

Objection to Higham Paper Rd Closure

30/5/10

Mr Roger Kerr-Newell
Chief Executive,
Rodney District Council
Private Bag 500
Orewa

Dear Mr Kerr-Newell,

We wish to make our objection to the stopping of part of Higham Paper Road; that is the portion of road known as Higham Rd, South Head and described as the parcel of land containing 6.6094 Ha being sections 1,2 and 3 on survey office plan 422172.

- 1 South Head Action Group was formed following Cater Holt Harvey's decision to stop access to Te Oneone Rangatira Beach. The group lobbied and agitated to have the Francis Dart Fenton Track opened for public use and thus preserved the right of South Head residents and the public to access the Beach. The group maintains its focus on preserving public access on this peninsula; encompassing all forms of access not just walkways. This paper road is heavily used which in itself demonstrates a public need. Had the paper road not been in existence, we would not have succeeded in our campaign and this community would have **no** access to the beach today.
- 2 This community deserves from our elected representatives, the time and consultation to plan for the future of South Kaipara Head Peninsula; and to date this has been sorely lacking. We have held three public meetings on this road closure issue to date, and many local people have expressed their concern that our notices were the first they had heard of this issue. The lack of consultation also includes the Narbey family whose farm adjoins the proposed walkway easement, and who have never been consulted by the Council on this issue, despite this being a pre-requisite to a road closure process.
- 3 At a public meeting on May 24th Noel Higham expressed concern that there is growing pressure from people to use the paper road, to access the Kaipara Harbour. He has also pointed out that the Higham family has taken care of the Higham beach site over the years. He contended that opening up the beach to the public would lead to degradation. However, we would like to point out that South Kaipara Landcare group has been able to take advantage of the opening of the Francis Dart Fenton Track, to undertake an environmental enhancement project in partnership with Ngati Whatua. This will enable the community to take guardianship and an education role in caring for and taking responsibility for our local environment. We are aware that South Kaipara Landcare has recently been awarded with accolades from Rodney District Council for their work in our community. Our local schools are also on board and this demonstrates the community is ready and able to assist the Higham family in the kaitiaki role.

- 4 Noel Higham's comments also point to the growing pressure to provide greater and wide ranging access to the Harbour. How can the Council be proposing the closure of a potential vehicle access in a time where this pressure is reaching such proportions? This move reeks of protection of private interest above the public good.
- 5 Our interest lies in providing wide ranging public access. Shelly Beach is at capacity during the summer months, weekends and public holidays and can no longer meet the ever-increasing needs of the public. There simply is insufficient space at Shelly Beach to meet all the conflicting demands of a steadily increasing Auckland recreational population as well as the growing population on the peninsula. This location is unsafe for young children and families when it is being used to its capacity; the water becomes polluted, the escarpment is unstable and the car park is hazardous. Even if development were to stop today, there are still some 200 titles yet to be built on in the South Head Peninsula.
- 6 There are currently only a small number (5) of paper roads to the Kaipara Harbour north of Shelly Beach. Three of these future access ways (Hedley farm Bishops Landing and Omokoiti) have little possibility of ever being formed. The Auckland Regional Council has stated that a road through Te Rau Puriri park would cost millions to form. Our Councillors appear to have got this notion stuck in their minds as the panacea for all future access concerns; however why is only one option good enough for this community? Their passion for the Te Rau Puriri vehicle access option should not cloud the issue of Higham Road closure.
- 7 B.E. Hayes (2007) states "the Territorial Local Authority in which a road is vested hold title to the road in trust for the public and is obliged to see that the right of passage is preserved not for the council or its ratepayers but for the public". There is little benefit to the public in closing this road, and developing a costly walkway at the ratepayers expense when the option to stay with the present alignment, offers far better cost effective options. It is stable ground (it carries buses with ease) and the present farm track road only slightly diverts from the paper road making any future formation relatively easy and cost effective.
- 8 The proposed easement access to the Kaipara Coast line is far inferior, choked with mangroves and swampy areas. This would require substantial money to be spent to bring the area up to a reasonable standard for public recreational use. i.e. swimming. At the proposed easement end there is limited potential for future amenities such as boat launching, a future wharf, sufficient area for picnicking, and this area **will not even cater well for swimming**. All of the above activities with the exception of the wharf are catered for now at Higham Beach.
- 9 **Section 4.3.9 Paper Road Management of the South Head walkway consultation plan, 1st March 2007.** A suggested alternative was to investigate options around with a possible land swap with the adjacent landowner. RDC would only consider going ahead with this or any other proposal if there was a "significant public benefit to the proposal". In this land swap option, we are losing a road and a beach, where is there significant public benefit in this proposal?

- 10 Closing this road is limiting options for future planning for wide ranging access; which may lead to opportunities for growth and development in this area.
- 11 We applaud the Higham Family for their generosity over the years to many young people in this and surrounding areas and there is nothing to suggest that this could not continue. There are provisions in the current by-laws to gain security for camps; which do not require the extreme and long term measures of closing a road which is not in the public good. Who is to say that the Higham family will even own this property in future generations? How can this decision protect the public interest for the future?
- 12 Whilst we sympathise with the Higham family over their concerns for their farming interest, however we understand fully these are 'private interests' separate from the interests of the public; and we all appreciate being part of a society that protects the public interest above those of private individuals and their selected and exclusive community groups. Why are our Councillors choosing to protect the interest of private individuals and select groups above the public, for whom they hold this road in trust?

South Head Action Group is committed to ensuring the rights of access to the foreshore are safeguarded for all, both now and in the future.

We wish to speak to this objection and to speak to this at Haranui Marae.

George Hill
Helensville

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