

Hahei Opito DOC Control and Management Report

TO Mercury Bay Community Board
FROM Sam Marshall - Area Manager Mercury Bay
DATE 4 May 2015
SUBJECT **Proposal to Seek Control and Management Authority from the Department of Conservation in Hahei and Opito Bay**

1 Purpose of Report

While there are benefits of tourism to the country, district and community there are also impacts to be managed. This report addresses the future control and management of three areas of Crown land (the sites) within the Thames Coromandel District, one in Opito Bay and two in Hahei. (Attachment B and Attachment C)

2 Background

The Coromandel is a popular tourist destination. Hahei and Opito Bay are subject to tourism pressures however these are at different levels. Hahei is one of the top ten destination sites managed by DOC in New Zealand. One of the current issues in Opito Bay is the management of freedom campers. The sites addressed in this report are currently Crown land under the control of the Department of Conservation (DOC) and it is suggested that the Thames-Coromandel District Council obtains control and management authority to allow consistent, integrated management of existing and future issues.

With the Council progressing the Coromandel Great Walks project, a number of land tenure and management issues will need to be addressed. One such site is the Crown land at the southern end of Hahei Beach known as Te Pupuha. This report does not address this or other sites directly associated with the Coromandel Great Walks project as a new entity and management approach may need to be formed based on the outcomes of the project management process.

3 Issue

In Hahei there are a variety of tourism related issues that are concerning the community. Two of these issues are the management of commercial concessions particularly in relation to the beachfront area and secondly the management of Grange Road. Some of the issues identified by TCDC compliance staff in relation to Grange Road and the Hahei Beach front include:

- Insufficient parking for high tourism volume
- No current revenue stream (pay & display) to cover high tourism related infrastructure costs
- Vehicles constantly parking on broken yellow lines and within restricted parking areas
- Vehicles parking over the footpath blocking pedestrian & disabled wheel chair access
- Cars parking in areas reserved for buses
- Large buses parking out onto roadway
- Vehicles stopping and parking on the roadway blocking vehicular access
- Non self-contained campers staying over night
- Buses not able to manoeuvre the car park due to illegal and inconsiderate parking
- No defined boundary between DOC / TCDC land on Grange Road - 50 metres below the car park
- Lack of management parking issues within the car park

- Overnight campers using the car park area as a toilet
- Overflow from the car park spilling out onto Grange Road causing additional parking issues for residents & other road users
- Duplication and confusion between agency responsibilities in relation to concessions management.

As Cathedral Cove is a tourism asset of national significance and under the control of DOC, DOC had planned for a major upgrade of the existing car park at the top of Grange Road at an estimated cost in the vicinity of \$800,000 or more. Subsequently DOC has moved away from the construction of this car park meaning that the congestion/parking issues need to be resolved in other ways. The TCDC managed Hahei Park and Ride has successfully operated for a number of years on land adjacent to the Hahei Wastewater Treatment Plant (currently on TCDC road reserve). With the increasing visitor numbers, additional capacity is required in the Park and Ride facility. TCDC had budgeted \$617,000 in the draft 2015/25 Long Term Plan (LTP) for a two stage expansion of the existing park and ride facility, including a financial contribution of \$300,000 to the project from DOC.

Given DOC have moved away from construction of an extended car park at Grange Road, an alternative approach has been discussed and agreed at a staff level. Instead of DOC constructing the Grange Road car park extension and incurring its associated costs, by working in partnership with TCDC a solution can be achieved that is cheaper for DOC and reduces vehicle congestion on Grange road. Essentially this involves a financial contribution of \$300,000 from DOC to TCDC as a contribution to the TCDC project to extend the park and ride facility. This approach helps ensure that TCDC (particularly Mercury Bay) ratepayers are not funding the resolution of what is primarily a DOC related tourism issue. With TCDC assuming control and management of all of Grange Road and the associated car parking together with its operation of the Park and Ride facility, an integrated management approach to traffic and associated issues can be achieved.

TCDC staff have been seeking to progress improvements to the management of the Grange Road area for some time. A limitation was an inability to achieve control and management responsibility transfer from DOC, with a previous attempt being unsuccessful due to DOC legal concerns in 2014. A further meeting was held between TCDC staff (Mercury Bay Area Manager and Steve Hart Team Leader Compliance and Bylaws) and DOC (John Rich - Partnerships Ranger) on 21st April 2015 where agreement was reached to progress a transfer from DOC to TCDC.

In Opito Bay freedom camping has been receiving recent attention, particularly the location of freedom campers in a Council approved location in/adjacent to the area known as the Moore Avenue Reserve. A number of community representatives have expressed concern with the appropriateness of this location. The land area known as the Stewart Stream Reserve is currently managed by TCDC and contains TCDC funded infrastructure such as a toilet facility, vehicle access ways and grassed area. However, legally the area is Crown land in the control of DOC. In the recent TCDC Freedom Camping Bylaw review, the Stewart Stream Reserve was considered as a potential location for a restricted freedom camping site however it was discounted due to its being Crown land. Beyond freedom camping issues, this site was previously identified in the reserve management plan for TCDC to seek control and management rights from DOC.

The Ferry Landing, Cooks, Hahei and Hot Water Beaches Reserve Management Plan 2007 notes the following:

Hahei Beach Recreation Reserve (extracts):

'Reserve Issues: The (TCDC) reserve adjoins a beach front Crown reserve, administered by Department of Conservation. Council manages some of the grassed area adjacent to the car park.

The public toilet block, managed by Council, is located on the Department of Conservation reserve.

Reserve Management Policy: *Integrate management of this reserve in conjunction with the Department of Conservation adjoining land.'*

The Mercury Bay North Reserve Management Plan 2008 noted the following:

Stewart Stream Reserve (extracts):

Background: *These reserves include all the beachfront land from opposite 910 Blackjack Road to the Stewart Stream Bridge.*

Reserve Issues: *Council undertakes maintenance of the Crown esplanade reserve.*

Reserve Management Policy: *Review the vesting of Crown land to Council for management and control purposes.*

DOC via Mr Rich have carried out consultation with Iwi on the transfers addressed in this report. The results of this and other information are provided in the email as **Attachment A**.

4 Discussion

There are many reserve sites in the Thames Coromandel District where a potential management issue exists in relation to which agency (particularly DOC and TCDC) should be the controlling authority. That wider issue is yet to be addressed and this report addresses only three sites where significant issues require action to allow issues to be resolved.

Council obtaining control and management responsibilities for the sites referred to in this report will address two 'hotspots' in the Mercury Bay area. Further work in relation to the wider control and management issues across the Peninsula as identified in TCDC Reserve Management plans should be considered and planned for.

An appointment to control and manage does not change ownership of the land which remains with the Crown. An alternative option would be to pursue the vesting of the subject land where the land ceases to be administered by the Crown. Such an approach was suggested to DOC however this was not their preferred approach to addressing the management changes.

There are likely to be some costs to TCDC in taking on control and management responsibilities for the sites. At the time of writing the report these had not been quantified however by the time the report is considered at the community board meeting further information should be available. As a general guide, Council already maintains and pays costs for the Stewart Stream Reserve and its infrastructure.

In Hahei, Council is already 'onsite' and carrying out its usual compliance functions on the majority of Grange Road (for example compliance with bylaws and particularly addressing traffic/parking related issues). The additional cost of managing the car parking area should not be significant. Some financial return should be generated through the issuing of infringement notices in the car park area and along Grange Road itself. Significant revenue should be generated if a pay and display area is developed at the top of Grange Road based on recent experience of implementing a similar approach at Hot Water Beach.

In relation to the Hahei beachfront, Council already manages the beachfront reserve area and the concessions in the vicinity of it and other areas of Hahei. Again the costs are expected to be minimal. Concessions at the car park at the top of Grange Road are currently managed by DOC. These include a concession to the NZ Bus Company and a coffee cart concession. To achieve consistent management of the carpark area it is recommended that TCDC assume management of these concessions as well with a cost/revenue sharing approach. The initial DOC preference is for DOC to retain

management of these concessions however this element could be discussed further depending on the outcome of the Community Board decisions on this report.

There will be some legal and surveying costs associated with the process (for example the preparation of an L.T. plan defining the exact areas to transfer to TCDC. It is estimated that this should not exceed \$10000 and will be covered from existing Mercury Bay parks and reserves budgets.

In the draft 2015/25 LTP process, Council consulted on the introduction of parking fees at Hahei. At the time of writing this report, submissions had been received and hearings held. Should the proposal to establish parking fees proceed, it is recommended that these be implemented not only in the new park and ride facility but also at the car park at the top of Grange Road. All revenue and costs generated from both sites are to be borne by TCDC. An alternative is that the top of Grange Road becomes a drop off only area.

While the detail is not repeated in this report, the Mercury Bay Community Board and Council successfully development an implemented a paid parking approach in Hot Water Beach in the 2013 year that now generates funding that is held for use on the maintenance and development of TCDC owned infrastructure impacted by tourism within the Mercury Bay Community Board area. The annual income at Hot Water Beach is ranging around \$45-\$55,000 (an exact figure will be available at the completion of the 2014/15 financial year in June). The income is expected to increase over time particularly with the extension of the paid parking areas. It is proposed that the same approach will be applied to paid parking at the top of Grange Road and the extended park and ride.

This report seeks a recommendation from the Mercury Bay Community Board in terms of direction for the issues addressed in this report. If the recommendation is supportive of progressing the control and management changes further work will be progressed to investigate and address the remaining process issues. A report will be presented to Council for a final decision and to obtain the necessary resolution(s) under Section 28 of the Reserves Act.

5 Suggested Resolution(s)

That the Mercury Bay Community Board:

1. Receives the Hahei Opito DOC Control and Management Report dated 4 May 2015.
2. Recommends that Council pass the necessary resolution(s) under Section 28 of the Reserves Act 1978 seeking control and management authority for the Crown owned marginal strip at the end of Hahei Beach Road, the land utilised as a parking area at the top of Grange Road Hahei (109 and 111 Grange Road) and the land known as the Stewart Stream Reserve, Opito Bay with the full legal descriptions to be confirmed.
3. Recommends that the control and management authority include the authority to manage concessions on all sites addressed within resolution two to achieve an integrated and consistent management approach, subject to further discussion with the Department of Conservation.
4. That the Mercury Bay Community Board Chair be delegated to make any further decisions or amendments required on behalf of the Mercury Bay Community Board in relation to the issues and land addressed in this report.

References-Tabled/Agenda Attachments

Attachment A - Email from Department of Conservation

Attachment B - Opitio Bay\

Attachment C - Hahei

[Attachment A - Email from Doc.pdf](#)

[Attachment B - Opito Bay](#)

Attachment C - Hahei