

MURIWAI BEACH VEHICLE ACCESS PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES AND FEEDBACK

Thursday 22nd April 2021
South Head Golf Club

Minutes		
Time	Topic	Presenter(s)
7:00pm	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Rachel introduces herself and Council staff, Stephen Bell, Scott DeSilva, Reg Phillips, Phelan Pirrie and Josh Grigg. RK thanks the public for attending and goes through housekeeping.</p> <p>RK describes the purpose of the public meeting – to receive constructive feedback on the future management of vehicles on Muriwai Beach. Feedback and discussion at the public meeting will be captured and submitted as part of the feedback process.</p> <p>RK explains that from the feedback received so far, a lot of people feel very strongly and passionately about this topic. It is mentioned that people have recognised there are issues in need of solving. Public meetings are a space for people to share their constructive ideas around how issues are solved. It is asked that attendees are respectful of others views and perspectives.</p> <p>RK runs through order of events including a short presentation. The floor will be opened for questions and suggestions following the presentation. It is mentioned that staff will be available after the meeting for members of the public to speak to if they prefer not to speak in front of the crowd. RK hands over to SB for the presentation.</p>	<p>Rachel Kelleher (RK)</p> <p>Various members of the Public</p>
7:05pm	<p>Presentation</p> <p>SB begins presentation. Outlines current context – increasing number of vehicles on Muriwai beach, increased number of pedestrians, highlights conflicts that occur on beach by virtue of increasing visitation numbers, outlines Recreational values, Conservational Values and environmental damage, Public Safety, and risks to public, fire risk - 145 fire events occurred, access ways and percentage of use, high survey and feedback submission numbers.</p> <p>Feedback from last meeting: increased/improved enforcement as a strong feedback point, a desire for better education and signage, improved current permitting system,</p>	<p>Stephen Bell (SB)</p>

7:20pm	<p>drivers ensuring they are suitably skilled or have an endorsement before driving on the beach, desire to create greater separation between horses and vehicles, a desire to improve access ways, alternative provision for 4WD and dirt-bikes (tracks). Options - seasonal closures, controlled access and flow on effects, greyed out permanent closure - strong feedback from the Waimauku meeting that attendees did not support permanent closure.</p> <p>The floor is opened for questions and suggestions. Questions are answered by SB, RK and SD.</p>	
7:20pm 9:00pm	<p>Verbal feedback received and recorded</p> <p>Feedback and suggestions from members of the public was given verbally for the remainder of the meeting and notes were taken (refer to feedback table below).</p>	All
9:00pm	<p>Meeting Conclusion</p> <p>Auckland Council staff were available after the meeting to hear questions or feedback from those who did not have a chance to speak during the meeting.</p>	All
	<p>Next Public Meeting:</p> <p>Muriwai Surf Club, 27th April, 7:00pm – 9:00pm.</p>	

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Feedback and answers

Feedback from members of the Public

- A member of the public mentioned that they want to see members of the PACE (Parks, Arts, Community Events) Committee at the public meeting. (Councillor Gregory Sayers arrived later in the meeting).
- It was mentioned by multiple attendees that currently Police do not have a strong presence on the beach and patrols are not often enough or long enough. Police have stopped undesirable behaviour in the past and beach patrols have been effective when they occur. Police need to have a stronger presence, increasing patrols and checkpoints at access ways. Police need to be asking people to show their beach driving permits and checking warrant of fitness'. Randomised police patrols were suggested.
- SB has explained that Police are stretched and under-resourced in the west. When an officer is on beach patrol, they are removed from a nearby community (i.e. Helensville). Patrols are dependent on what happens elsewhere. It is explained that Police alone cannot be relied upon to solve the issues alone.
- It was mentioned and supported by multiple attendees that the greyed out permanent closure option should be removed from the proposed management options section completely.
- It was mentioned that drones and video surveillance/CCTV could be used for policing of the dune areas. SB mentioned that many vehicles and motorbikes accessing the beach are not registered or warranted which creates difficulties in following up surveillance footage.
- The president of the OHV 4WD club has mentioned that most conversations he has had after the first public meeting were in relation to policing - not only police patrols but community patrols. An example from Foxton beach was described, where local community members acted as beach wardens – identifying and taking registrations of those who may be causing issues. A benefit of having community wardens was described as 'public approaching the public' (rather than a ranger or policeman). This could be a means of educating those who are less informed of beach rules or etiquette rather than being associated with a stigma of enforcement. Alternative areas for 4-wheel driving should be a long-term goal. He would like to see a smaller group of Muriwai community stakeholders discuss potential solutions to problems and see the problems solved as a community with the help of Police and Council staff.
- A member of the public mentioned that there is a negative stigma around 4WD vehicles on the beach – however they should be seen as first responders/coast-watch. A constant flow of vehicles means a constant pair of eyes keeping watch on things. If there are accidents or injuries on the beach the 4WD are often first on the scene to administer first-aid or contact help.

- It was mentioned that a member of the Northern surf life saving organisation said that closure would increase risk of injury as numbers would become concentrated at one end of the beach. SB mentioned that the previous seasonal beach closure was supported by NZ surf life saving at a management/organisational level.
- A member of the public asked how the statistics on vehicle access are gathered. SB explains that electronic counters are installed at each of the 3 access ways to the beach.
- A member of the public has mentioned that there used to be one track around the dunes however now there are tracks everywhere through the dunes. It was mentioned that the dunes look “disgusting” due to the tracks and the dunes are planted for a reason.
- A member of the public has asked what authority Auckland Council has to close the beach. SB explained that access ways/roads within the Regional Park can be closed by Parks (Coast Road). Parks has no jurisdiction over Paper Roads.
- A member of the public has asked if visitation increase information over the last 10 years is available to the public. SB explained that vehicle counters were installed in 2016/2017 and vehicle numbers have since doubled.
- A member of the public asked how many vehicles were issued with beach driving permits. SB answered in the vicinity of 2,800. The member of the public mentioned that 24,600 beach accesses in a 4-month period (as displayed on the PPT slide) suggests that the permit system and/or enforcement system needs improvement. Other members of the public stated that the vehicle counters could be counting the same potentially permitted vehicles multiple times. SB mentioned that there are a large amount of vehicles which are not registered, warranted, licenced or permitted to be on the beach. Education and signage as highlighted in the previous meeting would help.
- A member of the public asked if Auckland Council have spoken to Iwi about their position on the topic. SB has said that the conversation is happening, and their position is not known at the current time. In 2018 when Auckland Council reviewed the public safety and nuisance bylaws Iwi position was in support of the exclusion of vehicles from Muriwai Beach.
- A member of the public suggested a new access point further down coast road past the stream to avoid conflict and create separation between user groups.
- A member of the public mentioned that Reg Webber and Norm Smith (part of the South Head Action Group at the time) requested that access to Muriwai Beach via Wilson Road was given to Aucklanders. They would likely wish for it to remain open and accessible.
- A member of the public questioned the process of consultation – in particular the 3 ‘quite definitive’ options of Seasonal Closure, Controlled Access and Permanent Closure. It was mentioned that improved policing and status quo should have been added to the 3 options, which was supported by multiple attendees. RK mentioned that the public do not have to select a particular tick-box option and can type their suggestion in the free text box below the survey question. RK has explained that the status quo was not included due to current issues occurring on Muriwai Beach. RK mentioned Auckland Council are open to hearing different solutions and ideas.

- RK has mentioned that the consultation period has been extended to the 14th May after feedback from the public has suggested the survey/consultation was not advertised widely enough. RK has mentioned that any formal groups can come forward at any time to give their views or suggestions around what Auckland Council could do differently. It was mentioned that the July presentation to the PACE Committee will likely be delayed due to the volume of feedback received and to allow time for testing of ideas/solutions.
- A member of the public has suggested that a Muriwai steering group needs to be formed. Locals and the Muriwai community should have been consulted to form the questions in the survey that have been presented to the public. A community lead steering group was suggested, to work alongside Auckland Council to ensure that the voices of the local Muriwai community are being heard. The steering group suggestion was strongly supported by majority of attendees.
- A member of the public mentioned an example from Bethells where the community have come together to ease traffic and parking issues that are occurring – the same community lead approach could help to solve issues at Muriwai.
- Members of the Public asked for the community to be given time by Auckland Council to prepare and elect a Steering Group formed of local Muriwai Community Members before presentation of feedback to the PACE committee occurs. This was agreed to by Auckland Council members in attendance – and was strongly supported by a large majority of public attendees. A date is to be given to the community by Auckland Council for when the steering group is to be formed by; time is to be allowed for the election process, for appropriate discussions to occur and a proposal to be put forward by the steering group.
- SB has clarified that AT transport has decision making over paper roads, Auckland Council have decision making over Regional Parks and Forestry or Doc have decision making around easements.
- A member of the public has mentioned that most people agree something needs to change and supported a smaller meeting with leaders of stakeholder groups.
- A member of the public has mentioned that they are unhappy with seasonal closures as it means that the beach is inaccessible when friends visit at Christmas time. It was mentioned that if the beach is closed by Auckland Council – it would be opened by members of the public.
- A member of the public has mentioned that fallen trees are the most dangerous hazard on the beach - not vehicles. It was mentioned that the land is self-healing and tracks disappear in a few days. Methods of dune stabilisation should be investigated. Alternative provision of 4WD and dirt-bike space was supported.
- A member of the public has suggested lobbying the defence force to gain access to the bombing range for 4WD access. An example was suggested in Waiouru where 4WD clubs have asked for access to defence force land and access has been granted. Another member mentioned that defence force have to pay iwi to use lone pine road access which is a hurdle.
- Councillor Gregory Sayers explained how the PACE committee works – made of all the Councillors and the Mayor, 21 votes in total, 11 votes are needed to get through what the public want.

- A member of the public has mentioned that there is a risk of creating criminals out of people who just want access to the beach with gated access. Another member of the public has suggested that unimpeded access is, in general, what the public want.