

1. Report: Whangarei District Council Briefing Tuesday 18 July 2017

Report of a Briefing to the Whangarei District Council held in the Council Chamber, Forum North on Tuesday 18 July 2017 at 9.00am

Present:

Her Worship the Mayor Sheryl Mai, Crs Stu Bell, Tricia Cutforth, Shelley Deeming, Sue Glen, Cherry Hermon, Phil Halse, Greg Martin, Sharon Morgan and Anna Murphy

Declaration of Interest:

Cr Greg Martin

Apologies/Absent:

Cr Greg Innes, Jayne Golightly, Crichton Christie

In Attendance:

Chief Executive (Rob Forlong), General Manager Corporate (Alan Adcock), General Manager Strategy and Democracy (Jill McPherson), Waste and Drainage Manager (Andrew Carvell), Senior Communications Adviser (Ann Midson), Infrastructure Development Manager (Dominic Kula), Senior Meeting Co-ordinator (Jennie Thomas)

Facilitators: Andrew Carvell

Her Worship the Mayor convened the meeting.

Andrew Carvell covered the content of the briefing as outlined in the agenda report and attached presentation.

Hikurangi Flood Scheme LTP Briefing

Scheme Description

Andrew Carvell presented a brief history of the Hikurangi Flood Scheme.

In 1989 the Northland Regional Council (NRC) and Whangarei District Council (WDC) were formed. Control of the scheme was vested to WDC and has operated it with input from farmers since.

The scheme has a contributing catchment of over 55,000 ha and protects 5,600 ha of farmland from flooding in an up to a 1 in 3.5-year event.

Resource Consent was granted in 2010. Consent requirement included management plans to be drafted. These included:

- Overall Scheme Management Plan
- Riparian Management Plan
- Oxbow/Cutoff Channel Management Plan
- Fisheries Management Plan

Spillways were set to correct levels in 2012 and stop banks in 2015. Independent assessments undertaken in 2015 by WDC and NRC found compliance of the consent conditions. The Resource

Consent contains conditions on how the spillways work and is monitored. The water is allocated to the seven pockets on the basis of the percentage it received previous to the scheme.

Operation

- Operated by WDC contractor - currently tendering this contract.
- Regular Working Group meetings held to discuss the operation of the scheme.
- Annual operation costs \$670k pa.
- Income for 2016 \$890k rates (Scheme \$785K and Drainage \$95K)
- Drain clearing and spraying drains is a key part of the scheme.

Asset Condition

- Pumps stations are generally in good condition - ongoing maintenance.
- In the last five years, the older pumps have been refurbished. There are two standby pumps available as backups.
- The stop/control banks were topped up in 2015 to the design levels. These will settle over time and there is an allowance for maintenance every 5 years in the LTP.
- The spillways were rebuilt in 2011. These need continual monitoring and possible adjustment in the future.

Environmental Issues

Over the last three years we have made gains in improving environmental conditions. There has been cooperation on environmental projects with Fonterra, DoC, Ngā Kaitiaki o Ngā Wai Māori, NRC, Fish & Game, marae and landowners. Some of the environmental programmes undertaken include:

- Restoration has been undertaken on two oxbows.
- Reestablishment of an Ephemeral wetland.
- Council has retired 10 hectares of land for wetlands and planted 10,000 plants.
- Fencing requirements on leases of council waterways has been enforced.
- Pump operation in eel migration season has been altered to minimise run time to assist in reducing deaths. A spring system on gates has been set up.
- Fish pathways (rocks/concrete) installed to assist with migration.
- An eel monitoring survey has been undertaken and is ongoing.
- Electric barriers were trialled but unsuccessful.

There is work still required to reduce tuna deaths. A solution may require replacing pumps with “fish friendly” pumps. Replacement cost estimated to be about \$2m per station. “Fish friendly” pumps aren’t as efficient as other pumps.

Meetings have been held with the working group who raised concerns around planting the stock banks and how this may impede water flow. We have reassessed our plans and now undertaking planting outside of the main channel.

Discussion

There was a query regarding who will be responsible for the maintenance of any plantings undertaken in the scheme. The issue of maintenance will occur in three to four years’ time and Council will be partially responsible. All the work is funded through the rates.

Discussion on the number of eel deaths and various options to help reduce the number of deaths.

There was a query on the use and effects of glyphosate on the waterways and were there options to reduce the amount of spraying e.g. intelligent spraying. NRC monitor our spray regime. There

have been some plantings to one side of a drain which shades the area and reduces the growth on the bank. This will take some time to be effective.

Levels of Service - Compliant with resource consent.

Strategy

- The current strategy is to minimise capital expenditure until the debt is paid back and to maintain the rate rises to 2021.
- The draft MOU with Ngā Kaitiaki O Ngā Wai Māori to be finalised.
- Maintain the current working parting. Relationships have improved with open engagement.
- Look for partnership/funds to assist with environmental initiatives.

Discussion

Discussion on the long term management of the scheme. Most schemes are run by Regional Councils. There may be an opportunity for us to hand over to NRC. The scheme is a Strategic asset so we would have to consult on this. Exploring this option would be a decision for elected members to make.

Council is exploring the option of installing large concrete culverts. There are concerns this may cause more flooding in other areas e.g. Tangiteroria. Meeting to be held with NRC, scheme members and other possibly affected farmers.

Predictions on climate change are for less but more intense rain events. These types of events reduce the benefits of the scheme. It is important to monitor and understand the effects of the settling levels of peat.

There are Treaty claim negotiations on Crown land within the flood scheme. This may result in management changes on this land.

Funding

Aiming to maintain operational costs around the same level and for zero capital expenditure. Debt is reducing. The funding strategy has been discussed through the working group who seem comfortable with this approach.

There has been a request to put a culvert under Jordan Valley Road. An allowance has been made for this. Drainage gates to be installed for various catchments.

Hydraulic investigation – looking for low costs improvements to the scheme hydraulics e.g. gravity gate installation in the near future.

Risks

Andrew Carvell identified the following possible risks in relation to the scheme:

- Affordability – relying on the farming community to pay for the scheme.
- Climate Change
- Land Settlement – peat soils. Needs to be considered when making long term decisions on investments in the scheme.

Conclusion

The meeting agreed to continue with the current strategy.

The meeting closed at 10.15 am