

Freedom Camping Bylaw 2020
Submission from
Port Underwood Association
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Background:

This submission is made on behalf of The Port Underwood Association Incorporated (the Association) membership of which is open to persons having a meaningful interest in Port Underwood.

The Association is charged with representing the members' views which are gathered through meetings, emails, personal discussions and surveys, and to act on their behalf in matters which affect the area.

Position:

The Port Underwood Association agrees with most of the provisions of the proposed 2020 Freedom Camping bylaws. Regarding the Port Underwood area we agree that freedom camping should be prohibited on Port Underwood Road. We disagree that freedom camping is not prohibited on Tumbledown Bay Road. We suggest that there is room for improvements on the Smart Maps and other forms of information regarding where freedom camping is prohibited.

Discussion:

Through the various past reviews of the Marlborough Freedom Camping by-laws the majority of the Port Underwood community have been consistent in their view that freedom camping should not be allowed along Port Underwood Road and Tumbledown Bay Road.

The reasons are familiar as in other places – lack of suitable camping places, rubbish and human waste left behind and disrespect of the area whether it be through the use of fires, disregard of private property, or disregard of fishing regulations and lack of respect for other users.

Several examples from the recent holiday period highlight some of these problems. One of Port Underwood's popular bays has a limited grassy area fronting the sandy part of the beach. This particular area is used by day trippers and is very suitable for use by young children as the rest of the waterfront is coarse stones and gravel. During the holiday this area was taken over by campers with caravan and tent, a boat and numerous vehicles and people. This became an uninviting place for other people to use. At another bay there were two instances where freedom campers were informed that they were not at an appropriate camping spot, in one instance being located up a private road. They both became foul mouthed and arrogant in their defence of their entitlement to stay wherever they chose. Another instance along Tumbledown Bay Road involved a caravan and various other paraphernalia which was left abandoned for a number of months and became seriously degraded by the weather.

The Port Underwood area is well serviced by DOC camps at Rarangi, White's Bay, Robinhood Bay and Whatamongo Bay. It is a fact that the public roads connecting those camp sites are narrow and winding with very little area where camping can take place in a safe manner without encroaching on private property.

At the previous bylaw review the Port Underwood Association advocated for a complete freedom camping ban on both Port Underwood Road and Tumbledown Bay Road. Port Underwood Road

was given a prohibited status although, for reasons unknown, Tumbledown Bay Road was not included in the banned areas.

In the later part of 2019 the Association conducted an extensive survey of its membership. Among the topics was freedom camping. The questions and responses are listed below with a high percentage of replies in agreement that freedom camping should be banned on both roads. There is acknowledgement that legitimate and fully compliant self-contained vehicles may present less of a problem with rubbish and waste left behind but the other factors remain such as limited public space for camping and intrusion onto day use with a detrimental effect on local amenities.

Extract from Survey:

Question 27 Should Freedom Camping be prohibited on any part of the Port Underwood Road other than the established DOC camping sites?

Agree Strongly 74%	Agree Somewhat 13%	Neutral 13%	Disagree Somewhat	Disagree Strongly
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Question 28 Should Freedom Camping be prohibited on all parts of the Tumbledown Bay Road?

Agree Strongly 61%	Agree Somewhat 19%	Neutral 13%	Disagree Somewhat 6%	Disagree Strongly
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This is a very clear response for prohibiting freedom camping of 87% for Port Underwood Road and 80% for Tumbledown Bay Road.

The recommendation in current draft bylaw review document states:

Prohibition – Port Underwood Road only.

The primary rationale for prohibiting freedom camping on this road relates to safety issues associated with a narrow winding road with poor visibility with few turning places or parking areas. There are almost no facilities and those that do exist are designed for day use and day use volumes. Tumbledown Bay Road has the same features although pressure by campers is lower. In late 2019 survey of Port Underwood members indicated fewer issues along this road with support by some members for further monitoring, rather than a complete prohibition.

The Association makes the following comments to the draft decision to not place a prohibition on Tumbledown Bay Road. Tumbledown Bay Road, as observed in the draft document, has the same physical impairments to camping, and arguably to a greater extent, than Port Underwood Road and many other Sounds roads that are prohibited. Not including Tumbledown Bay Road in the prohibited areas would be a serious inconsistency in the bylaw and would confer a false indication of the conditions along Tumbledown Bay Road. There will be an attraction for campers to use Tumbledown Bay as many other roads will be prohibited. This will increase the chances for inappropriate and dangerous camping as travellers will be unwilling to turn around and go back even when there are no suitable places to camp.

The Association notes that the depiction of prohibited freedom camping areas in Port Underwood on the Smart Maps shows a generic prohibited width along the Port Underwood Road. This gives the impression that other areas of the road are not prohibited. Nor are areas such as Ocean Bay Reserve, areas in Tom Canes Bay, and areas in Hakahaka Bay indicated as being prohibited. Again this can be misleading to the public. We suggest that the Smart Maps and any other maps be clarified to indicate all prohibited areas including DOC sites.

Summary:

Based on the recent survey, it is apparent to the Port Underwood Association that the community it represents has major concerns with freedom camping along the roads and in the reserves in the Port Underwood area. On behalf of its members, the Association once again advocates the continuation for inclusion of the entire Port Underwood Road including adjacent roadside and foreshore reserves, outside of the designated DOC campsites, as prohibited status for freedom camping and, the additional inclusion of the entire Tumbledown Bay Road, including adjacent roadside and foreshore reserves, as prohibited for freedom camping. Camping is well provided for in the Port Underwood area with established, safe camping areas. We also suggest an improvement to the mapping of prohibited areas.

Respectfully,

Port Underwood Association Committee

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