

Date:	Monday, 8 May 2017
Time:	9.30am
Location:	Council Chamber
	72 Lake Terrace
	Таиро

# SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

#### MEMBERSHIP

Chairperson	
Deputy Chairperson	

Mayor David Trewavas Cr Rosie Harvey

Members

Cr John Boddy Cr Zane Cozens Cr Barry Hickling Cr Rosanne Jollands Cr Tangonui Kingi Cr Anna Park Cr Christine Rankin Cr Kirsty Trueman Cr John Williamson

Quorum

6

Gareth Green Chief Executive Officer

### **Order Of Business**

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#### 4.1 DRAFT FREEDOM CAMPING BYLAW DELIBERATIONS REPORT

Author: Jane Budge, Senior Policy Advisor

#### Authorised by: Alan Menhennet, Group Manager: Finance and Strategy

#### PURPOSE

This paper seeks agreement to make amendments to the draft freedom camping bylaw.

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Freedom camping continues to be a complicated issue with no one solution that will satisfy all parties.

The evidence does not always support the negative perceptions that people have about freedom camping and Council is unlikely to mitigate these deeply held views. Council will have to balance these perceptions and the intent of the Freedom Camping Act 2011, which is very permissive.

Council adopted the draft freedom camping bylaw and statement of proposal for public consultation at its February 2017 meeting (Resolution # TDC201702/09). The consultation occurred between 17 February and 18 April 2017 and 137 submissions were received (including 7 late submissions). Hearings were held on 8 May and 10 May.

The Freedom Camping Act 2011 (the Act) explicitly permits freedom camping in any local authority area unless it is restricted through a bylaw or another enactment.

It is recommended that Council amend the current draft bylaw to bring it more in line with the permissive intent of the Act. Adopting an amended bylaw will enable Council to protect those areas currently under the most pressure along the lakefront and the smaller settlements.

As a starting point it is recommended an amended bylaw could incorporate:

- A restriction to certified self-contained vehicles across the district
- Restricted areas where all camping is allowed (those identified sites such as Mangakino and at Reid's Farm)
- Prohibited areas the urban areas of the settlements in the district, other than Taupo, except for sites outlined in the schedules as restricted
- Prohibited area within 50 metres of Lake Taupo.

This amendment could see Council receiving some criticism because it does not fully meeting the expectations from parts of the community. However, it would be more in line with the Act.

There are other management options that Council can consider in support of the bylaw, including active promotion of freedom camping areas through social media and appropriate apps, the provision of infrastructure and education of campers. It is also recommended that Council include sufficient budget to ensure adequate infrastructure and enforcement to manage the effects of freedom camping. This is best considered as part of the development of the Long-term Plan (LTP).

It is recommended that Council adopts an amended draft Freedom Camping Bylaw.

#### RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Council

- 1. Receives the submissions and late submissions on the draft Freedom Camping Bylaw and thank the submitters.
- 2. Adopts the amended draft Freedom Camping Bylaw as agreed at the meeting.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MATTER

The matters covered in this paper affect a large portion of the community, and it is considered a significant decision in accordance with Council's policy. A special consultative procedure has been followed in accordance with section 83 of the Local Government Act (LGA).

#### LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Freedom Camping Act 2011 (the Act) explicitly permits freedom camping in any local authority area unless it is restricted through a bylaw or another enactment. The Act allows a local authority to make a freedom camping bylaw which can restrict or prohibit freedom camping from an area within the district. The prohibitions and restrictions are intended to be the exception and not the rule under the Act.

Under section 11(2) of the Act; a local authority must be satisfied that a freedom camping bylaw is necessary for one or more of the following purposes:

- a. to protect the area;
- b. to protect the health and safety of people who may visit the area; and/or
- c. to protect access to the area.

The restrictiveness of the current draft bylaw may lead to a legal challenge if not amended.

The Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) decision by the High Court (Attachment – NZMCA v TCDC) shows that any freedom camping bylaw needs to be evidentially based and not too restrictive. The High Court found the TCDC approach where they prohibited freedom camping from specified locations and had collected evidence as to its impact in relation to those locations was valid.

#### PROCESS TO DATE

Council directed officers, at its May 2016 Meeting (Resolution # TDC201605/09), to investigate a potential freedom camping bylaw under the Act and establish a working group of stakeholders to consider the issue. The process to date has included:

- Established a working group of stakeholders and undertook four workshops considering the issues and potential solutions
- A survey over June 2016 to better understand the issues with 196 responses. About two thirds of the respondents acknowledged that freedom campers provide some benefit to the community
- Informal engagement with interested and affected parties
- A survey over November 2016 considering potential areas for freedom camping that received 223 responses. This survey highlighted the complexity and polarising nature of the issue
- Council considered potential areas and solutions at the meeting in December 2016 and directed officers to draft a freedom camping bylaw based of the areas identified (Resolution # TDC201612/05)
- Council adopted the draft freedom camping bylaw and statement of proposal for public consultation in accordance with section 83 of the LGA at the February 2017 meeting (Resolution # TDC201702/09)
- Formal consultation was undertaken between 17 February and 18 April 2017 on the draft freedom camping bylaw and 137 submissions have been received. Hearings were held on 8 May and 10 May.

#### **REQUIRED DECISIONS**

Council needs to make a decision around the overarching approach in the bylaw. The draft freedom camping bylaw has taken a very restrictive approach reflecting concerns from parts of the community. In contrast, the New Zealand Motorhome and Caravan Association (NZMCA) has raised serious concerns about the legality of such a restrictive approach in light of the permissive direction in the legislation. The NZMCA have indicated that they are likely to take a legal challenge against Council if the freedom camping bylaw is not amended.

#### MAIN THEMES COMING THROUGH SUBMISSIONS

There continues to be a range of views on freedom camping and the main themes coming through from the submissions included:

#### • Polarising issue

There continues to be a clear division between submitters with some looking for a very restrictive approach and others seeking a more permissive approach in line with the Act.

#### • Freedom camper profiles

There are different types of freedom campers with many submitters drawing a distinction between those in self-contained motorhomes and those who are camping in smaller vans and cars which are not self-contained. They tend to freedom camp because of its flexibility and mobility rather than the widely assumed reason being that it is 'free'<sup>1</sup>.

However, number of the submissions highlighted a growing subset of domestic freedom campers that are the baby boomer generation, recently retired, buying the campervan or caravan, and joining the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (NZMCA) and hitting the road. The NZMCA estimates that their members and the motor caravan rental industry contributed \$650 million to the national economy in 2014. The association promotes responsible camping and members tend to self-police. Their membership is currently over 71,000 members and is estimated to go over 80,000 in the next few years.

#### • Increasing visitor numbers

There have been increasing numbers of visitors, both domestic and international, who are freedom camping. This is a national trend that has been reflected in Taupo and is expected to continue into the future.

Visitor numbers are set to increase to almost five million visitors annually by 2023<sup>2</sup>. A growing subset are choosing freedom camping as their choice for travel and accommodation.

Ensuring sufficient capacity to meet the ongoing demand is going to continue to be an issue. Any major restrictions are likely to cause unintended flow-on effects that we are unlikely to know until they occur. What is now considered our peak time is also extending, as Five Mile Bay showed, being full at Labour week-end last year. Previously the peak tended to start in December and ended in February. This has been extending from Labour week-end through to April now.

#### Infrastructure

The provision of resources for infrastructure is important in terms of making freedom camping areas attractive and usable for both self-contained and non-self-contained campers. This infrastructure includes toilet facilities, car park areas, dump stations and fresh water.

Adequate facilities encourage campers into certain locations, ensure proper usage and improve the visitor experience.

#### • Ratepayer funding

There is a concern by some local ratepayers that they end up paying for the provision and maintenance of infrastructure to support freedom camping and that this is inherently unfair. Providing facilities comes at a cost and this inevitably will fall on ratepayers. Attached are some estimates for infrastructure (Attachment – Freedom Camping Infrastructure Estimates).

However, the government has recently announced its new Tourism Infrastructure Fund as part of its budget announcement on 11 May 2017. The fund will provide up to \$25 million per year in co-funding for the development of tourism-related infrastructure such as carparks, freedom camping facilities and sewerage and water works.

#### • Enforcement

Further concerns were raised about the need for effective enforcement. Council needs to make sure there are sufficient resources and priority is given to monitoring and enforcing any bylaw. Much of the enforcement is likely to be after hours which may see a need for external contractors.

However, the benefits of having a bylaw is the ability for Council to utilise the Act's powers, including its infringement provisions and the ability to ask potential offenders to move on.

Infringement notices have proven to be an effective deterrent to inappropriate behaviour. However, again Council will need to be mindful that they are unlikely to receive the entire infringement fee due to the inadequacies of the Act. Currently, the Act does not allow local authorities to make rental companies seek the infringements from international tourists similar to the Land Transport Act.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Kerns et al., 2016

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Stuff, 6 June 2017, <u>http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/92963646/nz-ill-equipped-for-5-million-overseas-visitors.</u>

#### Nearby property owners

There are perceptions from nearby property owners about camper behaviours at potential sites. This is a universal issue that is not easily managed.

#### • Time limit and curfew

There are concerns about the enforceability of the nightly limits and curfews. Enforcement is likely to require more time and resources, particularly if Council wishes to rigorously enforce the bylaw. There are a number of legitimate defences to any offence under the Act, including "I was just parking during the day" which causes issues. It is recommended that the night limit and curfews be removed.

#### • Fee system

Some submitters believe there would be benefits in having user pays facilities for freedom campers. It is possible to have user pays facilities such as electricity or toilet access, however the act of camping must continue to be free to avoid making the area a campground under the Act. Retaining the freedom camping status enables Council to access the infringement regime under the legislation.

#### Lakeshore

There is general agreement that freedom campers should be kept away from the shores of Lake Taupo to avoid user conflict and environmental issues.

Some submitters also indicated specific concerns for smaller lakeshore settlements. This was particularly highlighted when Genesis Energy closed their camping site at Tokaanu and the Omori Stream Department of Conservation reserve was overwhelmed. The Department of Conservation has noted in their submission (Submission #111) to be mindful of not pushing the issues onto their areas. Some submitters did not regard Ferry Road as lakefront given its elevation and lack of lakefront access. Those suggesting Ferry Road remain tended to be either NZMCA members concerned that Rickit Street was too far from town and Rangatira Park residents offering a solution to the proposed Rickit Street site. Engagement with the Mangakino community has highlighted its uniqueness and identified a preference for having freedom campers close to their lakefront. This would ensure that they are close to facilities such as public toilets. They recognised the economic benefits that these visitors bring to their area, with an acknowledgment that the smaller numbers of campers had a proportionally larger influence on the local businesses. Only a couple of submissions were received questioning the approach for Mangakino.

#### • Other freedom camping areas

DOC and Department of Internal Affairs also manage land within the district which they make available for freedom camping. The highest profile sites are at Five Mile Bay, Taupo boat harbour and Whakaipo Bay. While these departments have been working with officers the Council has no direct control over how they use their land for freedom camping.

However, council officers and DOC rangers do have the ability to carry out compliance on each other's land. The DOC areas cannot be included in our bylaw but we can work together on enforcement.

#### • Summer prohibitions

A couple of submissions suggested the possibility of summer prohibitions to minimise any issues arising at peak times. However, visitors are likely to want to visit at peak times similar to everybody else. Moving freedom campers away from the lake shore is possibly the most appropriate way of managing the peak times.

#### • Competition with paid accommodation

Some submitters raised concerns that supplying areas for freedom campers makes Council in competition with the private sector. However, economic impacts cannot be a consideration for a freedom camping bylaw under the Act.

- More detailed information is included in the attachments, including the:
  - Attachment DIA Freedom-Camping-Situation-Analysis that outlines the information gathered for the Minister of Internal Affairs on the gap between the perceptions associated with freedom camping and the evidence;

- Attachment Submitter Site Support that outlines the support or opposition associated with the various sites incorporated in the draft bylaw;
- Attachment Infrastructure Estimates that outlines the estimates of the various infrastructure that might be considered appropriate and which could be more adequately investigated through the Long-term Plan process; and
- Attachment Freedom Camping Submission and Hearing Report that outlines the submissions and includes officer comments.

#### OPTIONS

#### Option 1. Maintain the restrictive approach in the draft freedom camping bylaw

The bylaw in its current form is restrictive where the Act clearly outlines a permissive approach. A bylaw cannot override the powers of an Act.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul> <li>Some local support for blanket prohibition</li> <li>Does not require further consultation</li> <li>Council is seen to be doing something.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>There is a clear legal threat from NZMCA</li> <li>May incur legal costs</li> <li>Unlikely to meet the permissive intent of the Act</li> <li>May have inadequate capacity with unforeseen consequences</li> <li>Some of the economic benefit from freedom campers may be lost to the district.</li> </ul>

## Option 2. Amend the draft freedom camping bylaw to be more aligned with the permissive intent of the Act

This option recommends the draft freedom camping bylaw be amended and bring it more in line with the intent of the Act. There are a number of ways that such amendments could be made in response to issues raised by submitters.

As a starting point a recommended amended bylaw could incorporate:

- A restriction to certified self-contained vehicles across the district
- Restricted areas where all camping is allowed (those identified sites such as Mangakino and at Reid's Farm)
- Prohibited areas the urban areas of the settlements in the district, other than Taupo, except for sites outlined in the schedules as restricted
- Prohibited area within 50 metres of Lake Taupo.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul> <li>Unlikely to be legally challenged</li> <li>Likely to avoid legal costs</li> <li>Will bring it more in line with the intent of the Act</li> <li>Likely to have adequate capacity and no unforeseen consequences</li> <li>Council could ensure adequate funding is incorporated into its Long-term Pan (LTP) discussions for compliance and infrastructure</li> <li>Could be seen to be encouraging more freedom campers and the associated potential economic benefits.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Council could receive criticism because of not fully meeting the expectations from parts of the community</li> <li>Could involve further consultation.</li> </ul>

Analysis Conclusion between Option 1 and 2:

NZMCA has indicated that they are likely to judicially review Council if the draft bylaw is not amended. Any legal challenge could incur legal costs.

The preferred option is to amend the current draft bylaw. Council is likely to receive some criticism from parts of the community looking for a very restrictive approach. However, amending the bylaw would ensure that it is brought more in line with the intent of the Act reduce the threat of legal challenge.

Adopting an amended bylaw will enable Council to protect those areas currently under the most pressure along the lakefront and the lakeside settlements.

Council has the ability to review the bylaw in the future to respond to issues that might arise in specific places. The freedom camping bylaw is a mechanism for dealing with established issues and when issues arise the bylaw can be reviewed to incorporate new areas.

It is recommended that Council amends the bylaw to better align with the Act.

#### CONSULTATION

The purpose of consultation is to enable Council to provide Council, as decision makers, with an understanding of the views and preferences of those who might be affected or have an interest in the draft bylaw. The submissions that Council has received cover a wide spectrum of views and demonstrate that parts of the community will be dissatisfied regardless of which decision is made.

If Council decides to amend the bylaw consideration should be given to whether Council needs to seek the views of those who are affected or interested. That decision will be influenced by the degree to which council amends the bylaw and how comfortable Council is that it understands those views from the community.

The lowest risk option for Council would be to re-consult the community on any amendments, however that needs to be weighed against the costs and whether Council already has a good understanding of the views.

Ultimately a decision to amend the bylaw to better align it with the intent of the Act would be consistent with Council's requirements and therefore unlikely to be vulnerable to challenge.

#### COMMUNICATION/MEDIA

This matter is of significant public interest and officers will ensure the decision and ongoing processes are clearly communicated through the appropriate channels.

#### CONCLUSION

Freedom camping is a complicated issue with no one solution and continues to be polarising.

The evidence often does not support the perceptions that people have about freedom camping. Council is unlikely to mitigate these deeply held views and will have to balance the expectations of parts of the community with the desires of other parts of the community for flexibility and the intent of the Act which is very permissive.

Of significant concern is the threat by NZMCA indicating that they are likely to judicially review Council if the draft bylaw is not amended.

As a consequence of the submissions received it is recommended that Council amend the current draft bylaw. Council is likely to receive some criticism from parts of the community regarding expectations of a very restrictive approach, however, this will ensure that the bylaw is brought more in line with the intent of the Act.

Adopting an amended bylaw will also enable Council to protect those areas currently under the most pressure along the lakefront and the smaller settlements.

The bylaw can only respond to the current issues which means that if new issues arise in the future Council may need to review the bylaw. There are other management options that Council can consider in support of the bylaw, including active promotion of freedom camping areas through social media and appropriate apps, the provision of infrastructure and education of campers. It is also recommended that Council include sufficient budget to ensure adequate infrastructure and enforcement to manage the effects of freedom camping.

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- DIA Freedom-Camping-Situational-Analysis (A1973025) 1.
- Freedom Camping (all camping) Infrastructure Estimates (A1876267) 2.
- Freedom Camping Infrastructure Estimates (A1876267) 3.
- 4.
- NZ Motor Caravan Assoc v Thames-Coromandel Dist Council High Court Judgment 25 Aug 2014 5. (A1332865) 🛣

#### 4.2 REID'S FARM RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW DELIBERATIONS REPORT

Author: Jane Budge, Senior Policy Advisor

Authorised by: Alan Menhennet, Group Manager: Finance and Strategy

#### PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider the results of the consultation on the Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve Management Plan undertaken in early 2017 and adopt the finalised reserve management plan.

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reserve management plans let people know what they can do at reserves, and how council manages their daily operation.

This item presents options for the Council to consider on the review of the Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm recreation reserve.

Consideration is given to the attached submissions report where submissions to the revised plan are analysed and recommendations are made on how specific points could be addressed through amendments to the draft reserve management plan.

It is recommended that Council accepts the suggested changes to the draft revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve as set out in the attached submissions report and adopt the revised plan.

#### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That Council

- 1. Receives the submissions in relation to the draft revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve.
- 2. Adopts the revised Reserve Management Plan (insert objective reference) for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve

#### BACKGROUND

Council adopted the draft revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve at its meeting on 13 December 2016 (refer item 5.6) for consultation and its associated background report.

The formal submission process was between February 17 and 18 April 2017. Formal notification was made under Section 41(6)(b) of the Reserves Act 1977.

At the end of the submission period, 16 submissions were received on the draft management plan. In addition to the 16 submissions a cultural impact assessment relating to Reid's Farm was formally submitted by the Ngāti Tūwharetoa Marae Working Group.

#### DISCUSSION

Attached to this item is a submissions report which sets out the submissions received, and a series of recommendations by topic.

#### OPTIONS

#### Analysis of Options

Option 1. Adopt the revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve as recommended to be amended in the attached submissions report or with further or different amendments as identified by Council.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul> <li>The revised RMP has been developed in collaboration and consultation with the community and reflects the outcomes of that engagement.</li> <li>The revised RMP will facilitate management of the reserve in a way that addresses current management issues and enables positive user experiences.</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>The revised plan does not align with the preferred outcomes sought by all submitters.</li> </ul>

Option 2. Do nothing - Do not adopt the revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve and rely on the current plan for the reserve.

Advantages	Disadvantages	
None identified	<ul> <li>The revised RMP has been developed in collaboration and consultation with the community and reflects the outcomes of that engagement, not adopting the plan will not reflect the outcomes of that engagement process.</li> <li>The current RMP will not facilitate management of the reserve in a way that addresses current management issues and enables positive user experiences.</li> </ul>	

#### Analysis Conclusion:

It is recommended that the revised Management Plan for Reid's Farm Recreation Reserve be adopted with the recommended changes outlined in the attached submissions report.

#### CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Financial Considerations**

There is no direct financial impact of adopting the revised plan, however there will be implications for implementing the plan. These will have to be addressed through the Council's Annual and Long Term Planning processes.

#### Legal Considerations

#### Local Government Act 2002

The matter comes within scope of the Council's lawful powers, including satisfying the purpose statement of Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002. The matter will enable the Council to meet the current and future needs of communities for good quality local infrastructure. (i.e. efficient, effective and appropriate to present and anticipated future circumstances).

The proposal has been evaluated with regards to a range of legislation. The key legislation applicable to the proposal has been reviewed and the relevant matters for consideration are as follows:

Under the Reserves Act section 41(4) council is required to keep its management plan under continuous review so that (subject to the reserve purpose) it can be adapted to changing circumstances or in accordance with increased knowledge. The current Reid's Farm Reserve Management Plan has not been reviewed since 1997, and requires updating in accordance with sections 41(5) and (6) of the Reserves Act.

The review process has occurred in a manner consistent with Section 41 of the Reserves Act.

#### **Policy Implications**

The policy implications associated with the management plan review have been assessed in Section 2 – Statutory Framework' of the Background Report for the Reid's Farm Reserve Management Plan Review. The revised plan is considered to be in accordance will all relevant legislation and statutory plans.

#### Risks

There are no known risks.

#### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DECISION OR PROPOSAL

Council's Significance and Engagement policy identifies the following matters that are to be taken into account when assessing the degree of significance of proposals and decisions:

- a. The level of financial consequences of the proposal or decision;
- b. Whether the proposal or decision will affect a large portion of the community or community of interest;
- c. The likely impact on present and future interests of the community, recognising Maori cultural values and their relationship to land and water;
- d. Whether the proposal affects the level of service of an activity identified in the Long Term Plan;
- e. Whether community interest is high; and
- f. The capacity of Council to perform its role and the financial and other costs of doing so.

Officers have undertaken a rounded assessment of the matters in clause 11 of the Significance and Engagement Policy (2016), and are of the opinion that the proposal under consideration is significant.

As identified in the attached submissions report and the background report (previously provided to council) an appropriate level of public consultation and engagement has occurred throughout the plan review process that reflects the significance of this work.

#### COMMUNICATION/MEDIA

Decisions made by Council should be communicated in the appropriate manner. It is considered that communication should be undertaken via a media release announcing Councils decision to adopt the revised plan. Officers will also write to submitters advising of Council's decision.

#### CONCLUSION

Option 1 is considered to be the most appropriate course of action for the Council to take when considering the revised Reserve Management Plan for Reid's Farm. It represents a comprehensive collaborative and evidence based process of reviewing the plan. This revised plan reflects the views of the community as well as enabling practical responses to the management issues which the reserve is currently facing.

#### ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment - Reids Farm Draft Deliberations Report (A1951572)

#### 5 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

#### **RESOLUTION TO EXCLUDE THE PUBLIC**

I move that the public be excluded from the following parts of the proceedings of this meeting.

The general subject matter of each matter to be considered while the public is excluded, the reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter, and the specific grounds under section 48(1) of the local government official information and meetings act 1987 for the passing of this resolution are as follows:

General subject of each matter to be considered	Reason for passing this resolution in relation to each matter	Ground(s) under Section 48(1) for the passing of this resolution
Agenda Item No: 5.1 Freedom Camping Legal Advice	Section 7(2)(g) - the withholding of the information is necessary to maintain legal professional privilege	Section 48(1)(a)(i)- the public conduct of the relevant part of the proceedings of the meeting would be likely to result in the disclosure of information for which good reason for withholding would exist under section 7

I also move that *[name of person or persons]* be permitted to remain at this meeting, after the public has been excluded, because of their knowledge of *[specify]*. This knowledge, which will be of assistance in relation to the matter to be discussed, is relevant to that matter because *[specify]*.