark		
7. Field trip to Rangitāiki Spillway to be scheduled for later in the year after the September meeting.	Mark		
8. Freshwater - Draft changes and options will be shared when available.	Kirsty		
9. Freshwater share links from presentation with group.	Kirsty		
10. Form a subgroup to deal with the gravel issue. Group to meet before the September 2024 meeting. Members to be confirmed, interest from	Mark		

Action	Person Responsible	Completed	Comment
Councillor Campbell, Terewai Kalman Scottie Muir and Shona Pederson.			
11. Distribute to members the examples of gravel extraction rates across the country.	Paula		
12. Draft submission for Aniwhenua re consent will be disseminated to the members of the advisory group for feedback.	Kirsty		
13. Follow up on the chance of fast-track consent for the Aniwhenua dam.	Kirsty		
14. Ascertain the scope of the issue of the trees in the Rangitāiki river.	Dan		
15. Provide the boundary map before the next meeting to show the scheme maintenance areas.	Dan		