

## Notes from Kuaotunu Peninsula Environment Group Hui 30 May 2021

### Speakers

Joe Davis (JD) – Ngati Hei  
Brent Page (BP) - Kuaotunu Peninsula Trust (KPT)  
Paul Cook (PC) – Opito Bay Ratepayers Association (OBRA)  
Roger Lampen (RL) - Whau Whau Environment Group  
Victor McLean (VM) - KEA (Kuaotunu Environmental Action)  
Paul Kington (PK) - Otama Reserves Group Inc  
Darcie Bellanto (DB) – Department of Conservation  
Martin Smith (MS) - KAMAG  
Paula Williams (PW) - Project Kiwi Trust  
Alison Henry (AH) - Kauri 2000  
Carrie Parker (CP) - Rings Beach Wetland Group

### Welcome and Karakia

Joe Davis welcomed those present and delivered a Karakia. He noted his excitement about the event, and keen interest to hear about all the groups represented.

### Introduction

Brent Page also welcomed those present, and explained the purpose and structure of the meeting. Planning to move from east to west across the peninsula, he invited OBRA to present.

### Opito Bay Ratepayers Association (Paul Cook)

OBRA represents around 300 families and ratepayers from Opito, with a constitution that embodies environmental protection and co-operation. OBRA has six active environmental projects, each with a nominated leader, numerous volunteers and financial support from some combination of the community and local, regional or central government support.

Projects (some in co-operation with other organisations) include:

- Coromandel Scallop Restoration Project – an outstanding example of collaboration and citizen science led by Ngati Hei, with the Opito Community, supported by Legasea. Significant national exposure, great progress and the opportunity to leverage at both regional and national level
- Pest Free Opito – nearly 100 Traps deployed, managed by volunteers, using TrapNZ App to record GPS locations and kills
- Wilding Pine clearance – historical volunteer activity now consolidated under KPT
- Dune Restoration – third year of planting in June, supported by TCDC
- Beach Clean Up – inspired by Sustainable Coastlines Litter Intelligence survey – Opito one of the most pristine beaches surveyed
- Native Forest Regeneration – over 20,000 native trees planted in the last 10 years on retired farmland, led by Chris Severne

- Dark Sky Reserve – advocates since 2009 and in 2019 secured the removal of 5 full height street lamps from new subdivision. Now working with local expert to determine TCDC requirements and secure support

The pillars and principles of Te Taiao provide an excellent framework for planning and action. Individuals and communities are acting now, ahead of politicians. While all the projects have great local support, long term success will depend on gaining appropriate funding, in turn dependent on effective lobbying and measurable outcomes.

OBRA aspirations are aligned with the six pillars suggested by the proposed Kuaotunu Peninsula Biosphere Group:

- A healthy, plentiful, sustainable marine environment with no dredging or trawling
- Trap saturation and / or a pest proof fence
- Global recognition of Dark Sky Community enabling sustainable, low impact tourism
- Best in class NZ water quality measurements
- Development and TCDC planning consistent with community views
- Iwi / Community partnership a model of Te Taiao in action

#### **Whau Whau Environment Group - Roger Lampen**

Roger introduced the establishment of the original group by five families, subsequently augmented by one. There are now three generations in every family active in the group. They originally developed a comprehensive predator control programme, and subsequently hooked up with Project Kiwi.

The overall vision is to have a strong environmental bay with diversity. They concentrate on kiwi, but believe that their work for kiwi will help the whole environment. The group is fairly informal, but benefits from channeling much of their activity through Project Kiwi.

#### **Kuaotunu Environmental Action (KEA) - Victor Mclean**

Victor thanked Joe Davis and Brent Page for calling this face to face meeting. He noted he was speaking on behalf of both KEA and Ngati Tamatera Hapu te Matewaru.

KEA was founded to stop 1080 poisoning and now represents over 200 landowners and residents who oppose the use of 1080.

Between 1996 and 2007 Project Kiwi trapped without 1080, showing that residual poisons are not necessary to control predators.

Recent initiatives include trapping on Blackjack Hill – essential to use trapping rather than poison here, as the creek / spring still provides the town water supply. KEA also continues to work with the Awamarire farm with their Trapping maintenance regime - The Awamarire Farm is a template in 2021 for the Kuaotunu Peninsula where you do not need to use 1080 or Residual poisons when doing large scale predator control.

KEA's objective is first to care for the health of the people and second to protect our taonga native species and the environment when doing large scale predator control. They aspire to a 1080 and residual poison free environment when doing large scale predator control..

There is a breakdown of communication between the various community groups on this subject. KEA would like to see better communication between the groups, and to stop the use of 1080. KEA politely asks Project Kiwi to stop using residual poisons and go back to trapping and hunting.

Their objectives are to look after the natural resources without using poison – to establish a predator free backyard without residual poison. They continue to consult with DoC and community groups on this issue.

What we have here is unique – KEA wants the peninsula to be residual poison free, as well as predator free.

### **Otama Reserves Group Inc (ORG) - Paul Kington**

Paul based his presentation on the minutes of a recent ORG Meeting, which addressed the various questions under consideration.

Paul's priorities are whanau, the environment, and community.

ORG developed a vision for the Otama reserves at their AGM this year – their fourth year of operation. Their objective is restoration of the complete ecological environment of the Otama reserves with a landscape level bush to beach approach. Their committee have varied skill sets and common goals and purpose - our mantra is to preserve, protect and restore the Otama reserves, they have a working agreement with DOC over 7 reserves.

They are currently putting a huge effort in to their website, funding applications, pest and weed control.

They have received a supply of native plants for wetland reserves from Jim Dahm Kim Lawry and Tanya Patrick

A successful funding application has allowed them to apply natural approaches. They are recognized for predator control and the wetlands habitat. A recent highlight was releasing a rescued Makatu (Bittern) into the wetland reserve.

Over 2000 plants were planted at a recent planting day, in the process reclaiming a paddock. This season we have 3500 trees/shrubs to plant in both the wetland and main village reserve.

They have worked on increasing community engagement and consultation, and upgraded access to the reserves. They have had over 50 volunteers on working and planting bees in the last season.

They now have a solid social media presence and an updated web page.

They have been running a very successful trapping program for several years, with funding from the DoC community fund and WRC small scale community fund. Now have 6 separate trap lines – 150 to 200 pests caught per year - positioned an extra 30 traps this year. They intend to GPS all those traps. Don't use poisons, generally DoC 200 traps, a few Good Natures.

They have engaged Natural Solutions to develop a plan for wetlands restoration. They are also working with DoC to protect and preserve archaeological and natural heritage, including recognition and protection of the historic sites on the village reserve, which has been funded through community working bees and local community funding.

Goals – connectivity, bush to beach predator free.

### **Lord Howe Island – Darcie Bellanto (DoC)**

Darcie was a ranger on Lord Howe Island for six years, during which time they implemented a successful eradication programme. She had been invited to the Hui to share her experience, and had so far been listening to see how the work she has been doing can tie into what KP groups are doing.

Darcie gave a great presentation on the eradication programme, and highlighted a number of factors that were relevant to the work the KP Groups are doing. In particular, the Eradication programme was successful because it was community led.

The programme was initially proposed in 2001, after a feasibility study confirmed it was possible.

From 2008 to 2014 they carried out a range of consultation, as there was a lot of opposition to the proposed methodology. In 2014 they went back to the community with two options – the community voted 52% in favour of eradication, 48% in favour of continuing the control approach. They went with the eradication option on the basis that although there were 48% in favour of the other option, there was a lot of give and take in the Community.

Eradication involved helicopter aerial baiting, but on the settled part of the island they instead installed 22000 traps on a 10m x 10m grid.

The Budget went from \$9.5m to almost \$15m.

Only 4 or 5 members of the community opposed the programme, despite the need to access every house once a week (a mousetrap was placed in every room). They used locals to do the work whenever possible, and carried out extensive one on one consultation to build support for the programme, as well as doing an external economic evaluation to support the justification.

Ultimately the success of the programme was based on high quality leaders.

There are no rabbits on the island, and no cats allowed.

### **Kuaotunu Anti Mining Action Group (KAMAG) – Martin Smith**

The Group was started 1978. We are a bit different to the other groups here – we want protection from mining for the whole of the Coromandel Peninsula.

They provide a lot of information on mining - they don't have specific things to protect, but mining affects all of us and our environment – water, animals, communities.

From 1979 to 1990 were involved with Watchdog stopping mining on Coromandel.

They thought they had succeeded in preventing the return of mining to the peninsula, but gold is a great allure and the miners are back. Before Europeans came, Maori had protection over whole country. This has changed over the last 250 years with the impact of extraction industries – particularly mining and timber.

Toxicity has lasted from last round of mining activity to now – it is still happening, poisons coming out of old mine sites.

KAMAG is about protection – getting the environment back to how it used to be. They want to stop destructive activity, focus on enhancement of our environment.

### **Project Kiwi Trust – Paula Williams, also regional coordinator of Kiwis for Kiwi**

Project Kiwi manages trapping on 3000 hectares and kiwi protection on 4000 hectares.

They have conducted call surveys since 2002 – moving from annual to biennial over that time - to measure growth, decline, dispersal.

The Project does not own any land – it operates on land owned by others, and depend on the goodwill of the landowners.

Their aspiration is to contribute to Kiwi abundance, and to restore Kiwi distribution.

They operate on the basis of what is long term and sustainable, and have the capacity to grow as long as the growth objective is in line with strategy.

Every relationship they have is a high trust model based on personal contact.

Their primary focus is on the Kuaotunu Peninsula. They are contributing regionally and nationally, but don't want to diversify resources.

### **Kauri 2000 – Alison Henry**

Alison noted that many of the issues under discussion are of national as well as local importance.

Kauri 2000 has been part of this landscape over 20 years. The initial plan was to plant 2000 Kauri – to date 53,000 are in the ground, with another 2000 ready to go.

Has been a wonderful journey, now need to re-evaluate, and look for co-operation with other groups. We are all passionate about looking after our environment – while we may have different views we share a common vision.

A major concern is the lack of effective decision making, and the length of time to reach decisions. Thank goodness for the rahui – it has brought significant focus on the fact that there are problems with the marine environment.

Kauri 2000 does not need to get involved with pest control – apart from issues related to Kauri dieback.

It has been great to hear what other groups are doing - looking at the Coromandel Peninsula it is truly amazing what is happening all over the place. There are very few bits of the jigsaw missing.

### **Kuaotunu Peninsula Trust (KPT) – Brent Page**

Seeds of the trust started 10 years ago with some private funding to get rid of wilding pines on Blackjack Hill. Progress became more noticeable and was well received – others volunteered and helped with funding. It became prudent to form a more formal structure to manage funding, so the Kuaotunu Peninsula Trust was formed. The wide ranging Trust Deed allows involvement with other environmental initiatives.

The significant funding recently secured for Wilding Pine clearance across the peninsula was a stunning demonstration of collaboration across groups.

The long term vision of KPT is to have the wider KP peninsula resplendent in biodiversity – enabling all of us and our grandchildren to enjoy the protected environment.

### ***Question from the floor***

*There is never a replanting programme put in place when trees are being cleared. Carbon is being released by each tree cut down, why is there no replanting programme?*

Replanting is part of the current programme, which is the largest wilding pine removal programme undertaken to date. However, experience to date is that regeneration is absolutely rampant where wilding pines are felled. DoC advise that if you drop the pines and create the light, growth will take off. The natural seed source is much stronger than replanting.

Rings Beach is a great example of native regeneration.

There is an Issue around potential slips when pines are removed – we need a special programme to deal with those.

Brent introduced Céline Derouet, the Project Manager who has been appointed to run the peninsula-wide wilding pine programme. Funding has been provided by MPI as they have a

responsibility to manage wilding pines. The project is happy to work with others on replanting and pest control, but that is not included in the current project scope, which is focused on pulling & sawing regenerating pines and the felling or poisoning of mature pines, thereby creating additional jobs plus training opportunities.

### ***Question from the floor***

*Does the carbon release have to be accounted for?*

No, not by this project.

### **Rings Beach Wetland Group - Carrie Parker**

The Group started in 2006 with a vision to put a walking track through to Matarangi, but in the process they discovered a wetland overrun with pests, wilding pines etc. They then discovered three pairs of critically endangered Fernbirds, and expanded the vision to protect the birds.

Work started with trapping on the wetlands, and have also planted over 5000 trees, engaging with local schools to assist. The number of trap lines has grown over the years, and every week volunteers are in the bush monitoring traps and pulling pines. Over 1500 volunteer hours per year are currently measured, with the primary focus on predator free and weed free. They have issues with feral cats, and now have a camera deployed that has also identified Kiwi. They have been catching 6 or 7 feral cats per year. Pigs are also an issue – don't yet have a strategy for pigs.

There are over 17,000 visitors per year to the Wetland.

The group's vision is based on the Wetland being predator free, weed free and enjoyed by the public.

### **Joe Davis – Ngati Hei**

Joe acknowledged everyone in the room and all the work going on in our Ngati Hei rohe, which extends from Opoutere to North Whangapoua.

He recalled his work over many years on Sea Change, on Island ecology working with CRIs, including a particular project with CRIs and other Iwi on the eastern seaboard looking at bird populations and chick mortality rates.

Ngati Hei are not just thinking about what is in front of us but the whole rohe. They don't have the resources to deal with all the issues, so need to collaborate with others, with Treaty Partners. They are currently working with DoC to look at the Te Taiao framework. They are trying to address a huge number of issues with limited resources, just our mana.

Hauraki Treaty Settlements will at some stage lead to a Hauraki Act which will produce collaborative agreements with government agencies.

Joe talked about the Biosphere concept, and noted its uncanny alignment with Ngati Hei aspirations – restorative, enhancing, improving. They need to know how they can help the various groups doing environmental work - maybe something as simple as a letter of support in some cases. They are trying to develop some resources – for instance looking at job opportunities around Kauri Ora – under management group of seven. This is an example of current DoC land which will revert to Ngati Hei under treaty settlement, and they want to work with the groups here to help achieve common objectives.

Ngati Hei haven't seen a real management process on the foreshore, around the islands. There are conversations about more MPAs, even a world heritage site. The only current marine reserve in the Waikato conservancy is in the Ngati Hei rohe. There could have been a lot more achieved with more resources. Current approaches are not working, but it is important to understand how MPAs will be managed to ensure an appropriate approach.

Joe is positive about the Dark Sky initiative – wants to be able to see Mataraki.

We have a lot on our plate – it will take a lot of collaboration to address the issues, and we like to think Ngati Hei will be alongside the various groups.

We need the economic benefits as well – without that we don't have resources. Need to zone and manage these places. Spatial zoning very much part of the Sea Change initiative.

Joe noted the lack of recognized Ngati Hei presence on the peninsula – for example there are many beautiful Pa sites that could be restored and opened to visitors. This should be a continuous process – alive and moving.

Ngati Hei would like to work with the groups – would like to make the initiatives portable, to able to be applied in different parts of the rohe, and also working alongside other Iwi.

The Lord Howe experience was fascinating - they are lucky as an island, unfortunately we are attached to the mainland!

Have noticed decline of bird populations on the islands, with post mortems revealing that parents are feeding chicks plastic. Lincoln Uni are discouraging consumption of mutton birds because of mercury content.

Ngati Hei need to come home and fix up the damage caused by the last 200 years of industrial revolution. We don't have one swimmable creek on the peninsula - now is the time to give back and restore. We want to help in any way.

## **General Discussion**

Brent Page commended a hall full of heroes, and noted particularly the support and leadership from Ngati Hei.



## **Where to now?**

The aims and objectives of the different groups are consistent – analogous to different pathways to the top of the same mountain.

**PW** suggestion – We should map the peninsula to work out what is being done, establish knowledge and gaps. Can the Biosphere provide a “bigger voice” to the smaller groups?

**BP** – don’t necessarily want to preempt the term Biosphere, it is for the Community to decide. We all want to leave the peninsula in better shape than we found it.

**PC** asked whether there was an opportunity in coordinating funding applications – can we choose one area (e.g. trapping) and set a target of doubling amounts secured over the last one or two years with a peninsula-wide approach to key funders?

**BP** – we have examples of successful co-ordination, but don’t want to try to do too much, too quickly as this may challenge some groups.

## **Scott Simpson (MP)**

Within each of the different communities and regions, there are groups doing stunning work. Over the years have talked about the power of community initiatives. Learning from parliament that the power of these comes from a coordinated focus. What I would like to see out of today is further talk and planning, refinement of vision and pathways. Many of you as individual organisations have had success – can we share what works in funding?

For instance Rings Beach changed their “pitch” from trap building to wetland restoration and money started to flow. Maybe we can share our experiences and harness our overall knowledge for the collective benefit.

Don’t wait for central government – power lies with us, and the challenge is for us to pick it up and run with it. Focus on what we have in common, not the differences.

## **Chris Severne (Chair, OBRA)**

Talked about the origin of the Scallop project – started in October last year, and significant achievements by Christmas, just 3 months later. Now being replicated in Waiheke and other places. People sick of waiting around. Significant funding opportunities exist – e.g. WRC, NEXT – and we need to access these in the most effective way.

**BP** – our communities have spoken loudly in support of the initiatives we are pursuing. The formation of the working group has moved this along with three Ratepayer Groups (Opito, Otama, Kuaotunu) plus DoC and Ngati Hei.

## ***Question from the floor***

We have always had good communication with DoC – they have local and regional responsibility. Is there more we should be doing with them?

**DoC – Nick Kelly.** We have only 8 members on our team for the area. There is a great opportunity now to leverage things like jobs for nature. DoC has great relationships with individuals in the room – the collective knowledge is absolutely here. Suggested that as well as a map initiatives and work, we should do a relationship map to identify people, skills and resources

### **Cameron Fleming – Chair Otama Ratepayers**

The genesis for the hui was the working group. Mapping of groups, activities, skills and resources is a clear outcome of this meeting. Any further actions must be community driven.

**BP** – would everyone be happy for the Working Group to delineate what the top of the mountain looks like – what is the end goal.

**JD** – we missed the whole Provincial Growth Fund opportunity, but there are other things to come. We need to be ready for the next wave – e.g. Jobs for Nature.

**PW** - Our projects and activities need to be measurable – e.g. impact by hectare.

**Kristina Pickford (Kuaotunu Peninsula Trust)** – can we use the Ngati Hei Environmental Strategy document as a common framework?

**JD** – a bit shy after 200 years in a secondary role, nervous of being taken over by a powerful group.

### **Statement from the floor**

The working group needs to have a voice from all groups, not just ratepayer groups.

**JD** – the role of the working group is to provide support for groups and activities across the peninsula. Don't want to lessen the power of smaller groups, want something more from the Umbrella Group – maybe lobbying or overall funding.

**PC** – Would it be worth considering trapping across the Peninsula as a coordinated opportunity?

**BP** – can we take out of today that the Working Group will map out the territory, distil some core aims. They can also set out the working group objectives to clarify these for review and consideration by the groups here today.

One of the things to come out of the mapping will be opportunities to extend, grow or expand particular initiatives and opportunities for co-operation.

Meeting Closed 1pm