

Freedom Camping Bylaw 2022
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 in general with the provisions of the 2020 Freedom Camping bylaws although we recognise that the local communities in other areas have a better understanding of effects in their areas. Regarding the Port Underwood area, we agree that freedom camping should be prohibited on Port Underwood Road, Tumbledown Bay Road and the various associated sites as listed in the 2020 bylaw.

Discussion:

Through the various past reviews of the Marlborough Freedom Camping bylaws 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, very limited areas that would be safe to camp at, 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 recent holiday periods 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 several 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 Whatomongo 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. The Marlborough Roads signage at the entry points to the Port Underwood area advises that the roads are unsuitable for caravans and larger vehicles, i.e., those that would be self-contained.

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 areas 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 assessment of Port Underwood in the 2020 bylaw document states:

There are few areas of Council controlled reserve land in the Port Underwood Area. This leaves roads as the only possible location for freedom camping. The roads are mostly unsealed, narrow and winding often with poor visibility and few turning places or parking areas. Given the nature of these roads generally, it is considered there are significant health and safety concerns with freedom camping vehicles being able to park completely off the road safely. In addition the susceptibility of the Marlborough Sounds road network to slips and dropouts during storm events means there is a risk to the health and safety of freedom campers. There is also a potential for conflict with freedom camping vehicles parked on roadsides with large forestry vehicles using these narrow roads. Collectively the potential health and safety issues for freedom campers on Marlborough Sounds roads, including those within this Area, are considered very significant.

Although there are several reserve areas under the Council's control in the Port Underwood Area, there are no facilities or other assets on these reserves.

The Marlborough Sounds environment in which the Port Underwood Area is located is a sensitive area with many cultural, recreational and landscape/amenity values. Collectively the area is considered of such significance that any camping should occur within areas where there are facilities to service the needs of campers such as those located at Whatamonga Bay, Robin Hood Bay and Whites Bay.

The Association is in agreement with this assessment and add that any type of camping increases the risk of fire which is a significant concern due to the long time-factor required for firefighting equipment to access Port Underwood.

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 and Tumbledown Bay Road including adjacent roadside and foreshore reserves, outside of the designated DOC campsites, as prohibited status for freedom camping. Camping is well provided for in the Port Underwood area with established, safe DOC camping areas. We also suggest an improvement to the mapping of prohibited areas to ensure that it is clear that freedom camping is prohibited throughout the Port Underwood area.

We would also recommend a closer alliance between the Council and DOC wardens as in many cases it is difficult to assess whether an area is road reserve, Council reserve or DOC reserve.

Respectfully,

Port Underwood Association Committee

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