

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,

I wish to make my 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.

As the Chairman of the South Kaipara Head Residents and Ratepayers Association (SKRRA) over the past three years I and others have put in an effort towards planning initiatives in our community. These include: the South Head Walkway Strategy, the McLeod proposal, the Rodney District Council long term plans (LTCCP), Planning Rodney, and council hearings to the above. 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. This road closure demonstrates a piecemeal approach to planning; a road closure from a walkway strategy?

- 1 Te Rau Puriri Park the adjoining property to the Higham's Farm, is recognised as high quality recreational area. It is a Park where planning is in its initial stages. Access Linkages for loop walks and coastal access in the future are many and varied. All options for future planning should be kept available at this early stage. The potential to cater for ALL the recreational needs of this community, now and in the long term is limited in this location; I believe it has no future as a hub for harbour access.
- 2 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 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 drinking 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 the South Head Peninsula.
- 3 There are currently only a small number (5) of public access ways 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 the Te Rau Puriri Park option would cost millions to form; Higham Road is currently the BEST option for development and would be the least costly access to develop of any of them.

- 4 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.
- 5 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. Coastal access is somewhat pointless without any thing to do when you get there?
- 6 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.
- 7 **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?
- 8 Closing this road is limiting future vehicle access to the Kaipara Harbour. Our Councillors have taken up SKRRA’s suggestion to propose vehicle access through the Te Rau Puriri Park however this community requires more than simply one alternative. This is a red herring and should not cloud the issue of Higham Road closure.
- 9 I sympathize with the Higham Family having a road running through their farm; as our farm is also bi-sected by a road, used by the public for a range of activities. Like the Highams, Webber Rd was in place when our family purchased the property. I understand fully however that my farming activity is a ‘private interest’ separate from the interest of the public; and I appreciate being part of a society that protects the public interest above those of private individuals and 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?
- 10 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?

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

Ross Webber
South Kaipara Head
Helensville 0874