

31 October 2016

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Thames Coromandel District Council
Mercury Bay Service Centre
10 Monk Street, Whitianga 3510

Subject: Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy
Hahei Community Review of Draft Strategy

Dear Allan

Thank you for preparing the Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy and for presenting it to the Mercury Bay Community Board on 24th August 2016. We believe it is a step in the right direction, but there is much more to be done before the Hahei Community can support it. This letter sets out concerns and provides a basis for further work as we collectively develop an effective traffic management system for Hahei.

This letter is divided into the following sections

- Review of Community Board meeting, 24th August 2016
- Identification of Key Outstanding Decisions
- Comments on Mercury Bay Parking Strategy Document
- Comments on Mercury Bay Parking Strategy Document, Attachment A
- Comments on Mercury Bay Parking Strategy Document, High Level Action Plan

Section A – Review of Community Board meeting, 24th August 2016

We acknowledge the support of the Community Board in agreeing with our position that the Parking Strategy documents should be considered as Draft document and subsequently your lead in encouraging interested/affected parties to make submission to the original documents. However, we would like to remind of the following key points we made in our presentation at the meeting

- Priority should be given to the preparation an implementation plan for managing 2016/17 season i.e. Shuttle service with Commercial Operators, Park and Ride operation as per 2015/16. It is vital that this service is provided for the coming holiday season
- Any funding plan should not be dependent on Pay and Display charging at every car park. We should think of traffic management in Hahei as a long term integrated business.

- No final decisions should be made until April/May 17 to allow data collation/evaluation and time for the Hahei Community reach a consensus.
- A copy of our presentation is attached

Section B – Review of Key Outstanding Decisions

There are many decisions yet to be determined, all of which will influence our final strategy. Some are very significant and it is for this reason that we recommend preparation of the document be structured in a more collaborative manner. We are aware of the following key issues that must be addressed in the final Parking strategy

1. **Waikato Regional Council Involvement** – In many ways a precursor to the Strategy would be to determine if Waikato Regional Council could be beneficially engaged as a partner for TCDC in preparation and implementation of the Strategy. They have transport expertise and a substantial annual budget.
2. **Department of Conservation** – the Strategy needs to clearly be aligned with the Whanganui O Hei Coast Integrated Plan. We must reach consensus on visitor growth projections v Cathedral Cove Beach and track carrying capacity at peak visitor hours. The introduction of a seasonal walk permit system may be needed in the future and this would have significant implications for the Strategy
3. **Grange Road Cathedral Cove Car park**—Once agreement is reached between TCDC/DOC/Iwi, we need to consider the following.
 - a. If the parking area becomes drop off only during peak periods, then we need a Strategy that recognises
 - i. Overall Hahei parking capacity is reduced.
 - ii. More frequent bus operation (possibly may require additional bus during peak hours)
 - iii. There must be effective supervision of Grange Rd Car park
 - iv. Less traffic on Grange Road and through the Village.
 - v. Parking Revenue during off season would be significant.
 - b. If the area become a permanent drop off and bus parking only then items 3a (i), (ii) and (iii) will apply. Also
 - i. Visitors accessing Cathedral Cove via Hahei only have the Bus transfer option during commercially viable periods such as the peak. For the remainder of the year, the only option, apart from Lees Rd, will be drop off or walk from the Village entry car park or street parking.
 - ii. There will a significant loss of **parking revenue** (off peak)
 - iii. Potential impact on some Hahei businesses.
4. **Hahei Beach Front Car park**. We understand TCDC/Iwi is considering eliminating and/or reducing Hahei Beach Front parking. If this were to occur, there would a significant loss of car parking for either commercial operators and potential loss of public reserves. In addition,
 - a. Village parking capacity reduced.
 - b. Increases demand at Village entry car park-Concession holder customer base.
 - c. Negative impact on roadside/berm parking on all roads between beach front and Village entry.
 - d. Increase number of tractor/quad bike on beaches.
 - e. Parking revenue opportunity lost. (Note – local residents would required parking exemption passes, similar to Hot Water Beach)

5. **Purangi Crossing and Walk from Blowhole to Hot Water Beach** – At this point in time, no route has been determined, costed, nor funded for the proposed Walk to be extended from the Blowhole to Hot Water Beach, nor has a route been established to circumnavigate the Purangi. This means that until these walkway links are in place, visitors will predominately be ‘Tick the Box’ Cathedral Cove and Blowhole visitors. The originally proposal was to attract ‘day walkers’. Therefore, the concept of promoting and establishing a commercial shuttle servicing the proposed Lees Road car park is improbable.
6. **Lees Road Car Park Timing** – The timing and impact of the Lees Road car park will have a huge impact on the Parking Strategy. Given the delays in the preparation the Resource Consent Application and the uncertain outcome of the RMA process, it would be premature, if not irresponsible, to finalise a plan until the outcome the RMA consenting process is known.
7. **Peak Traffic/Visitor numbers** – The Draft Plan made only generalised reference to increasing visitor numbers and car parking demand. We recommend that the forecasts are quantified to serve as a base line reference when strategy is reviewed. We need more robust analysis of Cathedral Cove visitor numbers, traffic flows and parking demand to underpin the Strategy. A significant critique made in Brett Harries Peer Review of the MWH Report as the lack of verifiable data. We trust that the annual data collection, as recommended by MWH and Brett Harries, will take place every year.
8. **Hahei Entrance (100 Acres) District Plan Environment Court Challenge** – The Hahei Rate Payers Association, along with several Hahei residents, have challenged the new District Plan with respect to the Structure Plan proposed for the two properties at the entrance to Hahei. One aspect of the challenge is need to allocate land adjacent to the new Entrance Car Park for parking and commercial purposes. If these negotiations are successful, then additional parking space may be available.
9. **Pedestrian Safety in Hahei** – We would like a detailed pedestrian assessment undertaken to ensure that we have mitigation strategies in place at all hazardous locations. Examples are Pa Rd and Wigmore Crescent that become dangerous during the busy holiday season. Perhaps we should ban all on street parking at busy times, or alternatively, we could direct pedestrians to take safer routes. The road safety assessment could be a community led project, with support from traffic safety experts.

Section C – General Comments on Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy

We have reviewed that document “Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy” and have the following comments

1. **Seasonal Challenge** – It is vital that the Parking Strategy recognises the extreme seasonal nature of traffic and tourist flows. We see no evidence to suggest that this has been taken into consideration. Currently, from May/June to early October, there is little demand for visitor parking and the existing Cathedral Cove/Grange Road car park is adequate. Conversely, from Boxing day to approximately the end of the first week of January, there is extreme demand. Hahei then remains extremely busy until at least Easter, although more and more visitors are coming through to May. Further, visitor numbers are heavily influenced by weather, school holidays etc. This means that any

parking strategy must be extremely flexibility. What is needed is a flexible, locally managed, seasonal management Parking Strategy.

We recommend that more data on seasonal flows is collected and the Parking Strategy is adjusted accordingly. Further, we recommend that a locally based group has the ability expand or contract parking services as required. For instance, we should be able to work with the shuttle bus operator to have him work longer hours to take care of visitor numbers.

2. **Parking Charges** – As you point out charging is a contentious issue. For Hahei residents, we are comfortable to charge at every car park, except the Hahei Entrance Car Park. We are concerned that the decision to introduce a Pay and Display at the Hahei Entrance Car Park has been predetermined primarily from experiences at Hot Water Beach, and by the need to service the investment in tourist related infrastructure requirements. The prime objective of the Strategy should be to encourage visitors to utilise available vehicle parks and bus transport where provided and we therefore recommend the following
 - a. From 2009 to 2016 the Hahei Entry Car Park has been operated as a free park and a base for all pay bus services. The objective of the community driven initiative, was to reduce the impact of visitor traffic on the Village during the peak holiday period and provide a service to visitors. We believe that this car park should remain as a free car park, servicing the proposed adjacent commercial tourist servicing area.
 - b. Hot Water Beach visitor parking is adjacent to the prime attraction, unlike Hahei Entrance Car Park. Furthermore, there are no berms or alternative streets to park at Hot Water Beach.
 - c. Hahei Village entry car park is 2.1 km from Cathedral Cove Car park and 600 m from Hahei Beach. Without a shuttle service, the walk to Cathedral Cove is additional 4km – not a very attractive prospect to most people, and so inevitably, they will attempt to find parking in the Hahei Village.
 - d. Hahei has numerous streets/berms which visitors could park on without paying (Map attached). The Hahei Community will never agree to these areas being subjected to the same measures as Grange Road (road markings and signage) to control seasonal peak traffic.
 - e. Any activity that discourages the use of the Village entry car park not only impacts on the Community but reduced patronage effects commercial viability of a transport provider.
 - f. The independent MWH Traffic Management report expressed concerns that given the free street parking options, the concept of Pay and Display could have negative effects. This was also endorsed in the Peer Review (Brett Harries,) - “Why would people pay when they can park closer to the Beach and/or Grange Road for free.”
 - g. Hahei residents are committed to promoting Hahei as a walking village and so any tourist cars entering Hahei, particularly during the busy holiday season, are undesirable. We must therefore do everything possible to encourage visitors to use the Entrance Car Park
 - h. We think you should consider all parking facilities in South Mercury Bay as a single business entity, and look at overall income and costs as whole. This means that parking income from Grange Rd, Lees Rd, Hot Water Beach, and other car parks would be consolidated, and the overall return on all parking income analysed. Any income could be spent in the area not necessarily in the

local area where it is generated. We would be happy to see an income from parking be used to promote tourism in South Mercury Bay generally

3. **Parking Management Working Group** – We recommend that South Mercury Bay Parking Management Group is formed to oversee development and operation of parking in Mercury Bay South. The group would include representatives from Hot Water Beach, Hahei, Cooks Beach, Whitianga TCDC Area office, and relevant tourist operators. Traffic management is a very local issue and needs to be managed by residents and business owners.
4. **Camper Van and Freedom Camping** – the Parking Strategy fails to address management challenges related to Camper Van and Motor Homes. The number visiting the area is increasing rapidly and are they are causing serious congestion periodically. A targeted management plan is needed to Camper Vans only to ensure they venture into approved locations only.

Section D – Comments on Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy – Attachment A

1. **Section 4 Parking Strategy Guiding Principles** – We have reviewed this section have the following comments
 - a. We believe all public transport should be paid for by users. There should be no subsidies from rate payers. If the car parks are located correctly, the bus operation should be profitable.
 - b. We think implementing a differential pricing policy is too complicated and not worth effort
 - c. While we support the concept of encouraging visitors to use Whitianga as a base, the will happen only if there is a natural commercial reason for tourists to go to Whitianga. We do not see as TCDC's role to modify the behaviour of tourists.
 - d. Agreed
 - e. We do not think TCDC should "provide a bus service..." This is the role of commercial operators
 - f. Agreed
 - g. Pricing policy is the responsibility of commercial operators
 - h. Agreed
 - i. As a community, we have not discussed the elimination of beach front parking. This needs more consultation
 - j. Agreed, but also recognise the rights of property owners to a peaceful existence
 - k. Agreed. But signage should be implemented in consultation with local businesses and residents
 - l. Agreed
 - m. Agreed, except for Hahei Entrance Carpark. See comments above.
 - n. Agreed. This is very important as Hahei wished to implement a walking village.
 - o. Agreed – absolutely essential
 - p. Agreed
 - q. Agreed – this need consultation with Hahei residents.
 - r. Agreed

- s. Agreed
- t. Agreed.

2. Section 5 Implementation Steps and Timing

We have reviewed this section and have the following comments

- a. We believe there should be continuous consultation with the people most effected.
- b. We have not seen Communication Plan so cannot comment
- c. Thank you
- d. Look forward to working with you.
- e. We need to finalise signage plan urgently
- f. We believe the plan needs sign off by Councillors/Mayor only. There is no need for Walk Project Board to approve or not the traffic strategy.
- g. Agreed
- h. Agreed. Look forward to working with you.
- i. Agreed

Section E – Comments on Mercury Bay South Parking Strategy – High Level Action Plan

We have reviewed this document and have the following comments

1. Shuttle Bus/Park and Ride
 - a. We note that it is your intention to “provide a service that runs over the peak demand period...”. We think you should state that you will seek proposal from commercial operators to provide transport services
 - b. Agreed. We think is vital that traffic flows are monitored so forecasting can be improved
 - c. Expanding shuttle services would be nice, but it should be a commercial decision of transport operators
 - d. Agreed
 - e. Agreed
 - f. Agreed
 - g. Agreed
 - h. Agreed
 - i. Agreed
 - j. Agreed. There shall be no contribution to transport service from TCDC ratepayers
 - k. Agreed
2. Tour Buses
Agree with all points
3. Grange Road Carpark
 - a. Presume a Consultative process with affected parties.
 - b. Drop off only-seasonal or permanent? More discussion required.
 - c. With Consultation.
4. Lees Road Carpark.
 - a. More analysis of car park utilisation, peak v off peak. Commercial impact businesses and Bus provider.

- b. Perhaps contrary to encourage people to use bus to visit Hahei/Hot water Beach etc.
 - c. Is it equitable that all funds derived go to the maintenance and further development of the walks programme —revenue forecast? Maintenance estimate? Disagree as per earlier comments Parking Charges
5. Hahei Village Entrance Carpark
- a. Capacity requirement and peak parking options need to be scoped first.
 - b. Totally opposed for reasons previously mentioned.
 - c. Requires considerable discussion.
 - d. No evidence to support 400 capacity.
 - e. Community and Commercial input required
 - f. Should be considered when promulgating the strategy.
 - g. Investigation as to alternative parking expansion need to be investigated short term 2016/17
6. Hot Water Beach Carpark
No comments

We note from 'TCDC Walk update' that an external peer review group met on the 23-09-16 to discuss the practicalities and details of the draft Parking Strategy. The group consisting of yourself, Community Board members and including 'experts' in the tourist industry proposed a number of recommendations. We were disappointed that the local community Stakeholders were not invited to attend nor informed of the recommendations from the meeting.

Given that you have requested submissions/comments from Community and Commercial stakeholders we recommend that the next stage should be a transparent review via interested parties 'Work-shop'. Hopefully such a forum would give all parties the opportunity to elaborate their views and determine an appropriate strategy utilising local knowledge and collective expertise.

We appreciate that work has commenced in organising the Park and Ride for 2016/17 and there would appear that no other parking issues that require addressing until the Strategy document is refined in 2017.

Yours faithfully

Bill Stead



Chairman of Hahei Beach Ratepayers
Association

John North



Deputy Chairman of Hahei Beach Ratepayers
Association

Hahei Ratepayer's Review of Draft Traffic Strategy

- **No 1 Priority is plan for managing 2016/17 season**
 - Recommend
 - Shuttle Service with Commercial Operators
 - Park and Ride hours/days same as 2015/16. (Could consider Easter)
 - Free Parking at Hahei Entrance Car Park for 2016/17
 - TCDC tender for bus operator
 - Establish TCDC Operating costs
 - Grange Rd Car Park must be managed properly otherwise **CHAOS** again.
- **Funding plan must not be dependant on Pay and Display charging at every car park. Think of it as an overall business.**
 - Example - Hahei Entrance Car Park Free, but high charges for Grange Rd in off season.
- **Must be clear accountability for Traffic management i.e. Whitianga Area Manager/Community Board.**
 - Not Walk Governance Board, DOC, IWI etc.
- **Recommend that MBCBd do not adopt the South Mercury Bay Parking Strategy and High level Action Plan. Postpone decision to April/May 2017**
 - Current Draft Strategy needs more data (from next season) and Community consensus

We must have flexible long term strategy that adapts to changing demands

Normal Day at the Grange Road Car Park

Trip Advisor Comments

Cathedral Cove is a scenic location and worth the walk. The track is currently being upgraded. The walk takes about 1.5 hours.

There is very limited parking in the carpark at the entrance to the walk. Many of the houses on the way to the carpark offer parking for \$10. The alternative is to park at the village or Hahei Beach which has a pathway up to the start.

The cove is a nice beach but was crowded on the day we went - mid week during an overcast day. It was an impressive arch. Take plenty of water and your own food - no facilities after you leave the carpark



