

Hanmer Springs Accommodation Providers Group submission to the Hurunui District Council Proposed Freedom Camping By-law

Executive summary

The Hanmer Springs Accommodation Providers Group (HSAPG) submits the following as input to the Hurunui Proposed Freedom Camping By-law:

1. Continue with existing total prohibition of freedom camping within the Hanmer Basin apart from two exception areas:
 - a) DOC area on Jollies Pass road,
 - b) Hanmer River reserve, by the bridge over Hanmer River, opposite Medway Rd
2. No freedom camping allowed within a 5 km radius of the Hanmer village green - NO exceptions, this must be policed at all times, 24 hours a day.
3. All vehicles must have a toilet on-board, unless at a designated area which has a toilet facility.
4. No designated areas as proposed, outside the village library, Chisholm car park or out in the forest areas of St James/Molesworth or anywhere "over the back".
5. A noise control cut-off time of 10pm

The Hanmer Springs Accommodation Providers Group

HSAPG represents 41 accommodation providers in Hanmer Springs, including motels, bed & breakfasts, holiday parks, backpackers, boutique accommodation, holiday homes, apartments and a hotel. Collectively we directly generate approx. \$26M in tourism business (conservative estimate), plus provide the necessary support for the evening restaurant and late day shopping revenue streams, adding another \$24M (Total \$50M).

Rationale

1. The benefits from freedom campers are yet to be fully measured financially or environmentally. We believe however that the financial benefits to our village community would be very minimal and disastrous environmentally, if it was allowed to be a "free for all". If we let this get out of hand as it has in other areas of NZ, our village reputation as clean and green will certainly diminish.
2. Pollution – both in obvious litter left behind and noise. A relaxing experience is at the heart of the village appeal, with its branding as NZ's Alpine Spa Village. We recognise that 95% of freedom campers are sensible and trustworthy – unfortunately it is the remaining 5% who spoil it for everyone involved and create the sour headlines that we regularly see in the media, where local councils have allowed too much freedom to these travellers. Examples of remains left behind on roads, paths and parks include rubbish, body waste and used sanitation products. Music and rowdy noise into the night is another form of pollution that these travellers seek to share without compassion for neighbours or the community as a whole.
3. Enforcement difficulty and cost if all areas within the Basin were allowed - Patrolled policing would require extra resources than that currently available, and who would bear the cost of this?

4. Financial impact – other regions in New Zealand have experienced a direct negative financial impact on motor camps that previously earned income from non-self-contained freedom campers and tents. We can expect the same to occur in Hanmer Springs, reducing the profitability and viability of these accommodation providers.

We believe that the above issues more than justify Council prohibiting Freedom Camping within the Hanmer Basin, except within the two stated areas above, under section 11(2) of the Freedom Camping Act.

Additional comments

Current requirements on councils to broaden areas available for freedom camping, devolved from the previous government, which had different perspectives on environmentally sustainable tourism than the new government.

While these may not be considerations for the current Freedom Camping ByLaw we request that Council would take the following comments into account when considering this ByLaw and in any future discussion with the new central government about Freedom Camping.

We accept and believe that many New Zealanders see the opportunity to experience the great outdoors as a right of birth. Most do not expect this to extend to “camping for free” in urban areas or locations where commercial options are available for them to use. Legalising Freedom Camping in these areas, as is proposed in the current draft, raises questions about market distortion and equity:

Why should some visitors have to pay for the views and location of the village while others get it for free and the Council pays for their water and sanitation?

Commercial operators pay a premium in rates for this location while the Council provides the location for free for visitors through the Freedom Camping bylaw. Such law distorts the market and has the potential to discourage future business investment.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we strongly oppose the proposal for changes to the existing bylaw, including specifically opposing permitting Freedom Camping in the Library carpark and other central locations within the village CBD. We urge Council to include a ban on all freedom camping within the Hanmer basin except situated at the two designated areas described.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

We would like the opportunity to speak to it when submissions are heard.

Attachments

Relevant articles from the free press (following pages)

Christchurch freedom camping sites to close



PAUL LONSDALE/SUPPLIED

A freedom camper's equipment spread across the road at Windsport Park near Humphreys Dr.

The Christchurch City Council will close five freedom camping sites because of overwhelming demand and health and safety concerns.

More than 130 businesses and residents have complained about freedom campers at several popular spots around the city and on Banks Peninsula since the council passed the Freedom Camping Bylaw in December.

Despite the number of complaints, the council has not issued any infringement notices, saying it has been too difficult to distinguish campers from people who had merely parked up short-term.

PAUL LONSDALE/SUPPLIED

A freedom camper's equipment spread across the road at Windsport Park near Humphreys Dr.

Popular Banks Peninsula site French Farm was closed on Thursday, and access to the beach had also been closed because water testing revealed increased levels of Ecoli.

READ MORE:

- * [Freedom camping numbers 'out of control' at Christchurch park](#)
- * [Freedom camping bylaw makes problem go 'viral' in other parts of Christchurch](#)
- * [Freedom campers bring 'a bit of life' to Christchurch's Addington Park](#)
- * [Christchurch freedom camping bylaw 'ludicrous': Mike Yardley](#)

Last week, locals notified the council of an overflowing pipe leaking sewage into the harbour from the site's septic tank.

Freedom camping sites at Wainui, Addington Park's car park, Lower Styx River and Windsport Park, off Humphreys Dr in Ferrymead, would be closed from March 16 to May 31.

Council chief executive Karleen Edwards said the bylaw would be reviewed, but it was possible the sites would not reopen next summer.

Edwards said most campers had behaved well – the problem had been the "sheer number" of people using the sites.

The effect of low airfares, low fuel prices, good weather and Christchurch's popularity had been underestimated by the council, she said.

She said the number of portable toilets and rubbish bins and the level of enforcement had been increased in response to high demand.

However, those measures had not resolved the problems.

French Farm resident Chris Goldspink said it had taken too long for the council to act.

Goldspink claimed he had received "false information" about the council's monitoring of the sewage spill.

He said he was not against freedom camping but there was a "huge difference" between finding an isolated spot that may not be used again for months and "hyper concentration" at one seaside area.

More than 50 vehicles had been at the site each night, Goldspink said, and he was concerned about the long-term effects on the water quality.

"I hey thought I was going to chastise them for polluting the sea...but I was more concerned about the sea polluting them."

Hagley-Ferrymead Community Board member Joe Davies criticised the council's decision, labelling it a "draconian measure".

"The bylaw clearly failed in its objective to assist freedom camping in Christchurch.

"[The closures] push something that should be a positive addition to our city's multi-culturalism onto other parts of the South Island."

Last week, campers at Windsport Park claimed they were being **threatened and intimidated** by locals since negative media reports about the behaviour of some campers.

Several campers said locals were driving through the car park in the middle of the night shouting at campers, honking their horns and doing burnouts.

Councillors have been **divided on the issue** of freedom camping. Some said they were not opposed to discussing a blanket ban in the city while others said that would only shift the problem from one place to another.

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Freedom campers overwhelm Banks Peninsula infrastructure

SUPPLIED

Freedom campers at French Farm on Banks Peninsula pack into a section of foreshore beside a 70kmh road.

334

campers.

The discovery on Tuesday was the last straw for residents who now called for an immediate closure of the French Farm freedom camping site for campers without self-contained toilets.

They say up to 56 cars parked three deep on the small piece of foreshore.

How to fix freedom camping?

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Residents were also calling for a complete ban on non-self contained freedom camping across Banks Peninsula.

READ MORE:

- * [Freedom camping ban could be on the table](#)
- * [Freedom camping numbers 'out of control' at Christchurch park](#)
- * [Freedom camping bylaw makes problem go 'viral' in other parts of Christchurch](#)
- * [Freedom campers bring 'a bit of life' to Christchurch's Addington Park](#)

* Christchurch freedom camping bylaw 'ludicrous': Mike Yardley

The Christchurch City Council had no plans to immediately close the French Farm site and would instead close the toilets at French Farm on Thursday, replacing them with four portaloos.

Council head of parks Andrew Rutledge said the council would place signs either side of the leaking culvert to warn people to avoid swimming or using that area of the beach.

French Farm resident Chris Goldspink said it was frustrating no-one at the council thought to increase the number of times the septic tank was emptied, given the huge number of campers at the site.

Goldspink said the number of freedom campers parking at French Farm was a health and safety risk. At its peak, he counted 56 vehicles on a small piece of foreshore and most vehicles had at least two people in them.

"It's quite extraordinary how many cars they pack into a small area. I've seen some quite dangerous and inappropriate parking practices."

He said vehicles often parked 15 centimetres apart and occupants clambered out of the boot, which hung over the road - a 70kmh zone.

The council installed signs designed to keep vehicles two metres from the road, but they were ignored, and cars were frequently parked three deep, Goldspink said.

Campers could stay on part of the French Farm foreshore, under the council's Freedom Camping bylaw introduced in December last year, for up to two nights in any 30 day period.

Council licensing compliance manager Fiona Proudfoot said staff were exploring the options available under the bylaw to manage all freedom camping sites, including French Farm, following the high number of campers.

Akaroa-Wairewa Community Board chairwoman Pam Richardson said she supported the residents call for a complete ban of non-self contained freedom camping on Banks Peninsula.

"We desperately need to do something."

Banks Peninsula ward councillor Andrew Turner said freedom camping across the city and peninsula needed to be looked at following this season's problems. If the French Farm site was closed, the problem would only move to other areas.

Councillors signalled the bylaw would be reviewed much sooner than the originally planned 2017.

* *Comments on this story are now closed*

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SUPPLIED

Freedom campers at French Farm on Banks Peninsula pack into a section of foreshore beside a 70kmh road.



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Freeloading freedom campers cost holiday park up to \$50,000

260



The closure of a popular Christchurch freedom camping spot can't come soon enough for the owners of a nearby holiday park who say it has cost them up to \$50,000 in lost business and attracted shower thieves.

The Christchurch Kiwi Holiday Park and Motels is less than a kilometre away from the Windsport Park freedom camping area on Humphreys Dr, bordering the Avon-Heathcote Estuary.

Owner Ross Lee said his backpacker and camper market was down by half over the summer as prospective customers headed to the nearby free camping area. He estimated it had cost him between \$30,000 and \$50,000 in lost earnings.

The Christchurch City Council said it had received more than 180 complaints about freedom campers from residents since passing a freedom camping bylaw in December.

READ MORE:

- * [Freedom camping numbers 'out of control' at Christchurch park](#)
- * [Freedom camping bylaw makes problem go 'viral' in other parts of Christchurch](#)
- * [Freedom campers bring 'a bit of life' to Christchurch's Addington Park](#)
- * [Christchurch freedom camping bylaw 'ludicrous': Mike Yardley](#)

As a result it will close four freedom camping sites across the city, including Windsport Park, from midday on Wednesday until the end of May.

DEAN KOZANIC/FAIRFAX NZ

All Seasons Holiday Park owners Ross and Christine Lee say they have lost an estimated \$50,000 business and attracted freeloaders because of a nearby freedom camping site.

Others closed are at Wainui, Addington Park car park and Lower Styx River. A fifth site at French Farm on Banks Peninsula was shut last week after sewage from toilets contaminated the harbour.

Lee said about 30 freedom campers had been caught sneaking in to use the holiday park's free showers.

"That's probably the tip of the iceberg. Our showers and toilets are not locked, we can't afford security so people could be coming in at all hours of the night."

Most of those confronted about "stealing showers" were European holiday makers, he said. One couple told him they were flying out that morning and needed a shower to be clean for the flight.

Lee said he charged \$25 a night per person for a tent site or an unpowered van site. He found the financial loss particularly galling because his rates went towards council spending on portable toilets and rubbish removal from the competing freedom camping area.

The council had potentially damaged its own business at the Spencer Park holiday park by allowing freedom camping nearby at Lower Styx River, he said.

"It smacks of the council opening up a bar and then just down the road opening up a shed and giving away free beer. It's ludicrous."