

Waikanae Beach drop-ins on 6 and 22 September 2015 – feedback themes

Two drop-in sessions to talk about the future of Waikanae Beach were held on 6 and 22 September 2015. Residents were invited to share what they think the issues are for Waikanae Beach's future, what they value about Waikanae Beach and what information they think they need to be able to contribute to developing options for the future.

The first session, held on a Sunday afternoon, drew about 200 people and the second, on a Tuesday evening, attracted approximately another 70. Ages of those who gave feedback ranged from about 10 to well into the 80s. As far as we could tell, there appeared to be representation from throughout the area west of the expressway line and from the Waikanae River north to about the Pharazyn Reserve.

In addition, we received some comments by email from people who couldn't get to the drop-ins.

At the drop-ins, people were asked to note on post-its what they loved about Waikanae Beach and what their concerns were for the future. A number of people felt inspired to place ticks and crosses on other people's comments which were noted. We have assumed that ticks meant agreement and crosses disagreement. We have also assumed that people only put one tick each, but this may not be true!

Special character

The special character of the area came up both as something that people loved and as a concern – that it would be lost. Descriptions of what was felt to be the special character of Waikanae Beach were many and varied but a theme is evident – the atmosphere of the seaside village is highly valued. One person summed it up in one word – “perfect”, while another two said it was “the best”. The following words and phrases occurred multiple times in relation to this:

- Child-safe and family-friendly (20 mentions or ticks)
- Residential and non-commercial (16)
- Old-fashioned restfulness (13)
- Relaxed with understated built environment (6)
- Peace and quiet (6)
- Calm, slower pace, a place to breathe out (3)
- Unspoilt natural beauty, especially rivers, lagoons and beach (5)
- Holiday atmosphere (3)
- Quaint (4)
- Small (2)

Other words used were charming, beautiful, simple, local, community, untouched, rural-like and retro. One person stated they felt very lucky to live by the beach, which was far from the new motorway.

What we love

People loved a wide range of features, with several standing out – those which were noted multiple times or received lots of ticks:

- The “ma and pa” food outlets, the cafes and corner stores were valued because of their contribution to the social life and cohesion of the area, because they are convenient and give great service and because they help give a strong sense of place. (10 mentions or ticks)
- The fantastic clean physical/natural environment, especially the river, the beach, the sky and sunsets, the lagoons and the wildlife (particularly the unique birdlife) were also highly valued. (8) Nga Manu Nature Reserve, Waimea Lagoon, and the scientific reserve at the river mouth were identified as three particularly special places. One person noted their appreciation that specific flora has been planted to attract birds.
- The cycleways, walkways and bridleways were valued for their ability to give people safe ways of getting around the area away from traffic and accessing the lagoons, rivers, and beach. People both loved using them and loved seeing others do so, especially families spending time together. (13)
- A wide range of things were valued about the built environment – buildings and streetscapes (15) – including the:
 - diversity of the housing with the mix of permanent residences and baches/weekend places, without any high rises, apartment blocks or commercial buildings at the beach
 - old baches
 - small number of multi-unit dwellings
 - streets in the old beach area without kerbs and channels were seen as contributing to the atmosphere of the coastal village while helping to manage quantity and quality of run-off (7)
 - macrocarpa hedges, the old fences and the Norfolk pines
 - beautiful views from the golf course
 - camping spots along the beach for RVs
 - power lines
- The quietness of the area, including the low traffic flows which make it feel safe (5)
- The leisure facilities, such as tennis courts, parks and bowling club (2)
- The fact that the beautiful beach is public, not restricted by private ownership (1) and not controlled by developers (1)
- The ability to walk dogs off leash on parts of the beach (3).

Many of these thoughts can perhaps be summed up in the following comment:

“Strong sense of place – baches, houses, greenery and leisure amenities represent physical and cultural legacies from the past ”

What we’re concerned about

Feedback on what people were concerned about was broad-ranging but much of it can be clustered in themes.

Theme 1: Development

There is a clear concern that intensification of development will lead to a loss of the loved character of Waikanae Beach. Some were afraid that the intensification of development could make Waikanae Beach less family-friendly, while several were concerned about the growth in population. One person noted that regulations are needed to minimise the impact of any development (including residential) on the landscape.

Many comments were opposed to buildings higher than 2 storeys and to large-scale development, particularly of retirement villages and commercial activities. Some said it was important to ensure that local businesses were not 'taken over' by big business. There was a very strongly-supported call for no change to the residential zoning without full community consultation and a view that subdivision should be limited.

A number of comments called for commercial activity to be confined to its present footprint at Tutere St between Rangihiroa and Hemara Streets and in the Te Moana/Rauparaha/Ono St triangle.

Most of the views could be summarised by a comment that attracted a large number of ticks which simply said "think small" and requests to designate the area west of the expressway as a "Zone of Special Significance" or a heritage area. Someone suggested that covenants could be used to protect building types.

As a counterbalance to these suggestions, there was a lone call to "stop prescriptive measures in the PDP/SEV (let us live!)"

Residential

Comments specific to residential development were:

- Need design guidelines for houses to ensure development is in keeping with beach character
- No apartments
- No McMansions
- No developments where all of the homes are designed the same
- No low cost homes
- Keep small building:large section ratio
- Keep houses single storey
- Do not allow houses with more than two storeys
- Limit house size to 150 m² maximum
- Limit number of new houses built
- Keep suburbia in north and south beach areas
- Don't want to be Hastings St, Noosa

Commercial – non-residential development

As noted above, a number of comments called for commercial activity to be confined to its present footprint at Tutere St between Rangihiroa and Hemara Streets and in the Te Moana/Rauparaha/Ono St triangle. Calls for no further commercialisation of the area were

also very strongly supported. Some called for this to be enshrined in a District Plan change to allow commercial activity in those places only.

Where support for some commercial activity was implied, comments were generally along the lines of restricting its size and location with one call for restricting the number of businesses. There was considerable support for restricting further commercial development to the expressway interchange area, to east of the expressway, or to the Waikanae township. In the latter case, the comment was made (and supported by a number of ticks) that the township businesses were only a short drive away and needed support if they were to survive.

Specific opposition was voiced (with many ticks in support) to the following in the Waikanae Beach area:

- more liquor outlets
- chain retail outlets such as
 - Supermarkets
 - Takeaways
 - Large retail
 - Petrol stations
- high rise buildings
- commercial development, of any sort

Specific opposition was voiced to the following in the area of the new expressway interchange:

- supermarkets
- fast food outlets
- commercial development, of any sort

One person specifically commented there should not be a supermarket anywhere on Te Moana Road, and several said there should be no more supermarkets anywhere in Waikanae.

On the other side of the ledger, other people commented that some retail activity would be needed to service a growing area and this should be coordinated, along with a comment that some development should be allowed for social needs purposes. Two people said they wanted a Countdown, one person wanted fast food (eg, McDonalds), and one simply wanted more shops. There were also calls for *more* commercial areas such as shops and restaurants - with associated comments that such development should be restricted to preserve the beach character, and be small and designed to support social cohesion needs.

One person suggested that ultrafast broadband could attract quiet and clean businesses. There were also single comments in support of small retirement development, possibly a small service station west of the expressway to supply boaties and lawnmowers, and that community markets and community food initiatives should be allowed.

Other comments under the non-residential development heading were that

- a primary school is needed west of the expressway

- late-night music in bars should be restricted
- water supply needs to be sorted out urgently and there should be no further development until it is.

Others argued that it was very important that Waikanae Beach maintain its “country/village” feel, and not become another Paraparaumu Beach or Mt Maunganui. To sum up a common theme in relation to development overall, one person wrote:

“Change has to happen, but a high rise would be unfortunate.”

Theme 2: Traffic

Expressway impacts

Clear concern was expressed that the Beach area, especially the Rutherford Drive/William St spine, will become a traffic thoroughfare for people from Pekapeka accessing the expressway at Te Moana Rd. This was not seen as a welcome development. A number of people requested that there be no traffic lights installed west of the expressway, and two people stated that the expressway “must” have sound baffles / walls on each side, similar to what has been done in parts of Australia.

It was suggested that once the interchange is operational, accessing the southern part of the area from the Rauparaha/Te Moana intersection will be difficult – a roundabout was proposed.

Traffic calming & speed restrictions

Safety was an explicit concern with a well-supported call for a traffic management plan to calm traffic and keep volumes low so families and children can walk and cycle safely. The comment was made that the Waimea/Ono/Te Moana intersection is getting busier and becoming unsafe. The angle parking on Tutere St was seen as dangerous and its removal suggested.

Presumably also in relation to safety, a maximum speed restriction of 30kms was suggested for Tutere St by three people and throughout the area in another 2 cases. One person suggested raising the speed limit on Te Moana Road to 70 km in an effort to encourage people to continue to support the Waikanae Township businesses and to confine commercial activity to that location. Another requested an alternative connection between the two areas. One person expressed concern that weekenders and holidaymakers appeared to be less aware and/or less supportive of existing speed restrictions.

Boy racers were seen in several comments (6) as an increasing problem and needing to be discouraged. Three people stated that boy racers were a problem on Queens Road, Eruini Street, and Tutere Street, while another was concerned about off road bikes on the beach. One person stated that boy racers were particularly problematic at night. One person felt that more policing would help the situation, while another wanted to see the introduction of traffic calming measures.

One person expressed concerns about the quality and on-going maintenance of roads following the potential increase in traffic. Another person suggested there needs to be more

than one point of access in and out of Jonathan Smith's first subdivision stage (*NB: this needs to be queried*).

Public transport

In relation to public transport, it was suggested that:

- free bikes ought to be considered
- only 15-seater buses were needed
- small, local buses could be used for traveling to and from the village
- bus(?) routes should be extended
- numbers of buses should be increased at peak times
- number of express buses (ie, those that do not take the retirement home detour) should be increased at peak times
- the speed of the buses on Tutere St was a concern
- the bus route be diverted from Queens Road, up Champion Road, and down Weggery Drive to re-join Queens Road, with bus stops added as appropriate.

Theme: 3 Open spaces

Cycleways, walkways and bridleways

The various pathways for non-vehicular traffic (Cycleways, Walkways and Bridleways - CWB) through the Waikanae Beach area were mentioned many times as an aspect to be treasured. A plea was made for more green spaces and CWB. It was suggested that CWB should be prioritised over cars. Suggestions were made for improvement to the CWB such as:

- extensions of CWB in various directions – to Waikanae township/station/shops, to Te Horo through the northern end of Paetawa Rd, around all the ponds in the Pharayn Reserve, “around and through all beach and waterways”, as well as generally “throughout the area”
- the provision of bike racks at Waimea Domain
- ensuring tracks are safe for horse-riders (it was noted that the “kissing gates” at the Pharazyn Reserve are not safe for horse riders),
- providing access paths for users of wheelchairs and mobility scooters to get around away from motorised traffic
- linking the smaller tracks.

Open space

Several suggestions were made that the reserve at Rangihiroa St should be signposted as few people know it's there. It was also suggested that this reserve should include swings for over three-year olds.

A couple of people would like to keep the green areas by the expressway such as the golf course.

Beach

Specific comments about the beach access can be summarised as follows:

People like the multiple access points. Some want to keep public access to the beach as it is (with no concrete walkways and unformed sandy paths), while others emphasised the need for better maintenance of existing beach pathways and/or improved beach access by foot, particularly for older people.

A new designated walkway on the beach was mentioned as a good idea; another person suggested that a wooden boardwalk be built along the dunes from the existing Four Square on Tutere St over to Rangihiroa St. Somebody liked the plastic accessways while someone else wanted wheelchair accessible access and suggested that beach wheelchairs should be available for hire. *Note: requests for work to repair eroded accessways have been treated as service requests and passed to the coastal management team.*

There was very strong support for monitoring of the rule banning vehicles on the beach apart from at the boat ramp, with one person suggesting that more beach patrols would help to limit vehicle use on the beach. One person emphasised that, in addition to safety for people, this was important to protect shellfish. Someone suggested that an exception should be made for 4WD vehicles used by disabled whitebaiters during the season but several people disagreed, wanting the ban to operate all year with no exceptions. The fact that this included motorcycles was strongly stated and supported.

There was a suggestion that horse owners should be made to clean up their animals' excrement from the beach as dog owners are expected to.

It was suggested that Norfolk pines should be banned from the beach and that picnic tables, more seating and swings for over three-year-olds should be put in, and public toilets upgraded.

There were calls to prevent coastal erosion with one person wanting this to occur without resorting to a rock seawall. There was support for a call to protect the sand dunes with suggestions to ban sand removals and paths and cycleways actually on the dunes. It was suggested that the dunes should be consolidated by planting suitable plant species. Alternatively, one person thought that designated walkways might protect the dunes by limiting foot traffic to those designated areas.

One person felt the stormwater outlets on the beach were dangerous and an eyesore.

One person requested that the beach area **not** be "tidied up" – i.e no ropes and poles and no spraying of grasses.

Theme 4 Supporting wildlife

The presence of wildlife, supported by the natural environment, featured strongly in the comments about what contributes to the character of Waikanae Beach and especially so in the responses to the question, *What do you love about Waikanae Beach?*

Suggestions made to help enhance this aspect of Waikanae Beach were:

- Develop the sanctuaries further, including more dune planting and designated walkways
- Create a corridor from Kāpiti Island to protect both animals and plants
- Put better restrictions on motorbikes in reserve areas
- Clean up the Waimeha Stream , particularly as one person feared it might damage the dunes
- There is a tension between better access for people and protection of wildlife at Pharazyn Reserve.

In raising concerns about the new tree regulations, one respondent said, “don’t turn ordinary gardeners into criminals for pruning natives”.

One person emphasised that the Estuary Care Group does a great job with replanting and caring for the estuary.

Theme 5 Built environment

Several comments were made which can be grouped under a theme of the built environment and the community’s living space. Concerns were expressed and enhancements suggested including:

- clean gutters and sumps more often, both on roadways and near beaches
- organise rubbish pick-up (presumably litter?) and graffiti removal
- provide a free piano for all to play. This comment prompted another comment to the effect that a piano would get buried in sand and rust
- do not increase parking in Tutere St
- some roads need to be repaired
- all designated commercial areas should have clearly appointed and pleasantly designed parking areas.

At least one person stated they wanted more kerbs and channels installed, but four others said they did not want kerbs and channels installed because they disrupt the character.

One suggestion was made that Tutere St could be beautified with more trees and a second that more trees were needed at the southern end of Tutere St.

A plea was made not to plant along the river in such a way that walkers’ and cyclists’ views were blocked.

Two people suggested that the road signs into Waikanae Beach could be improved.

One person called for allotments to be established (explicitly *not* community gardens). Another person stated they valued the existence of the community gardens.

Freedom campers came in for some comments:

- there are too many
- numbers of designated parking areas should be minimised and policy enforced
- numbers should be controlled during the summer – it looks like a camp ground
- there should be more designated areas for self-contained campervans.

Theme 6 Planning for Waikanae Beach's future

Several suggestions were made as to how to manage the planning for Waikanae Beach's future:

- set up focus groups for various areas of interest
- consult with primary and secondary school students
- Council planning and consenting processes should be transparent.

One person suggested that Waikanae's old beach should include all beachfront areas from Waikanae River to Peka Peka.

Theme 7 Animals

A few commentators specifically mentioned that they value the ability to walk their dog off-lead at the beach, although some expressed concern over dogs walking off-leash in areas where this was not allowed. To help dog owners understand where and when they can and can't have their dogs off leash (and to help those who want to avoid dogs off leash), a map of dog access areas in Waikanae is provided with this document.

In addition to the suggestion that horse riders clean up after their animals noted above, cats:

- were seen as a problem near the scientific reserve at the river mouth requiring bird protection
- owners should take the responsibility to ensure all have collars and are microchipped.

Dogs also occasioned the following comments:

- better signage for off-leash areas is required so others can avoid them
- more inland dog walking areas would be nice
- don't like dog poo on the beach
- dogs should be monitored on the beach
- dog owners need to be held responsible for monitoring their dogs.

Theme 8 Timeline

Some commentators expressed concerns about how long it might take to reach agreement in relation to these issues, with a fear that development could happen before decisions were made and implemented.

Two comments raised concerns about what would happen when the Bowling Club goes on the market, with one of those two asking whether this meant that some "fast" decisions needed to be made in relation to preserving "what we have". Similarly, another commentator wrote:

"We will lose what we have as a community and special area if a long time is taken to sort this, as there are so many developers and retailers looking for opportunities now to sneak through fast."

Other comments

In no particular order, the following comments were also received:

- The outdoor pool is highly valued, as is the dog park at the end of Greenaway Road.
- A roundabout is needed at the Park/Te Moana intersection.
- Better basketball hoops are needed at Queens Road Park, along with a half-marked basketball court.
- A splash pad at Waikanae Beach would be valued.
- Some comments were made about the operation of the Boating Club which have been passed on to the Commodore.
- The power pole outside the Waikanae Beach Boating Club needs to be removed because, in addition to being unattractive, it obstructs the views from the Waimea Café
- The Beach Bowling Centre should be converted into another leisure sports area.
- The Golf Club should be developed into a tasteful, destination resort connecting local motel rooms and tennis courts with the golf club.
- Keep in mind seismic risks which will influence the future of Waikanae Beach.
- Use the Mt Victoria North (Wellington) character area design guide as a model for Waikanae Beach.
- Maintain the parking area at the golf course (is this a request to keep it or a request for maintenance to be carried out?)
- Some of the old, big macrocarpa trees in the old campground area (on private property) look a bit unsafe.
- Two commentators wanted to see construction money taken from current activities and redirected to local schools (eg, Kapanui School) or others with greater need.
- Too many selfish people!
- The development of a “beach destination” will cost the whole community, but only benefit a few.
- One resident would like to see a reversal in the reduction of services (e.g, removal of the mail posting boxes).

The following questions / comment were also received:

- Will the current infrastructure (ie, stormwater, drains, and buildings) be sufficient to cope with increased population levels?
- Does the Council have any plans for developing the beach area, or is this a “feel good” exercise?
- The Council needs to keep rates down, do not borrow any more, and live within its means.

NB: Comments on the expressway have not been included in this report as there is no longer any opportunity to influence the design or completion of this project. However, a representative of the Mackays to Pekapeka expressway alliance has been invited to be at the session on 29 November 2015 on transport and traffic issues.

Similarly, comments on the proposed medical centre for Te Moana Road have not been included as that issue is the subject of a separate process with legislatively-defined opportunities for input.