

To the Hearing Commissioners. Thank you for this opportunity to present my further evidence and I regret we are unable to meet in person.

I, Adele Smaill, continue to seek that Version 13 of the “Taiwawe Catchment Structure Plan” be DECLINED due to the effects it continues to pose to the areas biodiversity.

I will speak particularly about Coromandel Brown Kiwi as they are very vulnerable to disturbance and predation. The potential to help maintain and grow a healthy kiwi population also means a wide range of other species and ecosystems will benefit.

My relevant expertise results from working as “Coromandel Kiwi Advocate” from 1995 – 2006, for the Department of Conservation. I am a founding committee member of the “Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group” and have been given their support to speak here today. I am also a founder of the kiwi aversion training programme for dogs. I have done extensive research to ensure my knowledge is up-to-date and have references listed below. I have been a permanent resident of Cooks Beach for 36 years and a dog trainer most of my life.

I will focus on the part of my submission covered in REASONS bullet point 2 where I state: “Adverse environmental impacts of such intensive housing in this location include predation of threatened native species by unconstrained dogs”. Also that “Dogs are known significant predators of adult and juvenile kiwi (abridged)”. In my RECOMMENDATIONS I sought “No domestic pets.”

I will demonstrate to you that this site at 104 Taiwawe Lane is probable kiwi habitat already, is definitely adjacent to such and if enhanced and protected as the applicant proposes, kiwi WILL come. Also that this proposal, in it’s current form, would threaten kiwi in the neighbouring sanctuary areas with more roaming dogs likely.

I commend the improvements to the plans in Version 13, page 5, in particular number 27.95. “To do baseline species surveys; to undertake pest control; to ban cats and ferrets; to monitor, report and re-survey species and develop an “Ecological Management Plan (abridged).” I suggest “individual species PROTECTION plans” to be an improvement as no management of kiwi is proposed, only protection. Also, I strongly agree with other submitters that baseline surveying of vulnerable native species should occur before this proposal is approved. For example, if kiwi are found to be nesting on the property it is reasonable to assume that no land-clearing or earthworks would be done in that vicinity.

I note the applicant has proposed several measures to reduce the destructive effects of dogs. This should NOT include microchipping, which alongside registration, is compulsory for all dogs in NZ and will not prevent them killing kiwi or straying.

I will speak to the risks of relying on Kiwi Aversion Training, dog proof fencing and of allowing dogs to be exercised within the subdivision. The effectiveness of relying on conservation covenants to ensure long-term biodiversity gains is also debatable for many reasons.

Some background to the area and species:

“Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group” currently manage predator control in just over three and a half thousand hectares, from Tairua to Hot Water Beach North, bounded by SH25. The group has been operating for 21 years, with 30 active volunteers and significant financial and practical support from the Department of Conservation and Waikato Regional Council. Private business, landowners and other interested parties are also valuable supporters.

This rare variety of Brown Kiwi spends alot of time “above ground” and can live over forty years. They are very active, especially but not only, at night; very territorial; have a piercing call; a strong

musky smell; may try to defend themselves then run away and have a relatively weak body structure that crushes easily. These birds cannot fly or climb away!

Call listening surveys are regularly done in kiwi sanctuaries to help monitor both success and problems. Last years Whenuakite survey detected about 133 adult pairs, with an annual increase estimated at just under 5%. Patrick Stewart who manages the census told me that last winters survey detected birds right through to the north end of the Hinds property and also from the Pa on the headland north of the Hot Water Beach settlement. Generally he says that they can detect kiwi through much of the landscape.

Anecdotal reports increasingly abound of kiwi being heard, and seen, to the north of Hot Water Beach, including being photographed crossing the road to the Pa site by Tony Lidgard, December 2020 and coming onto Hahei Beach to feed on sand-hoppers at night as reported to DOC Whitianga. Increasing dry soil conditions are probably forcing some birds to seek damper, softer ground in dunes and wetlands, extending their range and vulnerability from the sanctuary “core area”. Successful breeding means more young birds seeking new territories and these may not be detected in call surveys.

The effectiveness of Kiwi Aversion Training has long been questioned with multiple research projects undertaken. The most recent one was published in 2018, studying data collected on the Coromandel between 1998 and 2007. It was run by the SPCA and University of Auckland, with standardised training done by DOC staff and contractors on a wide range of dog breeds and uses. To summarise: before training 100% of dogs were interested in the kiwi training props. Live kiwi are not used. Results varied, with 60% showing strong avoidance after the 1st training session and 100% only achieved at the fifth annual session. Age at the time of the 1st training affected the results with younger and working dogs generally learning faster and better than pets. Long gaps between training also affected results. My own experience both as a trainer and dog owner agrees with these generalisations.

My first hands-on experience with kiwi, in 1995, was being phoned by a distressed land-owner near Hahei, whose dog had been left roaming at night to deter possums, was heard barking and upon investigation had killed a kiwi. My files became full of these incidents and unfortunately this continues to be a common story. A dog-killed kiwi was handed in to DOC Whitianga from Hot Water Beach about 5 years ago and another found under a house in Tairua late last year. These incidents can go undiscovered if the carcass is eaten or buried.

Resident dogs are not the only problem. My recent observation of several building sites near my home, is that dogs can accompany visitors and workers at all stages of a development. Local tradesmen observed who regularly take dogs to work include plumbers, landscapers, project managers, builders and digger drivers.

Dog proof fencing also needs to be “kiwi-proof” to prevent birds accidentally trespassing onto dogs territories. To be absolutely effective there would need to be a double gate system like at a predator free enclosure, with gates locked when not attended. It needs to be in place when the site is developed, before potential buyers come to look and contractors start to work. It needs to be 100% effective, all of the time.

Where the resident and visiting dogs will be exercised is also of huge concern. Anywhere on the property with low vegetation can provide cover for kiwi day-time roosts above ground. Very short leashes are required at all times and even a muzzle doesn't completely remove risk.

Precedent exists with cats and dogs banned from nearby “conservation subdivisions” at Hot Water Beach North (100 Link Road); “Silverstream Falls” on the Tairua Hill and further afield at

“Mahakirau Forest Estate” on the 309 Road. I refer you to the Council commissioned review of conservation covenants, August 2010, pages 19 and 20. The recommendation of the authors of this report was to “ban domestic cats and dogs in rural subdivision unless their effects can prove to be less than minor”. This report also describes the challenges of monitoring conservation covenants by Council and I have spoken to property owners in such subdivisions that have never been monitored. So, for any real long-term outcomes for local biodiversity, we rely on the goodwill of property owners. I believe this will be better achieved, on this site, by attracting purchasers who believe in the integrity of the wider environment and their part in it.

Thank you again for listening to my viewpoints, thank you to the other submitters and to the applicant for proposing a “conservation framework” as a basis for their project in this location. The kiwi of Hot Water Beach urgently need ambassadors and perhaps this property can increasingly lobby the wider community to ensure the greatest protection is given.

References:

Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group maps – operational area and predator control trap lines;
“Whenuakite Kiwi Care Group Repeat Distribution Survey”, Autumn 2020, Author: Red Admiral Ecology;
“Study evaluates kiwi aversion training for dogs” 13/12/18, Review Author: Kate Guthrie, Predator Free NZ website;
“Are covenants working? Biodiversity protection through the TCDC District Plan” 8/2010, Author: Natural Solutions;
Maps of covenanted properties, Hot Water Beach/ Whenuakite, Author: QE11 National Trust, Jroxburgh, 2/2021
Dept. Of Conservation “awareness” series “Pets can kill”, 5/2012, Author: Dept. Of Conservation;
“Kiwi Recovery Plan 2018- 2028”, Author: multiple, pages 11, 21 in particular
TCDC Biodiversity Strategy, 4/2008, Author: Policy and Planning Group.