



## Firm shells out on mussel biz



Talley's newly-acquired aquaculture operations in Golden Bay will be managed by Clearwater Mussels. Photo: Jo Richards.

JO RICHARDS

Food producer Talley's has boosted its mussel-farming interests in Golden Bay following its recent acquisition of a rival business.

Talley's Ltd announced the purchase of Marlborough-based Kono Seafood just over two weeks ago and expects the sale to be completed on 22 May. The deal includes Kono NZ's mussel farming and processing operations which employ a workforce of around 300 across sites in Blenheim, Golden Bay and Havelock. At the time of the sale, 19 staff were employed in Golden Bay.

Responding to an inquiry from *The GB Weekly*, Kono NZ chief operating officer Andy Wotton provided more detail about the company's Golden Bay operations. "Kono

Seafood currently farms across Collingwood, Golden Bay ring road and Tasman Bay areas. The operations comprise a mixture of owned farms, external leases and contract growers. Kono Seafood operates three vessels from Port Taranaki, and a land-based operation in Pōhara to support on-water activity."

Kono is one of several companies that run mussel operations in Golden Bay's coastal waters. The other major players, apart from Talley's, are Sanford, Clearwater Mussels (50 per cent owned by Talley's), MacLab, and Maara Moana (representing the eight Te Tau Ihu iwi). There are also a number of smaller, family owned shareholdings.

An industry source explained that one of these established operators will work closely with Talley's in Golden Bay. "While Talley's have

purchased the assets, Clearwater Mussels Ltd will be managing the aquaculture operations. Clearwater are long-established operators in Golden Bay and already have vessels, a yard and staff based here. The sale will see the Clearwater operation increase in size, utilising many of the Kono vessels and staff."

Although the sale has created some uncertainty, Andy said workers need not be anxious about their jobs. "Securing employment opportunities for affected staff beyond the sale was a key factor in our approach and we are delighted at Talley's intention to offer roles to as many of the Kono team as possible. The full number to be employed, and to what roles, will be determined over the next few weeks."

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## GB Community Board

JO RICHARDS

Golden Bay Community Board's monthly meeting got off to an unusual start on Monday afternoon with a karakia delivered simultaneously in two of the country's official languages.

In recognition of New Zealand Sign Language Week, board member Robert Hewison signed councillor Chris Hill's spoken te Reo Māori.

The meeting turned out to be shorter than anticipated because Nelson Tasman Civil Defence manager Joe Kennedy, who was due to make a presentation about Civil Defence Emergency Management plans for Golden Bay, was unable to attend as a result of the current weather event.

### Public Forum

Public forum began with Sea Rotman and Karl Webber Zooming in from their Pūponga home, where they are still waiting for their street name "Bifrost Rise" to be granted approval – six months after the application was initially made. Sea explained that they had followed Tasman District Council's (TDC) procedure and received written approval from staff, only to discover in February that because Manawhenua ki Mohua (MKM) had not provided its consent – required under Golden Bay Community Board (GBCB) street naming policy – further consultation was necessary. She apologised if they had caused any offence, but said they were "new to the Bay" and, as far as they had been aware, they had fully complied with the rules.

The long delay, she said, had created difficulties for the couple. "We've been running two businesses [from home] with no legal address."

To resolve what had become a major issue, two months ago they asked MKM to suggest a name but had not heard back. "We seem to be at an impasse," said Sea, who concluded with a simple request. "We were hoping that maybe we could stick to [the name] Bifrost Rise."

GBCB chair Abbie Langford apologised for the board's lack of communication and what had been "an unsatisfactory process" and undertook to speak to MKM and provide Sea with relevant contact details.

Noel Baigent expressed his concern over TDC's long-term plan (LTP) priorities. Referring to a recent community meeting of key stakeholders held to discuss the LTP, Noel bemoaned what he perceived as a narrow representation. "Nobody on the invite list had anything to do with..."

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# GB Community Board - May

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...Grey Power, museums, or heritage."

Discussing the issue later in the meeting, councillor Chris Hill pointed out that the invite-only meeting "wasn't intended to be fully representative", but it was a "good start", and she would "like to see another event, for example, at the Rec Centre".

Duncan Cavaye spoke on behalf of the chairman of the Central Takaka Water Board (CTWB) Rex Heuvel, who was also present, about the challenges facing the private water scheme because of new regulations. The scheme, he explained, which currently supplies 52 houses, the hospital, and a school, faces a bill of \$40,000 to install the UV treatment equipment required to deal with E.coli contamination.

Duncan said such an expense "shouldn't fall on private water schemes" and made a request that "council look at discretionary payments", explaining that there will be "very little left in the [scheme's] coffers for pumps, pipes, etc".

He suggested TDC support the scheme by paying for items including water quality testing and UV system maintenance.

When this matter was discussed by the board towards the end of the meeting, it was agreed that a hui should be arranged between the CTWB and relevant TDC staff, including group manager community infrastructure Richard Kirby, to discuss options, one of which would be whether council can assume responsibility for the scheme.

Attending the meeting via Zoom, TDC group manager environmental assurance Kim Drummond said many of the country's private water schemes would be in a similar position to CTWB. "There are real issues around scale of some suppliers,

but the regulator has a new set of standards that some small schemes will struggle to meet."

## Chair's Report

In addition to items included in the public forum discussions above, other significant issues addressed included:

**Pōhara to Takaka Cycleway:** Abbie noted there have been several service requests relating to maintenance of the cycleway, and it has come before the operations committee with no further progress. She therefore suggested the community board make a formal request to TDC for regular maintenance of cycleway.

Abbie's opening statement sparked off a discussion about what should be included in a resolution, which after some reiteration was worded thus: "That the GBCB requests the standard of service agreement be reviewed to improve the maintenance level of the Pōhara to Takaka cycleway, and that the ponding and surface flooding issues are remedied."

**Action Sheet:** There was some good news for residents in the Aorere Valley and beyond: TDC team leader customer services Jess McAlinden explained that the equipment required for online streaming from Collingwood Fire Station had been identified. "We've got a unit on order so we can have Zoom meetings." The first of the quarterly Collingwood GBCB meetings is likely to take place in September.

Following the board's official receipt of the financial summary, the meeting closed as it had opened with a dual language karakia.

The next GBCB meeting is at TDC Service Centre Takaka, on Monday 12 June at 1pm.

## FIRM SHELLS OUT ON MUSSEL BIZ

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Talley's chief executive officer Tony Hazlett was equally upbeat about future prospects for the Bay. "Our plans have been to continue growth in Golden Bay to meet demand for mussels, and the purchase of Kono Seafood helps us do that. We will undertake some developments at Port Taranaki to support this growth, which will see a number of jobs created in the Bay."

Beyond the Bay, Tony said the majority of Kono Seafood staff are currently being offered jobs within Talley's, and there was the potential to work in other parts of the company's food business. "With capacity at our mussel facilities we are thrilled this deal with Kono will enable us to employ hundreds of skilled local people, keeping them in our region."

The divestment by Kono represents something of a rapid u-turn for the Wakatū Incorporation subsidiary, having acquired the seafood business from Ngāi Tahu less than six years ago. The

Kono NZ CEO, however, sees it as a strategic move that aligns the company more closely with its 500-year vision. "Not only does the timing of this sale allow us to put our people in the position to secure ongoing employment with a well-known and experienced operator in the region, but we are also able to realise the value of our significant seafood asset, positioning us well for the future."

Commenting on the sale, industry sources expressed similarly positive views on the restructuring. "It's a shame to see Kono/Wakatū exiting the industry - but both Talley's and Clearwater Mussels have a long history with seafood in Te Tau Ihu and certainly know how to farm mussels. It's also great to see that Talley's are confident about the demand for our mussels and are scaling up to meet this demand from international markets."

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Wednesday 17th May

1:30pm-3:00pm

Wholemeal Café, Commercial Street, Takaka

Wednesday 14th June

1:30pm-3:00pm

Wholemeal Café, Commercial Street, Takaka

Wednesday 12th July

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