

Chairperson's Annual Report

Presented to the AGM held Saturday 25 July 2026.

The Society has again performed its responsibilities well during the year with the harbour and sandspit both being maintained in good condition. In the early part of the year there were several severe easterly storms which resulted in some coastal inundation along the coast where the sand fencing and planting are located but remedial work was undertaken mid-year which will hopefully correct this.

The following comments relate to specific activities:

1. D.O.C. & Te Uri o Hau:

The Society is reliant on the support and goodwill of both DOC and Te Uri o Hau so that the dredge tailings can be deposited on the sandspit which is owned & managed by DOC. We are fortunate in having both Concession and Community Agreements with DOC (and supported by the iwi) which allow both the depositing of the dredge tailings on the sandspit as well as providing for the sand fencing and native grass planting activities that are so necessary to assist with the stabilisation of the sand on the sandspit.

Throughout the last year, the Society has enjoyed a good working relationship with both these organisations who have participated in inspections of the locations where the tailings are deposited and agreed on both the specific location and any conditions that were required to protect against salt contamination of the wetland area contained on the spit.

We greatly appreciate the support of these two organisations and look forward to extending the work we do with them in the coming years.

2. Dredging Operations:

As usual the Society prepared its dredge plan for the 2026 season and following site inspections with DOC & Te Uri o Hau, this was submitted to the NRC for approval. The area dredged in 2026 was at the north end of the sandspit and concentrated on the sand buildup that had accumulated on the western side of the channel. This build up was causing issues with the boating fraternity who were finding this area of the harbour becoming increasingly shallow at low tide.

The tailings from this year's dredging were deposited into two of the locations that had been identified in the Auckland University's topographic survey undertaken in 2024, as being vulnerable to coastal inundation & it is pleasing to report that these two locations have now been back filled and should no longer pose a risk. In order to stabilise the sand deposits in these two areas grass planting has also been completed.



Showing the filling in of the low spot at north end of spit which was vulnerable for a breach.

Throughout the dredge season there has been an issue with boats motoring across the dredge pipeline, in spite of numerous signs and warning lights advising of the hazard and directing them to the safe passageway. Fortunately, no damage was reported to be sustained by either boats or the pipeline.



Showing location of dredge for 2026 season

Following an inspection by the NRC monitoring team in April, further sand walling was required to prevent saltwater flowing into the wetlands.

This season was the first where the Society used its own equipment to complete the bathymetric survey of the harbour floor around the dredge site which is a condition of our resource consent. This was completed successfully and accepted by the NRC.

Again, a special thanks to John Pearson for his efforts in successfully managing the dredging activities for the year, and also to the dredge team of Mark, Grant & Brett who have again successfully handled all the many issues that have arisen during the season in spite of having to at times endure some appalling weather conditions. Their dedication helps to make the harbour what it is today.

3. Equipment:

The Society's aging dredge motor was slated for replacement and by a stroke of good fortune, we were able to secure a 750HP Detroit diesel motor with very low running hours on it. This was purchased and overhauled and is due to be installed in the dredge during its maintenance in Whangarei over the next 2 months. This motor should extend the life of the dredge for many years.

It was also becoming apparent that with more and more activities, such as sand fencing and planting, requiring the use of the Society's only tractor that a second tractor was going to be required if these activities were not going to be compromised. We have just managed to secure another good used Case tractor which will be able to complement the existing tractor's workload.



The newly acquired Case Maxxum 110 tractor will support our workhorse Case Maxxum 140

4. Funding:

The Society has been fortunate to be favoured with three grants during the year which has allowed it to purchase equipment and extend its activities.

We again thank the Mangawhai Community Opportunity Shop Trust for its grant of \$5000 which has covered the raw material costs for this year's sand fencing.

This year an application was made to the NRC's Climate Resilient Communities Fund for the costs of purchasing the spinifex and pingao grasses that we plant on the sandspit. We were very pleased to gain the NRC's support for this work and the \$18,000 that they contributed which was very much appreciated – a grateful thanks.

Thirdly, we were very fortunate to be successful in an application to the Grassroots Trust for a contribution towards the cost of our second tractor. The Trust came up with a contribution of \$20,000 which was sufficient to allow us to purchase this necessary piece of equipment. After spending the first part of its life on the west coast of the Kaipara, this tractor will end its days working on the east coast in Mangawhai.

A special thanks to Colin Leach for his efforts in putting together the applications for these grants, which was no small feat, and to Cr John Hunt (NRC) for his support in pushing our case for the grants from both the NRC and the Grassroots Trust.

5. Activities on the Sandspit – fencing & planting:

The storms that were experienced early in 2026 did considerable damage to the sand fences that had been erected over the last two years. The hessian fabric had been stripped from all fences erected during this period, although it was pleasing to see that in most places the buildup of sand against the fence stakes still remained.

This year we sourced a heavier grade of hessian which was claimed to have a longer life than the grade we had previously used, and we were able to restore 275 metres of fencing which amounted to all the fences erected over the last two years. We also erected a 15 metre trial brushwood fence to see whether using this alternative material may provide a longer lasting option to the hessian.

Our planting activities centred on another trial of pingao grasses in which we planted 300 plants, together with the balance of 2700 spinifex plants that composed the majority of the planting.

Both the fencing and planting activities this year were very efficiently undertaken and thanks must go to Rosemarie Dunning for her efforts in procuring all the materials and organising the volunteers to undertake the actual work. Also, a big thank you to all our volunteers from the community who have again willingly given their time to help us with

these activities – without their help the Society would not be able to accomplish its objectives.



Part of the 275m of fence that was restored



Planting taking place along the fenceline – note sand buildup on fence after only 3 weeks.

6. PR and Communications:

The Society has put considerable effort during the year into raising its profile within the Mangawhai community. The population has grown very rapidly over the last decade and many of the newer residents are unaware of either the history of the harbour or the work that the Society undertakes on their behalf.

Our communications team of Stephen Owles and Karen Thompson, ably assisted by Sue Clayton have provided regular media releases to both the local newspapers as well as providing regular posts on our Facebook page and website. New publicity material has been prepared which will be of value in future promotional events.

In February the Team prepared an event at the Mangawhai Museum which commemorated the 35th anniversary of the completion of the Big Dig, which was when the harbour was restored to its original flow pattern following the breach that had occurred following a series of severe storms in the 1980's. This was a very successful event and provided an opportunity for many of the original participants in the Big Dig to come together and reminisce over old times.



Some of the “Originals” from the Big Dig who attended the anniversary celebrations.

Plans are in place to maintain this promotional activity over the coming year.

7. Other notable events planned:

- **Mangawhai groyne:** largely through lack of maintenance this coastal asset no longer provides the protection at the harbour entrance for which it was designed and the Society has managed to get the NRC to establish that DOC are the owners

of this abandoned asset on behalf of the Crown. In the coming year the Society will be putting resources into working with DOC to prepare a plan on the best option for restoring the groyne and then putting in place a maintenance plan to ensure it does not fall into a neglected state again.

- **Topographic Survey of sandspit:** two years' ago, the Society funded a topographic survey of the sandspit which was undertaken by Auckland University. This survey provided an accurate picture of the volume of sand contained on the spit and where the location of areas that were vulnerable to another harbour breach. The Society intends resurveying the spit again now that two years have passed since the last survey, so that an understanding can be gained of the benefit that the Society's activities have made and also what weather inflicted damage has occurred over the last two years. Tracking sand movement on the spit is the key to preventing another breach and providing the necessary protection to the harbour and the Mangawhai community.
- **Mangawhai Harbour Working Group:** The KDC Mayor has established this working group, which includes stakeholders with an interest in the welfare of the harbour & its surrounds, to explore ways of protecting the harbour in a more global sense than that which involves just the Society. As a member of this group, the Society will play an active role.

8. **Committee:** The committee has worked particularly well during the year and is achieving an increasing number of outputs. I must acknowledge the support that I have received from them all and thank them for their efforts.

Importantly new members are being attracted into its ranks which is always a challenge as the committee are all volunteers who give up their time to serve the community.

Two longstanding members of the Committee are standing down, namely Vern Dark and Ray Welson. A special mention to both of these who have given many hours of service, Vern for being the Society's voice during the opposition to the McCullum's sand mining and Ray who, as a Life Member, has been involved with many of the Society's activities over nearly three decades of service. A sincere vote of thanks to both of these Committee members.

Another special vote of thanks must go to our Secretary/Treasurer Judy Just, who continues to provide excellent service in keeping all our finances in a very well managed state and ably provides the administration support to the Committee.

9. **Support:** Again, our thanks go to the KDC Mayor and elected members who have attended our Committee meetings and special events and have provided both support and information of value to the Committee.

The newly elected member of the Coastal South Ward for the NRC has also provided great support and advice and is assisting with developing a good working relationship with this council.

In conclusion, the Society starts its next year in a healthy financial state and is well placed to be able to take further action in safeguarding the magnificent harbour asset that the Mangawhai community enjoys.

Peter Wethey - Chair, Mangawhai Harbour Restoration Society Inc.

25 July 2026

Locations vulnerable to coastal inundation

Red dots mark the 6 most vulnerable locations where a breach could occur on the spit

(as identified from the AU topographic mapping study 2024/25)

Dredge plan for 2026 to be at north end of harbour focussing on the 2 northern most vulnerable locations



Source: ex Auckland University Topographic Mapping Survey: 2024

- *Red dots pinpoint the locations most vulnerable to a coastal breach in the future.*
- *Tailings from 2026 dredging have filled in the top 2 locations*