

LOWER KAIWHARAWHARA STREAM, ESTUARY AND RECLAMATION STUDY

BACKGROUND PAPER ON PUBLIC/RECREATION PEDESTRIAN ACCESS (see paper entitled Land Ownership and Titles for some relevant information and maps)

1. Since the land around the estuary of the Kaiwharawhara Stream was reclaimed in the 1970's and, importantly, as no detailed port development has been carried out by CentrePort in the area north of the stream, the public have been using it. This has involved the Department of Conservation (DOC) managed beach on the northern edge – and also the beach at the estuary itself - for such things as launching boats, fishing, exercising dogs, enjoying the wonderful views around the whole harbour, picnics, model boats, swimming and generally giving residents from the northern suburbs the chance to enjoy a stretch of seashore - the nearest alternative being Petone and Oriental Bay. Water skiing, kayaking and diving could also operate from there. The water off the northern beach is reasonably shallow and safe for children.
2. The area could be available also for search and rescue and for oil spill purposes as well as for access to the motorway in case of earthquake problems.
3. In looking at providing some permanent public access, it is important to remember that the marginal strip of the northern beach is Crown land managed by DOC under the Conservation Act 1987 which has a provision to “enable members of the public to have access along the strip”. The public have a right to be there but access is virtually denied. Crown land also exists along the sea edge of the ferry's marshalling yards as it is “unauthorised” reclaimed land. (The comments relate mainly to pedestrian access but some thought could be given to vehicles if required, eg launching boats.)
4. In past years Wellington City Council (WCC) has indicated that some public access would be provided in this area, giving the public an 'expectation'. Archival material of 1987 referred to the reclamation becoming a Park with public access over Crown rail land via a footbridge connection at the Kaiwharawhara railway station. A 1993 WCC report to the Mayor referred to a meeting to determine the potential of the reclamation for recreation/tourist/historic values. Maintenance and enhancing of the estuary's ecological values was raised as well as the promotion of the area for sea fishers. In 1999, in the context of the District Plan Review, WCC zoned the area as Open Space but this was lost under appeals. At one stage, when the main wharves in the city were closed to recreational fishers, it was indicated that compensation would be given by providing jetties off the reclamation. This never happened. More recently the possibility of a WCC camping ground was raised but not pursued. Public access has thus been a subject for consideration by the authorities for some time.
5. From 2000 Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) made an effort to enhance the estuary itself with removal of much rubbish, improvement of the stream banks on the south side, and with plantings. This was done in line with the Pharazyn Plan 2001 commissioned by GW and WCC. A notice was installed by the estuary to highlight that the area was part of Project Kaiwharawhara (supported by GW and WCC) which encompasses many environment groups working within the extensive

Kaiwharawhara catchment. However this section of the Project has gradually deteriorated as no further plan was developed for protection and improvements.

6. The current situation is that – with the Interislander ferry developments and CentrePort's 'guardianship' of its land - it is virtually impossible for the public to reach the northern beach. Wire fences exist throughout the area and special permission is required from Interislander and CentrePort. Regarding the estuary, the public can walk along the signposted (Crown land) sea-edge on the (recent) concrete footpath from the terminal to the estuary. The very bare rock sea-edge could be much improved with suitable low plantings. (A 4WD with cradle was recently noted on the estuary beach having launched a boat, so this activity is still permitted). For the Trelissick Park Group to check rubbish and plantings in the whole area, permission is now needed whereas earlier our volunteer labour could enter to do this work..

7. Apart from the range of public activities mentioned in para 1., there are now two major proposals involving the public. First, there is the Great Harbour Way for walkers and cyclists to enjoy a route around the harbour which would cross this area. No solution has yet been reached on this issue. Second, there is WCC's Sanctuary to Sea Walkway which has frequent signage along its route from the Karori Sanctuary to the lower end of Trelissick Park off Kaiwharawhara Rd. This needs completion to make it a reality for walkers. It would seem that the best route for this Walkway (as raised in 1987 – see para 4.) would be to extend the pedestrian bridge at the Kaiwharawhara railway station over the remaining line, fence a short narrow track southwards alongside the railway, walk under the motorway by the stream to enter NZ Transport Agency administered land and thence north along an existing track to access directly the DOC managed beach area. It is an easy route and by enclosing/fencing a track, the public need not create a problem.

8. Assurance of continued pedestrian entry from the ferry terminal to the small beach at the estuary is required. This area is already accessed frequently by drivers of both trucks and cars waiting for the ferries. It is delightful to sit and watch the seabirds congregating at the outflow. However, around the estuary beach it is messy yet could be vastly improved without too much effort. (Possibly a separate group could be formed to look after the area). To reach the NZ Transport Agency and DOC administered areas (para 7) from the estuary itself, access to the CentrePort reclamation area would require entry over a bridge and possibly a 'safety gate' installed at the rail shunting line (similar to that already existing near the ferry terminal) .

9. Some years ago DOC made nesting boxes for little blue penguins in its Conservation site further upstream alongside Spotlight, but they were washed away in floods. It is not known if these penguins still inhabit the streamside at certain times of the year or could be encouraged to return.

ACTION

10. It is important that all stake holders (including relevant authorities) agree to a strategy for future commercial developments which would protect and enhance the area whilst giving full consideration to public access.. With the necessary will, the public could be allowed to have limited access to enjoy the many attributes, including

the beaches, the glorious views of the city and harbour, and partake in appropriate activities.

The strategy would involve :-

- preparing a detailed plan for the Sanctuary to Sea Walkway to be extended to access the DOC managed northern beach (as suggested in para 7) and to explore a link to that area with the ferry terminal/estuary route (para. 8), all with relevant signage.
- developing a route for the Great Harbour Way through the area with appropriate signage
- confirming the existing signposted pedestrian route along the sea edge from the ferry terminal to the beach at the estuary .
- and, importantly, enhancing the whole area with suitable layout and plantings, (with fencing and signage as necessary), so that a pleasurable experience is provided for the public including ferry travellers instead of seeing the miserable degraded area of this 1970s reclamation which currently exists. It could also become a most attractive area for all those who travel by road, rail and sea to see as they enter Wellington City.

Trelissick Park Group 19 April 2012