

18. APPLICATION BY THE WATER ACTIVITIES CENTRE FOR LICENCE TO USE LAKE 2 AT ROTO KOHATU RESERVE

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Corporate Plan Output: Consents – Sub Output: Leases (9.4.8)	

The purpose of this report is to enable the Shirley/Papanui Community Board to comment on the proposal to grant a licence to the Water Activities Centre to use Lake 2 on Roto Kohatu Reserve (being Pt Lot 1 DP 23615) for the purposes of undertaking a water safety programme for school children, prior to the matter going onto the Parks and Recreation Committee for a decision. Roto Kohatu Reserve is vested as a Recreation Reserve under section 17 of the Reserves Act 1977.

INTRODUCTION

The Water Activities Centre was set up with the support of the Water Safety Council in 1990 to provide a safe and fun environment in which school children can learn skills and experience the attendant rewards of sailing a small craft. The programme also instructs the children in the necessary safety practices and precautions they need to be aware of when sailing small craft. A charge of between \$12 to \$15 per child is made for a 5 to 6 hours tuition period, usually during school hours.

Since becoming established, over 15,000 children have visited the centre gaining the skills, enjoyment and experienced the rewards that sailing offers. The predominant users are Christchurch school children between the ages of eight and twelve, many of whom are children who would not usually have the opportunity to participate in a hands-on sailing experience.

PRESENT LOCATION

The water safety programme is currently run from Charteris Bay in Lyttelton Harbour and some sessions will continue to take place there. However, as this is a tidal location, unfavourable tides during school hours limit the use of Charteris Bay for around two weeks every month. This severely limits the number of children they are able to offer the programme to, as they only operate during the first and fourth term when the water and weather conditions are more conducive to the odd unplanned swim.

In the past the Water Activities Centre has used Lyttelton as an alternative location. However, with the development of the marina this location is no longer available.

PROPOSED USE OF LAKE 2

The Water Activities Centre has applied to the Council to obtain a licence to use Lake 2 at Roto Kohatu Reserve as an alternative sailing venue. Lake 1 has been set aside for powered water sports, being leased to the Canterbury Jet Ski Club.

While it has always been intended that Lake 2 would be used for more passive types of recreation, the current proposal does not conflict with this objective. Roto Kohatu would be a welcome addition to the groups existing sailing base at Charteris Bay and offers a tide-less expanse of water that is not affected by wind and weather changes to the extremes of Charteris Bay.

Other benefits associated with Roto Kohatu include its close proximity for users, confidence building through children perceiving a small lake as a “safer” less domineering environment to the open sea. It is envisaged that Roto Kohatu Reserve will provide a city base from which to offer schools a reliable and close “learn to sail” environment every alternate week when low tides preclude the effective use of Charteris Bay.

RECREATIONAL FISHING

The Council has previously granted approval to the Canterbury Float Fishing Club to release Tench into Lake 2 for recreational fishing. The Club has released fish into this lake under the supervision of the North Canterbury Fish and Game Council and these fish should now be breeding and establishing.

Parks Unit staff have discussed the application with the President of the Canterbury Float Fishing Club and they do not see any conflict or problems with the current proposal. The most favourable times for targeting this particular species of fish is early morning or late evening which is well outside the times the sailboats will be operating.

OMAKA SCOUT FACILITIES AND RESERVE DEVELOPMENT

There is still a substantial amount of development required before the reserve will be available for general public use. The reserve still lacks some basic amenities such as toilets etc, however this will not restrict the current proposal as the Water Activities Centre has negotiated the use of amenities at the adjacent Omaka Scout site. (See copy of letters from both parties confirming use of the scout facilities attached.)

The scouts are happy for the applicant to use their facilities until toilet and change facilities are available on the reserve. In return the Water Activities Centre has offered to run some sail training days for scouts during scout camps.

The Parks Unit is currently talking with the Canterbury Jet Ski Club regarding formalising lease details along with proposals for the club to construct a clubhouse on the reserve. Staff are also investigating the option of combining public toilets with their building to reduce costs for both parties and to ensure the successful integration of these facilities into the landscape so that they complement the reserve.

A separate report covering the Canterbury Jet Ski Club building proposals will be presented at some stage in the near future when more details are available.

SAFETY

Safety and risk management is of paramount concern to the operators. All instructors are Yachting New Zealand qualified and hold current First Aid certificates. The Water Activities Centre uses Optimist yachts which are small one-person dinghies with a single sail, providing a simple and safe craft in which to learn the basic skills of yacht handling.

Yachting New Zealand guidelines are strictly adhered to in relation to on-water instructor/pupil ratios, with the maximum number of yachts in the water at any one time being ten, ensuring safe and comprehensive instruction and (if needed) rescue abilities. All students and instructors must be wearing a life-jacket before going out onto the water. The pick-up boats are inflatable dinghies with small outboard motors. A pickup boat will be on the lake at all times when sailing is in progress. Given the nature of the activities, the pick-up boats seldom reach speeds in excess of 5 knots.

The Parks Manager will reserve the right to withdraw the licence at any time should there be any breach of the safety conditions in the licence, or the Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Plan.

LICENSING ISSUES

The Council is able to grant a licence to use part of Roto Kohatu Reserve to the Water Activities Centre pursuant to section 54 (1)(d) of the Reserves Act.

The Parks Unit proposes to issue a licence for an initial period of 1 year during which time the Parks Manager shall reserve the right to adjust the conditions of the licence, to ensure its operation is as safe as possible. The renewal of the licence for a further term of 4 years is to be subject to the satisfactory performance of the first year.

CONCLUSION

New Zealanders' love-affair with water and recreational activities based around water is well known, however this association does have a down-side in terms of the drowning statistics. The Council can take a proactive role in turning these statistics around by promoting and encouraging activities that focus on education and safety aspects.

The Parks Unit is comfortable with the current proposal and believes that providing a venue where children and young adults can receive professional water safety training is a very positive and proactive use of the reserve as well as providing benefits to the wider community. Accordingly the Parks Unit will be recommending that the application be approved.

Recommendation: The Shirley/Papanui Community Board recommends to the Parks and Recreation Committee that the application to grant a licence to Water Activities Centre over Lake 2 of Roto Kohatu Reserve pursuant to section 54(1)(d) for the operation of a Water Safety Programme for a period of 1 year with a right of renewal for a further four years be approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. Public notification and subsequent approval by the Minister of Conservation.
2. The satisfactory outcome of the public consultation process.
3. The licence terms being negotiated by the Property Manager in consultation with the Area Parks Officer (Consents).

4. The licensed area being maintained by the applicant in a safe and tidy condition at all times while they are operating on the lake.
5. Lake 2, which is the area covered by the licence, is to be available for public use at all times.
6. The applicant to show proof of having obtained \$1,000,000 public liability insurance to the Area Parks Officer (Consents) before commencing operations upon the site.
7. The applicant to file a copy of their Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Plan with the Area Parks Officer (Consents) before commencing operations upon the site.
8. No structures of any sort are to be built upon the site. Any marker buoys put in place on the day are to be removed at the end of sailing.
9. The speed of any motorised support craft not to exceed 5 knots at any time other than in the case of an emergency.
10. The Parks Manager shall reserve the right to withdraw the licence to use Lake 2 should there be any breach of the safety conditions contained in the licence, or Occupational Safety and Health Hazard Plan.
11. The applicant acknowledges the requirement for the planting of trees around the lake and that they will not be pruned or removed, to improve sailing on the lake.
12. The renewal of the licence for a period of 4 years to be delegated to the Parks Manager subject to the satisfactory performance of the Licensee, during the first year of operation.
13. All costs associated with the application are the responsibility of the applicant.

Chairperson's

Recommendation:

That the officer's recommendation be adopted and that the consultation process include the North West Rural Residents Association and the business community at the Sawyers Arms/Johns Roads intersection.