

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of the hearing of submissions to Variation 3 to the
Proposed Thames Coromandel District Plan
(Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan)

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF
JEREMY COATES
ON BEHALF OF HOT WATER BEACH (NZ) LIMITED**

Dated 6 September 2021

1. Thank you to the Commissioners for the opportunity to address this hearing.
2. John McDermott and I formed our partnership to buy 790C Hot Water Beach Rd some 4 years ago, operating through the company known as Hot Water Beach (NZ) Limited.
3. It has always been our vision to create a special eco-friendly, conservation sanctuary as part of any subdivision and development on the land, taking a long-term view. This is why we were keen to progress a plan change or variation as the better 'fit' for our vision, rather than a resource consent, once these options were explained to us by Mr Lawrence.
4. The land in our view, and even as conceded by the previous farmer owner, is not a viable standalone farming unit with only about two thirds of the (less than) 40 hectare block being what could be considered marginal pasture at best, and the rest in bush. Sadly, the bush areas have been largely neglected, much of it is overgrown with a variety of noxious plants and home to a high number of pests (mainly rats and pigs with stoats sighted on occasion, and so far one feral cat caught).
5. The bush immediately behind the existing house (near the proposed Lot 7 house site) was, in the past, used for nothing more than a dumping ground with old farm equipment and general rubbish still being discovered throughout the bush, and removed. The existing pond/spring toward the top end of the northern western boundary, feeding in to the Taiwawe Stream, is unfenced and heavily fouled (not helped by a cow having drowned and subsequently left to decompose some two years ago). And just to reiterate, the three main bush corridors on the property are all heavily infested with mature, noxious plants and trees.
6. I have to state that despite conceding that we can only comment from a lay perspective, both John and I are perplexed by the view of some submitters interpretation that this property is better kept in its current state (as a working farm with degraded bush and streams) rather than, as we envisage, becoming a significant conservation sanctuary with the guardianship effort shared amongst up to 25 landowners. As I now explain, the conservation and restoration work required cannot be underestimated, and will need 'many more hands to the pump' to complete.
7. We have reached out on a number of occasions to key submitters to visit the site to see just what we are up against, as already pointed out. With the exception of one submitter, our invitations have not been taken up. John has been working regularly over the past 9-10 months to make inroads in to clearing the likes of woolly nightshade, privet, gorse and wattle, however the reality is that he is barely scratching the surface. Furthermore, it will take time and

ongoing resource to ensure full eradication, pest management, and future maintenance and upkeep.

8. Despite best efforts, our current pest control methods are proving relatively futile, not helped by a number of dead cows being left to rot out immediately above the Taiwawe, which can only further exacerbate our efforts to reduce vermin numbers.
9. While this is a commercial venture, it is a project that both John and I are strongly passionate about in terms of restoring and increasing the existing bush corridors throughout the property, as well as creating a significant wetland along the length of Ngatuturu Lane. We will also need to address the heavily fouled waterhole adjacent to the Taiwawe (toward the top of the northern boundary of the property).
10. We accept that the initial number of proposed sites was 'optimistic' and probably too intensive for the area. However, with some further guidance from council and taking on board the subsequent views of many of the local submitters, we believe we have settled on a number of lots and landowners that would not only better fit within the landscape, but still be able to sustain the protection and enhancement programs, as guardians of the land in the years to come.
11. While the benefits for the catchment and landscape as well as ecology do not come cheap, we are up for that challenge in promoting this Structure Plan and marketing it to future landowners with these requirements, but the realities of what is involved should not be overlooked. The overall project has to be viable if it is to succeed.
12. We are fortunate that the Taiwawe Stream runs along the north western boundary. While the aesthetics of the stream are clearly evident we certainly understand the cultural sensitivity especially for local Iwi, and have had constructive dialogue to date with Mr Joe Davis, Kaumatua for Ngāti Hei, now supported by a memorandum of understanding agreed between us for future consultation, and direct involvement of Ngāti Hei as kaitiaki in the conservation and restoration work. We can only offer our assurance that the work we do, together with Ngāti Hei, adjacent to the stream and tributaries, with additional planting, pest control, and removal of barriers to fish passage, will improve character and purity over time.
13. I want to assure those people who may be concerned about our intentions, that we are wholly committed to creating something very special for this community. We do not intend to be a burden on the Council or ratepayer, and the expert advice is that the land can readily accommodate the building sites, wastewater treatment systems, and roading with minimal earthworks and effects. In fact, with what we propose in terms of additional planting, water tanks, swales and

wetlands; stormwater flows and water quality will improve compared to continued farming of this marginal undersized block, as the experts have confirmed.

14. We are aware that the Structure Plan has changed a lot since first notified, after being adopted by the Council. This was in part at the Council's request for more detail and information, made at a meeting with the Council last September.
15. We are especially pleased that a prehearing meeting took place where we were able to explain these changes face to face, discuss a number of issues raised by those submitters present, and while site visits as earlier offered would have been preferable, I hope we have been able to satisfactorily address their respective concerns accordingly.
16. Should Council approve our Structure Plan, our first objective will be to ring fence the length of the Taiwawe and proposed Wetland area, and to implement a comprehensive planting program effective immediately.
17. There is an appropriate Greek proverb that says; "A society grows great when **old men plant trees** in whose shade they know they shall never sit." While I don't consider us to be old men, we are determined to leave our legacy that future owners' and the local community at large can embrace and appreciate.
18. Thank you.

Jeremy Coates