

Introduction from John Forbes

Welcome to the latest update on the Ōpōtiki Harbour Development and other local projects that will ultimately transform our district's social and economic future.

Ōpōtiki district is small in terms of population (9,000) and economy (\$180M GDP), but has a large geographical area.

Ōpōtiki has huge potential to contribute to the New Zealand economy. Underpinning this belief is a strong commitment from local community leaders, including Iwi and Council, to focus on community economic development and jobs for local people.

That economic development is underpinned by tourism, horticulture and aquaculture. The harbour project, which we will update you on in this newsletter, is an important part of this development.

It is also a significant area of focus for our new Ōpōtiki District Council CEO Aileen Lawrie, who joined us in June.

Aileen is already well known in our district through her work in leading the town's aquaculture project and supporting Eastern Seafarms Ltd through its appeal process. She replaces Vaughn Payne, who has taken up a position at Environment Waikato.

Aileen hit the ground running. Within a couple of weeks of her starting, the Ōpōtiki Harbour Development was announced as a finalist in the Institute of Public Administration New Zealand Gen-I Public Sector Excellence awards. These are national awards and it is a major achievement to have made it as a finalist.

There have also been a number of developments in the Ōpōtiki Harbour Development project and in the aquaculture project. It is an exciting time to be in our district. Our vision to ensure the economic and social transformation of our region is clear. Our challenge will be to continue to sustain the momentum that we are building.

John Forbes

Mayor, Ōpōtiki District

Ōpōtiki Harbour Development - the heart of the district

It is a long-held aspiration of the Ōpōtiki community to re-establish the town's harbour and this is now a priority for the District Council.

The aim is for the harbour to provide a platform for sustained economic growth in the district by:

- ▶ Increasing the overall social, economic and cultural wellbeing of the Ōpōtiki community, the Eastern Bay of Plenty and the wider region
- ▶ Enhancing recreation opportunities and public access to the ocean
- ▶ Capitalising on opportunities arising from the proposed Whakatōhea 3,800 hectare marine farm offshore from Ōpōtiki
- ▶ Providing a platform for other Eastern Bay of Plenty aquaculture ventures
- ▶ Mitigating flooding of the Ōpōtiki township and surrounding area
- ▶ Achieving a long-held community aspiration and a high-priority community outcome.

Over the history of the Eastern Bay of Plenty, Ōpōtiki's harbor has been a vital link to our markets, supporting the transportation of goods and products to markets within New Zealand and the wider world. But, as the region's roading infrastructure developed, use of the port diminished, and the harbour was not maintained, so that now there is a significant shallowing of the harbour entrance.

During the building of the Ōpōtiki to Gisborne road, through the Waioeke Gorge, rock was pushed into the river. That rock has been washed down the river and is now the sand that is silting up the river mouth.

The preferred option for improving the harbour entrance is to build a parallel groyne system. Resource consent to start the work has been granted and the District Council is now in the process of refining the business case and seeking funding.

The District Council, which is leading this initiative, is delighted to have signed a memorandum of understanding with BayTrust. This is an important step in building some longer term partnerships within the Bay of Plenty and we are extremely grateful to the BayTrust for their commitment. We are looking forward to working with them in the coming years.

For further information, and back issues of Harbour Update, visit the Ōpōtiki Harbour Development website (www.opotikiharbour.co.nz).

Aquaculture – taking Ōpōtiki to the world

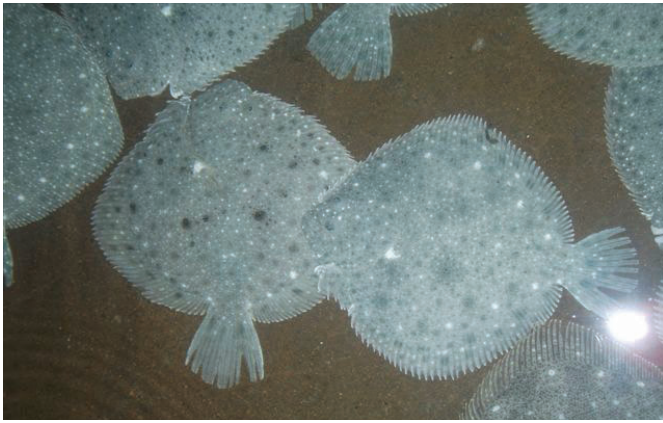
Historically, the oceans were teeming with fish, but today more people rely on fish farmers to produce their food than ever before.

That opportunity is being grasped by Ōpōtiki-based Eastern Seafarms Ltd, as it looks to develop a successful marine farm project that will significantly benefit the Bay of Plenty region and also New Zealand.

The aquaculture project is fully consented and Eastern Seafarms Ltd has been established with 54 percent ownership by local iwi Whakatōhea, and other partners Sealords (26%) and NZ Seafarms (20%).



Oriental Ocean president Che Shi and Whakatōhea chairman Robert Edwards (front) sign a memorandum of understanding in front of (from left) Yantai Mayor Zhang Jianting; Ōpōtiki Mayor John Forbes; Sun Liqiang, President of Changyu Pioneer Wine (the 10th largest wine producer in the world); and Song Weining, Secretary-General of the Yantai Municipal People's Government.



Turbott, farmed in concrete ponds in sheds, near Penglai, China.

On 18 September 2010, Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board signed a memorandum of understanding with Oriental Ocean from Shandong, China, to look at advancing a joint venture approach to aquaculture. The venture will begin with a focus on growing sea cucumber, a delicacy in China, and may lead to ventures involving shellfish, fin fish and other aquaculture products.

The signing follows a three-year relationship with Oriental Ocean, one of China's largest aquaculture companies. In July, Ōpōtiki representatives were part of a Tauranga-led delegation to China, which included a visit to Oriental Ocean. This prompted a high-powered return visit in September by the Mayor of Yantai Zhang Jianting and Oriental Ocean President Professor Che Shi, who is one of the wealthiest and most influential people in China.

Ōpōtiki's relationship with Oriental Ocean is not just significant for the Bay of Plenty. It's also good for wider New Zealand. As one of China's largest aquaculture producers, Oriental Ocean has enormous knowledge and distribution networks. The company's products include aquatic seeds, including kelp seedlings; abalone fries and scallop fries; cultured products, including fish and holothurians; processed products, including fish and shrimp, and collagen, such as deep-sea fish collagen. The company's products are distributed within the domestic Chinese market and to the overseas markets, such as Europe, the rest of Asia, the United States and Canada.

The Ōpōtiki Harbour Development will form a vital part of the success of the aquaculture project. The development of aquaculture will benefit from improved harbour access to processing and servicing facilities. The employment opportunities associated with these developments are very exciting for the community and wider region.

Eastern Seafarms commenced commercial trials for mussel production off Ōpōtiki in early October.

Sea cucumbers (pictured) have been consumed for centuries in Asia as traditional medicinal and prestige foods. Increasing prosperity in China over the past 30 years has fuelled growing demand for the product.



Whakatōhea – a shared vision of success

The Ōpōtiki District Council and Whakatōhea Māori Trust Board have a formal agreement to work collaboratively on opportunities that would benefit Ōpōtiki and create local jobs for Whakatōhea beneficiaries. This agreement forms the basis for a strong working relationship between local government, community and iwi.

Whakatōhea have just undertaken a kanohi ki te kanohi Wellbeing Survey with people living in the rohe (from Waimana to Torere). The survey canvassed over 700 people aged 15 and over, estimated to be 62% of the Whakatōhea people living in the area.

One of the questions asked was "What are your dreams and aspirations for Whakatōhea?"

The success of the marine farm and its potential to provide meaningful employment and economic development was one of the six most common responses volunteered.

Wellbeing Survey leader Louisa Erickson says: "Our people are excited about the marine farm. They see it as really positive, with the potential to impact on health and wellbeing generally. Many are especially interested in its future impact for young people."



New General Manager

Whakatōhea's General Manager Dickie Farrar is now five months into her role. Dickie is an uri of Whakatōhea with ties to Ngai Tama, Ngāti Rua, Ngāti Ngahere, Ngāti Patu, Ngāti Irapuaia as well as Te Whānau ā Apanui, Ngati Porou, Te Aitanga a Mahaki and Kahungunu. Dickie was previously General Manager of Raukawa

Trust Board where her primary role was to develop a 50-year strategy, new vision and mission for the Iwi as well as new five-year strategic and annual business plans for the Raukawa Trust Board. Her secondary role has been developing a new group model to receive the current and future treaty assets. This required working with a range of legal, HR and accounting teams, as well as a change manager to implement the closedown of the current Trust Board and the setting up of a trust compliant to receive settlement assets.

"Coming home to work for your own people has a lot more challenges but they can be overcome. My focus for the last three months has been to review the organisation and to ensure the Trust Board has a strong business infrastructure in place, with core functions that will enable me to strategically plan and execute the priorities for the future, this must follow up with sound cash management and the right people in place to realize Whakatōhea's aspirations," she says.

The Board has been involved in ongoing research into aquaculture and is happy to take a conservative approach to its development. The marine farm is an opportunity to develop strong leadership in the development of aquaculture in New Zealand. She says Whakatōhea is committed to finding solutions to improving the economic and social outlook for Ōpōtiki and the Eastern Bay, and is aware that what is good for Whakatōhea, will be good for the community and the region.

"We value the importance of multi-partnership arrangements between local, regional, national and international parties. What we are creating is a research approach to sustainability and viability."

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