

**Kuaotunu Residents and Ratepayers Association**  
Notes on Public Meeting  
held at Kuaotunu Hall  
8 January 2023

**Meeting opened:** 3:04pm

**Present:**

KRRA committee members Chair Brent Page, Kathy Speirs, Danny Bay, Kate Nielsen, Alastair Brickell, Roimata Taimana, Carrie Parker

Elected public officials & TCDC staff Len Salt, Mayor; TCDC Area Manager Heather Bruce, Councillors Deli Connell, Rehka Giri; Mercury Bay Community Board Members Krissy Robinson, Peter MacKenzie; MP Scott Simpson

Public approx 50 members of the public

**Welcome**

Brent thanked all those attending for taking time out of a rare sunny afternoon, and welcomed the official guests, noting that with so many new faces in the Council and Community Board we are looking forward to a new direction in our local government, and might hope for a change from the previous Mayor's *unique approach to community consultation*.

**Rubbish compactor**

Since its installation in 2018 the compactor has been beset with issues. In December Brent met with Heather Bruce and other Council waste management staff, and they agreed that the boat ramp was not a suitable location, and that there were no suitable alternatives in Kuaotunu. The compactor has been removed. The meeting concurred with this decision.

**Traffic calming**

In recent weeks a red "courtesy crossing" has replaced the guerilla zebra, and two red "go slow" bands were painted at either end of the village; finally some action after a meeting two years ago between KRRA, Waka Kotahi, and TCDC agreed to undertake it. Anecdotal observations suggest that these measures have slowed some drivers. Plans are in place to reduce the speed limit through the village to 30 kph (although the meeting suggested 15kph would be better and safer); this can't happen until gazetted, which is expected in March 2023. At that point a wide median will be painted and gateways at either end of the village will be installed. Brent suggests that in the meantime our creative community comes up with a gateway design that is less generic and boring than the standard white poles: for example, a painting (similar to the toilet mural) of a child holding the hand of a little blue penguin. At the same time the Council could tidy up (and remove some of) the existing signage.

Discussion: what is the official designation/purpose of the red "courtesy crossing"? Might it be dangerously confusing? Why isn't it like the crossings in Whitianga with yellow

raised dots and warning signs to pedestrians that cars have right of way? = Something is better than nothing, but KRRA should keep pushing for a proper pedestrian crossing.

## **Dark Skies**

Alastair gave an update on progress towards Dark Sky Community accreditation:

- Twice-yearly public events are required; a Matariki event was held last year at the Kuaotunu Domain with a great turn-out for 5am on a cloudy day! Another is planned for Easter at Opito.
- A \$50,000 grant has been secured for the project by Destination Hauraki Coromandel with funds coming from MBIE. This will be used to fund consultants Kahu Environmental to guide the lighting plan change through council and the IDA.
- A pre-application to the International Dark Sky Association is underway
- Opito Residents & Ratepayers have raised \$5000
- The European Space Agency has asked to put a robotically-operated telescope in our area as we have dark skies. This will probably be sited at Opito somewhere (as it needs good wifi); it will look for earth-bound asteroids and damaging space junk. Final details are under discussion.
- ESA required good weather data so Alastair provided his recently digitised rainfall records from the last 41 years at Kuaotunu. Annual average rainfall 1677mm, lowest rainfall 1148 (1982), highest rainfall 2381 (2022)
- Information brochures re Dark Sky accreditation have been distributed throughout the community, funded by a Community Board grant
- a t-shirt has been designed for further fundraising

Brent commended Alastair for his indefatigable dedication to this important project.

## **Bluff Road closure**

The communities of Matarangi, Kuaotunu, Otama, and Opito are 100% in favour of keeping the Bluff Road open for pedestrian and cycling access. Mark Bedford, MRRA Chair, is leading the drive for a point-to-point suspension bridge to bypass the rockfall. There is political will in support of this: TCDC is appointing a project manager, who will prepare a business case, and report back to the Ratepayers' Associations for consultation. Mayor Len warns that, while the elected officials at this meeting are in support of the idea, it will be a whole-Council decision; the business case has to be persuasive, that the bridge can be safe and long-lasting. Issues to contend with: funding the building (Mark Bedford has suggested there might be private contributors to help with this); ongoing ownership and maintenance.

New TCDC CEO Aileen Lawrie has experience with suspension bridges; KRRA's secretary Kevin Crawford is an Engineer with specific experience in suspension bridge construction and is an active advocate for this solution.

Discussion: In the meantime, what is the status of the road? It is signed closed, but many people still use it. TCDC says **it is NOT SAFE, do not use it**. The nature of the rock face means it is at constant and unpredictable risk of falling, regardless of weather/rainfall. Ratepayers' Assoc have no authority to enforce the closure; users do so

at their own risk. Emergency Services are concerned they may have to undertake a dangerous rescue. - It is perhaps still safer than cycling along SH25?

### **Waitaia loop track**

The track has finally re-opened after a closure of some years. Two bridges have been repaired; work still to do includes re-routing the steep steps and creating a new car park.

### **KAMAG update**

Martin Smith gave a summary of the anti-mining group's kaupapa and current work:

- established in the 1980s to protect the Kuaotunu environment, inform the community of their rights, engage in direct action and peaceful protest when and where necessary
- 2017 KAMAG initiated a survey, carried out by KRRRA, in which 94% of respondents confirmed they did not want industrial mining or tailings dams here
- 2019-2022 they undertook the "Lock the gate" campaign; in the Licence area 65 "No Mining Access" signs are on gates
- Oceania Gold's previous exploration licence was to expire in May 2022; they had to apply for a licence extension and reduce the area covered by the Licence. The extension was approved by MBIE in January 2022. This is **partial good news** for the Kuaotunu Peninsula as it is no longer in the area. The exploration licence now covers Crown and Summit Forestry lands, and farms between the Myndeman Hill and Te Rerenga, south of SH25. (NB, KAMAG had to file an Official Information Act request to discover this information.)
- **However** the Kuaotunu community needs to remain vigilant. Other mining companies could apply for a new licence; and if OG were to establish an industrial processing plant in the area, they may still seek to mine Kuaotunu by other means.

KAMAG would like to thank KRRRA, the community, and individual landowners, and they encourage everyone to continue in their support whatever way they can.

### **Scallop rahui**

Thanks to Legasea and Optio R&R, supported by KRRRA and Joe Davis Ngati Hei, last year the Ministry for Oceans and Fisheries established a 2-year ban on scallop harvesting from Whangapoua to Tairua. It is due to expire September 2023; it needs to be extended by another 2 years to be really effective. An interim sea-bed survey is being undertaken and needs funding. In the last KRRRA committee meeting, a resolution was passed to contribute \$1000 towards this, with the proviso that Kuaotunu waters be included in the survey. However this wasn't found to be economically feasible so KRRRA withdrew from that commitment; private individuals stepped in and made up the \$1000 donation. Many thanks, invisible benefactors.

A direct question to our MP Scott Simpson: Why is NZ the only country in the OECD that does not have an outright ban on coastal inshore dredging?

SS: The Hauraki Gulf is degrading horribly... simple legislative change (IE signing a ban) is not simple; "property rights" [*my quotes - KN*] - fishing quotas - need to be taken into consideration... in my personal view buying back the quota is a good investment... there are some exciting and hopeful initiatives....

Q: What are some of the exciting and hopeful initiatives?

SS: It's an election year, I'm not going to reveal policy to you, watch this space.

### **Proposed changes to dog by-law**

As part of its regular 6-yearly review of bylaws, TCDC has proposed increasing no-dogs restrictions to Kuaotunu beaches to 4 months/year, and restricting access to off-leash areas to limited hours. Sheila Westley reported the community's strong opposition to the proposal. KRRA has made a submission against the proposed changes and has asked to speak to it at a hearing. Local dog-owners love and respect our beaches, understand the need to protect dotterel nesting areas, and keep their dogs under control. Dog-walking on the beach is an important element of physical & mental well-being for dog-owners. SW suggests more informative signage to educate visitors *why* dogs need to be on leads around dotterels. Dotterel breeding and survival rates in Kuaotunu are above average: the current by-law is working - don't change it.

Brian Walsh read his statement in opposition to the proposed changes.

Discussion: Should time and effort be wasted taking this to a hearing when the community voice is loud and unambiguous? Why wasn't the community consulted before the proposal was made? Who in Council recommended these changes?

TCDC response: The process needs to be followed. The public submission period [which closed in December] *is* the consultation process. We are here, hearing you loud and clear. Staff make recommendations for the whole of the District and they are not arbitrary: many things are taken into consideration, including RFS relating to dogs, animal control incidents, register of complaints (Steve Hart notes that every complaint lodged to Council is recorded in the register but there is no "register of compliments", so the data are necessarily skewed to the negative).

In summary: The Kuaotunu community reject strongly the proposed changes to the dog by-law. The Mayor, Councillors, and Community Board members present have heard our voice; we (the community) would be very surprised and disappointed if the changes went through.

### **Boat ramp**

Bill Muir has met with the new Harbourmaster and TCDC to discuss a 10-year plan to increase the large rocks but not upgrade the boat ramp too much. They agreed to look at the plan.

### **From the floor:**

Len Salt concedes he lost the bet that there would be more invited officials than public at this meeting, on such a lovely afternoon. Ka pai, community, for turning out in support of civic engagement!

Bill Muir raised the (ongoing) question of reducing speed limits through Kuaotunu on SH25 - locals have been advocating for this for more than 40 years. Scott Simpson shares his frustration: For Waka Kotahi, one of the key performance indicators that might trigger a change is number of deaths. He is happy to keep lobbying on this.

Discussion: What about actually enforcing the current speed limit? What about speed cameras? =Local police say they don't have the resources.

Other countries use 3-D road painting to slow drivers -could we do something similar?

What about making sure the speed sign at the Domain works reliably?!

Len reports he attended a Waka Kotahi meeting in Wellington December 2022: Items discussed included reducing SH25 speed limit to 80kph, installing point-to-point cameras through problem areas, increasing fines for speeding.

Action: **KRRA to contact Waka Kotahi asking for speed cameras.**

Isabel Gilbert Palmer gave an update on the ArtSpace project, which aims to create a dedicated space for makers creators & exhibitors in the village. A hui was held in September 2022 to discuss a model space in Hokianga. The ArtSpace still seeks a site: they have looked at the Domain but this land is awaiting Treaty settlement so no decisions are being made about its use. Conversations are being held with Creative Waikato for support. IGP and Roimata are both Trustees on the Creative Coromandel Trust.

Hamish Noble: Potholes on the Blackjack Reserve road - in a very bad state. They were repaired 3 months ago but recent rains have scoured them out again. **Heather Bruce will put in an RFS for pot-hole repair 9/1/23.** (Ian Preece remarked if there's funds available they could be better put towards a pedestrian crossing instead.)

Brent reminded the meeting of the KRRA's next AGM at Easter: A few quite long-serving members of the committee will be stepping down, so start thinking about nominations for the 2023-24 committee. Also, everyone is welcome at committee meetings, to speak on any issue that concerns you, or just to listen.

### **Thanks**

Brent thanked the elected officials and the public for attending. Enjoy the rest of the sunny evening!

**Meeting closed:** 4:54pm

## ACTION SUMMARY

who	what
KRRRA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● ask Waka Kotahi for speed cameras along SH25</li><li>● engage local arts community to come up with ideas for village gateways</li></ul>
Heather B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● rfs re potholes</li></ul>