

# Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group

## Ngā Meneti Open Minutes

**Commencing:** Friday 1 November 2024, 09:30AM

**Venue:** Mataatua Room, Bay of Plenty Regional Council, 5 Quay Street, Whakatāne and via Zoom (Audiovisual meeting)

**Heamana  
Chairperson:** Chair Leith Comer (Te Mana o Ngāti Rangitahi Trust)

**Heamana Tuarua  
Deputy Chairperson:** Dr Pouroto Ngaropo (Te Rūnanga o Ngāti Awa)

**Ngā Kopounga  
Members:** Awhi Awhimate (Ngāti Mākinu Iwi Authority)  
Cr Gregg Brown (Rotorua Lakes Council)  
Chair Phill Thomass (Alternate - Rotorua Lakes Council)  
Cr Malcolm Campbell (Alternate - Toi Moana Bay of Plenty Regional Council)  
Deputy Mayor Lesley Immink (Alternate - Whakatāne District Council)  
Tiipene Marr (Alternate- Ngāti Rangitahi Trust)  
Laurance Tamati (Alternate - Ngāti Mākinu Iwi Authority)

**Te Hunga i Tae Ake  
In Attendance:** BOPRC: Chris Ingle - General Manager Integrated Catchments, Kataraina O'Brien - General Manager Strategic Engagement, Kerry Brown - Kaitohutohu Taiao Matua (Senior Advisor), Gemma Moleta - Senior Planner (Water Policy), Gina Mohi - Pūtaiao Mātauranga, Steve Groom - Governance Manager, Tone-Nerdrum Smith - Senior Committee Advisor.

TMoNRT: Simon Costar and Destiny Wharewera-Mason - Cultural Monitors

Department of Conservation: Merenia Sawrey (on behalf of Regional Director), Karito Paul - Te Papa Atawhai Tiriti Ranger.

Staff/Presenters: as listed in the minutes

## Ngā Hōnea

**Apologies:**

Mayor Faylene Tunui (Kawerau District Council)  
Mayor Victor Luca (Whakatāne District Council)  
Chairman Doug Leeder (Bay of Plenty Regional Council)  
Jim Schuster (Ngāti Tūwharetoa (BOP) Settlement Trust)  
Manu Glenn (Alternate - Te Mana o Ngāti Rangitīhi Trust)  
Deputy Mayor Aaron Rangihika (Alternate - Kawerau District Council)

**1. Karakia Whakatuwhera  
Opening Karakia**

A karakia was provided by Tiipene Marr and responded by Deputy Chair Dr Pouroto Ngaropo.

**2. Ngā Hōnea  
Apologies****Resolved**

**That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

**Accepts the apologies from Chairman Doug Leeder, Mayor Victor Luca, Mayor Faylene Tunui and Jim Schuster tendered at the meeting.**

[Campbell/Ngaropo]  
[CARRIED]

**3. Whakapuakanga o Ngā Take Whai Taha-Rua  
Declaration of Conflicts of Interest**

None declared.

**4. Ngā Meneti  
Minutes**

**Kia Whakaūngia Ngā Meneti  
Minutes to be Confirmed**

**4.1 Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group Minutes - 9 August 2024****Resolved**

**That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 Confirms the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group Minutes - 9 August 2024 as a true and correct record.**

[Campbell/Brown]  
[CARRIED]

## 5. Ngā Pūrongo Reports

Chair Comer provided an introduction to the reports on the agenda and items for discussion at today's hui. The Chair noted that there had been approaches to Hon Shane Jones (Minister for Regional Development) regarding infrastructure funding for restoration of the Awa work in progress.

### 5.1 Legislated Responsibilities of the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group

Presented by: Keri Topperwien - Consultant Planner, supported by Frances Teinakore-Curtis

#### **Key Points:**

- Provided an outline of the report
- There had been frequent hui of the Project Team since the last Group meeting
- The paper was a reminder of why everyone was here today and purpose of the Group
- Recognised the valuable input from Group members and wider Iwi in the development of the report, which – although relatively short – represented a significant amount of kōrero
- The paper serves as a 'stocktake' and 'where to from here' moment
- Noted the emotive language which was necessary for such an emotional and important document
- Clarified the layout and structure of the paper with its strong language, paving the way for the future
- Well timed paper, running in parallel with Council's Fresh Water Management Plan (FMMP) development
- Recognised the strong legal focus, clearly identifying purpose, roles and responsibilities
- Important to keep the restoration of the mauri of the Awa as the primary and overriding focus and purpose
- Clarified the process and approach supporting the document, in particular considering the significant and weighty issues and aspirational goals
- Recognised the many kōrero taking place with regards to public processes that affected the communities

#### **Stephen Lamb – Natural Resources Policy Manager**

- Brief update ) on the Freshwater Planning Process:
  - Council had intended to release draft Plan Change for formal notification in September 2025. However, this process had been halted as a result of Central Government requiring that this did not occur until November 2025, being after the local elections
  - Uncertainty means that releasing a draft was no longer viable
  - A paper would be presented to Council in December to discuss 'what next'.

#### **Key Points - Members:**

- A timely reminder of the past, present and future of the aspirations document
- Queried the role and visibility of the community of Matatā, and whether their input was included

- Noted that this paper set out the legal background/purpose, i.e. restoration of the mauri of the Awa. The next stage would be the how, i.e. engagement/community visibility etc.
- Emphasised the legislative requirement setting the direction for the Group, i.e. restoration of mauri, which could not be done if contamination continued
- Worked with people to encourage reduction in pollution, and doing this through a 'continual improvement' approach, rather than a 'stop now' directive which was not realistic
- Group took a 'pro-growth' approach and would continue to work with the community/interested and affected parties
- Agreed that a more gentle approach was more likely to achieve positive outcomes as a directive/negative approach would generate resistance to change
- Kotuku was rarely seen these days at Matatā and regrowth in the population symbolised the improved environment/mauri
- Noted the ancestrally relevant background for the area and its relevance to the paper/aspirational Strategic Document
- Recognised Tarawera as the parent body/catchment, flowing out to the other catchments, and recognised the significance of this being reflected in the paper.

**Key Points - in response to questions and discussion:**

- Recognised the mahi of Council to this point and would continue to progress and work with Council
- Had discussed their role in the engagement with the Matatā residents
- Today's kōrero would inform and guide the continued development of the aspirational Strategic Document.

## **Resolved**

### **That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 Receives the report, Legislated Responsibilities of the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group.**

**[Comer/Brown]  
[CARRIED]**

## **5.2 TARSG Iwi Collective Progress Report**

Presented by: Dr Frances Teinakore-Curtis, TARSG Project Manager

**Key Points:**

- Provided an outline of the report and the progress/mahi undertaken since the August 2024 hui
- Had had the opportunity to undertake meaningful engagement with community regarding what a stages approach to continued improvement would look like and the ongoing discussion and shaping of this
- Water allocation: How could the water currently being pushed out to sea be allocated and utilised by Iwi
- Economic/environment benefit: Relatively 'invisible' and appeared to be somewhat missing in the document

- Recognised the significant and positive improvements in practises by local farmers in reducing pollution in the water being discharged into the Awa.

#### **Key Points - Members:**

- Aspiration to eliminate pollution in the future needed to be a joint goal
- Would like to provide a level of certainty for current water users, e.g. farmers, on continued allocation. Sought a discussion on surplus water being allocated to Iwi, rather than to existing users
- Queried how the aspirational document could impact on current users, and whether their engagement would be less forthcoming as a result
- The Group supported current users/allocations and did not intend to change this, however would work with users regarding continued improvement of any discharge as part of the restoration programme
- Recognised that although water allocation was important, if it did not align with the aspiration of the Group, there was a conflict that would need to be addressed
- There were users that had significant oversupply of allocation, e.g. the Kawerau Mill, and queried if re-allocation/reduction in the current paper allocation could occur to provide certainty for the future
- Important to retain the Group's role as strategic/high level, providing the overall guidance, rather than operationally managing the water allocation
- Suggested it might be timely for the Group to develop its own cultural assessment framework.

#### **Key Points - Staff:**

- Concerned that the proposed RMA changes to come from central government (and the accompanying lack of certainty) would have less provision for cultural/environmental consideration, and this would negatively impact on the purpose of the Group, i.e. the restoration of mauri of the Awa
- Recognised the speculative nature of any comments at this stage
- Although the current water allocations might not be quite right, a plan change was required to make changes, and this had effectively been paused by central government
- Renewals of water take consents would only be declined in exceptional circumstances, but allocation quantum would match actual use and need
- Council analysed use records, national guidance documents etc. when considering an application for renewal and whether the allocation appeared appropriate
- Cumulative assessments were undertaken in each catchment on the health of the waterways in the context of water takes
- Concerns regarding alignment between Plan Change and Strategic Document.

## **Resolved**

### **That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 Receives the report, TARSG Iwi Collective Progress Report.**

**[Immink/Awhimate]  
[CARRIED]**

## 6. Whakahoutanga Kōrero Verbal Updates

### 6.1 Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group (TARSG) Iwi Collective Proposition

Presented by: Leith Comer, TARSG Chairperson

#### **Key Points:**

- Provided an outline of the proposal that the water, currently flowing to sea, be used by Te Awa o Te Atua for restoration
- The Iwi proposed to use this water allocation to restore the mauri of Te Awa o Te Atua by creating a flow through what was currently a stagnant, polluted lagoon
- The Iwi was developing a funding proposal to be considered by Kanoa. The funding proposal would describe the economic, environmental and cultural benefits to Iwi, the Matata Residents and to the Eastern Bay of Plenty Community.

#### **Key Points - staff:**

- Diverting the waterflow would require resource consent
- High level environmental impacts would be the first consideration
- Feasibility study should include ecological aspects, flooding and other risks
- If the intent was to divert the river below the bridge, then water allocation would not be required as technical this is a diversion, not a water take
- Current allocations stipulated a minimum flow which maintains flows
- When considering consent for water allocations, first priority was to the river itself, i.e. the water flow
- There was a current minimum flow in the Plan, which could not currently be changed
- Staff would commence work on what would be required initially for a diversion and liaise directly with the Iwi collective
- Department of Conservation to participate in process to identify and mitigate any impact on the wildlife/biodiversity in the freshwater wetland.

#### **Key Points - Members:**

- General support of the proposition
- Noted that diversion would require a consent
- Questioned if the remaining water – following upstream allocations – would be sufficient to restore the mauri
- Different thinking: The flow at the end point should be seen as most important, and it should be measured from there, back through the upstream allocations
- Who would the Iwi be required to work with to pursue the diversion?
- Recognised the importance of any ecological impacts being clearly identified and mitigated
- Sources of the flow should also be considered, i.e. the Rotorua Lakes.

## Resolved

**That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 **Notes that the Iwi Collective of Te Awa o Te Atua seek a consent to use the water that remains in the Tarawera Awa when it passes under the road bridge at the “ cut “, before it flows out to sea.**
- 2 **agrees that the proposition be accepted and identifies the process to be followed to have the proposition enacted.**

**Ngaropo/Brown  
CARRIED**

## 6.2 Kanoa Funding Proposal Outline

*Presentation - Kanoa - TARSG pdf - 1 November 2024: Objective ID A4812329* [⇒](#)

Presented by: Dr Emily Afoa, Technical Planning Engineer (Tektus Consultants Ltd)

### **Key Points:**

- Provided an outline of the various aspects/phases and the associated costs of each project phase
- Restoration was recognised as a high cost and challenging exercise, and it was important that this was well understood in the planning phase
- Process of discovery and options assessments would be clearly and openly considered, with opportunities and obstacles clearly documented, including rationale behind discontinuing any options
- Recognised the ‘do nothing’ risk pertaining to flooding/biodiversity/environmental impacts etc. and how this would not support restoration of the mauri
- Part of the assessment phase included learnings from other projects and initiatives.

### **Key Points - Members:**

- The flow of Te Awa o Te Atua had been intercepted by humans and the current outlet was not the original one
- Recognised the original course of the river and that restoration of Mauri would need to recognise this/be incorporated in the planning of a rediversion
- Recognised the importance of a joint approach and to recognise the significant costs associated with the aspirational restoration proposal
- Provided an outline of the history of the area of Matatā

11.38 am – Cr Brown **withdrew** from the meeting.

- Suggested that options should be developed and costed, then brought to the Group for consideration
- Supported the ‘bigger picture’ approach and this would be presented to Hon Shane Jones, Minister for Regional Development.

## **Resolved**

### **That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 **Notes the development of a funding proposal in support of Te Awa o Te Atua restoration.**
- 2 **Requests that options be developed and costed and brought back to the Group.**

- 3 Supports the development of the 'bigger picture' option and indicated that this is likely to be the option endorsed by the Group.**

**Thomass/Ngaropo  
CARRIED**

## **7. Ngā Pūrongo Reports (Continued)**

### **7.1 Project Team Update**

*Presentation - TARSG Project Update pdf - 1 November 2024: Objective ID  
A4812324 [⇨](#)*

Presented by: Jane Waldon - Co-Governance Secretariat, Dr Frances Teinakore-Curtis - Project Manager, Dr Emily Afoa - Consultant Technical Planning Engineer, Keri Topperwien - Consultant Plan Writer

#### **Key Points:**

- Team provided updates on
  - Series of engagements, including with Matatā Residents Association, Māori Investments Ltd, Rangitāiki-Tarawera Rivers Scheme Advisory Group, Federated Farmers and Essity Mill
  - Site visits update on Oji site, Kaituna Rediversion site, Essity visit
  - Outlined feedback received from stakeholders
  - Next steps, including a key document scheduled to come to TARSG Committee in early 2025.

#### **Key Points - staff:**

- Cultural monitoring team to present to a future meeting of the Group
- Cultural Monitoring hui scheduled for 19 November 2024.

### **7.2 Amendment to Standing Orders: Virtual Attendance at Meetings**

Presented by: Steve Groom - Governance Manager

#### **Key Points:**

- Noted that changes to the Group's Standing Orders were necessary if the Group wished to continue to enable virtual attendees to count towards quorum, due to temporary legislation lapsing
- Paper sought two decisions from the Group - did they want to enable virtual attendees to count towards quorum; and did they want to enable a physical hui to be chaired by a Chair attending virtually.

#### **Key Points - Members:**

- General view that it was positive to enable virtual attendance to enable maximum participation
- Noted the difficulty of participating online at times, either due to technological issues, or that virtual participation provide the same experience as being physically present at the hui



- Questioned whether there was a protocol around having cameras on so that people in the room could see virtual attendees, and to ensure that all participants were valid participants
- Discussed the merits of the Chair being physically present, and in particular the difficulty of chairing a hui virtually when most other participants were physically present.

#### **Key Points - Staff:**

- Noted that these changes were ‘enabling’, i.e. did not require participants to be virtually present, but enabled it when necessary
- Outlined that while the Standing Orders did not contain a protocol around whether virtual participants’ cameras should be switched on, it was best practice to do so, with the recognition that if there were connectivity issues, turning the camera off could assist
- Noted that a virtual participant’s name would appear on screen, even if their camera was off and that the Committee Advisor would be keeping track of who was online at all stages
- Noted that if the Chair was attending virtually and there was difficulty chairing while online, they could pass their Chair duties to the Deputy Chair.

## **Resolved**

### **That the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group:**

- 1 Receives the report, Amendment to Standing Orders: Virtual Attendance at Meetings.**
- 2 Approves the following amendments to the Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy Group’s Standing Orders (refer Attachment 1):**
  - a) Amend the following Definition to read: “Present at the meeting to constitute quorum means the member is to be present (in person or via audio/audiovisual link)”;**
  - b) Amend Standing Order 13.8 (Member’s status: quorum) to read “Members who attend meetings by electronic link will be counted as present for the purposes of a quorum.”;**
  - c) Amend Standing Order 13.9 (Member’s status: voting) to read “Where a meeting has a quorum, determined by the number present (in person or via audio/audiovisual link), the members attending by electronic link can vote on any matters raised at the meeting.”;**
  - d) Amend Standing Order 13.11 (Conditions for attending by audio or audio-visual link) to read: “Noting standing order 13.7, members may attend meetings by electronic link, either generally or for a specific meeting, if the technology allows”;**
  - e) Amend Standing Order 13.12 (Request to attend by audio or audio visual link) by replacing the word ‘request’ with ‘notification’;**
  - f) Retains the current Standing Order 13.10 (Chairperson’s duties) and the requirement that the Chairperson must be physically present [in the event of a hybrid meeting].**

**[Thomass/Immink]  
[CARRIED]**

## **8. Karakia Kati Closing Karakia**

A karakia was provided by Dr Pouroto Ngaropo.

**12.37 pm - the meeting closed.**

**CONFIRMED**

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Chair Leith Comer  
Chairperson, Tarawera Awa Restoration Strategy  
Group