

Marlborough District Council – Annual Plan

Hearing Notes

4 June 2019

Presentation from:

Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association

Presentation to AP Hearing Panel – June 2019

Introduction

1. On behalf of the Kenepuru and Central Sounds Residents' Association (**KCSRA - Association**) I would like to thank the hearing panel for the opportunity to talk to aspects of our submissions on the Marlborough District Council's 2019 Annual Plan.
2. My name is Andrew Caddie and I am the President of KCSRA. I have been a member of KCSRA for over 20 years and a committee member for around nine. This is my second year as President at the Association. With me today I have another KCSRA committee member and former KCSRA President – Ross Withell.
3. The Association was incorporated back in 1991 and is an active organisation, with its efforts well supported by the community with over 280 – mainly household – members. We engage on a wide variety of issues on behalf of members and a feel for the diversity and persistence of the Association in pursuing these matters can be gained from looking at our web site www.kcsra.org.nz. As can be appreciated part of our remit is to engage with Council but we also engage with central government. We do this to be effective.
4. The Association has over the last 6 or 7 years taken up the offer of Council to have a say in the cycle of Annual Plans/Budgets and the three yearly Long Term Plan/Budget.
5. It is fair to say that over this time we have noted just how long it takes to make an impact on Council through this process. However in the last little while we feel we have made some progress – for example the installation of a public toilet at Torea Bay and a badly needed upgrade at the Te Mahia jetty facility was accomplished last year. We have also been very pleased that our pleas to bring back the rural roadman – to stop the little road maintenance jobs - such as clearing blocked culverts - turning into BIG jobs has been heeded with the trialling of a Sounds Cyclic work crew. More on that later.
6. This year we are tabling no new project funding requests, just asking you to keep in mind matters which agreement has been reached on but have yet to be implemented and a repeat of a plea for some targeted environment monitoring. Accordingly for administrative ease we divided the Association's submission into two separate parts.

Submission One – Monitoring of Water column effects – Zooplankton.

7. We raised this matter last year and from discussions with the MDC new Coastal Scientist not much has progressed so we raise it again.

8. Bivalve shellfish such as mussels are avid water column feeders. They feed by filtering what is in the water column to a given size. If palatable it is ingested if not it is ejected as pseudo faeces. Daily filtration rates of an adult green-lipped mussel depend upon who is talking and in what context. Suffice to say they are stated in a range of 200 to 300 litres per day per adult mussel. Bear in mind that in the intensively marine farmed areas such as Kenepuru Sound or Clova Bay we have hundreds of millions of these things filtering the water column flat out.
9. Plankton is part of their target diet. Put simply it consists of two types – phytoplankton (the grass of the sea) and zooplankton (the animals of the sea). The later is very important to the continued presence of shellfish, fish and so on. Or in the words of marine biologist Dr Brian Stewart “*Such stripping has implications for downstream communities in the form of reduced recruitment through the removal of eggs and/or larvae, and reduced food supply*”¹.
10. Our submission sets out the background as to why we believe there is a need for the Council to urgently investigate a research program that addresses the technical difficulties of monitoring zooplankton in the water column.
11. But just briefly. A number of years ago the Association became concerned at the seemingly limitless sprawl of aquaculture in the public space of the much treasured Kenepuru and Pelorus Sounds. Like any large-scale industrial development that has eventuated over a long period of time in a somewhat haphazard matter it has its pros and cons. Among the cons we felt the adverse impacts on the water column and thus the rest of the ecosystem from hundreds of millions of farmed mussels (filter feeders) in some of our intensively farmed bays and Sounds busy filtering out the available “feed” from the water column was being overlooked.
12. We decided to make a stand and via expert advice up skilled ourselves as to the scientific basis behind our straightforward logic of what was happening.
13. Sharing some of our concerns, the MDC commissioned a scientific assessment by NIWA using the latest and greatest in biophysical modelling techniques and analysis. For the Pelorus² this report when tabled at Council was said to be quite defensible - in other words the points it made were sound.
14. In short the NIWA biophysical model by running a scenario of with mussel farms and without confirmed emphatically that the negative impacts on water column indicators in intensively farmed relatively low flush bays like Clova Bay and in the Kenepuru Sound were predicted to be significant, particularly in relation to zooplankton depletion. Arguably the ecological carrying capacity of these areas was being exceeded with consequential adverse ecosystem effects.

¹ “Mussel Farming in Central Pelorus Sound”, Prepared for KCSRA December 2015, Dr B Stewart

² “A Biophysical Model for the Marlborough Sounds – Part 2 Pelorus Sound” Prepared for the Marlborough District Council, March 2015 by NIWA scientists Dr N Broekhuizen, Mark Hadfield and David Plew

15. The Association pointed this outcome out. It is fair to say that this was not well received. In due course the narrative shifted, that the NIWA model is over predicting such depletion and it was unreliable - at least on this aspect.
16. Then another tack was taken. This line of argument went – forget the model, in any event today's mussel farms more or less replicate the impacts on the water column that the long established extensive mussel beds that existed until wiped out by uncontrolled commercial dredging in the 60's. A coring study was commissioned by MDC, MPI and industry with the terms of reference confidently predicting the results would support this assertion.
17. Suffice to say the NIWA coring study³ carried out in the Keneperu Sound and Beatrix Bay area did not support this assertion. In fact analysis of the cores showed that rather than stretching back a 1,000 years, green lipped mussels were a very recent new comer to the Sounds.
18. Then yet another strand was added to the discussion. The means and method by which MDC sampled for zooplankton was expensive and uncertain as to accuracy. Accordingly we understand a decision was made to stop sampling or monitoring for zooplankton.
19. It is fair to say the KCSRA committee was somewhat flabbergasted by this approach. Surely the approach should be how do we go about addressing this fundamental gap?
20. Accordingly, the Association is disappointed that the allocation for funding in the Annual Plan for environmental monitoring does seem to not expressly address this vital, basic and known research issue. Compare the express allocation of **three million dollars** allocated from Council Reserves for the multi beam survey of the seabed in the Pelorus. That project is, with all due respect, research looking for problems to solve. In terms of the all-important zooplankton sampling, we very much have a problem that from a technical, operational and scientific viewpoint needs to be addressed.
21. We reiterate the Association's willingness to work with the MDC Coastal Scientist to make this pressing research project happen. In respect of the later we noted the media story about the new "camera in the can" water sampling technique and discussed the same with the new Coastal Scientist. He was aware of the new technology and had had some discussions with the Cawthron Institute on the same. As always funding is short.
22. We urge the Council to allocate an additional sum of money to urgently investigate a research program that addresses the technical difficulties alluded to above and gives priority to empirical scientific work specifically targeted at identifying, through control site studies or otherwise, the impact of mussel farms

³ A 1,000 year history of seabed change in Pelorus Sound/Te Hoiere Marlborough
Prepared for MDC, MPI and MFA April 2017 by S Handley et al.

on zooplankton levels in at risk areas such as the Beatrix Basin and the Kenepuru Sound. We submit accordingly.

Submission Two - Outstanding Infrastructure Projects.

23. **Te Mahia Wharf Jetty Upgrade:** As we understand it a resource consent was recently lodged and funding is available to complete this much need Health and Safety upgrade. We submit that the allocated funding be ring fenced.
24. **Sealing a small section of Kenepuru Road:** There have been a number of twists and turns with this project since the money was allocated 2 - 3 years back. The latest has been a shortage of local gravel v's the very high costs of carting gravel in to the head of the Kenepuru.
25. As can be appreciated our members are somewhat scathing with us about the seeming tardiness of the realisation amongst the "powers that be" that gravel is a vital, nay essential, component for road maintenance work let alone sealing.
26. However the Committee got on with it and over the last year we have worked with Marlborough Roads to identify a local source, progress negotiations with the landowner as to access and encourage along the necessary resource consents. We have been informed by Marlborough Roads that the access agreement has been signed off and crushed gravel should be available for the sealing work to be let shortly and hopefully commence in October/November.
27. Conscious of the bigger picture we are also heartened to hear from MDC/MR that in the new contract - currently being reviewed by the NZ Transport Agency - that expectations will be placed on the successful tenderer to take a more proactive role in ensuring that strategic materials such as gravel are part of the expectations as to what constituents competent planning. **Fingers crossed.** In the interim we submit that the funding allocated continue to be ring fenced.
28. **A Log Barge site in the Kenepuru:** Again this has been a long running saga. When the Council advised 2 - 3 years back that the funding had been allocated we thought it was just the process of locating a suitable site. Not to be. Long story short we now understand a refreshed approach by MDC is now being pursued. This involves working with local foresters and landowners. We understand that the inaugural meeting of the same with MDC was greeted with cautious optimism by attendees.
29. Lets be clear, there is no way you can expect the 500,000 or more tonnes of logs predicted over the next little while that could be taken to market can come out via Kenepuru Road. The road is simply not designed or capable of taking that

pressure - and that is just from a capacity point of view let alone health and safety concerns. The vast majority has to come out by barge.

30. We cross our fingers that MDC will maintain the pressure and allocation of staff resources to the new approach. In the interim we submit the money allocated continue to be ring fenced.
31. **Small Scale Road Maintenance in the Sounds:** As can be seen from our submission we see the dedicated Sounds Cyclic Road Crew as an excellent initiative albeit with one or three delivery issues. I can assure Council that our members and the two experienced civil contractors that we are lucky enough to have on the committee have been – to put it politely – immensely frustrated with what they saw as obvious inefficiencies and work scheduling failure.
32. One again we have worked with MDC/MR to try and address these matters. Our last meeting was something of a break through - the incumbent head contractor has managed to hire field staff who can use a tablet. So we are finally seeing progress reports as to what was done and where in a given period. Just the small matter of members agreeing that something was done at a given spot competently, but as ever we are hopeful.
33. Finally Councillors, this year the main roading contract is being put up for tender. I urge you to see this as an opportunity to come to grips with your slightly complicated roading infrastructure arrangements and make sure the more obvious shortcomings of the current set up are at least debated if not addressed.

Andrew Caddie
President KCSRA
4 June 2019