Port Underwood Association

PO Box 59

Blenheim 7240

30 September 2016

Manager of Marlborough Roads

Marlborough District Council

15 Seymour Street

Blenheim 7201

Dear Sir,

**Port Underwood Road**

I am writing to you in respect of the Port Underwood Road, in particular the road between Whatamango Bay and Oyster Bay. I have to admit to rarely using this road as I find it narrow, winding and frequently dangerous; I usually go south via Rarangi. I did, however, use this road yesterday.

On this journey I met four vehicles that were coming in the opposite direction (that is coming from Oyster Bay and travelling to Whatamango Bay/Picton). One SUV was passed without difficulty. The second was a ute that was going so fast that it came around a corner on the wrong side of the road and narrowly missed my vehicle. This was a contractor’s vehicle but I could not read the name of the contractor as it went by too fast.

The other two vehicles were logging trucks with trailers. One logging truck was met on a narrow stretch and I had to pull over to avoid being hit. The second truck came around a blind corner on the wrong side and I was forced onto the edge of the road where there was a steep precipice with no barrier. I had very little time to take evasive action before the truck was on me, and it was fortunate that I was driving so slowly – about 30kph. This was a very near miss and if I had been hit it would have been inevitable that I would have been forced over the edge.

I have to say that I do not blame the drivers of the log trucks. I used to drive trucks for a living, and I cannot see how such large vehicles, pulling trailers, can get around the sharp corners without going onto the wrong side of the road. In addition, given the weight of the vehicles they are not going to slow down so that they can maintain their momentum. The issue is that the roads are unsuitable for this type of traffic.

The Port Underwood area has 127 properties in it, with only 16 occupied on a permanent basis. Logging traffic may have been appropriate when there were few properties in the area. I am unsure how many new properties have been built in the past few years, but the council has, over the past year, granted consents for 56 more residential properties, a 44% increase; the majority at the north end of Port Underwood and would use the road to Picton. It is not known how many of these will be permanently occupied

In the summer and other holiday periods the roads are very busy. Often more than one family stays in the holiday homes, and then there are numerous campers and other tourists. The volume of traffic is bound to increase due to these new developments. Consequently, it would seem inevitable that there will be a serious accident due to the increased traffic levels and logging trucks that take up the whole road. Whilst a collision between a car/SUV/ute can be serious, a collision with a car and a logging truck would be far more serious. If I had been hit yesterday I do believe I would have been pushed over and down a steep fall. There have been collisions in the past couple of years, but fortunately without serious consequences other than bent metal.

As the council is granting residential consents at an unprecedented level and has granted resource consents that permit road transport of logs it is suggested that the council may have vicarious liability for any accident. Given the expected road use, the near misses and the recent accidents, I would also be interested to learn what the council is planning to improve the road conditions. Are there any plans to widen or straighten the road? Are there any plans to control traffic movements?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



John Davison

Chairman

Port Underwood Association