

# Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of The Lake Rotoiti Community Association

Held on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024, 10 am, at Rotoiti Sports and Community Association, State Highway 30, Rotoiti.

## Present

Jim Stanton, Mary Stanton, Nick Miller, Elizabeth Miller (Life Members)  
Doug Leeder (Chair, Bay of Plenty Regional Council)  
Andy Bruere (BOP Regional Council Staff)  
Nick Chater, Phill Thomass (Rotorua Lakes Community Board)  
Don Atkinson (LakesWater Quality Society)  
Dr Ian Kusabs (Freshwater Biologist Consultant)  
John Brightwell (Response Manager - Biosecurity NZ)  
William Anaru (Te Arawa Lakes Trust)  
Reina Engelen (Chair), Roy Duffy (Deputy Chair), Marion Dixon, Mark Thomson, Andrea Davies, Mike Gowan, Tom Macky, Annamarie Jensen, Claire Miller (LRCA Committee).

Approximately 50 people in total were present at the meeting.

## Welcome

Roy Duffy opened the meeting and thanked all official visitors and others present for attending. Tammy Gardiner gave the opening karakia and welcomed everyone to the Rotoiti Sports Club.

## Apologies

Sarah Uhl (LRCA Committee), RLC Councillor Sandra Kai Fong, BOPRC Councillor Kevin Winters and Lyall Thurston, Derek Nolan, Robin and Anne Sinclair, Richard and Christine Amery, Robin Duffy, Matakino Lawless, Sherilyn Coney, John and Sue LaRoche.

**Motion:** Jim Stanton proposed that the apologies be accepted, seconded by Marion Dixon. Carried.

## Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

**Motion:** Roy Duffy proposed that the Minutes be accepted, seconded by Tom Macky. Carried.

## Matters arising from the previous minutes

Bob Armstrong: Re the item on page 2 about lake structures. This was fully discussed at the AGM last year and has since been resolved to the satisfaction of members. He feels that it is important to acknowledge all the work done by Roy to achieve this.

**Motion:** This meeting expresses sincere appreciation to Roy Duffy for the major efforts that he made over recent years to conclude a very satisfactory outcome relating to the recently completed resource consent renewals. Moved by Bob Armstrong, seconded by Tom Macky. Approved by acclamation.

Roy Duffy said thanks, but that it hadn't been a one-man effort. Derek Nolan had done an extraordinary amount of work and had also provided his legal and environmental knowledge. Don Atkinson and others were also of assistance. It had been a challenging situation but we worked with BOPRC over six years and tried hard to reach agreement with TALT. We are grateful that TALT accepted the Commissioners' decision. In the future we have an aspiration to work more closely with local iwi groups around the lake

Roy Duffy asked Andy Bruere of BOPRC if there is any new information on when the lake levels trial might happen or is it weather-dependent? Andy Bruere: BOPRC can't even look at starting the trial before the lake

levels drop from their current levels to something closer to drought-level, so this is not likely to happen any time soon.

Roy Duffy: The Eastern Rotoiti Rotoma Sewerage Scheme is still ongoing for those at the eastern end of Lake Rotoiti, and it is still of great concern to residents to learn what the final cost will be. The bad weather has caused cost increases due to delays and extra work for the contractors. We have some frustration due to hearing that the previous Minister for the Environment withdrew \$10m of funding support – we would like to hear from Doug Leeder and Tania Tapsell about their perspectives on that when they come to speak.

Tom Macky: The State Highway 30 Speed Review has been completed and the new lower speed limits are in place – it now is a lot safer to exit or enter the highway and we hope that the community is enjoying that. We would like to think that the roads are safer as a result. The impact of the new government is uncertain – their policy platform going into the election was to remove the lower speed limits and they have already enacted that at a high level. It may be harder to do this for individual areas, and they have indicated that they will take community support into consideration, which we had here.

Roy Duffy: Re algal blooms, we had an alert come through yesterday that there was an algal bloom in Okawa Bay. Andy Bruere: there have been occurrences from time to time – BOPRC are trying to identify the causes. As part of the resource consent for the Ohau Channel Diversion Wall, BOPRC are required to monitor water quality downstream of the Wall. They have asked Deniz Özkundakci of the University of Waikato to model whether the water quality changes with or without the Wall in place. There are also community concerns that the holes in the Wall affect water quality – Deniz is also going to look at that in March/April and the information will be made available.

Don Atkinson: very disappointed to hear what Andy said because there was a meeting held a couple of months ago between BOPRC and a group of Okawa Bay and LWQS members which had resulted in an undertaking from BOPRC that the Wall would be repaired before Christmas, not investigated in March/April. The holes in the Wall are very large, not minimal. This is a major issue, and the water further down the lake is visibly green as a result. This issue has been around for a long time and has not been addressed.

Andy: there was an undertaking to do a trial by Christmas to create the methodology of repairing the holes in the Wall. The Wall is not falling apart – there are walers along the length of the wall to provide support between the king piles. The holes haven't developed overnight – BOPRC have to decide at what point it is worthwhile to fix them as they grow, and have worked out that now is probably a good time. They are working out how best to fill the holes again. The next part of this trial will occur early this year, and the rest of the repair will go forward to Council as part of the 10-Year-Plan as part of year two of the plan – it hasn't received funding yet.

Don Atkinson: would like to record a resolution that we strongly recommend to Council that immediate remedies be undertaken. We have talked about this issue at several AGMs, it's not a new issue.

**Motion:** That the Association urgently advise to BOPRC that immediate work be undertaken to resolve this issue. Moved by Don Atkinson, seconded by Grant Cossey. Most of meeting in favour. One against.

## Treasurer's Report

Jim Stanton presented the accounts of the association and explained the details.

The accounts have been reviewed by Graham Prior and Jim expressed the committee's gratitude to him for giving his time once again.

**Motion:** That the financial report be accepted. Moved by Jim Stanton, seconded by Marion Dixon. Carried.

## Chairperson's Report

Roy noted that most of the substance of the Chairperson's report can be found in the print newsletter which shows committee activity throughout the year. It notes that this year we had new committee members taking on new responsibilities. Andrea Davies has taken up the Emergency Management portfolio. This is something that LRCA is in a position to take leadership in. There are many different incidents or disasters that could isolate Rotoiti communities – and all need us to work together with iwi and marae. There has also been a lot of activity in other areas such as the Okere Care Group and working on iwi relationships, which is one of the

new portfolios we have developed. At the moment we have met with Te Kotahi a Pikiao and are developing a MoU with them in conjunction with Arapeta Tahana. We all live in the same rohe and we need to have more conversations with each other – hopefully we get to hear a lot more about what is going on with Pikiao. Reina is in charge of this portfolio. Our communication policy is also one of our most important areas – Tom Macky and Annamarie Jensen have been working to maintain and develop our communications via the webpage and Facebook pages and email updates.

## Election of Officers

**Chair:** Marion Dixon was nominated as Chair by Jim Stanton, seconded by Claire Miller. There were no other nominations. Marion was elected as Chairperson.

**Treasurer:** Jim Stanton was nominated as Treasurer by Mike Gowan, seconded by Claire Miller. There were no other nominations. Jim was elected as Treasurer.

**Secretary:** Claire Miller was nominated as secretary by Jim Stanton, seconded by Mike Gowan. There were no other nominations. Claire was elected as Secretary.

### **Committee:**

Roy Duffy is retiring after many years of work for the committee.

The following committee members are re-standing: Mike Gowan, Tom Macky, Sarah Uhl, Annamarie Jensen, Mark Thomson, Andrea Davies, Reina Engelen. They were nominated by Jim Stanton and seconded by Claire Miller.

No other nominations received. All were Carried.

Nominations were closed. All re-standing committee members were approved by the meeting.

Marion introduced herself to the meeting as Chair and gave a history of her association with the lake. She gave tribute to Reina and to Roy for their development of the portfolio management system, meaning that the role of Chair isn't as intimidating as it has been in the past. Thanks again to Reina for all her mahi in the role.

## Presentations:

### John Brightwell, MPI

John is a response manager for Biosecurity New Zealand, part of the Ministry of Primary Industries. He gave a presentation on the freshwater gold clam issue and how the biosecurity process works to ensure a similar issue can't occur in the future. They try to have a layered system to reduce risk as much as possible, but can't guarantee that no pests will ever get into the country.

The gold clam is a serious issue as it multiplies quickly and survives well. The chances of eradicating it from the Waikato River are very low and so Biosecurity New Zealand are just trying to contain it. So far they haven't found evidence of it outside the Waikato River. The gold clam has been classified as an Unwanted Organism, meaning that Biosecurity New Zealand can use regulatory controls against them, such as placing a Controlled Area Notice on the Te Arawa Lakes and also on the Waikato River where they have been found. Biosecurity New Zealand hope to use behaviour change to get water users to be aware of the risk and prevent transmission, for example the Check Clean Dry message. They also track high risk events across the country and have ambassadors at those. They have set up an engagement group and are sending out communications but are keen to work with community groups to push their messages out.

Raina Meha: would like to hear from William Anaru and TALT on their progress with this from a more local perspective. Also, what is the process if people unknowingly bring the clam to Lake Rotoiti on their equipment – how do we monitor and mitigate that? John: under the Biosecurity Act, people have to move things knowingly before they can be prosecuted, so we have to communicate out to people so that they know the issue and what is going on.

William Anaru: for TALT activities, as soon as they heard about the gold clams in the Waikato River, they wanted to check the Te Arawa Lakes, so pushed out communications to everyone. TALT had biosecurity officers on the lake from October onwards, looking for clams and inspecting boats. They closed Lake Okataina for a month and a half, and have had people on the lakes continuously since, and will keep going full-time until March. Have had a boat-wash setup since late December. The busiest ramps are the Delta ramp and Otaramarae. TALT have been working with event organisers to get inspectors at the events. There is signage at the public boat ramps but not very big since there are already a lot of signs there.

Marion: we all have responsibility for this issue – this is the point of the communication strategy. We need to be telling all the visitors to the lake and our friends and family so that everyone is aware.

Question: there is a lot of comment about wake boats but nothing about jet skis and jetboats which operate in shallow water and suck in a lot of water which may contain clams. John: yes, they suck in water, but they can be drained and they are required to have a 2-day stand-down. Wake boats have ballast tanks which can't be drained, so they are the primary concern.

Andrea Macfarlane: is it a potential consideration that people shouldn't use their gear and/or clothing for several days after they have been used in the Waikato River as well. John: in the Check Clean Dry primers there are sections on how to treat clothing as well as boats. Andrea: that's not coming out on the comms – we are only seeing the boat washing info. John: will take that back to comms people to make sure it is re-emphasised.

Don Atkinson: MPI talked to the LakesWater Quality Society a couple of years ago and made an undertaking to take a process to Government that would result in instant fines for breaking the rules. Why hasn't that got through and where is it in process? John: MPI have been trying to do a Biosecurity Act review for some time, including for this reason. The review has stalled several times already, but they hope under the new government it can be pushed through.

Elizabeth Miller: Why a 2-day stand-down for boats and gear when juvenile clams can survive up to 3 days and adults up to 10 days? John: yes they can survive up to 3 days but require optimal conditions for that. This is risk mitigation – MPI feel fairly confident that 2 days will kill clams when implemented along with the other recommendations given.

#### Andy Bruere, BOPRC

Following on from discussing gold clams, we have had examples of where invasive species have come into the Te Arawa lakes in the past, for example catfish which have had a devastating impact. This leads into the next presentation.

#### Dr Ian Kusabs: Koura artificial reef project

Koura populations have declined drastically following the catfish incursion into Lake Rotoiti. Ian and BOPRC are collaborating with other organisations such as NIWA and University of Waikato to see what can be done to support the koura population. One project is testing artificial reefs in the lake to give the koura somewhere to live that the catfish can't access. This trial will be starting early 2024. Other options under consideration include sniffer dogs for catfish or introducing koura from other populations that are more used to nocturnal predators and may have better evasion tactics.

John Lawless: are there catfish at the eastern end of the lake? William Anaru: there are catfish all around the lake now, even though there are still higher numbers at the western end. They prefer shallow waters but are all around the lake. Unlike Lake Taupo, Lake Rotoiti isn't sufficiently oxygenated below 15m deep, so the koura don't go below that depth. We need to improve water quality so that the koura can live at deeper levels where the catfish don't go.

Andy Bruere: BOPRC are working with Mark Thomson to work out where the artificial reefs would go so that they won't impact lake users and will be communicating out to the community as things progress. They are also considering maybe combining the reefs with the uwahi mats to test whether rocks can suppress weed growth as well as providing cover for koura.

John Lawless: is the weed spray affecting the koura? We get told not to swim for 24 hours after the spray. Ian Kusabs: no, it doesn't affect koura. What does affect them is insecticide that is sprayed on the forests and washes into the streams and then into the lake. William Anaru: we have a very low level of diquat in the lakeweed spray and it doesn't affect any animals or fish. Ian Kusabs: the lake weed has more of an impact on koura than the spray. There's nothing living in the weed beds.

Elizabeth Miller: do the koura have to come out of the reefs to feed or do they get enough in there? Ian Kusabs: there's enough for them in there but they can come out for a while as well as long as there's somewhere for them to retreat to.

## **Invited speakers**

#### Tania Tapsell, Mayor of Rotorua

The Mayor did not attend the meeting.

#### Doug Leeder, BOPRC Chair:

The new government has several items in their 100-day plan which the community might be interested in, including a replacement of the Resource Management Act. So far we don't know what that will involve or how it may affect us.

Regarding the Eastern Rotoiti and Rotoma Sewerage Scheme, there are a couple of things which weren't covered in the article in the newsletter: as a result of advocacy by the community and especially by Ian McLean in 2014/15, BOPRC committed \$8m to the project contingent on commercial contingency. We still don't have a final cost for the project at this point. The grant was contingent that the primary responsibility for the project ran from the Executive of RLC through to the elected members of RLC – what is their oversight over the project in the last 8 years? They have been giving quarterly reports to the management group which includes BOPRC. The person who has always fronted the reports in this has been Stavros Michael, the infrastructure and engineering manager, but the person who takes ultimate responsibility should have been the previous chief executive, and so it is hard for BOPRC to put pressure on Stavros Michael regarding the project. As a result of the cost increases, RLC made a recommendation to the Strategy Group that they go back to the Minister for the Environment, David Parker, that they make use of the unused money from the Lakes Enhancement Fund incentive scheme, which was intended to buy nitrogen out of the area. So far most of the money in the fund has been unused – BOPRC have until 2032 to use it. BOPRC and RLC asked David Parker if he would be prepared to sign over \$10m of that fund to RLC to finance the overspend for the Eastern Rotoiti and Rotoma scheme. He said yes, but wanted a guarantee from RLC that this cost would be reimbursed to BOPRC in future years. RLC said that they would not resile from this condition and that they would consult with the ratepayers to increase the targeted rate across the Rotorua district to repay the fund. This commitment to consult with ratepayers did not proceed after the local election, and as a result of this decision the Minister pulled the funding. Mayor Tapsell has said that in the Long Term Plan RLC will reintroduce that commitment. If that goes ahead, they will get support from BOPRC to re-take \$10m from the fund.

John Lawless: was at the first introduction meeting for the scheme where RLC wanted a plant to pump the sewerage. That's been installed at Haumingi 3B block and is now up and running. The beneficiaries of the land were given a costing at that time of \$14,200 for each installation. Now they have been told the cost has escalated up to \$35,000 per installation. How can the retirees and low-income people living out here afford that increase? The contractors should be bearing the cost increase if that is what they quoted the project at originally. Doug Leeder: have sympathy for this position but BOPRC made a grant to RLC – the responsibility is through RLC's elected representatives to individuals. From Doug's perspective, the relationship between BOPRC and RLC has historically not been ideal when BOPRC funds projects and RLC implements them. An example is the Ohau Channel Diversion Wall where it's not halfway through its expected lifecycle but it is already failing. In future BOPRC would be requiring a representative on the project planning and implementation group when they made funding available.

Jim Stanton: the latest response from RLC engineers indicates that the project has a serious cost overrun over time. The latest cost indicated is \$56m, where initially it was \$35m. Only back in August the figure was \$51m, so it has increased \$5m over 5 months. 65% of the cost has been secured from grants, including the \$10m loan which is to be paid back from the Lakes Enhancement Rate. The 35% of the cost which hasn't been covered and will be allocated to individual owners means a serious increase for individuals which we need to strongly question in the next Long Term Plan, and LRCA will continue pursuing this issue in future.

## **General Business:**

### **East Rotoiti Sewerage Scheme:**

Jim Stanton: the scheme has been fairly well explained over the last few years and hopefully people are well aware of where we are at, at this point. Tom: thanks to Doug Leeder for the presentation. A question: at the beginning of the project RLC were talking about 740 installations – they seem to now be talking about installation numbers way below that. Roy Duffy: the original number included an allowance for future housing development at Hinehopu which has not yet occurred. Tom Macky: yes, but we have blown the budget at 500 installations, not 740 – the numbers don't seem to add up.

Mary Stanton: want to remind everyone how much we paid for the sewerage scheme at Mourea. Mourea was the first community to join the sewerage scheme and paid about \$5000 for each installation. The amount people are being asked to pay today is disgusting, especially around Rotoiti and Rotoma, compared to Mourea and Okawa Bay. The Mourea community fought hard to get a good water supply, especially due to the water quality issues in the lake.

Barry Brook: Thanks to Doug for being very clear and raising the point about accountability. Have always looked to Stavros Michael to get the real facts. Think it's an indictment that RLC doesn't have anyone available here today to answer questions. It's a serious issue and it is important for this Association to pursue. **Motion:** To request as soon as possible that RLC communicate with the community what the plan is, what the figures are about the Eastern Rotoiti and Rotoma Sewerage Scheme. Moved by Barry Brook, seconded by Mary Browning. All in favour.

Ian Balmer: was a regional councillor for Environment Waikato in previous years. From his perspective, surprised that BOPRC was prepared to so quickly give \$9m and then write off all accountability for the project. BOPRC should have been the best people to ask questions of RLC – they will get better response and quicker than either individuals or an association such as LRCA. They have the experience and capability to pursue this.

Doug: These are valid comments. However, historically BOPRC have made grants to RLC and implementation was carried out by RLC. This policy will change going forward. At the time RLC was reluctant that BOPRC do any more than grant funding. The people at Lake Tarawera are in the same position with their sewerage scheme – they have started the process but have no idea of the final cost. The individuals need people on the project management group as they are paying the lion's share, however when he suggested this, he got pushback from RLC. We need to have solid expectations around timelines and completion for the contractors.

### **Vegetation along walkway between Rotoiti school and Hinehopu**

Peter Browning raised a question about the footpath between Rotoiti kura and Tamatea Street. BOPRC was involved in planting some of the vegetation along the footpath. It's become very overgrown, and no pruning work has been done along it since it was built. The footpath runs along a State Highway and vegetation control for that part is the responsibility of Waka Kotahi. However, they decline responsibility for highway areas within Limited Speed Zones, which includes most of our highway areas in the Rotoiti community. Waka Kotahi say it is RLC's responsibility, and RLC say they aren't able to do anything along State Highways. This issue has been in dispute for several years now at the Lakes Community Board meetings, but RLC have recently been doing some work on the highway area at Mourea. LRCA will continue to push for a resolution for this issue.

### **Emergency Management quiz prize drawing**

Andrea Davies: we have been working with RLC Civil Defence to develop a plan for Lake Rotoiti communities in the case of an emergency. We are in the early stages of developing this plan but have been working to communicate out to the local community and raise awareness of the issue. As part of this communication Andrea sent out a quiz and we will draw the prize winner now. Andrea wants to acknowledge the support of RLC Civil Defence team for their support and for providing the prize. Also thanks to the community for their responses and offers of support. Roy Duffy drew the prize winner: Steve Vine will be receiving an emergency kit.

Comment: On behalf of eastern Lake Rotoiti residents, thanks for having the AGM at this end of the lake. It is good to have a change from the western end of the lake after many years.

Roy Duffy: thanks to the team at Rotoiti Sports Club for providing the food today – hopefully everyone can stay and meet new people over the excellent food.

Tammy Gardiner closed the meeting with a karakia.

Meeting closed 12.15pm.