

Opito Bay Ratepayers Association Chairman's Report 2021/2022

Firstly, I would like to thank everyone on the Committee for their time and efforts during the year, with particular mention due for Cheryle Parker in her capacity as Secretary and Paul Cook as Treasurer. I would also like to thank our Committee Members, Jonny Teat, Nathan Tessler, Sue Edens, Craig Roe and Glen Sycamore. I also have pleasure in again recording our gratitude to Jock Stevens, who prepares our accounts on a pro bono basis, and to the Biel family for their continued generosity in making the Helicopter Shed available for meetings.

During the year OBRA made funding commitments to support the acquisition of Epi Pens, batteries for defibrillators, traps and lures for Pest Free Opito Bay, a new navigation light for the swim raft and a complete overhaul of the raft after it dragged its mooring ending up on the beach in a storm earlier this year. A new emergency helicopter landing space has been established in Opito Sands if conditions aren't right to land at Moore Crescent Reserve (a big thank you from your committee to Wally Leighton and his team sorting both the raft and emergency landing site out). Because of these commitments and as flagged last year, we increased our OBRA annual membership fee from \$25 to \$50. The increase has been received well by the Ratepayers who understand that funding for the above and representation on your behalf to the Council is 'money well spent'.

. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our 'First Response' Team Bob and Annie Toomey who have committed their time to ensure our Community stays safe. They are always on standby to help with any medical or fire emergency. Remember in any emergency to dial 111. We also received a further grant from the Waikato Regional Council to support our Pest Free Opito Bay team. Craig Roe is coordinating this programme ably supported by Rachael, Richard, Margaret and Cassie. Craig will give an update at the meeting on the success of this programme. The Opito community and committee owes a lot to the work of this group.

The Opito Environment Group has now been folded into OBRA and has continues with its various initiatives in planting, weed control and pest control, and now has a solid base of committed volunteers to develop this worker further in the coming year. A dune planting day in June last year at Stewart Stream Reserve saw over 1200 grasses planted and bollards placed leading to the beach. Further planting will occur this June and hopefully we can get 30 volunteers along like we did last year. Great work has been done by volunteers to clear the waterfall track off Matapaua Bay Road of pampas grass and to lay traps for possums, rats and stoats. The work this team have done should be applauded and gives our community a wonderful walking track giving access to the waterfall and Sandy Bay. Congratulations on a job well done!

Another Sustainable Coastlines session will be held on Queens Birthday weekend to check on the state of the beach with regard to plastic contamination. Opito was in the top 3 beaches of over 300 checked throughout New Zealand with the least plastic contamination! Kristina Pickford from Otama has been successful in obtaining \$375,000 of funding from the Wilding Pine Trust of which approx \$50,000 has been allocated to Option and its environs to control this pest. Aaron Powers is our representative on this project and he will update us at the meeting on how this project is going.

Sadly, we have had to cancel this year's Easter Barbecue but it will be happening in 2023!!

Our scallop rahui came into place last September which included all of Ngati Hei's rohe. This action has seen other groups in the Gulf stand up and establish their own formal rahui so today around 43% of the Hauraki Gulf (500,000 hectares) bans taking of scallops by commercial and recreational fishers. We shall do further research in September 2023 to see if the rahui has worked to restore scallop numbers.

Our CCTV camera has been operating since late last year and to date the Police have not requested any images of vehicles. We are aware of some antisocial behavior and graffiti being painted on walls and seats on the Jack Mills Reserve earlier this year. We know the property these people were staying at and will remind the homeowner of their responsibility when renting their property out in future.

The finances of the Association are in good shape, but there are around **one quarter** of ratepayers who do not pay subscriptions, and about a fifth who are not on our email database. Contact Paul Cook our Treasurer on prcook@me.com to sign up as an OBRA member. While the Committee works hard to collect the subscriptions and maintain our records, it would make life easier if more people could do this proactively. This is particularly important as we move to increase our financial support for a variety of community initiatives from which we all benefit. Your annual subs of \$50 can be paid directly into the OBRA Westpac account # 03 1578 0007035 000.

A new Committee headed by Roger Gwynne has taken over running of our annual fishing competition. This year's event in early January was a massive success. The OBRA Committee thanks Roger and his team for creating a great event. Special thanks also to Cheryle Willoughby and her team of helpers for once again putting on a great Sports Day on New Year's Day and the sponsors including Zuru who supplied toys to the children. Both these events are an integral part of our Community and are appreciated by us all!

Finally, I repeat our annual call for some younger members of the Community to join the Committee – we really do need some new blood and broader support, so please consider giving a small amount of your time to help us.

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