

Summary of Pre-Consent Consultation Responses

Information on the project and invitations to meet were sent to local stakeholders identified by the project team. The project team also advertised in both Te Puke Times and Mai Maketū one public meeting, one market day and two drop-in sessions for public participation.

As of 18 July 2013, the project team received responses from 35 separate individuals and groups. Responses were received by email, letter, and meetings. Of the responses received, 12 were from individuals, 4 were from local authorities or central government agencies, 7 were from community organisations, and 10 were from tangata whenua. Feedback was also received from a public meeting and a market day at Maketū, which have been compiled into two separate responses.

The project team held targeted meetings with 20 parties. Some parties were met with more than once, and some were met in conjunction with others. Many of these parties provided written responses following their meeting with the project team. This summary includes both the written responses along with the meeting notes of the project team.

Preferred Option

Of the responses received, 74% expressed outright or conditional support for the project. Only 6% expressed outright opposition to the project, while 20% were neutral. The responses did not provide a clear direction on a preferred option. Of the responses received, 20% preferred Option 1 with 14% preferring Option 2. 66% of responses did not express a preference for either option.

Common reasons for preferring Option 1 related to increased flushing out of Papahikahawai Lagoon and restoring flow to Papahikahawai Creek – which is perceived by many to have been the natural course of the river. Those who preferred Option 2 generally cited concerns regarding erosion of Papahikahawai Island and Maketū Spit as the reason for their preference.

Key Themes

The responses received highlighted a number of common issues in relation to the perceived benefits of the project, areas of concern or unanswered questions, and general comments. These common issues may be loosely grouped together into the key themes described below:

Navigation and Erosion

Changes to water depths and currents through the Ongatoro / Maketū Estuary entrance and at Te Tumu following the re-diversion could affect the morphology and navigability of both entrances. It could also affect the risk of erosion to land such as Papahikahawai Island and Maketū Spit.

Benefits	Concerns
Maintenance of navigable access to open ocean at Te Tumu Cut.	Effects on existing erosion protection structures and coastal morphology.
Option 2 avoids erosion of Maketū Spit.	Erosion caused by recreational boating.
Potential improvements to navigability at Maketū entrance.	Erosion due to increased salinity and further loss of wetland.
	Erosion of beach at Maketū Surf Club.
	Increased erosion of Papahikahawai Island, Maketū Spit, land north of Kaituna River at Te Tumu, stopbanks, and Ford Island.
	Navigability of Te Tumu entrance for commercial fishing, recreational boating, coastguard, barge to Motiti Island, and future urbanisation.
	Navigability of Te Tumu entrance would be improved by extending mole.

Landscape and Access

The re-diversion will result in significant changes to the existing landscape, particularly to the low-lying land north of Ford's Cut. The creation of new wetland in this area will partially restore the landscape to what existed prior to 1956. The removal of stopbanks will limit access to Papahikahawai Island to boats.

Benefits	Concerns
Restore area to its natural state. Restore poor quality farmland to wetland. Restore submerged land south of Papahikahawai Island to wetland.	Acknowledgement of landscape changes as a result of future urbanisation. Effects on geothermal features in Maketū. Land acquisition should focus on buying adjacent farmland when available. Loss of access to Papahikahawai Island. Loss of productive farmland, effect on surrounding properties. New channel too wide as Ford's Cut could accommodate the entire flow. Ownership of reclaimed or purchased land. Papahikahawai Creek was largely a man-made flow-path - should not be used.

Cultural and Social

The mauri of the estuary and river is expected to improve over time, and there should be no effects on known archaeological sites. Activities such as shellfish gathering, shore-based fishing, or white-baiting from Ford Road, should benefit from improved habitat in the longer term.

Benefits	Concerns
Community engagement through wetland plantings. Enables people to enjoy Estuary for cultural and recreational purposes. Implement Kaituna River and Ongatoro/Maketū Estuary Strategy. Improve boat ramp and parking facilities at Te Tumu. Opportunity to develop a Wetlands Education Centre. Restore the mauri of the estuary.	Acknowledge both Māori and European history in area. Acknowledge Treaty Settlements, establishment of Kaituna River Authority, and Kaituna Governance Plan. Effects on existing boat ramps, recreational fishing, and watersports. Effects on historic sites, including Te Tumu Pa. Effects on water supply from Kaituna River for farms. Effects on water-based recreation and boating. No mention of tangata whenua in project objectives. Possible unmarked urupa in low-lying land north of Ford's Cut. Safety for swimming at Maketū.

Ecology

Water in parts of the estuary will likely become less saline, but have slightly higher levels of bacterial contamination. The project is expected to enhance habitat for wildlife and provide better protection for existing ecological sites. Edible shellfish and finfish populations are likely to improve over time.

Benefits	Concerns
Encourage clean-up of water quality in Kaituna River. Flushing of Maketū Estuary and Papahikahawai Lagoon and reduce sedimentation. Improved kaimoana and fish habitat. New wetland habitat. Reduced pests on Maketū Spit and Papahikahawai Island.	Channel margins should be naturalised. Use of hard-engineering for non-natural banks reduces benefits of project. Effects on edible sea lettuce and samphire in Papahikahawai Creek. Effects on kaimoana from increased bacterial contamination and sedimentation. Effects on Kaituna Wetland Reserve and Maketū Wildlife Reserve Filling in of Ford's Cut and parts of old Kaituna River bed. Incorrect methodology for modelling estuary morphology and water quality. Increase sedimentation and requirement for dredging of new channel. Loss of wetland north of stopbank upstream of Ford Island. Maintenance and management of wetland areas.

Benefits	Concerns
Restore ecological integrity of Maketū Estuary. Restore the balance of fresh water and salinity.	Monitoring of water levels, flow rates, water quality, and discharges. Partial re-diversion will have a detrimental effect on estuary and existing wetland and not generate expected benefits. Poor water quality in Kaituna River from existing discharges, improvements required before re-diversion. Project ignores evidence of past failures to improve Estuary. Suitability of wetland habitat for new salinity profile.

Natural Hazards

Flood protection, drainage levels, and conditions for grass growth upstream in the Kaituna River are unlikely to be affected. However, water levels in the estuary and adjacent drains and wetlands may change, depending on the type of flow control structure used for the re-diversion.

Benefits	Concerns
Retention of Te Tumu Cut for peak flood flows.	Blockage of flow control structures and flood gates with debris. Capacity of the Kaituna River to accommodate future flood flows, particularly stormwater discharges from Te Tumu urbanisation. Cost of protecting farmland with stopbanks and drainage works. Effects on Tauranga Eastern Link (TEL) and available freeboard for bridges. Increased flood risk for Maketū, land north of Kaituna River, and Ford Island. Increased flood risk upstream for Kaituna Catchment Control Scheme. Ongoing maintenance of culverts and design of alignment to avoid blockage.

Summary

The comments summarised above clearly show that while there is broad support for the project, many respondents have outstanding concerns that will need to be addressed through further detailed study as the project develops. By far the most prevalent comments from respondents were in relation to the effect of the re-diversion on erosion, flood risk, navigability at Te Tumu, and availability of kaimoana.

In terms of suggested modifications to the project and future process, the following comments are representative of the range of suggestions received:

- Consultation has not been adequate to date.
- Cost of the project could be better spent.
- Diversion should be via original course and Papahikahawai Creek.
- Full re-diversion of the river flows with closure of Te Tumu.
- Important to establish good and clear relationships with Regional Council.
- Move intake further upstream to increase freshwater component of diversion.

Many comments were received in relation to the history of the area, and previous attempts to control the outlet of the Kaituna River and restore freshwater flows to Maketū Estuary. These comments have greatly enhanced the project team’s understanding, but do not relate directly to the benefits or concerns identified in the consultation responses so have not been reported here.