

Plans for surf park at Makorori Point revealed

A formal plan to landscape and manage reserve land around Makorori Point was already in motion long before recent roadworks took away roadside car parking at the popular surf beach.

GDC and the Ferris Family Trust have been drafting a Makorori Point Co-management Plan since the year 2000. This evolved from negotiations that finally saw the original owners sell two strips of strategic beachfront land to the Council last year.

On behalf of the people of Gisborne, GDC bought the 0.4209ha triangle at “Red Bus” and the rectangular 0.3175 ha strip at “The Creek”.

Both these blocks are popular car parking areas and provide traditional access to the beach for surfers and other beach users.

The trust says it received \$715,000 over two payments with the deal settled in 2010.

GDC also leases two other blocks from the Ferris Family Trust. They are the steep Makorori hillslope below the hilltop viewing area overlooking “The Point” (pictured) and the relatively unused strip of wild foreshore between “Red Bus” and “The Creek”.

The leases are into their third year of 12 year deals (with rights of renewal). With the lease agreements comes a GDC commitment to allow the Ferris Family Trust, all descendants of the pre-European Maori owners of Wainui and Makorori, a continued input into how the land is used and managed.

The co-management plan is still only a draft but it contains proposed policies based around the concept of “encouraging and promoting the provision, protection and enhancement of open space for the benefit and enjoyment of the people of New Zealand”.

Both GDC and the Ferris Family Trust says the co-management plan gives the Ferris family no dictatorial powers and is purely an agreement to give the original owners a “voice” in any decisions regarding development of the land which was originally a summer fishing village, or pa, of the Rakaiatane people of Ngati Oneone, who had their main settlement at Wainui.

The co-management draft plan contains



STAIRWAY TO SURFING HEAVEN: A viewing platform below the road on Makorori Hill and stairs down to the beach are suggested as a first priority in the plan for a Makorori Point surf park.

aims and objectives regarding the protection of the “natural values” of the area. One of its key objectives is: **“to encourage the sport of surfing in establishing the first dedicated Surfing Reserve in New Zealand”.**

This was suggested long before the NZCPS named Makorori Point as a “protected” surf break late last year. Ferris Family Trust secretary, Nikki Searancke, says the Ferris family have always supported the sport of surfing by allowing access to the surf over their beachfront lands at Makorori for over 50 years. One of the reasons for selling the lands at “Red Bus” and “The Creek” to the people of Gisborne was to ensure surfers had beach access for all time.

The flat leased area on the beachfront, linking the two car parks, will have new access turning bays off SH35 as NZTA continues its current work. It is suggested this park-like strip be used for recreation such as picnics, walking and school nature study visits. There is a suggestion that this strip may be “chained off” at night. While overnight camping is not permitted on any of the reserve, Ferris Family members would retain the right to camp there if desired.

Toilets and parking areas will be located on

the GDC-owned land adjacent.

For the steep Makorori hillside, the draft plan suggests a walkway down to the beach from the look out and car park at the top of the hill. A viewing platform just below the brow of the hill is also suggested.

Nikki Searancke says the viewing area at the top, for a long time used by NZTA as a “gravel dump”, is subject to a claim by the Ferris Family Trust that will bring this piece into the reserve as well. Upgrading the rough parking area on the hill top would be a priority.

While the Ferris Family Trust are obviously keen to play a vocal role in the ongoing management of the proposed “Makorori Point Surf Park”, it would be in a co-operative partnership with all other interested parties through the Gisborne District Council.

“The Ferris Family would have no more decision making powers than all other public users of the reserve,” says Nikki Searancke.

Asked about how the plan would be funded she says GDC, as part of its 12 year lease, pays \$5000 per year for the upgrading and maintenance of the reserve. There is already around \$14,000 in the kitty to start implementing the plan immediately. 🐦

Plan accepted, money available for Makorori surf park

The plan to manage and improve the surfing reserves at Makorori Point has been finalised and is ready to proceed, says Ferris Family Trust secretary Nikki Searancke.

She says the trust is now looking to consult with the surfing community as part of its co-management arrangement with local beach-users, represented by GDC.

Sorting out details of the Makorori Point Co-management Plan had been held for up some time due to confusion over

detail between the land leased and the land eventually purchased by GDC from the trust, said GDC’s property services manager, Terry McMillan, in late February this year.

However trust secretary Nikki Searancke told BeachLife this week they have now agreed on the details of the final draft and they wish to proceed with it as soon as possible.

The management plan includes provision for the Trust to suggest names for the reserve areas with a regard to the land’s heritage.

Once a name or names have been decided, GDC will arrange appropriate signage.

There is also provision for the establishment of a “heritage area” within the reserve with signage, plantings and seating.

The plan reiterates that “nothing in this lease shall limit the ability of the landlord to exercise their customary traditional rights in relation to the foreshore and seabed”.

According to the draft plan Makorori hilltop was the site of a summer village, or pa, which the Maori living at Wainui used to

Safety reason for barriers



PROTECTED SPECIES: Surfers now park their vehicles behind the “safety” of steel crash barriers after traditional access to the surf at Makorori was blocked by recent road works.

Makorori Beach has been changed significantly by recent road works.

NZ Transport Agency has erected a solid steel crash barrier from the top of Wainui-Makorori hill to beyond a new turning-bay entrance to the Red Bus car park.

They’ve also widened and realigned SH35 along the entire length of the beach. As part of the project they have “fenced off” the surfers’ car park area at “Red Bus” behind the “safety” of steel crash barriers.

Both NZTA and GDC say it had become dangerous the way surfers parked their cars along the narrow strip beside the highway to gain closer access to the areas they wished to surf – particularly from logging trucks.

Some surfers are angry and say logging trucks and forestry can be blamed for “insidiously changed the way of life at Wainui and Makorori” making it necessary for NZTA to protect surfers from being killed on the roadside by fast moving trucks.

The roadworks have been undertaken just months of Makorori Point being designated a surf break of national significance.

According to the NZCPS surf breaks of national significance must be protected

by “ensuring that activities in the coastal environment **“do not adversely affect the surf breaks”**; and **“avoiding adverse effects of other activities on access to, and use and enjoyment of the surf breaks”**.”

NZTA has responded to BeachLife queries with a statement saying: “We’re very aware of the importance of the surf break and its national and international significance. This was at the forefront of our minds as we carried out this work. To be sustainable, access to the break must be safe and recognise the increasing traffic volume on SH35.

“The car parks that have been removed are only those that were using the roadside parking on the uphill slope and that was dangerous both in terms of the risk of collision with passing traffic during the manoeuvring phase, and in terms of the risk to people moving around parked cars so close to the traffic lanes

“We’ve significantly improved the entrance to the facility, ensuring safe access to the beach for all. The work is not yet finished, and we will be installing a right turn bay at the gap in the guardrail where beach access is gained.

“In terms of access to the beach, a

access the rich kaimoana resources offered by the reef areas along Makorori Beach. Archeological surveys of the headland area have revealed evidence of middens relating to this activity.

As the tenant of the land GDC has agreed, in addition to rent payable, set aside and spend on the premises a minimum of \$5000 per annum.

GDC has carried out some maintenance on the leased land over the past three years with a total of \$1580 spend on litter pick-up, removal of dumped rubbish, monitoring of illegal camping, some weed control and

recent mowing and weed-eating.

The annual expenditure has been well below the expected \$5000pa leaving an accumulation of \$13,420 waiting to be spent on improvements or maintenance.

Council has also installed a new toilet on the adjacent car park at a cost of over \$25,000 and has maintained the toilet, car parking, litter bins, access stairs and general mowing and edging.

Mr McMillan says that while not actually on the leased land the car park it is often seen by staff and the general public as one reserve.

GDC says landscaping is part of the deal

THERE IS A requirement for the Council to develop and implement a landscaping plan for the surfers car park area at southern Makorori. This requirement was part of the purchase agreement with the vendors of the land. Council intends to consult with all affected parties over this, says Hans van Kregten, GDC’s Group Manager Environment and Policy.

Explaining the lack of early consultation over the works he says: “A non-notified resource consent application procedure was followed. While the natural heritage aspects were considered, the overriding consideration was safety improvement, and on balance a decision was made to grant consent. The barriers do not impact on the integrity of the surf breaks, and in my view the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement has not been compromised.”

“The barriers and the purchase and upgrading of the car park all contribute to improving safety for surfers and beach visitors, as well as highway users at this iconic spot.

“Safety in this area, which was subject to heavy traffic levels, was being severely compromised by random and informal parking. The combined efforts of the Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency have significantly contributed to improved safety levels in this area.

Mr Van Kregten says the car park is now in Council ownership: “The total cost to Council to date far has been approximately \$650,000 for the land purchase. This does not include the highway improvements undertaken by the New Zealand Transport Agency.”

formed and metalled track has been created southwards along the beach in front of the area where surfers work their way down to the beach to get to the sea. Previously there was no track there, and this presents a significant enhancement for beach access.”

“It is proposed that we agree on a level of maintenance for the leased area and use any surpluses that may have accumulated over the past three years to carry out improvements as outlined in the Co-management Plan. This may be spread over the coming three year period,” Mr McMillan wrote. The plan can be reviewed every three years.

Nikki Searancke says the trust now wishes to liaise with interested representatives of the surfing community to see how the reserve can best reflect the idea of a “surfing park”.

“Let’s get on and do it,” she says.