

Otago Natural History Trust

Minutes of the 20th Annual General Meeting

5:30 p.m. on 31 October 2022

Orokonui Ecosanctuary, 600 Blueskin Road, Waitati, Dunedin

Attendees: Colin Campbell-Hunt, Lindsey Shields, Suzanne Middleton, Andy Cunningham, Alison Cunningham, Tony Stewart, Alison Cree, Marie Ballagh, Francie Beggs, Alyth Grant, Graham McArthur, Alister Robinson, John Williams, Allie Cunninghame, John Kaiser, Wendy Harrex, Susan Wigmore, Cheryl Adams, David Smith, Georgina Pickerell, Yolanda van Heezik, Amanda Symon, Deb Wilson (Minutes)

Apologies: Elizabeth and John McAllister, Brenda and Wayne Sutherland, Noelene and Bram Evans, Mark Stewart, David Smith, Heather Hay, Brigid Casey, Claire Hagglund, Jean Bretherton, Frances Anderson, Jenny Freeman, John Barkla, Geoff Plunket, Lyn Carter, Sue Murray, Phillipa Wilson, Jane Wilson, Annie and Kurien Yohannan, Heather Hay.

1. Minutes of the 19th Annual General Meeting, 20 October 2021 (refer Orokonui website)

- Moved Alison Cunningham, seconded Alister Robinson: That the minutes are a true and complete record. Carried.

2. Matters Arising. No matters were raised.

3. Chair Report for 2021–2022 (Allie Cunninghame, Chair of ONHT)

We have had some real challenges in 2022. Firstly, OEL's financial position was affected by the ongoing covid situation and the consequent downturn in visitor numbers, and the cancellation of events. This loss of revenue required the Trustees to direct Orokonui Ecosanctuary Limited to ensure the solvency of the Ecosanctuary, which resulted in some redundancies, and restructure of some staff responsibilities, the scaling down of the café, and a reduction in our opening hours. I can assure you that none of these steps were taken lightly.

As the world gradually returns to its new normal, we are seeing an increase in visitor numbers. Our general manager Amanda Symon has been working with tour operators and we are hopeful that visitor numbers will continue to increase over summer.

We are grateful to our local visitors who have continued to visit the Ecosanctuary, particularly in the colder, wetter months.

The second challenge was the decision of the Ministry of Education not to renew our contract to provide Education outside the Classroom. This decision was met with dismay, and received widespread publicity. Unfortunately, the Ministry of Education has made decisions which have resulted in our funding, and that of other locally based providers not being renewed.

After obtaining feedback from the Ministry which set out the rationale for its decision, it was decided that the energies of Amanda and the Education Team are better placed seeking alternative sources for funding the programme, rather than trying to force the Ministry to reverse its decision. Furthermore, Orokonui Ecosanctuary Limited has committed to underwriting the shortfall in funding

for the 2022–2023 year so that the programme can continue to be delivered to our tamariki, and our wonderful Education staff can have some security regarding their positions.

The final challenge for this year which I wanted to mention relates to our infrastructure. The rain event in winter caused flood-related damage and we were fortunate that our staff were able to be on site quickly, which mitigated damage.

Now, on to some of our happier highlights.

Firstly, we are thrilled to be working with Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki and the Rakiura Tītī Islands Administering Body on a project which we hope will see 100 tīeke, or saddlebacks, translocated to the Ecosanctuary in early 2022. We have obtained the necessary permits from the Department of Conservation and Amanda has been working tirelessly with funders to ensure that this mahi can come to fruition. The trustees are thrilled to see another translocation project proceed, and we look forward to updating you more about this in due course.

In September, we hosted the Minister for Conservation, DOC staff, and local MPs for a hui which was also attended by representatives from Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki. That was an opportunity for the Minister to spend some time walking about the sanctuary and to understand what it is that we do, and why our work, and in particular our education programme, is important for the local community. It was also an opportunity for the minister to be reminded about our recognition of our manawhenua and their role as kaitiaki, or guardians, of this land.

When the minister visited she was able to meet our takahe mother, who was then sitting on her egg. Since then we have been delighted to welcome two new chicks, who I understand are the earliest known hatching of takahe. We were most relieved that they were undeterred by the recent snowfall.

We have been heartened by the support of our community, which has responded generously with donations over the past 12 months. These donations have come from individuals and from businesses.

Most significant, is a bequest exceeding \$800,000 from the estates of the late Rita and Ian Campbell to OEL. The funds have been placed under the guardianship of the Orokonui Foundation, for the purposes of ensuring that there is a substantial capital sum to assist the future viability of the Ecosanctuary. This capital sum has been invested, and the intention of the Foundation is to pay the income annually to OEL.

Secondly, the Trust received a bequest from the estate of Mr Johannes Suykerbuyk, exceeding \$36,000.

It is with gratitude that we acknowledge the generosity of the Campbell and Suykerbuyk families.

The Trustees of ONHT are members of the Third Appointer Group to the Predator Free Dunedin trust, and we were invited to nominate a new trustee recently. Kent Chalmers, who sits on OEL, agreed to be nominated and was duly elected. We look forward to building on our relationship with that organisation and its sister orgs.

Finally, I wish to end this report by acknowledging the work of our staff, who show literally tireless commitment to the Kaupapa of the Ecosanctuary and to supporting and promoting conservation. We could not do this without such a committed bunch of people, and I thank them all.

4. Annual Accounts (prepared by Geoff Plunket, Treasurer; read by Allie Cunninghame; refer Orokonui website)

- Moved Alister Robinson, seconded Cheryl Adams: That the annual performance report for OEL be received. Carried.
- Moved Alister Robinson, seconded Alison Cunningham: That the consolidated annual report for ONHT be received. Carried.
- Moved Alister Robinson: That the annual performance report for Orokonui Foundation be received.
- Moved Allie Cunninghame, seconded Alister Robinson: That Crowe (Dunedin) be appointed as auditor for 2022–2023. Carried.

Alison Cree noted that in the ONHT report, the Statement of Service Performance in relation to tuatara referred to the previous year's monitoring results. It was agreed to communicate with Geoff Plunket by email about rephrasing. Many thanks to Alison for this correction.

In November 2022 the Statement of Service Performance was corrected accordingly, and a revised document was posted on the Orokonui website with updated text as follows:

This was our tenth year of monitoring tuatara at Orokonui since their translocation from Takapourewa (Stephens Island) in Marlborough Sounds in October 2012. Intensive monitoring was cancelled due to Covid-19, but limited fieldwork revealed new nesting activity, one hatchling seen by chance, many fresh scats, and basking tuatara. These observations, combined with results from 2020/21 (12 of the original released animals recaptured in good health, much nesting activity, one juvenile and 5 hatchlings) confirm that the Orokonui population is breeding successfully.

5. Election of Trustees

Tony Stewart is standing down as trustee after more than six years of service. The eight other trustees do not require re-election in 2022. The Trust Board constitution requires between 6 and 9 members, each elected for a period of 3 years. One trustee, Lyn Carter, is appointed to represent Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki. The Board can appoint members during the year to serve until the following AGM. We are fortunate to also have two advisors, Annie Wallace (DOC) and Korako Edwards (Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki).

Alyth Grant thanked Tony Stewart for his huge contributions to the Orokonui project over many years as a volunteer and trustee.

6. Subscription Charges

- Moved Deb Wilson, seconded Yolanda van Heezik: That subscriptions be unchanged at \$55 for individuals and \$70 for families. Carried.

7. General Business

Georgina Pickerell, on behalf of the Orokonui Knowledge Group, thanked all the advisers for their inputs and support during the year.

- Moved Alister Robinson, seconded Alison Cree and Alison Cunningham: That ONHT state its appreciation of the General Manager Amanda Symon and all Orokonui staff during the Covid period and the difficulties of the past 2 years. Carried with acclamation.

Allie Cunninghame, on behalf of ONHT, thanked Tony Stewart for his many years of service to Orokonui as a volunteer since 2009 and an ONHT trustee since 2016.

It is with sadness that the Trustees farewell Tony Stewart, who is stepping down from a formal role with us. Kelly Gough has shared the following information: I'm sure she won't mind me telling you that she actually wasn't initially sure when Tony was first involved, because, in her words, he actually pre-dated a lot of the induction/health and safety/procedural paperwork!

From Kelly Gough: *Tony has helped with a lot of stuff! The big ticket things include:*

- *Fence security: he programmed all the surveillance boxes around the fence, with the wording we still see today when the duty phone goes off with something fence related*
- *Track marking: this involved following a line on the GPS and putting out flagging tape through the bush so that chainsaw teams could come along to cut the monitoring tracks that are in existence today*
- *Track clearing/formation: some of the public track stuff as well many monitoring tracks*
- *Camera security: installed (physical and software) cameras around culverts to help monitor water gates opening*
- *Other camera stuff: Tony set up the first ever nest cam we had, on Paku and Quammen's first nests*
- *Sirocco security: when Sirocco came for visits it was Tony who procured and installed the security that linked to the enclosure's door and top wire*
- *Mapping: the maps that we used for so long are all from the web-based program created with data that Tony configured*
- *Then, of course, there was just regular operational volunteering for a number of years as well!*

Tony, thank you for your service, for your kindness, and for your wisdom. We will miss you very much, and we hope that you continue to keep in touch with us, when you can.

Carried with acclamation.

Tony commented that his strong background in physics and electronics enabled him to contribute in the ways he has done.

Allie noted that ONHT would welcome a new trustee or advisor with related knowledge and skills.

8. Taylor Davies-Colley led a very interesting and enjoyable guided walk in the Ecosanctuary.