

## Next Generation Project Consultative Group

Notes from the meeting held on Thursday 18 March 2010, 7pm  
Port Otago Limited Building, Port Chalmers.

In Attendance:

- Aidan Bird (CPG New Zealand Ltd)
- Allan Anderson (East Coast Taipure)
- Andy Pullar (Port Otago)
- Bert Youngman
- Bruce Hill (DOC)
- Carol Meikle (Port Environment Liaison Committee)
- Cheryl Adams (Blueskin Road resident)
- Chris Shaw (Otago Regional Council)
- Chris Hepburn (Dept of Marine Science)
- Dave O'Malley (OCTA)
- Daniel Pritchard (Dept of Botany, University of Otago)
- David Redshaw (Southern Clams)
- Gillian Thomas (Southern Clams)
- Graeme Burns (Harrington Point Community Society)
- Joan Conway (Port Environment Liaison Committee)
- John Milburn (Monarch Wildlife Cruises)
- John Perry (Port Environment Liaison Committee)
- Lincoln Coe (Port Otago)
- Keith Probert (University of Otago)
- Mark James (NIWA/Aquaticsciences Ltd)
- Martin Single (University of Canterbury)
- Nicola Reeves (Surfbreak Protection Society)
- Peter Brown (Port Otago)
- Rei Ishikawa (CPG New Zealand Ltd)
- Robert Watt
- Roger Belton (Southern Clams)
- Roy Innes (Port Environment Liaison Committee)
- Stephen Higgs (in the Chair)
- Steve Little (Port Chas Fishermen's Co-op)
- Vernon Hall (Otago Yacht Club)
- Warren Lewis (Recreational Fishing)

Apologies: Bill Lloyd (Port Environment Liaison Committee), Irene Scurr (Otago Peninsula Community Board), John Christie (Otago Chamber of Commerce), Phyllis Smith (Kati Huirapa Runaka ki Puketeraki), Sally Carson (NZ Marine Studies Centre), Terry Broad (Huirapa Runanga)

### 1.0 Welcome

Stephen opened the discussion and welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was confirmed that copies of the agenda and minutes are available.

Stephen restated the purpose of the meeting outlined on the agenda. As at previous meetings, it was proposed to revisit the agenda at the end of the meeting to confirm that all matters had been covered.

### 2.0 Apologies

The apologies (noted above) were received.

### 3.0 Confirmation of Notes from the previous meeting

Stephen asked whether the notes of the previous meeting should be accepted.

Roger Belton referred to the previous discussion on the impact on dredging - in particular the impact in the harbour of spoil from the proposed dredging. He felt that the meeting had not adequately covered this issue as there was limited time to discuss the document. Stephen noted that the short response time was acknowledged in the notes, specifically in Section 4.3. Stephen asked whether any changes on wording should be made.

Roger said a statement was made that material will not move on to shore. This is recorded as a matter of fact but was not correct. Sections 4.2 and 4.3 of the notes needed to reflect this. While pointing out that the comment about material not moving on shore was the statement made in the AEE, it was agreed that the phrase "Queries were raised on these matters" should be added to both sections.

Cheryl Adams raised an issue of the availability of reports. She was not sure that this matter was recorded correctly in Section 6.0 of the Notes. John Milburn disagreed. He commented that the process has been good, with the updated documents being progressively uploaded on to the website. He had sighted all the latest documents with many earlier versions also being made available. As it was his comment that was being disputed, he wished to confirm that the wording of the Notes was correct.

Subject to the changes outlined above, the previous notes were accepted.

#### **4.0 Matters arising**

Stephen proposed to review and matters arising at the end of the meeting.

#### **5.0 Update of progress since last meeting**

##### *a. The Channel Design Report*

This detailed report outlines the methodology applied to the Channel Design. The approach is summarised on pages 61 – 63 (Section 3.3) of the draft AEE. This report contains no new information than outlined in the draft AEE and will be filed with the draft AEE.

##### *b. The Dredging Environmental Management Report*

Monitoring and mitigation as well as dredging management are outlined on pages 105-108 (Section 8.0) of the draft AEE. The Dredging Environmental Management Report is not, therefore, a report that is required to be lodged with the application.

##### *c. Economic Impact Report*

This report is undergoing final review and will be released when available.

##### *d. Cultural Impact Assessment*

This report is being prepared by Kai Tahu ki Otago and will be released when available. Completion is expected in early April.

Lincoln also confirmed that the most up to date noise report is now on the POL website.

Lincoln noted that written comments had been received from three parties: South Coast Board-riders, Department of Conservation and Bert Youngman. There had been other requests for reports and copies of these had been provided.

#### **6.0 Question & feedback session**

The Chairman opened the floor for questions and comments.

6.1 John Milburn noted that he wished to make a submission and spoke to his document. He noted that it is recognised that the process of dredging is very

complex. However, he felt the majority of concerns were addressed in the AEE and would be presumably considered in the conditions. The effect on tidal range and channel flow at the harbour entrance was an early concern. John commented that he is now satisfied that these effects are minor.

- 6.2 John also noted that sediment accretion in certain harbour areas, particularly in areas adjacent to the channel, was a concern. However, John said that he is satisfied that the AEE deals with this issue and indicates the monitoring that is to be undertaken.
- 6.3 The effect on the harbour and offshore ecology is another concern. As a tourism operator he has an overall concern on the impact on wildlife. However the support documents explain how these issues are considered.
- 6.4 He advised that his company (Monarch Wildlife Cruises) supports this project and it is essential for the region to have a profitable and vibrant port. He did note that there is still one remaining issue to be considered, which is somewhat outside the application scope. The importance of other (recreational) areas in the harbour needs to be recognised. There would be no better time to address these issues than during the implementation of the POL dredging project. This would be consistent with the Otago Regional Council's vision statement which supports recreational use of the harbour. There appears to be a good case for the ORC to undertake maintenance work to other areas and a useful condition of the consent would be to improve access to other areas of the harbour. If this maintenance work is not done now it will never be done. Even a commitment to look at these issues would be of benefit.
- 6.5 Bruce Hill advised that he had provided some written comment to POL. These comments focused on the effect of the project on the Aramoana mudflats and Taiaroa Head. Consideration of the impact on all seagrass and rocky shore areas had not yet been made by DoC. A detailed look at the proposed disposal site and the current maintenance dredging disposal site would also be made.
- 6.6 With respect to Aramoana, DoC would like to further discuss the channel widening with POL. The significance of the Otago Harbour has perhaps been overlooked as a place of national significance. However DoC believes that any adverse effects can be mitigated. An example of this might be to undertake dredging on an outgoing tide. DoC would need to review this if dredge volumes increased above the advised levels and undertaking benthic and bird surveys before and after dredging would be of value.
- 6.7 DoC also wished to discuss timing of the project relative to bird breeding season and roosting sites in the turning basin. Perhaps avoiding dredging in the September - March period needed to be considered.
- 6.8 Taiaroa Head is also a significant area. Loud noises have the potential to disturb roosting birds and this effect needs to be mitigated. In particular avoiding affecting blue penguins on Pilots Beach by not undertaking dredging at dusk/dawn might also be required.
- 6.9 Minimising the effect of dredge lights may also be required. While health and safety needs to be considered, vessel lights should be covered in some way to avoid impact on nocturnal birds.
- 6.10 The opportunity to discuss the timing of dredging work would be appreciated and Lincoln confirmed POL's willingness to discuss these matters.
- 6.11 Cheryl Adams raised an issue regarding visual amenity and light pollution in Careys Bay resulting from the proposed multi-purpose wharf extension. It was suggested that consultation with Carey's Bay residents had not been as comprehensive as it had been around other aspects of the application.

- 6.12 Allan Anderson asked if the proportions of sand, silt, clay and rock involved in the dredging were stated in the draft AEE. Lincoln referred Allan to page 73 of the draft AEE.
- 6.13 Allan also felt that there was not enough work on dispersion from the disposal site and that there was a lack of understanding of the impact of dredging on recreational and commercial fishing as well as cultural and health impacts. Allan expressed serious concerns regarding sedimentation. He noted that in other places this is the number one killer of species, and believes that disposal of silt must not occur under any circumstances as it stays in the water column. This would put the lobster fishery at risk. Any sedimentation would also cover rocky areas. This comment was based on Allan's own experience as a cray-fisherman and his local knowledge of tides and currents. His view is that a lot of sediment will end up on the rocky reefs and that more homework is required. He had no problems with disposing of sand and rock. Lincoln referred to page 63 of the draft AEE which discusses the make-up of dredged material (62% sand and 34% silt - around 2 million m<sup>3</sup> of silt). Lincoln advised that there was considerable supporting work explaining the modelling that has been undertaken.
- 6.14 Allan repeated that there should be no disposal of silt as it was probably toxic with heavy metals. Mark James responded that contamination testing was undertaken. Contaminants levels were checked and all were below threshold guideline levels. Mark shared concerns about silt affecting rocky coasts. This was the reason for selecting AO as the disposal site, because it avoids the gyre and the possibility of silt being trapped within it. Mark indicated that, at worst, less than 0.5mm and less than 0.3mg/m<sup>3</sup> concentration would reach the coast and along the coast. He considered these low concentrations would be difficult to detect above background levels of turbidity. He also noted that this aspect would be monitored during the capital dredging.
- 6.15 Allan remained unconvinced and said the risk of a loss of habitat is real, with a commensurate impact on sea-life. He claimed that anyone who is a diver has seen the impact of silt on reefs and that it never goes away. He said it was difficult to see how this material would disperse. Mark said that it has been acknowledged there will be a direct impact at the disposal site and this is addressed in the report. However, in the medium to longer term, this material will disperse. Extensive mapping was carried out to determine the best disposal site and avoid areas of significance, such as the bryozoan beds to the south-east and east of the harbour entrance.
- 6.16 Allan advised that he would like to discuss this further with POL to understand the modelling that had been done. Martin Single said that prediction of sediment movement was approached from a number of directions. The modelling had looked at existing sediment movements, which were then extrapolated to predict future movement. There is a background level of existing sediments in the water column with the model adding in the effect of the additional sediment load. Allan said that it was a struggle to see how the model could be accurate. Martin replied that tide buoys were used to calibrate the model and hind-cast information was used. A number of different conditions were considered and then verified with hind-cast data. Lincoln said that POL would be happy to discuss this in more detail.
- 6.17 John Milburn noted that the Clutha River puts sediment in water. He asked how that volume of sediment each year compared to the proposed dredging project. Martin said that the project's 7 million m<sup>3</sup> is about 7 years of estimated discharge from the Clutha and other rivers. There is thought to be about 1 million m<sup>3</sup> per annum of sediment passing the coast.
- 6.18 Bert Youngman asked about the sequence of work and the stage at which silt would be dredged as, clearly, the fine silts are the concern. Lincoln said having the New Era only concentrate on sand/silts would be impractical.
- 6.19 Bert said that the timing of the "large dig" is an issue. However it is acknowledged that this would be driven by commercial needs. The ability to monitor and take

action needed to be determined. Lincoln said that there was the ability to do this. Monitoring conditions would likely require active management of dredging.

- 6.20 Bert asked whether stand down costs would increase if the capital dredge process was stopped. Lincoln said that with a large dredge there would be significant stand down costs. With the New Era however, there was greater ability to manage the dredging process.
- 6.21 Steve Little also outlined his concern with the disposal of the silt material, noting there could be considerable effect on fishing in the area. He advised that the commercial fishers currently fill out catch logs and so detailed information on species and tonnage caught was available. He advised that local commercial fishers were sceptical that their concerns had been considered. He noted that there would be an economic impact on smaller fishers and they would like to discuss this with POL. He felt that compensation to alleviate adverse effects needed to be considered. The local fishermen were not supportive of disposal of dredge material in trawl grounds. Steve said that they were supportive of the project overall provided the impact on fishermen was recognised.
- 6.22 Graeme Burns then spoke in support of what he described as "the comprehensive documents" prepared by POL for the project. Initially he had been concerned at the change to tidal flows and tide heights from the channel deepening but he was now satisfied that the changes, would be negligible.
- 6.23 Graeme did express concern about the effect of dredge disposal on the harbour. He noted that, as a consequence of storms, breeding grounds on the channel sides disappear naturally. His impression was that dredging was a more controlled effect compared to nature which was uncontrolled. Graeme's impression was that the overall effect was likely to be minor with some short-term effects from which the system would quickly recover.
- 6.24 He felt POL should be congratulated on the level of expert advice sought so far and the comprehensiveness of the draft AEE. Graeme stated there was a need to look at the overall effects of the project and the benefits to the Port and the community. He noted that the former OHB motto was "By Ships we Live" and POL needed these larger ships to call at Port Chalmers
- 6.25 Warren Lewis also congratulated POL on the draft document and he acknowledged that recreational users had been listened to. The new fishing wharf would be a great asset. He also acknowledged the mitigating steps such as lobster removal from dredging areas where blasting was required. While there would be some short-term effects, these would reduce over time.
- 6.26 Bert Youngman asked whether hard copies of the report were available. Lincoln said that there is no problem providing these and he would include a copy of the port environment plan. Bert also asked about any deadline for a response from PCG members. Geoff Plunket said early discussion with POL would be useful so that any matters could be dealt with.
- 6.27 Bert acknowledged the modelling report and said it was good that the eastern channel had been considered. He was confident that there were no effects from the proposed dredging. However, there had been issues in the past and he asked what had caused the present siltation, especially in the Eastern Channel. Martin Single replied that harbours naturally capture sediment. This can be a result of large events such as storms that trigger rapid changes and modelling is not able to predict that. In the case of Otago Harbour, there is no single event responsible for siltation in certain areas but, rather, a gradual change over time.
- 6.28 Bert referred to the draft AEE. He noted that there was a strong commercial case put forward but perhaps the AEE didn't consider the national perspective sufficiently. Bert stated he could not imagine Otago people disapproving of the project and he noted that other ports were proceeding down the same path.

- 6.29 Bert also noted that there had been a change in the project strategy, with dredging starting with the New Era and then being completed (at some stage) by a large dredge. While there is a desire to avoid the Environment Court, Bert felt that there were insufficient mitigating measures for other harbour users. He said it was important to consider recreational users, when undertaking this work. He suggested there had been cumulative effects of past dredging work and these needed to be considered for this proposal too. Recreational users would like a discussion with POL on this point.
- 6.30 Bert stated he saw no problems with the first stage of dredging but said it was difficult to determine mitigating measures that might be required for a large dredge. He also noted that there was also no local navigation expertise outside POL. He suggested that monitoring by the entity undertaking the work could be an issue.
- 6.31 Bert then discussed a range of other recreational and community projects that could be associated with the Next Generation project, noting that the ORC had never taken responsibility for anything other than regulatory work with regard to Otago Harbour. In noting that the proposed fishing wharf was only a small increase in amenity, Bert also suggested that a higher priority should be to provide a multipurpose wharf. POL should make a commitment to maintain existing recreational facilities. This need not be a cost added to the project and perhaps a portion of cruise ship profits could be used to look after these assets.
- 6.32 Bert also believed a condition to monitor the depths of adjacent channels and facilities should be part of any consent. This has not been done for sometime and a commitment to maintain adjacent channel depths would be important.
- 6.33 It was suggested that, in conjunction with the DCC and ORC a permanent liaison committee for the Harbour should be established. This could meet annually and there would be a number of harbour users who would support this. Geoff Plunket replied that POL was happy to have a dialogue on these matters but that POL was a commercial entity with no responsibility for the recreational matters raised. When POL was formed it effectively became a harbour user. Responsibility for harbour management passed to the ORC at that time (1989). There may be a need to speak to the ORC on these matters as the reality was that POL had no jurisdiction over attending to these matters and it is quite limited as to what it could do. Bert acknowledged this but still wished to discuss this matter further.
- 6.34 Chris Hepburn asked about the re-suspension and transportation of silty sediment after initial settling. Martin Single replied that wave and current re-suspension hadn't been modelled. Chris suggested that this would then under-estimated the plume size and spread of fine material but Martin re-iterated that it was very difficult to model in this manner and even if done would not add significantly more knowledge.
- 6.35 Chris asked about the error rate and confidence levels around the deposition rates. Martin said these questions needed to be put to the modeller (Rob Bell). John Milburn suggested that POL would have information from current dredging and that it should be possible to predict this for the larger volume. Martin advised that there were different conditions around disposal further offshore than in the existing (shallower) disposal areas, so it was not possible to directly compare them. Martin said the offshore sediment sampling showed natural occurrence of finer sediments in the centre of the gyre. The modelling report held by POL contained much more detail than the draft AEE and it was possible to provide more background information on the assumptions behind the report.
- 6.36 Roger Belton acknowledged the importance of the project to the city but urged everyone to not lose sight of the overall picture. There was a need to avoid irreversibly modifying the inner and outer harbour. Roger said it was easy to overlook the possible impacts. Roger was not certain on the size of the disposal site. If it was 72 ha then there was a huge area that would be buried with all the

species living there buried with it. The downstream impact on all marine life should not be under-estimated.

- 6.37 Roger recognised that the harbour had been modified over the last 150 years but the long term impacts of the proposed dredging could not be ignored. The last extension of the swinging basin had observable effects for two years after dredging. There were also ongoing results from changes in channel shape. For example, he suggested that more maintenance dredging would be required to remove channel slumping. Roger stated that shellfish beds would be affected by collapsing channels, with considerable mortality in the order of 10,000 tonnes. This represented 12 years of harvesting. This resource had a real value that should be considered in any economic analysis. He recognised in the longer term it would recover but, in the short term, there would be a loss. Lincoln advised the comment relating to channel walls collapsing was not correct and said that the total volume of dredged material included a volume related to battering back the slope of the channel edge. Geoff Plunket commented that the batter cut would be at a sustainable position and this had not been done to the same extent in the 1970s dredging programme. In relation to the direct impact on the inter-tidal zone, Lincoln advised that only 8,000m<sup>2</sup> of that area would be affected by dredging. Mark James said there was a need to discuss the effect on adjacent areas and it may be necessary to monitor key areas during dredging.
- 6.38 Roger acknowledged that there was no contamination in the material to be dredged – his own testing had shown that, but he felt that due to cumulative effects there may be other unspecified subtle changes.
- 6.39 Keith Probert commented on the mid-1970s dredging. There were sedimentation effects and at the time this was a surprise, but lessons had been learned from this. Keith believed the draft AEE took account of these effects and provided for a regime to minimise and mitigate them with more accurate modelling and assessment of impacts.
- 6.40 Roger stated that monitoring was easier with good baseline data but that the response was the key. He felt that where there was high loading of fine sediments, dredging should be only performed on an outgoing tide.

## **7.0 Next steps**

Stephen encouraged written feedback and taking the opportunity to meet with POL representatives. He noted the Agenda had suggested the date of April 13 if another meeting was required.

Allan Anderson asked about stakeholder discussions that would be held subsequent to this meeting and whether notes would be taken and circulated to PCG members. He felt that this might be useful if there were common issues between stakeholder groups. Geoff Plunket advised that an issues summary would be prepared and circulated to PCG members.

Nicola Reeves asked whether there would be any benefit from establishing an online forum for discussion of issues, and she offered to set one up. There was no opposition to an online forum being established but the purpose of it needed to be clear.

John Milburn asked about the date for lodging of the consent application. Geoff Plunket advised that the deadline kept moving as POL endeavoured to address concerns raised. There were still the identified reports outstanding but that the AEE was likely to be lodged in May.

John Milburn also acknowledged POL's intent to consider concerns expressed by the PCG. Geoff said would POL would like to address as many concerns as possible and ensure everyone was engaged in the process.

Geoff said timeline will be reviewed and confirmed at the next meeting, which was to be tentatively pencilled for the 13th April.

## **8.0 General business**

No other items of business were raised.

## **9.0 Meeting close**

The meeting closed at 9.35pm.