

Welcome to the first AGM of the Waipa Mountain bike club.

It's a little over 12 months since we first met here at the Te Awamutu Visitors centre for the inaugural meeting of the Waipa MTB club. Its been a busy year and the committee has had the added challenge of starting a new club from scratch, but we have made good progress in that time, helped considerably by the enthusiasm of our club members and our various supporters. In this presidents report I briefly discuss progress in our first year and raise some challenges for the future.

The club has got off to a healthy start, with 35 financial members, of which many are family subscriptions. We have supporters from around the Waikato, including Hamilton, Otorohanga and Waitomo. A key request that came up in our inaugural meeting was that people were interested in having regular social rides to various locations and trails. This we achieved through a regular series of rides, which has visited both local trails and sites further a-field, including Tokoroa and very successful 42 Traverse trip in March. Numbers have varied on these trips, sometimes only a couple of people turn up, other trips have had 30, but the enthusiasm of those attending is high. We have also made the Ngutunui Hill climb a fixed event on our calendar and this always attracts riders from the Hamilton MTB club as well .

Communication is a key to keeping club members, and potential club members, connected and informed with what club activities. In this role we have been lucky to have Tui Allen as our communication person, a position she shares with the Hamilton MTB club. Through her efforts we have a club newsletter, regularly updated website and have run a number of articles in the Te Awamutu Courier and recently, the Waikato Times.

On the financial front, the club generated \$490 through membership subscriptions and \$565 through grants (Waipa District Council) and sponsorship (Brett Purchase- TeA' Cycles). This was sufficient to cover the set up costs of the club, provided for the running of a professional trail building workshop at no cost to club members, and leaves us with an operating surplus of \$282.20.

Advocacy is another area the club has been involved in. We have lodged submissions on the Waipa District Council's cycling strategy and long-term plan, as well as the DOC's conservation management strategy for the Waikato area. Although these have only had impact on policy documents so far, the changes we have made will be useful in the future, as local bodies such as DOC and the Council must take these policies into account when they decide on new projects (such as Sainsbury Rd) or bylaws in our area.

On the trail building front much has gone on behind the scenes with our proposal to develop an area for MTB trail building at Sainsbury Rd Pirongia. What we naively thought would be a simple thing to arrange (can we get permission to dig some MTB trails?) became a lot more complicated as we delved further (resource consent, lease, liability insurance, parking etc etc). However, we are taking an ambitious approach to this project and it has the potential to be a major asset to the club and our community, hence it is important we set this project up properly to ensure it is sustainable, well managed and meets our present and future needs. Key to progressing this project has been the excellent relationship which we have established with the Waipa District Council, who have supported our project and assisted us in the planning process. At this point in time, the resource consent application for the project has been drafted and will go out to affected parties this week for their signatures. We have backing from the local community for this project and have involved the neighbouring landowners through the process. Assuming that is approved, we will be offered a 15 year lease on 250 hectares of pine forest for use as mountain biking area. Obtaining a lease provides us with security of tenure and allows us to control access to the forest. This is an area with excellent potential for mountain biking and, as noted by Ric Balfour during his trail workshop in April, this block of land is good enough to keep any MTB club happy for quite some time.

The main challenge for the club in the coming year will be getting Sainsbury Rd up and running. It's also going to be a lot of fun and there is a lot of enthusiasm to get in there and start digging some sweet singletrack, which is exactly what we need. Once we have some trails up and running this will attract more interest in the club and will have flow on effects to things such as our membership, ability to attract community grant funding, helpers for trail building, numbers at social rides etc. It will also give us a presence in the community and be a catalyst for interaction with other recreation groups such as BMX clubs, schools and the strong road cycling community in the area.

Finally I would like to thank our members once again for their support of this new club. Not just in paying subs but for turning up to rides, a highlight for me has been meeting local riders and their families, and after all, getting out on our mountain bikes is what it's all about.

Thank you,

Brendan Haigh, Club President.