

Results from the Waikawa Beach Ratepayers Association (WBRA) Survey

The WBRA would like to thank all those who took part in this survey.

This was a survey to gather the opinion of the Waikawa Beach Ratepayers and members of the community to inform a submission by the WBRA for the council's consultation process.

A survey link was sent out to the 187 e-mails of past and present members of the Waikawa Beach Ratepayers with an e-mail stating that they were welcome to share the link provided it stayed within this community.

The survey was open for one week and closed on Sunday the 28th of January at 11pm.

Survey Results

Question One: Do you support the council reestablishing the Manga Pirau St vehicle access to the beach?

Answer choices	%	Responses
Yes	63%	112
No	37%	65
Total		177

Question Two: - Have you made your submission to the council?

Answer choices	%	Responses
Yes	33%	57
No, I am leaving this until later	56%	97
No, I am not going to make a submission	10%	18
Total		172

Of those who said they were not going to make a submission, ten voted NO and eight YES. Ten of the responses left a comment. The WBRA would encourage everyone to make a submission to council as it is a similar process to filling in this survey and comments are not compulsory.

There was also a Comments box – we received 114 comments, of these 68 (60%) were from those answering YES to Question one and 46 (40%) from those answering NO. This number of comments reflects the interest from the community on this issue.

Content analysis with illustrative quotes

The following is a summary that counts the number of times specific points were mentioned and includes illustrative quotes to give an understanding on the range of feedback received.

Small grammar changes have been made to comments for readability.

Those answering YES to question one.

Comments about maintaining a lifestyle that involved transporting family, fishing and equipment to the beach were the most frequent, with 38 comments (55%). This was followed by comments on ensuring access to the beach for everyone (18, 26%) and needing emergency medical access (12,17%)

We brought our property at Waikawa beach in 2004 for the reason of it being a seaside community and what beach life has to offer. Having vehicle beach access allowed fishing activities, kayaking, long days at the beach, BBQS and enjoying time with our young family.

We have lived in Manakau for 10 years and family time on the beach has been a big part of our lives. We Kontiki fish, camp and have family meals on the beach so without access, our family activities will be greatly affected.

As a community we need to have the council lease the land at the end of Manga Pirau Street, and have the ramp reinstated (moved back, to prevent more immediate erosion) so that vehicles can access the beach. I believe as New Zealanders and rate payers we are entitled to it. I do not wish the elderly or disabled to be victims of the current situation, due to not being able to access the beach. I would also like to know should my family, friends or neighbours have an accident on the beach, that they would be helped by our emergency services promptly to prevent avoidable death.

Access to the beach has been there from day one. It's why we are there. A close-knit community that is been split apart by councils' failings. Why should we have to travel up or down the highway just to use our own beach.

Sixteen comments, (23%), specifically mentioned themselves, family members or friends that were disabled or elderly and would not be able to access the beach without vehicle access.

We have a beach house at Waikawa Beach which is regularly attended by both very young people and also people with physical disabilities. It is impossible currently for those with physical disabilities to access the beach and participate in fishing, swimming and all the things that make Waikawa such a special place. Please restore access.

I have not always been able to walk and appreciate vehicle access.

Eleven comments (16%) mentioned their support for the environment.

I also believe we can work together to overcome concerns about dune, bird and wildlife protection. Many, many people who believe in vehicle access to the beach - are also the ones out there planting in the dunes and making sure the wildlife is undisturbed.

Locals look after their own area. Get us involved in planting. Protecting nesting areas and educating others that come from other beach access.

It is possible to be both a motorbike user and an environmentalist. We can work to live in harmony with the bird watchers and dune restorers. Please give us a chance to.

There were also five comments (7%) that supported vehicle beach access but had reservations or wanted limited vehicle access.

I'm ashamed to support vehicle access to the beach after the terrible behaviour on the private land, Reay Mackay grove and the posts made on Waikawa Facebook group over Christmas when asked not to use the tracks. The sign at the entrance says "Access to this land is a privilege and not a right" for those that bother to read it. Regardless of where the access is, we are at the mercy of mother nature, the tides and the river. We are adults and need to expect that access may be limited seasonally and be prepared, not throw a tantrum like a child every time it happens.

Yes, I would like access reestablished - but not at the cost to wildlife and without a major increase in rates. The current access works as it tidal ensuring access is limited to small time periods. wholesale access 24 x 7 will damage the beach and people's enjoyment.

I am in favour of limited vehicle access, so long as it is provided with strong, policeable restrictions which will be enforced. No motorbikes, no 4WDs, quads for fishing only, no speeding, and respect for other beach users, dunes, plants, nests and bird life at all times.

Other comments left by those voting yes included how important vehicle access was for their personal health and wellbeing (4, 6%), concerns about their house prices falling if there was no vehicle access (4, 6%), to maintain access for horses (3, 5%) and that no vehicle access had changed the community (2, 3%).

As an elderly resident, this is daily exercise for me and my dog and contributes massively to my health and well being. I feel the drive on beach access is a must for this community, for families to enjoy making memories, and enables their senior members to be transported along with them.

To be honest I think access to the beach will keep my Beach price high.

2023 Xmas/New Year the heart of Waikawa was missing, there was a severely depleted population and vibe.

Those responding NO to question one.

Environmental concerns were the most frequently mentioned reason with 21 comments, (46%). Followed by safety on the beach (16, 35%) and the irresponsible behavior from those with vehicles on the beach (14, 30%).

We have had several instances of dangerous driving near us where we feared for our safety and that of our three children when we have been using the beach - although this does not mean all vehicle users on the beach are like this, we have had enough negative experiences to be in favor of not providing and encouraging vehicle access to the beach and dune areas.

Strongly oppose vehicle access, seeing how much worse vehicle traffic has become over the years. Too much damage to dunes and even newly planted grasslands; motorbikes have become a real nuisance in both damage and noise and drivers often aggressive toward pedestrians.

Initially I was not opposed to establishing a vehicle access for people to take their fishing gear to the beach or launch a boat. However, the behavior of a number of people recently showing complete disregard for others plus being "terrorsized" by trail bikers has led me to believe that all vehicles should be banned from the beach. Just a matter of time until a child gets run over by them.

Many times we have seen irresponsible people driving through the dune areas and destroying the habitat. Also, people speeding up and down the beaches with no respect for people and their animals. We have never seen any beach access being policed and believe that a terrible accident could happen at any time. There are other ways for people to access the beach without motorised vehicles.

I stopped supporting vehicles on the beach after the January 7th. The Show of strength? I think they called it in a now deleted Facebook post. The community was forced to spend a Sunday afternoon listening to a bunch of locals drive around in circles for 3 or 4 hours to showing how clever they were. Later I saw people picking up the rubbish left after they had gone as well. This is not the type of behavior I expect from the community.

Those people over in Ray Mackay grove, Strathnaver have area have worked with the council to build up new dunes and protect the environment for beach goers and bird life. What have the Beach

Access fraternity done? Destroyed private property, made illegal tracks through private land and destroyed the council spinifex planting by the groyne by building a personal track to the beach.

Ten comments (22%) included cost as a reason for not restoring vehicle beach access and seven (15%) mentioned that vehicle access is available in other beaches.

Sadly over the forty years I have owned a property at Waikawa Beach, I have watched so many vehicles used inappropriately on the beach (which is supposed to be a public road with all the same legal requirements. WOF, Reg and licensed drivers). There is a beach access available at Otaki which any one can use (with road legal vehicles able to get there), and I would encourage anyone requiring vehicle access to use it. The \$150,000-\$200,000 cost for access is not something I want to contribute to with my taxes.

The access washes out because of natural causes. Permanent solutions are prohibitively expensive. Other beaches in the region have permanent car access - not every beach needs to have it. Fewer cars on the beach at Waikawa makes the beach safer for kids and wildlife.

I feel due to the ongoing costs to the community as whole, and the growing trend of disregard by motorized users of coastal areas in general, in this country, that providing access is becoming a liability. I do also note that some of our citizens will be negatively affected, as in those with disabilities. Overall, the continued costs and injuries to the community and the public outweigh the continued access.

Three comments (6%) mentioned observing more families on the beach.

There seem to have been a lot more families spending longer time on the beach this Christmas when the quads were not able get down onto the beach.

Two comments (3%) were made about the concerns over other issues that were more important in the community for the council to focus on

Waikawa faces a number of serious issues that need attention prior to vehicle access being reinstated. As a fourth-generation landowner in Waikawa, I am incredibly disappointed to read the relentless moaning from ratepayers who only care about the short-term disruption of vehicle access. We have significant environmental and infrastructure issues that are far more important yet ignored. The river - residential septic waste is responsible for a significant portion of its degradation. If we care about this land we must work with the farmers and build the infrastructure to clean up the river. Once this is done, I will be happy for safe vehicle access to be built, but the river must be cleaned up and protected first.

There were seven comments (15%) that if vehicle beach access was made available, it should be restricted. Suggestions included –restricting areas for vehicles, the use of a locked gate, and permits for any vehicles on the beach.

Something like a locked gate with keys given to responsible Waikawa landowners would be much better.

It's been very nice with fewer vehicles on the beach driving up and down. If access could be made purely so only boats can be launched, we would be more encouraged to support this.

Any access to the beach can be 'Drive to park' - as happening with other NZ councils - allows access to those that need it and a free from vehicle space for those who want to enjoy this.

Limitations of this Survey

It is unknown how many people received this survey link as we encouraged those receiving it to send on to others in the community. This was to encourage representative feedback from as many people in the community as possible – not only those belonging to the WBRA.

The survey was only open for one week – while the disadvantage of this is that not all people may have been able to participate it was seen as necessary due to the time constraints in preparing a submission for the council by the 20th of February.