

Council's freedom camping proposal slammed as 'demonstrably unenforceable'

Freedom camping on Waiheke is not likely to be banned anytime soon, with Auckland Council sticking to its recommendation of a two-day limit.

Waitematā and Gulf Ward councillor Pippa Coom went into bat for the Waiheke Local Board's plea to ban freedom camping on the island at council's governing body meeting last week. But despite her efforts, council's draft freedom camping bylaw, which instead proposes a maximum two-night stay and prohibits camping in just four areas of the island, will go out for public consultation next month.

At the governing body meeting, council staff said they didn't have enough information to prohibit freedom camping on Waiheke and noted that doing so would require a new assessment and public consultation after the introduction of the new bylaw.

But Waiheke Local Board chairperson Cath Handley is hopeful this will be considered.

"They do have the capacity to ban it in my view, but they're not going to exercise that now?"

The local board, along with the majority of Auckland's 21 local boards, took issue with different aspects of the proposed bylaw.

Waiheke board members have significant concerns around council's two-night maximum stay proposal, which was put forward due to the island's lack of a dump station.

"We are adamantly against that pro-



"Council staff were somewhat, if not totally dismissive of our feedback. When you have 17 of our beachside car parks taken up every night over summer with no means of enforcement, it's a real problem."
Robin Tucker, above.

posal; it will not be able to be enforced," says Handley. "We don't know yet whether we might have to pay for compliance ... our board is not resourced to employ



Pippa Coom supported the board.

additional people.

"The issue for us is that the local board has a view which is not expressed in the draft bylaw. What is going out for public consultation is not aligned with many boards' feedback, including ours. Many boards are upset with the draft. Our local people should be responding to the board's view, not council staff's view which is demonstrably unenforceable."

Handley says the island's facilities will be stretched, and complaints will roll in just as they have done over previous summers. "We have massive homelessness relative to our population and freedom campers will compete with issues of homelessness."

Board member Robin Tucker believes council's engagement process with local

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	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN	WEEKLY TOTAL	MONTH TO DATE	MONTH HISTORIC
☁ WAI	0.0	0.0	35.0	5.6	0.5	0.2	1.0	42.3	150.6	79.6
☁ AUCK	0.0	0.0	51.0	2.0	0.0	0.0	3.0	56.0	159.0	114.7
☀ WAI	19.5°	18.4°	17.1°	16.7°	19.5°	20.0°	19.4°	18.7°	17.9°	15.0°
☀ AUCK	16.8°	17.1°	16.4°	17.2°	18.1°	20.2°	19.8°	17.5°	16.4°	17.3°
❄ WAI	10.0°	12.9°	13.1°	10.8°	10.0°	12.8°	10.7°	11.5°	12.2°	8.7°
❄ AUCK	12.2°	13.6°	14.3°	12.7°	9.4°	14.2°	8.9°	10.7°	10.8°	9.9°

Data by WeatherWise Auckland: 020-4023-0106

WAIHEKE MONTHLY RAINFALL PAST 3 YEARS – 2019/20/21

Lift off for helicopter flights probe

Air traffic over Waiheke, helipad usage, and the potential for a Special Use Airspace designation are under Civil Aviation Authority investigation.

The investigations are the result of the Waiheke Local Board and lobby group Quiet Sky Waiheke raising concerns around the helipad consent process and a resulting “proliferation” of helicopter traffic over the island.

A comprehensive, local board-endorsed application for a Special Use Airspace was filed with the authority last month by the 50-strong lobby group. Such a designation can be put in place to enhance safety or security within the civil aviation system, for national security purposes, or for any other reason in the public interest.

Quiet Sky members say the public interest justification for a Special Use Airspace is valid as the island is home to a large number of helipads compared to anywhere else in the country creating a density of flights during peak periods resulting in cumulative noise impacts and safety concerns.

The group would like to see rules implemented under a Special Use Airspace, such as ensuring choppers stay over water rather than flying over land, stick to consented flight paths and keep to higher altitudes. Members say the situation for Waiheke is “unprecedented and requires regulation, both to protect safety and lessen harm from noise”.

The group’s request also asks that all helicopters over Waiheke keep their transponders on so everyone can track their flights.

As a result of Quiet Sky’s application, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has held initial discussions with Auckland Council with the intent of improving the consenting process for helipads on Waiheke, of which there are 48. The CAA is also in talks with council to increase levels of cooperation concerning avia-

tion-related matters.

The authority has briefed the Minister of Transport about helipads on Waiheke and is working through the process of contacting all helipad owners to increase its understanding of how, or if, they are currently operating, including usage and flight paths.

“What we can say is that our aeronautical services unit is in the very early ‘information gathering’ stage and there could be numerous forms of engagement with various interested parties and stakeholder groups before CAA can form a view on the application,” says principal communications advisor Mike Richards.

“We will be evaluating the application against the requirements of Part 71 of the Civil Aviation Act and our primary responsibility in every application we assess is the impact on aviation safety.

“Historically, applications of this nature can require a significant amount of work, as any localised changes to airspace will potentially impact the surrounding controlled airspace. In addition, the airspace designation process requires consultation and this adds time to the process. We anticipate this application progressing over the coming months and will likely only be able to give a more accurate assessment after our information gathering is complete.”

Meanwhile, Auckland Council is in the process of responding to a Waiheke Local Board notice of motion requesting a report on options to increase chopper controls for the island.

Within the notice of motion, which was

supported by all members when it was tabled at the July meeting, the board asks council’s planning committee to enable public notification on all helicopter consents so people can give submissions for or against any future proposals. The board also asked the committee to review all of the island’s helipad consents to determine if any have lapsed and can be cancelled.

Waiheke and Gulf ward councillor Pippa Coom said she was keen to progress

the notice of motion through council’s planning committee, however Auckland’s lengthy lockdown is delaying progress.

“We are still in the early stages of determining our response and assessing the information requests alongside

the concerns raised,” Auckland Council’s general manager of resource consents Ian Smallburn told *Gulf News* last week.

“Since this notice of motion was presented, our region has had to shift focus to navigating our way safely through another pandemic response. Our staff, like many other Aucklanders, are juggling heavy workloads and competing priorities at home. We therefore ask for patience during these unprecedented times.”

Smallburn says he understands the issue is important to many on Waiheke.

“Council will ensure both the local board and the Waiheke community are kept updated as progress is made.” • *Sophie Boladeras*

“Historically, applications of this nature can require a significant amount of work, as any localised changes to airspace will potentially impact the surrounding controlled airspace.”

Mike Richards, CAA.

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