

**Okawa, Rūnanga, Ohiti Community
and Hawke's Bay Regional and Hastings District Councils**

Minutes for Hui at Rūnanga Marae

September 28 2023, 2-4.45 pm

Community members: Charmaine Pene, Sam Wood, Neil MacLean, John Bell, Selwyn & Jill Dorwood, Nick & Anita Agnew, Marc & Fiona Fox, Brian Darraah, Alan Gunn, Malcolm Smith, Michael Hindmarsh, Bill Beamish, Renata Hakiwai.

Hawke's Bay Regional Council: **Hinewai Ormsby** (Chair), **Xan Harding** (Councillor), **Nic Peet** (CEO), **James Feary** (Regional Asset Manager), **Pieri Munro** (Pou Whakarae - Group Manager Māori), **Anthony Tipene-Matua** (Māori Relationship Manager - Southern Hawke's Bay), **Jack Smith-Ballingall** (Māori Relationships Advisor)

Hastings District Council: **Tania Kerr** (Deputy-Mayor), **Ana Apatu** (Councillor), **Craig Thew** (Group Assets Manager)

B2R Committee members: Andrew Russell, Jane Read, Mary Tukiwaho, Jenny Mauger, Tom Lowry.

B2R Team: Steph Howard, Ingrid Bardsley, Kit Rutherford.

Mary Tukiwaho welcomed everyone to Rūnanga marae and asked Pieri Munro to open the meeting with a karakia.

Andrew Russell explained what Between the Two Rivers (B2R) is and how it came about. He acknowledged Meihana Watson, the Piringa Hapū Authority and the community in Omahu and all that has been achieved by the councils and other groups since Gabrielle. He noted that:

- The purpose of the meeting is to build a relationship with councils and make a plan to address the things that needing sorting out and that the community identified at a meeting at Pukehāmoamo school. B2R has worked through these to put together a roadmap and the first part of the meeting will be to overview that.
- From Ōmahu inland - Taihape Road is the lifeline to the main centres for the community and the many land-based businesses. Repeated flooding of the road impacts the whole community and needs to be addressed.
- But however important the road is, this is not just a roading conversation. It's also about profitable land-based businesses, healthy waterways and healthy communities.
- B2R doesn't expect councils to do everything. As much as possible, the community wants to take the lead, but there are many actions that council need to take and some of these need coordinated action by regional and district councils, which is why B2R asked both councils to attend.
- B2R's role will be to keep things on track.

Issues the community has identified and is seeking a way forward on with councils - overview

B2R gave an overview of the issues the community has identified and is seeking a way forward on with councils. These covered:

1. Relationships and communication with council

- A forum for **meaningful discussion and debate** between councils, agencies and the community about issues, options, tensions, trade-offs for the catchment *HBRC, HDC*

- A **single point of contact** within each council or a contact person for both councils *HBRC, HDC*
- A commitment that **senior staff with knowledge and authority** will engage in a timely manner *HBRC, HDC*
- Current pressing issues are **roading hotspots** and **flooding** *HBRC, HDC*

2. The need to understand our changed landscapes

- **Meaningful conversations** between the community and councils to establish science priorities and programmes in the future *HBRC*
- **Integrate Mātauranga Māori and intergenerational landholders' knowledge** of historic flow paths, flora & fauna, māhinga kai, taonga species to inform vision for the future. *Mana whenua, community, HBRC, HDC*
- **Collate and disseminate information** being gathered (aerial mapping, LiDAR etc) on erosion, stream channels and floodplains, wetlands and lakes. *HBRC, HDC, CRIs*
- **Develop functional online interfaces** and information platforms for the community. *HBRC, HDC*

3. On Okawa, Rūnanga, Ohiti, Waitio

- Commitment to clarify the history and and resolve issues with the Okawa and Waitio streams, Lake Rūnanga and Ohiti ecosystems, including issues such as the weir and bund *HBRC*
- Analysis of Lake Rūnanga – including changes to the water health, lakebed and surrounding vegetation – to identify factors that may cause flooding and sedimentation (e.g., willows, other vegetation) *HBRC*
- Hui and walk-the-land in October hosted by and with Rūnanga marae and Ohiti community to work through issues and a way forward and conduct eDNA testing of the lake *Community-led*
- Review and repurposing of council reserves for flood protection and ecological restoration > *HDC*

4. Protecting roads, homes and farms from flooding

Immediate action on

- Roading hot spots (e.g., Dorward's bridge) *HDC*
- Consider inclusion of the Okawa/Ohiwia in the flood protection scheme *HBRC*
- Removal of significant debris from waterways that increases future flood risk *HBRC*
- Repair landholders' roadside fences that were damaged in order to clear roads for traffic *HDC*

Medium-term commitment to:

- **Catchment plan** for the Okawa/Ohiwia and associated lakes & wetlands by councils *HBRC, HDC*
- **Disseminate information** on
 - historic and recent topography (floodplain, stream channel, wetland and lakes, LiDAR) – to inform actions and decisions

- frequency and duration of road closures – **economic, social, medical** impact.
- climate change and land-use effects on rainfall- runoff and flooding
- **Investigate:**
 - engineering interventions (spilling peak flows)
 - lake level controls, widening floodplains)
 - use of floodplains for flood storage (winter) and pasture (summer)
 - flexible lake level control *HBRC*

5. Health of waterbodies and the land

Immediate action

- Engineering solutions regarding streams and flood points along Taihape Road
- Lost riparian replacement at no or minimal costs to land owners
- Removal of large, old or broken woody debris, replaced with native plants

Medium-long term

- 'Greening' the streams during rehabilitation
- Within a wider flood plain the river meanders naturally, if possible using council held lands not in use
- Allocating councils held lands to be used for a nursery within the catchment area

6. Road damage and repairs

- **Community involvement in strategic analysis** of access vulnerabilities around Taihape Road and plan to address these *HDC*
- **Visibility** over road damage through a community- facing, live dashboard of repairs *HDC*
- Council staff enabled **to allow community to clear minor slips and remove debris** *HDC*

Councils' response

Q and A, facilitated by Andrew Russell and Mary Tukiwaho

Hinewai Ormsby, regional council chair, introduced herself and other HBRC members in attendance and invited questions from the community.

Community members present asked were several questions in relation to the waterways, including:

- Where the responsibility lies for cleaning up streams and rivers (noting that sections of the Okawa have not been properly cleaned out since 2008)
- Where council/landholder responsibilities lie when landlines are in the middle of the stream
- Can/How can landowners return river flows back to where they were pre-Gabrielle?

HBRC suggested that it would be best to organise a workshop with landholders to work through these questions and is happy to work on that.

Tania Kerr, Hastings District Deputy Mayor, said that for clear, direct communications with the council:

Councillor Ana Apatu is the local contact for community issues.

The 06-871 5000 is the number that she uses to report in issues; it is well monitored and the community can expect follow through using that number

For emergency response, Tracey Ashworth has already been in contact with B2R and will continue with this.

In terms of communicating to the community what is happening that the council is working on making the website better

She also expressed a commitment to work through the esplanade reserve issue in the future.

Emergency management - Radio and batteries is still likely the best go-to. As a community you need to identify the best option and then a plan can be worked on.

Tania also underscored the value of getting HDRC and HDC to work together so that B2R can work on the roadmap with them without having to reach them both bodies individually. Like the regional council, Hastings District will respond within a month to the issues raised.

Roading

Given the scale of damage across the district, the community is looking at a 5-7 year repair schedule that will also depend on funding from Waka Katohi.

To get action on potholes, Tania Kerr recommended that people call 06 8715000. This is the line that she also uses to report issues and says it is an effective way to log issues. She also recommending contacting Ana if there were any issues getting through that number.

Tania noted that after water events, potholes increase due to the saturation underneath the roading surface and that the amount of heavy traffic has increased due to recovery efforts (such as for silt removal) and the roads are taking a hammering.

She also noted that the council is currently having to do a lot of patch-repairs because Waka Kotahi has underfunded the district for the last four funding cycles. HDC is continuing to follow up with Waka Kotahi on this.

Due to the uncertainties about funding and other factors (such as further heavy weather), it is difficult for the council to provide the community with a certain timeframe for roading repairs.

Funding for fencing - Council will cover damaging to fences if the damages were caused by Council when clearing debris following Gabrielle; but it will not cover fencing damage caused directly by the Cyclone. If the landowner cleared roadways etc and fencing was damaged as a result of this, the landholders should get in touch with council.

Use of council owned land – such as reserves - that could be used for future nursery/flood control etc: This is a conversation to be had with Ana (and also HBRC). Ana could meet with the community to discuss options.

Following a cup of tea, the meeting reconvened to summarise and discuss the way forward.

HBRC

Hinewai Ormsby said that the regional council will respond to the Mahi Tahi report within a month. Xan Harding will be involved in regular meetings and a senior staff member will be tasked with interacting, answering queries etc.

Landowners would like to meet on a regular basis and both HDC or HBRC are keen to make this happen.

HDC

Council contacts are as mentioned earlier: the 06-871 5000 service. Tracey Ashworth (through B2R) is the community recovery liaison and Ana Apatu is the next port of call.

Roading repair job ahead of the council is huge, not helped by the challenges of getting adequate, timely funding. A community-facing website is in the pipeline; this will be the "port of truth"

Either HDC or HBRC will alternatively take the lead on projects, depending on their nature.

A catchment group is a great opportunity for the community to have a collective voice on a range of matters. They are a two-way street and landowners need to hold up their end.

Some landholders expressed frustration at trying to deal with council regarding issues stemming from the lake levels and the weir that were raised and the effect that this has at the other end of the lake.

Ana Apatu invited the community to contact over any issues they have. Her email is: Ana.apatu@hdc.govt.nz.

Comments from the community:

One landowner has had to rerun the river back to its original path and put in a culvert etc at his own cost after dealing with Council and getting nowhere for years.

B2R can be the go-between for landowners and council so that these frustrations can be alleviated.

Alan Gunn offered his experience and knowledge about growing trees to a low-cost point, having planted thousands of natives along the lake that is now a native forest.

There was discussion concerning Lake Rūnanga-Ohiti and it being two lakes historically. A community member from Rūnanga spoke about the importance of the preservation of the lake and there is Hapū Rūnanga dedicated to this. The importance of the waterways of the area and the strong spiritual as well as physical role that they play in the lives of locals (particularly multigenerational landowners)

HBRC noted that the council's top priority has to be rebuilding stock banks to protect those whose lives were in danger.

A member of the community asked how people in the area will know where they stand on the priority list.

The regional council said it is keen on the idea of a regular catchup/meeting/wānanga with B2R and interested parties.

Andrew thanked everyone for coming and contributing. Reiterated that B2R is here to follow up on community issues and back our people and make things happen.

Summary of commitments

Council	Commitment
HDC and HBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Joint wānanga end of October to agree priority set of strategic actions (e.g., catchment plan, including environmental climate change, flooding) and operational actions (e.g., communications)Strategic, B2R and councils

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Council to pay landholders for roadside fencing damaged by council activities to clear debris from roads. Ana Apatu is the HDC contact point. • Liaise with HBRC on fence repair (through Nic Peet) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational • Community clarify their needs • Riparian restoration
HDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of esplanade reserves and how they can be managed for flood protection and ecological restoration, with the Shanley Road Esplanade Reserve being a priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic, with B2R
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easily accessible information portal on road damage in the district 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational, underway
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate Council plans for upgrade to floodproof "Dorward's bridge" • Communicate long-term solution to road flooding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational, urgent • Strategic
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ana Apatu to be main contact for our community • Tracy Ashworth main contact in Community Rural Response Team 	
HBRC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshop with Okawa Stream community regarding legal rights and responsibilities for waterways, cleanup etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community and councils

Pieri Munro closed the meeting with a karakia whakamutunga at 4.45pm.