



Spring Newsletter

September 2018

Greetings from the OBC Committee,

This is the Spring 2018 online Newsletter. The Summer Newsletter will be sent out at the end of the year, in hard copy, as well as being available on the website.

Website

We would like to encourage you, the community, to use the website – www.omahabeach.co.nz – as the “go to” place to see what is happening in our community, and what we, the Committee, have been engaged in.

I will talk briefly below about some of the headline issues that we have been dealing with. We are continually facing new issues and are struggling to address issues as and when they arise.

Having improved the website we are now migrating the database to Xero from which we will expect more efficient communication and updating of the database. It is, however, important that if you are in the northern end of Omaha and sell your property, that you send us an email advising us of the new owner’s details. It is surprising how many people do not tell us that they have shifted, and the new people wonder why they are not receiving emails or newsletters.

You have to be a member of OBC to receive communications.

The Omaha Beach Community Committee would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of Macnicol and Co, Chartered Accountants in Warkworth. Paul Macnicol, Abby Brown and April Corry have given us hours of their time for free, initially setting us up with our new accounting system, Xero, four years ago, and then again, more recently, updating our database. This generous support for the community over the last four years is greatly appreciated.

Council Matters

We are grateful to Councillor Grey Sayers and Beth Houlbrooke, Chair of the Rodney Local Board, for their huge support to the OBC Committee and the community this year. We are being informed by and getting access to Auckland Council’s officers in relation to a range of issues including stormwater, the regulatory authority in regard to setnets and crab pots, and Auckland Transport

in terms of the Causeway repairs – although we are told that the “troll hole” is not a serious risk to the community’s access across the Causeway.

Our latest endeavour is to respond to a proposal for improved bus shelters along Omaha Drive. Spending money on a new bus shelter in Omaha seems absurd when the Warkworth to Omaha bus service is hardly supported and, in any event, takes a month of Sundays to get to Omaha, leaving the commuter stranded in the middle of Central Omaha and forced to make their way home from there. Unfortunately, the wave of bureaucracy is unlikely to see reason on this.

Stormwater Update

On the website there is a stormwater update for people to view and we are pleased that Healthy Waters have now established this direct communication with those of the community who have registered an interest, as well as making the stormwater updates available for our website.

The northern area of Omaha is notably lacking storm water infrastructure. Localised flooding events are commonly reported during heavy rainfall.

The “drains” on the roadside in north Omaha are mostly soak pits. They are 1.85m deep with sand bases. These soakage devices had become clogged at the surface due to the collection of sediment and organic material. The Council has arranged a clean of the soak pits and will continue a six-monthly cleaning programme. We need to improve contouring or channelling of the water to some of these soak pits.

Generally, north Omaha is known to have consistently high permeability as confirmed by infiltration testing. In some areas we do need more private and public soakage systems. Getting the soak pits working effectively is a good start.

Transport

We are pleased to welcome Paul King who lives on Mangatawhiri Road. Paul has a particular interest in matters of traffic affecting the Omaha community – especially speeding – and he will be dealing with all matters relating to traffic on behalf of the community.

Pest and Predators

Pest and predator control remains a priority issue and Rob Zubielevitch, Treasurer, will report on this in more detail later in this online newsletter.

Footpaths

Thanks to Peter Jackson, OBC has ramped up efforts to secure a proper footpath from the roundabout to the Community Centre on the golf course side of Omaha Drive. Whilst I am aware that certain residents might consider this money better spent elsewhere, the fact is that the money that would be used for this work would come from pre-allocated footpath funds. Those funds, we understand, are only available for the purposes of footpath-like projects.

The Committee has met with representatives of the Golf Club and a representative of Urban Solutions who have been engaged by the Local Board to provide consultative services regarding this footpath, as well as footpaths and cycleways within the wider Omaha/Matakana area. In the course of those discussions, it became apparent that the proposed Taniko walkway and its location was more problematic than initially viewed. It is noted that Council owned a section of land bordering between the Taniko Department of Conservation land and Whangateau itself, which would be a more attractive location for a walkway – with a view to linking to the quarry to the south of the golf course and, ultimately, to the cycleway on Jones Road at some point in time.

Community Centre Lease

You will have received an email outlining a brief summary of where matters stand with the lease of the Community Centre. OBC continues to work collaboratively in conjunction with the Omaha Beach Golf Club, Rodney Local Board and the Auckland Council lease managers to achieve a positive outcome. There are some repair issues to a box guttering in the Community Centre roof that will need to be addressed as part of this process. We will advise more on this when the extent of repairs is determined.

As you may be aware, there was a hiccup when we were advised by Council representatives that lease negotiations in relation to the golf course were put on hold by a department within Council who had been tasked to review the golf course assets. With the assistance of Richard Brabant and Graham Painter we produced an extensive paper for Beth Houlbrooke, our local Board Chairperson, explaining why this is a bad idea. Reference is made to that paper later in this Newsletter. I am pleased to say that the negotiations are now continuing, and the Council property officers are currently progressing through the compulsory consultative processes as required.

Security

Representatives of your community meet regularly with Chris Martin from Insite Security to review security around the community. A number of new cameras have been installed at various locations and more are envisaged. However, there is nothing better than the eyes and ears of the community and if you see anything suspicious that may be urgent then the number to call is **0800 66 24 24** – or email us@omahabeach.co.nz if you have any information that you want to share.

The usual boorish behaviour seems to have elevated to some serious criminal activity in the form of theft of large and valuable items, vehicles and boats – the community needs to ensure that individuals secure their personal chattels and vehicles.

Northwest Bank Renewal

Finally, progress is being made in this area and we'll report more fully in the Summer Newsletter.

Rubbish

As most of you are aware we sent out a Rubbish Survey and, notwithstanding one or two unhelpful and somewhat rude criticisms, a huge response was achieved, and that information has been collated. Murray Beatson reports on the outcome in this Newsletter.

People

We are very grateful to the many volunteers who have assisted various projects over the course of the last six months. We are desperately in need of people to drive projects that they are interested in pursuing. If you have a suggestion/criticism, then you need to be prepared to pick up the issue and deal with it.

Firstly, we will need a Treasurer for the oncoming year and I thank Rob Zubielevitch and Ian Russell for their continued efforts in dealing with this very important function.

If you think you would like to project drive a particular interest, with the support of OBC, please communicate with us on us@omahabeach.co.nz

Golf Club Bar Licence at the Community Centre

The Golf Club currently holds a “club licence” and there are strict conditions which have to be complied with in order to ensure the continuity of this licence. To many of you these will be obvious.

If you are a Golf Club member then you must carry your Golf Club Membership Card with you when at the Club and, if you have guests, please ensure that they are signed in correctly. Your guests must be chaperoned; it is not permissible to simply sign people in and “set them free”.

Financial members of the OBC are social members of the Golf Club. It is intended that Club Cards will also be issued to financial members of OBC. A list of financial members and their address is being provided to the Golf Club; financial OBC members are requested to see Golf Club staff when they next visit the Community Centre to uplift their Club Card. Please identify yourselves as part of that process. If you are not a financial member of OBC you will not be issued with a Club Card.

Kind regards,

Chris Allan, President

VISION MATAKANA MEETING

Three OBC Committee members went to a well-attended meeting convened by the Matakana Community Group, organised by Simon Barclay and Wendy Douglas. Our local body members, Beth Houlbrooke and Greg Sayers, were also present.

Each local community – which includes Matakana, Point Wells, Whangateau, Snells Beach, Omaha and others – presented their plans for improvement along with their concerns, many of which were very similar e.g. traffic density and speed, parking, estuary protection, drainage, footpath creation and maintenance, and toilet facilities ... or lack of.

The meeting was of value as an information evening as well as a briefing for our local Board representatives. The discussions should be of benefit in the future if, collectively, we could better influence bodies such as Auckland Transport, Auckland City Council and NZTA, to give a few examples.

OMAHA SHOREBIRD PROTECTION TRUST

The Omaha Shorebird Protection Trust was established in 2009 with the aim of protecting the shorebirds that feed in the Whangateau harbour and roost at high tide at the tip of Omaha spit. In particular, our group is focused on improving the breeding success of the Northern NZ dotterels.

The NZ dotterel is sparsely distributed around the North Island, and has increased over the past 10 years to now number over 2,000. This increase in dotterel numbers is largely due to the efforts of committed community groups such as ours, that carry out predator control, fencing of nesting areas, provision of signage to reduce disturbance, and advocacy. We are very fortunate to have about 10% of the total population of NZ dotterels *in the world* roost at North Omaha Reserve at the end of Omaha spit. This special area has been set aside for the shorebirds, which are increasingly threatened as coastal development and human recreational activities become more prevalent.

New Zealand dotterels breed in monogamous pairs, and vigorously defend their territories against other dotterels. Currently, our oldest known dotterel at Omaha spit was colour-banded as a chick at Tawharanui in March 1997. For many years this little bird could be found in its breeding territory on the estuary side of the spit at the southern end of the reserve. Unfortunately, she lost her mate to cat predation in 2015, and has remained without a mate since then. She can often be seen hanging out with the juveniles and other non-breeding dotterels that roost on the spit.



Northern New Zealand dotterel "rat racing" intruders from their nest site. Photo by Marie Ward.

As we move towards summer, and the start of the shorebird breeding season, we ask that you take extra care to help us protect our Omaha shorebirds. Please keep your cats inside at night, and follow the regulations regarding dogs, keeping them out of the reserve. We would also ask you not to jog or run around the spit, particularly at high tide when the birds are roosting. If you wish to visit the spit, then please walk on the wet sand wherever possible, and keep moving. The dotterels undertake distraction displays to lead intruders away from nests and chicks; these include 'rat-runs' and injury-feigning. If you see

a dotterel displaying this behaviour (an example is shown in the photo) then please heed the bird and move well away. That way you will not inadvertently step on any well camouflaged eggs or tiny chicks.

Marie Ward, OSPT Trustee and Chair.

PREDATOR FREE OMAHA

We now have a range of traps set at the rear of the houses on Mangatawhiri Rd and around the quarry lake area. We have a mixture of DOC 200 traps, targeting stoats and rats, and Victor rat traps inside rat motels targeting rats. The traps were first set in late February and the current team of Rob Zubielevitch, Phil Bougen and Tod Tait have been delighted with the results so far.

In March and April we were surprised at the large numbers of mice caught in the rat traps – well over 110 of them. In addition to the mice, to date we have caught 35 rats, 14 stoats and five weasels. A big thanks to Kiwibank Predator Free Communities Trust for the traps.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has also donated \$1,000 to the Omaha community and with that funding we purchased another 13 DOC traps. DOC approved a health and safety plan for us to be able to set Goodnature possum traps in the DOC-owned Taniko reserve. With the help of DOC staff, and Denis O'Callahan from Omaha Shorebirds Protection Trust, we have set 13 of these traps in the reserve, as well as the 13 DOC traps. We are delighted that in the first two weeks we have killed three possums (two from one single trap) and a large rat. We haven't checked all the traps yet so are expecting more in the next few weeks. The Taniko reserve is very difficult to negotiate with much of the area in very swampy ground.

Finally, the Auckland Council has prepared an Omaha Peninsula Community Pest Free Operational Plan which will also be funding pest and predator control in the community. Several of us have to pitch at a meeting with the Rodney Local Board at Council chambers on 18th October.

These projects are big and, although we are receiving support from DOC and Omaha Shorebirds, we will need more volunteers going forward. Typically, we need people who have a passion for this type of work and who can commit to 3 or 4 hours once a month. It's amazing how much encouragement the community has given the volunteers as they go around setting and rebaiting the traps. If you are willing to have a trap located on your property, please contact us.

Here are some photos of our catches. It was very satisfying to catch our first stoat.

Contact robzubielevitch@gmail.com or call 021 963 434



L to R: Stoat, Rat in Victor Trap, Weasel

GOLF CLUB LEASE

As we have previously reported, the Golf Club and OBC are working in tandem with the Rodney Local Board and the Auckland Council's Property people to renew the leases for the Golf Course and the Community Centre.

However, we are aware of Auckland Council's review relating to its continued ownership of certain assets – one of which is the Omaha Golf Course.

To enable an informed position to be had regarding any possible attempt by Auckland Council to sell off the Golf Course to a developer, we have had a brief prepared, which backgrounds the Omaha development, including the Golf Course. We believe the facts would prevent any such sell-off and development.

The paper provides interesting reading regarding the history, and special nature, of the Omaha development. If you are interested in reading it, click here [Brief on Omaha Development and Golf Course Sep18](#).

We continue to monitor developments.

RUBBISH & RECYCLING SURVEY

As you will no doubt be aware we undertook a survey earlier in the year to find out your views on the current Rubbish and Recycling kerb-side collection services, and possible changes; hopefully you were able to participate. The survey resulted from what the OBC committee members had observed, numerous complaints received, and requests to do something about it.

We had very good participation in the survey, with a 56% response rate. So ... for those that took the trouble to have their say, thank you!

The majority of respondents confirmed that they weren't happy with the current arrangements, with only 28% not seeing the need for any changes and, in relation to the Rubbish collection services, not seeing the need for Omaha to get rid of the plastic Rubbish bags and, instead, introduce Rubbish wheelie bins. It was interesting also that only 10% of respondents indicated

they would take up the use, if offered, of a 'Holiday Only' 240 Litre Rubbish bin that would only be serviced during the summer period. However, notwithstanding only a small number appearing to be interested in a 'Holiday Only' bin, discussions with Northland Waste have indicated they would still favourably consider providing such a service.

A similar result was found when we asked residents about the likely use of an eftpos operated community compactor bin for their Rubbish disposal, if a suitable location could be found for it and if it was offered; only 8% supported this proposal.

Whilst the Rubbish collection service (basically the use of plastic Rubbish bags) was felt to be the main area of concern, we also took the opportunity to ascertain views on Recycling, notwithstanding the changes and improvements we made for the previous summer/holiday period. The survey showed that 88% of the respondents were very pleased with the additional, weekly, recycling collection service we had been able to arrange with Auckland Council. The additional Rubbish collections provided by Northland Waste over this period were also very much appreciated and, combined, contributed to a much tidier Omaha.

It was interesting to find that, of the respondents, 75% were from those whose property was a bach/holiday home; 23% were where it was their home/permanent residence; with only 1% disclosed as being a rental property. The greatest number of respondents were in the Northern end (60%); and 40% in the Southern end of Omaha.

It was very pleasing that many respondents (26%) took the trouble to provide additional comments ... which were quite enlightening! The vast majority of comments could essentially be grouped as follows:

- Residents being unhappy with the plastic Rubbish bags, which are often put out after the scheduled collection day and time, and then left out for the seagulls to get into and litter the rubbish everywhere; plus the environmental impact of using plastic Rubbish bags which go to landfill.
- Residents concerned about a change to Rubbish wheelie bins and them being left on the street after collection. Some were also concerned that this was a potential security issue, signalling that the property was vacant.
- Residents concerned about an apparent increase in costs if they had to pay for a Rubbish wheelie bin; some (incorrectly) believe it is covered by their Rates.

It was clear, on reading the comments, that there were also some misunderstandings around what would be involved with a move by all of Omaha from the use of plastic Rubbish bags to the Rubbish wheelie bins, and even what the current arrangements are.

Rubbish Collection

Our current **weekly Rubbish collection service** is handled by Northland Waste, utilising a combination of their Rubbish wheelie bins, and their orange plastic rubbish bags. Of the respondents, 17% already use the Rubbish wheelie bins. The cost of the Rubbish collection service is covered by the rental of a Rubbish wheelie bin, or the purchase of the orange plastic Rubbish bags.

In terms of what we pay for in our Rates, the 'Waste Management – Base Service' included in the Rates covers recycling collection and annual inorganic collection only. Rodney, including Omaha, does not have a Council-supplied general rubbish collection service. Other parts of Auckland, who do have a Council-supplied rubbish collection, either pay a higher 'Waste Management' levy in their Rates or use a system of paid tags on bins (the latter having its own issues). So, a switch to Rubbish wheelie bins for Omaha residents would only be in substitution for the cost of the plastic Rubbish bags (not in addition to any amount you pay in Rates). Each plastic Rubbish bag costs

around \$3 (which covers the cost of collection and disposal at the landfill), whereas the indicative cost from Northland Waste (reduced from their standard rates) of the proposed Rubbish wheelie bins is, with even moderate use, cheaper. An 80 Litre bin, equivalent to 1.3x of the plastic rubbish bags, is estimated to cost around \$100 pa and also includes Northland Waste's additional (twice weekly) collections over the peak summer holiday periods. It goes without saying that doing away with the plastic Rubbish bags is better for the environment!

We appreciate the comments regarding Rubbish wheelie bins being left out on the street for periods following collection, but we would hope that a 'neighbourly' approach by all would see the bins put away, or at least moved off the street by neighbours/friends, for those not residing here (as we have observed happens in many streets already). This would also alleviate the concerns some have regarding potential security issues.

In relation to the security of people and property in Omaha, sadly it is becoming more of an issue ... and our thanks go out to Chris Martin and his team at Insite Security for the great job they do for us. The OBC, together with Chris, has also recently reviewed and improved our CCTV camera coverage around Omaha, which we hope would be a further deterrent.

So, where to next with our Rubbish collection service? Following the survey, with the vast majority supporting a change from the plastic Rubbish bags to Rubbish wheelie bins, it is our intention to have further discussions with Northland Waste in an attempt to conclude such an arrangement, together with the additional (twice-weekly) Rubbish collections over the busy summer holiday period and, we believe, a 'Holiday Only' Rubbish wheelie bin option. On the assumption that we do change, it would be up to each property owner to make the decision on whether to rent a Rubbish wheelie bin (and what size), or not – it will not be compulsory for all properties to have a bin but, following the change, there would no longer be a kerbside collection service for the plastic Rubbish bags. However, we would look at a phased change, and introduction of the Rubbish wheelie bins.

Recycling Collection

In terms of the **fortnightly Recycling collection service**, this is handled by Smart Environmental, who are contracted by Auckland Council, and our fortnightly collections are paid for via a targeted rate (as noted above) included in your Rates. The additional weekly Recycling collections we were able to secure over the peak holiday period last summer were treated as a 'trial' by Auckland Council. We have essentially been in discussions with Auckland Council for the past six months, pressing for the 'trial' weekly collections over the summer holiday period to be made permanent over this period in future years. We thought we were close to reaching agreement, but Council then insisted on an additional payment by us/residents (extra to that already paid on the Rates) to assist in covering the cost of the additional collections. One option included an approach to the Rodney Local Board for financial assistance, but they were unable to assist us. Suffice to say, we're still in discussions and considering our options and Councillor Greg Sayers is now looking at our case.

Residents are reminded that it is possible to upgrade their Recycling wheelie bin to a larger, 360 Litre, size – but to do this they do need to contact Auckland Council (Call Centre 09 3010101; or email enquiry@aucklandcouncil.govt.nz).

We'll continue to keep you informed on developments ...

Lawrie Road Waste Transfer Station

You may also have read, or heard, about changes the Council is proposing to the Waste Transfer Station ... namely its closure – without a workable solution, at this stage, for a replacement.

We have been liaising with Beth Houlbrooke, Chair of the Rodney Local Board on this, and it's fair to say that the Local Board was as surprised at the news as we were! It seems the Local Board has not been part of this decision-making process, but they are keenly seeking a solution. They will continue to keep us updated.

You may be interested in reading Auckland Council's media release on it, which we've put on our website - see link <https://omahabeach.co.nz/auckland-councils-proposed-closure-of-lawrie-rd-waste-transfer-station/>