

Kuaotunu Residents and Ratepayers Association
Notes from Public Meeting
held at Kuaotunu Hall
24 January 2021

Committee members Brent Page, Chair; Kathy Speirs, Treasurer; Kate Nielsen, Minutes Secretary; Carrie Parker, Correspondence Secretary; Luke Reilly, Carolyn Gibbs, Alastair Brickell, Bruce Pilkington, Danny Bay, Courtney Linnecar

Meeting opened: 3 pm

Committee Present: Brent, Kathy, Kate, Bruce, Carrie, Courtney, Danny

Invited guests: Heather Bruce, TCDC; Deli Connell, Rehka Percival, Bill McLean Mercury Bay Community Board

Public: approx 50 members of the public

Apologies: Committee: Carolyn, Luke, Alastair. Invited guests: Tony Fox, Alan Tiplady, Ed Varley. Public: Marilyn Pilkington, Chris & Bob deLeeuw, Christine Carter, Kevin Brown, Jill Goodall, Brian & Judy Dixon, Steve Brown Douglas, Lee Barraclough

Welcome

Chair Brent Page welcomed the public and invited guests, and read through the apologies. The purpose of this meeting is for the KRRRA committee to give updates to the community, and for the community to give feedback on how well we are representing them, and to keep us on track with the issues of concern. The last time we all sat down together was the public meeting in October 2019!

Historical Photobook Project

Carrie gave a brief background, and then a call to action. In summary: As a consequence of the work Rebecca Simpson has put into restoring the Kuaotunu Hall to its historic form, the Hall committee came into possession of over 80 old photographs of Kuaotunu. Matarangi photographer Ian Patrick helped prepare, mount, and frame the copies that hang on the walls of the hall. Ian and the Hall Committee also had 6 copies of a photobook published. (A copy was shown around the meeting.) One copy lives in the Kuaotunu Library. Since this time, more photos have been donated; there are now upwards of 100 small pieces of Kuaotunu history preserved digitally. The Hall Committee and the KRRRA believe the photobook project should be extended, and ask for someone in the community to take it on. To do: find out an approximate market for such a book; look into publishing options and costs (the original 6 were very expensive); explore possible ways of funding. **If this is you or someone you know, please get in touch with Carrie.**

Biosphere aspirations

Brent reminded the meeting of the 2019 Community Plan refresh: of over 200 respondents, these issues were rated most important by the most number of people:

- 97%, retain the small coastal community (“keep Kuaotunu, Kuaotunu”)
- 97%, environmental protection and predator control
- 94%, cycle- & pedestrian-friendly pathways
- 94%, improved water quality
- 92%, bush walk establishment & maintenance
- 94%, ban on extractive mineral mining

The next question is how do we achieve all these things? There are already a number of smaller groups actively pursuing individual aims. The Chairs of the Opito, Otama, and Kuaotunu Ratepayers Associations got together and talked about combining them, and lobbying central government for a special biosphere designation. A combined effort of our three communities would be a powerful and credible lobby.

While this would be a completely new land-use designation in NZ, biospheres exist in many places in the world. They are special designations wherein an area of land and sea allows for human interaction (differing from national parks and conservation areas), *but* prohibits any further degradation of the environment. Any future development or enterprise must demonstrate a *positive* effect on the environment, for it to be consented. The area we are considering is the Kuaotunu peninsula, roughly (but not exclusively) demarcated by SH25, from Rings Beach to Wharekaho. The four “pillars” of the biosphere are:

- eradicating invasive flora and fauna
- improving (and maintaining) water quality
- restoration & replenishment of our marine environment
- maintaining the integrity and culture of our small coastal communities

The three ratepayers’ groups have resolved to establish a working group to explore and implement next steps. BP read the KRRRA’s resolution from committee meeting 5 November 2020, and wishes to check with the community that we’re all happy to pursue this? It’s a long game, but we have to start somewhere! Those at the meeting agreed unanimously. The KRRRA’s representatives on this working group are Brent and Kate.

Discussion from the floor:

- SH25 as a demarcation needs to be carefully assessed, as many properties lie on the other side of it
- are we doubling up on what the TCDC should be doing anyway, with the District Plan?
 - a central gov’t mandate is a more fixed and powerful thing; NZ has many examples of councils whose best intentions for limiting development were eroded
- it’s a good opportunity to be poison-free too
- the broader approach will give smaller initiatives more traction
- other groups & projects tie in snugly with this aspiration, for example KAMAG and Dark Skies

The KRRRA thanks the community for its support - we’ll keep you posted.

Dune Care

Carrie gave a brief history and update: Lots of other local coastal communities have really strong beach/dune/coast care groups; Kuaotunu used to have one but it dwindled away several years ago. Thanks to the energy, enthusiasm, and inspiration of Tanya Patrick from TCDC, the Dune Care group is revitalised. Recent and upcoming events:

- first community event weeding & planting: 32 people turned up and got a heap of work done
- seed-collection workshop hosted by Tanya - very well attended

- seed collecting has begun: spinifex and pingao. The seeds are sent to a nursery in Whakatane, where they are carefully labelled and reared separately, and then returned to the place of their birth as seedlings.
- a weeding bee in newly-planted area has taken place
- due to such enthusiasm from the community there will be a regular weeding bee, third Wednesday of every month, 8:30am - starting February
- the next area to be planted is at the end of Davis Rd

Carrie has a mailing list - if you're keen to join in, get on it!

Heather Bruce will pass on the committee's thanks to Tanya for her work.

Fireworks

There have been a number of complaints in the community about the use of fireworks (BP read Lee Barraclough's letter aloud) and the damage they can cause to livestock. KRRRA passed these on to Council; Heather Bruce did some research. Although there is a total fire ban in place, Council cannot ban fireworks. There used to be a bylaw against them, but when FENZ took over the administration of fire permits, the bylaw was let lapse. FENZ cannot stop people using fireworks (it is not an enforcement body); nor can Council; nor can the police, as there is no legislation banning them.

What can we do? We'd like to speak to the person who has an annual display on the beach, and suggest they notify FENZ beforehand, perhaps with a donation; and suggest they put a notice on KT Ketchup so animal owners have time to prepare dogs and move horses.

But managing "displays" will not solve the whole problem: small individual incidences of fireworks happen regularly through the summer; the only solution is a ban on sales. We can lobby central government to pass legislation. **KRRRA to draft a letter to the Minister of the Environment, copied to MP Scott Simpson.** When it's ready, the community can write in individually in support. We should include Mercury Bay South in this initiative. **Brent to bring to next MB Chairs meeting.**

Traffic Calming in the Village

Brent and Matt Linnecar (KT Kindy Trust) have had a meeting with TCDC's new roading manager Ed Varley, and George Matthew, regarding traffic calming measures through the village.* Note that although TCDC manages the Blackjack Road, they still need to work within NZTA guidelines.

Ed will have a proposal prepared for the community. Items for consideration:

- 30kph through the village
- more visual curbing
- gateways to village - Kuaotunu-style, including some local art
- improved road markings
- widened centre-line at the corner by Luke's

- installation of a wide raised road-crossing (similar to the new ones in Whitianga) in front of shop
- re-programmed electronic signs that can flash with a fire-call-out warning, or for kindy children crossing

*Approaches to the village (SH25) are in NZTA's jurisdiction. Courtney & BP have a meeting planned with Liam Ryan, NZTA, in the near future to discuss those separate issues and lobby to have the Village solutions accepted. NZTA has identified Kuaotunu as a speed-zone hotspot for review in 2021.

Other discussion:

How far up the hill will there be warning signs so trucks slow down before the corner?

Concern about how haphazardly people cross the road- can we corral them somehow? Where's the best place for a crossing?

-An alternative perspective to specific crossing places is a shared traffic zone, where *all* users of the road (pedestrians, bicycles, dogs, cars,...) have equal rights and equal responsibilities on the road.

Speed bumps work much better than signs.

-Note that we requested temporary speed bumps for this summer, and were refused.

Responsible Freedom Camping

Note that Council has changed the nomenclature from *freedom camping* to *responsible freedom camping*, and it refers to *self-contained and certified motor-homes*. Also the definition of *self-contained* is changing: It will in future attempt to exclude vehicles like Wicked campers with inaccessible, unusable toilets.

Note also that current laws already prohibit non-self-contained vehicles, and this is effectively enforced by TCDC officers.

Question: Does our community have an appetite for providing an area for responsible freedom camping?

Discussion:

- Are there problems with how the system is working now?
 - yes, there have been instances of campers using our public reserves as toilets
- No Camping signs on reserves are in the wrong place (ie, they should be at the entrance to reserves, not at the back corners)
- if the dedicated area is too big, it might become a magnet
- an area away from the village will not stop camper-vans congesting the village, if they drive to the café etc
 - a decent footpath might help!
- What about ongoing management of such a site?
 - the Motorhome Association could take it on
 - most camper-van users tend to understand how to use these sites, and TCDC bylaws officers would also keep an eye out

- ❑ a camper-van site on private land is out of our jurisdiction
- ❑ Current bylaws are under review - deadline for submissions is 2 Feb - but none of the proposed minor changes affect Kuaotunu. Deli suggested that both KRRRA and the Domain Board should make a submission on the Midas Rd proposal.
- ❑ Keep in mind that previously TCDC was threatened with a lawsuit for trying to ban campervans

Proposed site:

The Midas Rd reserve, aka old tennis courts, opposite Garrick's woolshed. The site needs work - level raised, possibly with debris from cleared slips. Set-up, signage, landscaping could be "Kuaotunu-ised", so it isn't the same as similar sites in other places; we keep a local feel.

Summary:

The community is not opposed in principle to having a dedicated responsible-freedom-camping site, provided the vehicles *are* self-contained, and the chosen site meets our approval.

Scallop Rahui

Scallop numbers have (anecdotally) dropped significantly in recent years due to over-harvesting. Opito Bay has placed a voluntary rahui on scallop-gathering. KRRRA, on behalf of the community, has written to Joe Davis expressing our support. Luke Reilly & Steve MacIntyre will conduct a survey of Kuaotunu scallops, using the same methodology as in Opito, so our data can be folded into theirs, to be forwarded to the Ministry of Primary Industry.

Dark Skies

In Alastair's absence, Brent gave an update: The plan is now to aim for Dark Skies Community designation, which is a lower rating, and more easily achievable, than a Sanctuary. This designation would allow us 10 years to achieve lighting compliance. The most important factor at this point is TCDC changing its District Plan to reflect International Dark-skies Association lighting standards. The cost of consultation to effect this change is estimated to be about \$40,000.

KAMAG

Ian Preece spoke briefly on the current situation on mining in Kuaotunu: He referred to the Community Plan refresh, and the strong community feeling for opposing mining. He believes that while there is not yet actual evidence of mining companies moving into our area, the risk this year is greater than ever due to Oceana Golds increased activity in Waihi and the record high in gold price and it is time to speak out even louder against mining. Oceana Gold holds an active exploration license, expiring April 2022, extending from Te Rerenga to Whitianga and Otama. The three phases of such a license are 1) prospecting , 2) exploration (including drilling), and 3) mining/acquisition. He believes our community should aim for:

1. no further activity on this license
2. the license to lapse in April 2022 without being renewed

The questions now are what kind of messaging will be most effective, and how do we send it. Ian will be reaching out to the community in the near future for your input and feedback: Please make your voices heard!

Any Other Business

Bill Muir raised concerns over vandalism (missing penguin signs, missing rat-traps from the boat ramp), and asked what we can do to be a better-behaved community.

Marguerite Müller complimented the community on our quiet dark nights, which are noticeable to and appreciated by visitors.

Courtney Linnecar asked for an update on water-quality investigations.

-James Muir has been doing testing and working with Waikato Regional Council; **KRRA will follow up for a status report.**

Lorraine Hammersley notified the meeting that Gray Avenue residents have clubbed together to purchase an AED unit, similar to the one at the Noticeboard. It is at 26 Gray Ave and is accessed by calling 111. St John's will be offering training in the use of AEDs. **Kathy will put a note of this in the newsletter.**

Ian reminded the meeting of the 10 Artists exhibition in the Hall this weekend (Auckland Anniversary W/E). This year a donation from the proceeds will go to Kuaotunu Bird Rescue.

Roadside rubbish - can we organise a working bee to collect rubbish on the Kuaotunu hill? Advertise time & date on KT Ketchup and the people will come...

Closing

In closing, Brent introduced the committee who were present (!), and reminded the meeting of the KRRA AGM which will be on Easter weekend (early April). Come! Stand for the committee! Vote! And until then, keep giving us feedback, attend meetings, join in.

Meeting closed 5pm

ACTION SUMMARY

who	what
KRRRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● draft letter to MoEnvironment re fireworks; let community know so they can write in support● follow up with James Muir re water testing
community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● put your hand up to help with photo-book project● sign up to Carrie's Dune Care mailing list● write MoE/Scott Simpson in support of fireworks ban● organise rubbish-pick-up bee
Brent	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● take fireworks-ban letter to parliament initiative to MB Chairs meeting
Kathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● include a note re Gray Ave AED in newsletter