

Report No.	20-102
Decision Required	

FOXTON EAST DRAINAGE SCHEME LIAISON GROUP

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This item seeks approval to establish a liaison group for the Foxton East Drainage Scheme and confirm Horizons governance representation for Foxton Futures.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1. The **Horowhenua District Council (HDC)** and Horizons have been working collaboratively on a number of initiatives relating to the town of Foxton. With the announcements around Provincial Growth Fund investment in restoring sections of the Foxton Loop, HDC are looking to establish a governance structure for Foxton Futures.
- 2.2. Similarly as the modifications to the Foxton East Drainage Scheme begin to gear up there is a need for Horizons to confirm a Liaison Group structure for the Scheme. Convention with Horizons River Management Schemes is to take nominations from the ratepayer base, a process that generally works well for rural schemes.
- 2.3. It is proposed to develop a different model for the Foxton Scheme, with the group comprising Iwi, Horizons and HDC Councillors and **Foxton Community Board (FCB)** representation.

3. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee recommends that Council:

- a. receives the information contained in Report No. 20-102.
- b. approves the establishment of the Foxton East Drainage Scheme Liaison Group as outlined in Report No. 20-102.

4. FINANCIAL IMPACT

- 4.1. The financial impacts associated with the item are minimal; staff time associated with preparing for and attending meetings is not significant.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 5.1. Engagement in the form of a newsletter update to targeted ratepayers on the mitigation plan for the town is in draft form waiting on detailed announcements from Central Government around funding of shovel ready flood protection projects.

6. SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS RISK IMPACT

- 6.1. There is no significant business risk associated with this item.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1. A core component of river management activity and a significant component of Horizons community engagement is through scheme ratepayer liaison committees. The structure

and level of activity of each committee is a function of both the size of the scheme and the degree of engagement each committee has, particularly the chair. Smaller schemes do not have a Liaison Committee as such – those are mostly rural in nature with relatively informal communication channels (the task of bringing together a small group of farmers who typically know each other well is relatively easy).

- 7.2. As a small scheme the Foxton East Drainage Scheme has not had a Liaison Committee. Currently the **Long Term Plan (LTP)** contains capital expenditure plans for the scheme that considerably increase the scale of the scheme, requiring a more structured approach to ratepayer engagement, particularly to enable engagement around the form of the works.

8. DISCUSSION

- 8.1. Report 15-260 presented to the December 2015 Strategy and Policy Committee meeting sought and obtained endorsement for scheme meetings to be broadened to Catchment Community meetings, seeking to widen both the content present and the audience that attends. Liaison Committees have largely remained as they were from Catchment Board days - an informal process where the Committee is made up of those with an interest in the scheme's affairs with a new Chair elected as / when necessary.
- 8.2. The December 2019 workshop outlined the Catchment Board background to Liaison Committees, amongst other things intended to prompt discussion around whether the current approach is still relevant. There are a range of drivers to examining whether the current structure is still fit for purpose particularly with changes in technology and the advent of social media.
- 8.3. That workshop also noted three matters in particular; use of the term committee and the connotations that has, whether the current structure is fit for purpose particularly in regard to Iwi representation and the limitations the current format has for urban community representation.
- 8.4. Current terms of reference notes that "Committees shall be established on an informal basis and have no authority to make decisions or formal recommendations to Council. However, issues or recommendations arising from Liaison Committee meetings will either be addressed at Scheme Manager level or referred to the Horizons Catchment Operations Committee through Officers' reports."
- 8.5. The presentation noted that "*in practise Chairs have been encouraged to make Annual Plan / LTP submissions where a particular view is evident at a meeting.*" That comment in part reflects the confusion that use of the term generates – the occasional reference at a meeting to a 'motion' being put to the meeting. The intent with these changes (and progressively across all schemes) is to use the term Scheme Liaison Group rather than Committee to avoid confusion around roles and responsibilities.

9. PROPOSED LIAISON GROUP STRUCTURE

- 9.1. What's proposed for the Foxton East Scheme is a more structured approach to the composition of the Liaison Group, using elected members to represent the views of the ratepayer base. The following is proposed:
- From Horizons the Chair of the Catchment Operations Committee and the two Horowhenua Constituency Councillors;
 - From HDC the two Foxton Constituency Councillors;
 - Two Iwi representatives from Ngāti Raukawa and Muaūpoko;
 - A representative from the Foxton Community Board (FCB).
- 9.2. It's intended to write to both the FCB and Iwi and seek nominations for representation. The model proposed would be at minimum an annual meeting of the group to coincide with

11 August 2020

Annual Plan / LTP consultation. It's intended for the group to meet at more frequent intervals / as required with the development phase for the scheme.

10. FOXTON FUTURES

- 10.1. Running largely in parallel with the flood protection initiatives for the town has been the HDC led Foxton Futures initiative - essentially an economic development blueprint for the town. Regional Economic Development Minister Shane Jones made an announcement in Foxton on 2 July 2020 around Provincial Growth Fund investment in the first stage of Foxton Futures – the enhancement of a section of the Foxton Loop.
- 10.2. That announcement has given added impetus to Foxton Futures and consequently HDC are looking to establish a governance group to advance the other elements of the plan. They include both aspirations around River/ Loop connectivity and making the Manawatu River mouth and estuary RAMSAR (avoiding the full and lengthy definition essentially wetlands of international importance) site – the only RAMSAR site in the lower North Island - more accessible to the public.
- 10.3. Horizons representation is intended to be Horowhenua Constituency Councillors Ferguson and Clarke with the Group Manager River Management as staff representation. Other representatives on the group include HDC elected members and staff, Iwi and **Save Our Rivers Trust (SORT)** – the group ostensibly established to reconnect the loop to the Manawatu River.

11. TIMELINE / NEXT STEPS

- 11.1. Should the Committee agree to the proposal the process of forming the group and confirming representation will start with the intent of an inaugural meeting in September / October.

12. SIGNIFICANCE

- 12.1. This is not a significant decision according to the Council's Policy on Significance and Engagement.

Ramon Strong
GROUP MANAGER RIVER MANAGEMENT

ANNEXES

There are no attachments for this report.