

Submission to Thames Coromandel District Council Draft Long Term Plan 2021 -31

12 April 2021

Thames Coromandel District Council
Private Bag
Thames

Attention: Sandra Goudie, Mayor

On behalf of the Hahei Residents and Ratepayers Association, we wish to make the following submission in relation to the draft Long-Term Plan (LTP) 2021 - 31

1 Executive Summary

Until Covid 19 hit New Zealand Hahei was in the middle of New Zealand's tourist boom. Now everything has changed. We have returned to a quiet costal village, with more reasonable domestic tourist numbers. How tourism will develop in the future is difficult to predict, and so our submission on the draft LTP is based on gradual tourism growth over the life of the plan.

Based on this assumption, investment in Hahei should focus on preserving our unique coastal village character and provide infrastructure to deliver safe drinking water and a progressively expanded sewage treatment system.

A summary of key issues for Hahei is follows

- **Visitor Revenue Generation Options (Issue 6 in LTP)** – We strongly object to any new parking fees in Hahei. TCDC should work with central government and the local community to develop revenue generating programs that focus specifically on all tourists e.g., Cathedral Cove Entrance Fees. We also recommend that TCDC negotiate substantially higher concession fees in relation to Hahei beach to reflect market conditions. Nevertheless, we strongly support our local operators, so a fair solution must be found.
- **Find more water, and Upgrade and Expand Drinking Water Coverage that Complies with new Water Regulations** – This is critical for our community. TCDC has already started this project and it must continue
- **Provide Sewage Collection and Treatment to Properties Adjacent to Wigmore Stream** –. The Harrison Grierson report explained that the existing treatment has the capacity to treat sewage from the 79 properties near the Wigmore Stream. Without doubt the unhealthy nature of the Wigmore Stream is partly contributed to by the septic tanks used by the 79 properties located adjacent to the stream. TCDC should commence negotiations with these property owners and connect them as a matter of priority.
- **Continued Development of a Walkable Village** – The walkways that have been built over the last 3 years and improved the pedestrian experience in Hahei, but more could be done.

We request TCDC work with us to continuously to improve the walkability of Hahei. Some funding for walks and foot paths should be included in the LTP.

2 Fees and Charges

While we agree with the concept of visitors and users paying their fair share of costs related to use of infrastructure in the Coromandel, we oppose the introduction of any more parking fees in Hahei. TCDC should not introduce parking fees at Hahei Beach Car Parks and Hahei Entrance Visitor Car Park.

While our community supports the park and ride from the Entrance Visitor Car Park to Cathedral Cove Car Park, we **oppose**

- **Parking Fees in Visitor Car Park** – If visitors had to pay parking fees in this car park, the whole of Hahei would be inundated with cars parking on our streets and verges. Also, parking fees would discourage visitors to use the Park and Ride bus. We think the income from Park and Ride Fees are sufficient
- **Parking Fees at Front Beach Car Park** – Parking Fees in this area would have a disproportionate effect on locals who use this car park regularly. It would also cause visitors to find free street parking, inconveniencing owners.

We request that the table headed Parking Fees – Hahei Car Park on page 49 of the document “Proposed Schedule of Fees and Charge 2021/22” be removed.

If TCDC proposes introducing any new parking fees in Hahei, this should undergo full consultation.

We believe TCDC should work to develop more creative user charge fees. Some suggestions are

- The Minister of Tourism has proposed that DoC should charge international visitors entrance fees for parks. If this policy is implemented and an entrance fee of say \$10 for Cathedral Cove visitors, then TCDC should negotiate with DoC to have say 20% of the fee income go to our community. With around 350,000 visitors, TCDC could raise \$700,000 pa.
- Grange Road Car Park Management Agreement - We also remind TCDC that the current agreement will expire soon. It is essential that agreement is extended as our community supports Parking Fees in the location.
- Concession Fees – As our Mercury Bay Community Board has proposed, priority should be given to negotiating long term concessions for tour operations. The concession fee should include fees to pay for infrastructure costs. While we strongly support the current local operators, we recommend TCDC negotiate concession fees that more accurately reflect current market conditions.

If we are going to adopt a truly no-frills plan, we recommend that TCDC consider eliminating payment of around \$500,000 to Destination Coromandel. This organisation should be self-funding, not a burden on ratepayers.

3 Upgrade and Expand Drinking Water Coverage

3.1 Background

Currently, Hahei is served by the following potable water providers

- TCDC operated water system, managed by Veolia, supplying approx. 150 properties.
- Hahei Water Association (HWA) – a voluntary group that supplies water to approx. 180 properties
- Grange Road Water Association (GRWA) - a voluntary group that supplies water to 79 properties. GRWA water complies with current water regulations.
- Hahei Holidays Resort - provide water to their clients
- Approximately 150 properties rely on rainwater systems.
- An unknown number of private wells
- Approximately 80 new properties may wish to access potable water, as covered in Structure Plan covering the entrance to Hahei.

Water consumption has been rising due to more permanent residents and tourists renting properties.

The HWA has decided they do not wish to upgrade their system to comply with new water quality standards and would like to negotiate with TCDC to take over their system. Requests to TCDC to take over the system have been rebuffed and so 180 properties, are potentially using non-compliant potable water.

All reticulated water systems take water from aquifers that may be interconnected. While the bores have been able to provide the required amount of water for most of the year, there have been severe shortages in summer for the last few years.

3.2 Issues

3.2.1 Compliance with NZ Potable Water Standards

The Havelock North Inquiry raised the importance of compliance with relevant water standards, issued by the NZ Health Department. We understand the TCDC water supply has implemented the necessary upgrades, but the TCDC water supply only provides water to roughly a quarter of Hahei's residents. So potentially, 75% of Hahei's ratepayers may be using non-compliant water.

3.2.2 Harrison Grierson Report and Three Water Review

We acknowledge and thank TCDC for procuring the Harrison Grierson Feasibility Study for Water in Hahei. The report provides a good basis for expanding potable water coverage in Hahei. Now TCDC needs to engage with the community to reach a consensus on its recommendations.

3.2.3 Three Water Review

We recognise the Government is undertaking the Three Water Review, and there is considerable uncertainty. We request that TCDC makes clear in any discussions with the Minister that Hahei is a particularly important village in the Coromandel and should be given top priority in any future investment plans.

3.3 Recommendations

The draft LTP in Option 2; 'Nice to haves' - Water Supply states Water Extension, Hahei \$3,394k spread over years from 2021 to 26.

We believe this investment is critical for Hahei and request that this investment is moved to the MUST HAVES.

4 Upgrade Hahei Sewage Collection and Treatment Systems

4.1 Background

Currently, 180 properties in Hahei are served by a TCDC owned and operated sewage system. Sewage from connected properties flows to a treatment plant from which it is discharged in the Wigmore Stream. But there are approximately 550 properties in Hahei and so a relatively small proportion of Hahei Village that has reticulated sewage collection.

The community has expressed great concern over the state of the Wigmore Stream which discharges in the Hahei Bay. Children often play in this stream.

In 2020, TCDC arranged for Harrison and Grierson to prepare a Wastewater Expansion Feasibility Study. This study recommended in Section 6.0 - Interim Options, that the 79 properties adjacent to the Wigmore Stream are connected to the existing treatment. The existing plant has sufficient capacity and so the interim upgrade would only involve installation of collection sewers.

4.2 Issues

4.2.1 Condition of Wigmore Stream

It is well documented that the Wigmore Stream is unsafe for swimming. The community wish to improve the quality to bring it up to swimming water quality. We recognise we must address the entire Hahei catchment area. This includes rural and residential area. To implement the total clean-up strategy, we will need funding from TCDC for wastewater and storm water discharges. In addition, we will need continued support from WRC to help adjacent farmers fence streams etc,

4.2.2 Health of our Tourists – Our reputation as one of NZ's top destination

If Hahei and Cathedral Cove is to remain a world class tourist destination, we must take care of our environment. Tourists come to Hahei to experience the pristine ocean and enjoy marine life at the marine reserve.

4.2.3 Property Connections

The most difficult aspect of implementation of the expanded sewage system will be connecting properties to the sewers. As we have seen in the proposed Emma Place expansion, not all property owners wish to connect. TCDC needs to work closely with the community to develop generally acceptable protocols.

4.3 Recommendations

The draft LTP includes in Option 2; 'Nice to have's'- Wastewater states Wastewater Extension, Hahei \$2,784k spread over years from 2023 to 26.

We believe this investment is critical for Hahei and request that this investment is moved to the MUST HAVE and is brought forward to commence in 2021/22

Furthermore, until the Wigmore property owners are consulted, and a definitive implementation plan agreed, there shall be no more connections to the Hahei Waste treatment plant. Any spare capacity must be reserved for Wigmore property owners as they have the most effect on the quality of the Wigmore Stream. We note with concern that recently there have been new connections being installed from Pa Road to a small new subdivision near the Church.

5 Walkable Village

As Hahei has changed from being a quiet seaside village to one of New Zealand's top tourist destinations, we have looked for a strategy that creates a sustainable balance between tourism and lifestyle expectations of Hahei property owners and residents. While we continue to develop a car parking management plan, we need to have a long-term solution that will work for everyone. During the past 2 years we have observed increasing numbers of visitors electing to walk from the Visitor car park. Feedback from these walkers, both visitor and residents, has led us to the concept of, a Walkable Village. This seems to offer the best solution for our Community and could well be an appropriate model for other Coromandel Communities.

The key aspects for the Walkable Village are

- A reduced speed limit for the whole of Hahei (40 km/h)
- Shared Space streets
- Integration of pedestrian crossing locations with traffic calming measures
- Connected, attractive, and safe walkways and footpaths.
- Visitors encouraged to park at the Visitor Car Park

The Walkable Village concept has general community support and now we must develop a plan that enables our community to understand exactly what it would involve. We need to address important issues such as pedestrian amenity and safety, effect on businesses, parking along verges, access to properties etc.

For day visitors to Hahei, we see the vast majority parking at the Visitor Car Park and then, if not using the bus, walk to the beach, shopping centre or Cathedral Cove.

Since we have general community support for the Walkable Village concept, we now need to develop a more detailed plan to allow the community to understand exactly how such a proposal could be implemented. In Hahei we have professionally qualified residents to lead the development, but they require support for TCDC staff to develop the concept to the next stage.

5.1 Recommendations

We recommend the LTP include the following

- Funding in 2021/22 for a qualified adviser to develop the Walkable Village Concept. We recommend budget of \$50,000 in first year of LTP, 2021/22.
- Funding to implement in the Walkable Village concept in Hahei. We recommend including \$50,000 every year of the first 3 years of the LPT, i.e., from 2022 to 2024.
- Priority should be given to the implementation of a safe walking path from the Pa Road bridge to Wigmore stream bridge

6 Community Support

All the above points were discussed at our AGM held on 3 April 2021. At the meeting Dep Mayor, Murray Mclean explained some of the issues that TCDC was facing.

After some discussion, there was a unanimous vote to submit all the above items

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Penne Clayton', enclosed within a large, loopy blue circle.

Penne Clayton
Chair of Hahei Residents & Ratepayers Association