

13. CORRESPONDENCE (Cont'd)

SPIT RESERVE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The following letter was received from the Chairman of the Southshore Ratepayers' Association regarding progress on the Spit Reserve Development Plan (July 2000):

"On behalf of my Committee, Ms Tricia Urch, Mrs Dianne Lawrence Ms Denise Brown, and Mr CL Batcheler visited the Spit Reserve on Saturday 31 January to review progress on the Spit Reserve Development Plan (July 2000). The Plan was developed in consultation with the community and prepared by Consultant Mark Davis. My members report as follows:

- 1. We are concerned that no action yet appears to have been taken to reclassify the area from "Recreation-" to "Scenic Reserve". All the Community groups involved in formulation of the Development Plan considered that this change is vital as an instrument to maintain the integrity of the reserve for its natural values. Associated with this, we inquire on progress of the legal closure of Ebbitide Street, and of cartographic surveys required to identify land to be included in the Spit Reserve.*
- 2. We note that the planned perimeter track around the Reserve has been roughly cut, but not yet surfaced in accordance with the Development Plan. We believe that adoption of this track by walkers, particularly at high tide, and especially by people with dogs, will do much to protect godwits and oystercatchers roosting at high tide. Appropriate sign posting might improve use of the track.*

We recognise that this track was also requested by Coast Care staff for easier fire- and weed- control access. We are therefore surprised that little weed control work appears to have been done, even in easily accessible areas.

- 3. We also noticed that the salt-marsh at the south-west tip is continuing to degrade rapidly under the combined impact of walkers and sea erosion. We therefore request urgency be given to installation of the proposed boardwalk, and believe that associated signposting of entrances to the track (and boardwalk) would be helpful. We also strongly request assessment of the natural and cultural causes of the continuing erosion. For instance: we ask whether construction of the car park at CYC and walkways on the Moncks Bay side of the channel could be related to degradation of the Spit tip? This would seem to us an hydraulic certainty, given the extent of recent construction of car parks and tracks on the Moncks Bay side of the channel.*
- 4. We are specially concerned about the excavation during 2003 of a second artificial wetland, to the north-west of the wetland excavated in spring 1997. In the "Draft Management Plan" for the Beaches and Parks, published November 1993, Council proposed to excavate a wetland in the middle of the Reserve. We raised concerns about it at the time of Hearings. The Commissioner, Mr R. Davidson, who heard the Resource Consent application in 1995, ruled that Consent was required for all artificial wetlands in the Beach Parks. We are not aware of any Consents being applied for or granted.*

This is not a trivial procedural matter to our Association. From the seaward end of the 1997 and 2003 wetlands, it is immediately clear that they form a depression that weakens the natural defences to the residential area and Reserve against major storms and tsunami.

Furthermore, we are advised by neighbours that they have been pestered by mosquitoes for the first time in memory, since the first wetland was excavated.

Clearly, excavation of the wetlands was ill-advised as well as apparently unlawful. They should therefore, in our opinion, be filled in to above MHWs in the short term, and ultimately to the prevailing level of the surrounding dunes.

5. *We remind the Board of the continuing need for maintenance of adequate fire breaks. The boundary that intersects Rockinghorse Road has a good short-grass buffer to the west, but little eastwards to the ocean. An incipient blow-out near the south-west corner of the residential area could be a matter of concern. The short-grass buffer is incomplete on the west flank of the Reserve, north to about 178 Rockinghorse Road. We recommend that the Community should be consulted about perceived needs for mown grass buffers.*
6. *We were impressed by the growth of the pingao (*Desmoschoenus spiralis*), sand fescue (*Austrofestuca Jittoralis*) and spinifex (*Spinifex sericeus*) that was established in a CCC/Forest Research Institute trial along the foredune at the south east corner of the Reserve. Success of this trial is a credit to the researchers involved.*
7. *We are pleased that the planned public toilet at the end of Rockinghorse Road has been built, along with the washing and drinking facility. The proposal initially generated quite divided opinions in the community, related to anxiety that it could become a magnet for undesirable characters. So far though, apart from a report of a drunken teen-age party, and a report of two people "loitering" there on one occasion, it been of considerable benefit to visitors and residents alike. It has redirected many earlier requests to neighbours for permission to use household facilities. The building is pleasingly free of graffiti.*

Several people have noticed - and we confirm it - that problems frequently arise with sand blocking the drains of the drinking fountain and water taps. These problems are usually dealt with promptly by your staff or agents.

We wonder if these problems could be resolved, perhaps by changing the type of fittings used.

We look forward to appropriate action on the above matters."

Comments from Coast Care have been circulated separately to Board members. The Coastal Parks Area Head Ranger will be in attendance.

Chairperson's

Recommendation: For discussion.