

Draft Te Oka Reserve Management Plan

Submission of Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust

Submitter Details:

Postal Address: Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust
PO Box 5
Little River, 7546

Email Address: suky@roddonaldtrust.co.nz

Phone Number: 03-304-7733

Contact Person: Suky Thompson, Trust Manager

The Trust wishes to be heard in support of its submission.

1 Introduction

The Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust (Trust) is a charitable trust and CCO founded by the Christchurch City Council in 2010 for the benefit of the present and future inhabitants of Banks Peninsula and for visitors to the area. The Trust has objectives to promote sustainable management and conservation of the natural environment and environmental based projects focussed on the maintenance and development of recreation facilities including parks, reserves and walkways.

The Trust seeks to work in partnership with other organisations to achieve its objectives and to align activities with the projects and initiatives of Christchurch City Council. It aims to work holistically on projects underpinned by four key pillars of improved public walking and biking access, enhancing biodiversity, building and promoting knowledge and working in partnership with others.

The Trust produces a range of walking publications including the Akaroa Wairewa Summits and Bays brochure. This includes the walk down the main spur on Te Oka reserve, but not the other tracks shown in the draft Management plan.

The Trust has an aspiration to extend the Te Ara Pātaka tramping network around the Southern Bays, including through the Te Oka reserve and making use of its overnight accommodation. We are pleased that note of this has been made in the draft plan.

We have worked with staff from the Christchurch City Council in the development of our brochures and have attended a joint meeting with Wairewa rūnanga discussing some of the issues around increased visitation to Te Oka.

We support the submission from Department of Conservation.

2 Te Oka issues and opportunities

The Trust supports the introduction of a Reserve Management Plan for the Te Oka Reserve, but suggests the Council needs to more fully analyse and address the issues and opportunities outside the immediate reserve boundaries and consider how they will be addressed as the Reserve itself develops. To relegate these issues to “out of scope” is counter-productive to developing a future vision for the Reserve as they frame the context for its development and are critical to its future success.

We briefly canvas these issues and opportunities in this submission, but recommend that the Council carries out further work before adopting a Reserve Management Plan for Te Oka. We are concerned that unless these issues and opportunities have been discussed and a path forward charted in the Management Plan, the later “Landscape Plan” process is likely to flounder, as it will be restricted by the Plan.

We suggest that the starting point is further analysis of the biodiversity and recreational potential of Te Oka and how it can complement and add to the other opportunities already available on Banks Peninsula, alongside a commitment to work in with neighbouring property owners, particularly Wairewa rūnanga.

We also suggest that the Council prioritises development of the Misty Peaks Reserve while it works to resolve some of the issues around Te Oka.

2.1 Issues

We identify three major issues facing Te Oka Reserve that need to be addressed as part of the Reserve development.

2.1.1 Road access a limiting factor

Te Oka is in a remote location and served only by steep, narrow shingle roads. This limits the extent to which the reserve can develop to attract a higher volume of visitors without road upgrades.

If the intent is to attract high visitor numbers (for example by development as a mountain bike park), then the Management Plan should make this clear, and present a staged development indicating at what visitation level the road will need to be upgraded, and some ideas as to what might be feasible.

Alternatively, if the strategy is to encourage visitors on foot or bike from the Bossu Road, or fewer visitors who stay longer and get more out of their visit, then this needs to be stated. The accommodation available at the Park is a plus to such a “longer stay strategy”.

2.1.2 Key attractions are not part of the reserve

The key attractions in the area, Tumbledown Bay and Devils Gap Peak do not form part of the reserve. Working in with the neighbouring landowners to develop secure access to these attractions would greatly strengthen what the reserve has to offer. This may be an area where the Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust can assist.

In particular, most people visiting or staying at Te Oka reserve are likely to visit Tumbledown Bay beach. Access to Tumbledown beach is currently available from the road because of the goodwill of the landowner, Wairewa rūnanga. It is vital that as the Council develops Te Oka, it takes the rūnanga with it on its vision for the reserve, and does not create a situation where the current public access to the beach is withdrawn. Public toilets, rubbish and people management at Tumbledown are already an issue and the Reserve Management plan needs to acknowledge the connections and these issues and present some way forward.

Existing Council signage on Te Oka Reserve directs visitors to Tumbledown beach. See Appendix 2.

2.1.3 On-site management

Currently the farm lessee lives on site. The Reserve Management Plan indicates that grazing is to be gradually withdrawn, but makes no mention of the current farm manager’s house, whether this will continue to be occupied by a Reserve Manager, or how accommodation on the site is to be marketed and managed. Given the remoteness of the location, and the need to service accommodation, the issue of whether there is to be a resident manager on site needs to be addressed. The Trust recommends that an on-site manager is retained in this remote location to keep an eye on things, service the accommodation, manage the residual grazing and ensure public facilities such as tracks are maintained.

2.2 Opportunities

What does Te Oka Reserve offer that is special and different from other reserves in the area? What type of visitors is it likely to appeal to? These questions need to be analysed and form the basis of planning. We make some suggestions below, based on our experience of promoting walking, biking and biodiversity on Banks Peninsula.

2.2.1 Southern Bays location

Currently the Southern Bays would be one of the least visited and least well known areas of Banks Peninsula. Other than Tumbledown Bay used by people seeking a gentle beach, and Magnet Bay by surfers, the area is little known and visited. It is not clear that beach-goers are likely to make significant use of Te Oka given the nearest access point is a 20 minute walk up the road.

From a biodiversity perspective Te Oka gives almost summit to sea protection, unlike the other reserves in the area which are mainly in upland areas, so perhaps the real opportunity at Te Oka is as a biodiversity reserve, with public recreation coming second. In this case some sort of management philosophy such as that expressed at Hinewai, where conservation comes first and public recreation second, needs to be included in the Reserve Management Plan.

There are other major biodiversity initiatives in the Southern Bays, including the Oashore property which is largely managed for conservation. There may be opportunities for linkages here, particularly with the Pest Free Banks Peninsula consortium now underway.

2.2.2 Walking linkages

The Rod Donald Trust envisages Te Oka providing walking access from the Bossu Road down to the coastline as part of extending the Te Ara Pātaka tramping track from Saddle Hill Reserve on the Bossu Road to Birdlings Flat. The Trust anticipates starting work on this extension once it has completed securing access along the existing track linking Gebbies Pass to Hilltop. This is likely to be at least 2 or 3 years in the future.

At such a time, the Trust would like to see the “backpacker” accommodation at Te Oka managed as a tramping hut and bookable via the DOC website to match with the other huts on the route. The Trust could potentially be involved with the management of the hut. There may be synergies for the cottage on Te Oka to be used as accommodation for parties seeking to have exclusive use of accommodation. This could tie in with a building on Saddle Hill Reserve if this was developed by the Trust or DOC for tramping parties in tandem.

2.2.3 Mountain biking

Mountain biking is an increasingly popular recreational activity, but there are few places on Banks Peninsula where mountain bikers can get off-road. The large area of Te Oka may make it an appealing destination if it was substantially developed for mountain biking, but this would need to be done in conjunction with decisions about the roading and toilets.

The new bridge across the canal draining Te Roto o Wairewa may provide better access to Te Oka for mountain bikers or part of the whole experience.

There need to be discussions with the mountain biking users as to what would appeal to them, to determine if Te Oka should be a mountain bike park.

Mountain bikers can also bring issues, such as construction of informal tracks in biodiversity areas and disturbing stock, and these would need to be dealt with.

2.2.4 Working with runanga

Perhaps the most exciting potential for Te Oka is to develop in conjunction with the adjoining Tumbledown/Te Kaio property owned by Wairewa Rūnanga. That could enable Te Oka to develop as a special place where people can better understand and appreciate the natural world through Te Ao Māori.

2.3 Hui and further consultation needed

The Trust has made detailed comments on the proposed Reserve Management plan, but suggests that rather than hold a hearing and aiming to adopt the plan at this stage, it would be far better for the Council to hold a hui with all interested parties to brainstorm the issues and ideas on how Te Oka could be developed in future. We do not consider this has been well enough thought through in the draft.

2.4 Stakeholder input through a Reserve Management Committee or similar

If the Council does proceed with the Plan in its current form, then we strongly advocate that a Reserve Management Committee or similar including the interested parties is set up, and tasked with developing the proposed Landscape Plan. This could be done in conjunction with the Community Board, to ensure that there is collaboration with neighbours, and that development in the reserve is matched to resolution of the issues with Te Oka Road and toilets and management at adjoining Tumbledown.

3 Detailed submissions

The following lists proposed amendments to the draft management plan. These are indicative changes only and if accepted, any consequential amendments should also be made, whether listed here or not.

Reference	Suggested amendment or comment	Reason
Page 2 Figure 1 Reserve Map	Show only the walking track down the main spur on the map.	The track from the Bossu Road down the central spur ridgeline is currently the only track signposted for public access. The other tracks may be present, but to the public are not distinguishable from other farm tracks on the property
Page 9 Section 1.2 Notable Topographic Features	Combine the Landscape and Notable Topographic Features sections. Reword as:	Landscape addressed first as Notable features are a subset.
Page 10 Section 1.4 History of human use	It would be useful to state if there is any known pre-European use of the reserve land	
Page 10 Section 1.4 History of human use	No mention is made of the former Southern Bay walkway that traversed from Oashore to Okuti valley via Te Oka, which provided the second night of accommodation. There are old stiles etc left from these days, and probably the building now referred as a backpackers was kitted out in this manner to provide track accommodation.	
Page 11 Sections 1.6, 1.7	An up to date ecological survey of the reserve should be conducted to provide more information for these sections and a baseline of what is present	More information on what is in the reserve and the threats would help inform the policies and the management of the reserve
Page 15 Section 2.7	Para 1 reword second sentence	This section comes under Issues – so needs to address the big issue for Te Oka which is the

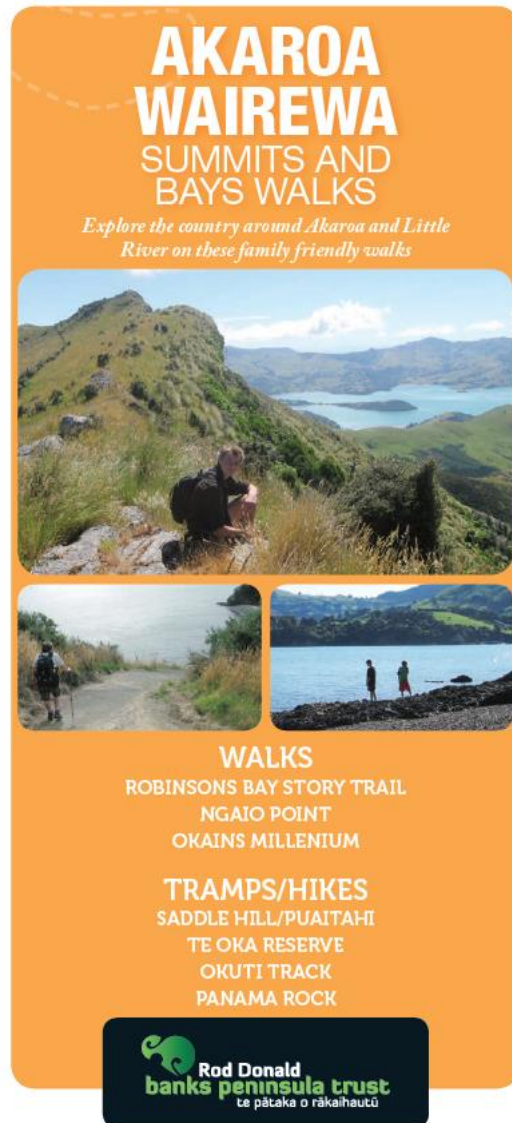
Reference	Suggested amendment or comment	Reason
Access and use	<i>Te Oka Reserve is in a remote setting and all the roads leading to the park are steep and narrow. Bossu Road gives access to the upper part of the park and Te Oka Bay Road to the lower part, including the beaches and accommodation buildings. This road is steep, narrow and unsealed at the lower elevations and often corrugated, making it difficult for oncoming vehicles to pass each other. This means that unless the Te Oka Bay road undergoes significant upgrade, development of the Park will need to be done in the context of minimising the increase in vehicular traffic on this road.</i>	road access.
Page 15 Section 2.7 Access and Use	<p>Last para – suggest the following:</p> <p><i>The difficulty of access without major upgrade to the Te Oka Bay Road is the major issue facing the development of more recreation at this reserve. A strategy of encouraging low visitor numbers for high quality experiences is the more realistic way to develop. This could include people arriving by foot on the long distance walkway proposed and encouraging people to stay overnight for a longer experience in the reserve. Another option might be to encourage cross country mountain biking via the Rail Trail and Bossu Road.</i></p>	Suggest that given the difficulty of vehicular access, the Reserve Management Plan promotes non-vehicular access.
Page 16 Section 2.8 Facilities and Utilities	<p>Para 2 – the sentence below needs re-working. Suggest as follows.</p> <p><i>There are already a good number of structures in the former farm homestead area and yards in the mid Te Oka valley.</i></p>	What does “it is expected” mean. Either there are or there aren’t a good number of structures!
Page 17 Section 2.8	<p>The Management Plan needs to show both of the accommodation buildings on the map, images of both, and address how the public are to be informed about them, and deal with issues around booking and servicing. Who handles the bookings, who services the accommodation, where does the income go, is it returned to the Reserve are some of the questions to answer.</p> <p>It also needs to show the current lessees house and state whether an on-site manager is to be retained once the grazing is withdrawn.</p>	<p>We question statement that two former farm buildings are regularly let out to visitors. Earlier this year, the Trust asked about including how to book the accommodation in our Akaroa Wairewa Summit and Bays brochure and were referred by Regional Parks staff to the lessee who declined for it to be included saying it was too early. We see these buildings are now on www.holidayhomes.co.nz, but not with listings that make them appear attractive nor</p>

Reference	Suggested amendment or comment	Reason
		any mention that they are in Te Oka Reserve.
Page 17 Section 2 Add additional topic	2.9 Collaborating with neighbours <i>Some of the notable features in the area, and those which visitors are highly likely to want to access, are either on neighbouring properties or accessed via them. These include the Devils Gap rock on Kennethmont Farms and Tumbledown Beach accessed via land belonging to Wairewa rūnanga through the Te Kaio Trustee Company Ltd.</i> <i>Devils Gap rock is popular with climbers, who might want to stay the accommodation at Te Oka, and visitors making a weekend at Te Oka are likely to want to climb it also, as there is easy access for walkers.</i> <i>The most popular spot in the area is Tumbledown Bay with its safe, sandy swimming beach. The rūnanga currently permit beach access across their land and have constructed a good track to the beach, but are concerned about the need for toilets as this beach is popular in summer.</i> <i>Working constructively with neighbours is a management aim, as increasing visitation to Te Oka is likely to impact on both, particularly Tumbledown.</i>	
Page 17 Section 3 Vision	Move Section 3 Vision to before Section 2 Issues	The Vision informs the issues. If there was no vision of people visiting, the roading access would not be an issue.
Page 17 Section 3.2 Management Aims	Reword as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Protect and enhance natural values through restoration of native biodiversity across the reserve</i> • <i>Provide public access on a network of tramping tracks through the park and support it with overnight accommodation</i> • <i>Maintain and promote the historical, cultural, environmental values and feature and retain views from key points</i> • <i>Provide and maintain facilities as needed</i> • <i>Collaborate with and work toward shared aims with neighbouring properties</i> • <i>Ensure the reserve adds value to, connects with and complements the other recreational opportunities in the area.</i> 	The Reserve should not be managed in isolation, but in conjunction with the other relevant biodiversity and recreation projects in the area.

Reference	Suggested amendment or comment	Reason
Page 18 Section 4.3 European History Add objective	<i>3.2 The dwellings will be used to house a resident manager and provide visitor accommodation. Visitor accommodation should include both shared use tramping accommodation and exclusive use, and be managed through a booking system.</i>	<p>Somewhere the matter of renting out accommodation to visitors needs to be addressed.</p> <p>Currently there is a resident farm manager living in one of the houses not available for rent. The Management Plan needs to indicate whether this is to continue. The Trust recommends that in this remote location it would be desirable to have an on-site manager and for that person to also manage the holiday accommodation.</p>
Page 21 Section 8.3	Add visitor accommodation to the list of facilities.	
Page 21 Section 4.8 Recreation Additional policy	Add <i>8.4 Tracks and facilities will be well maintained.</i>	Important that this is an objective.
Page 22, Section 10 Access Objective	Reword Objective 10 to state: <i>Objective: 10 Encourage the park to be accessible by the public in a manner that does not add significantly to the traffic on Te Oka Bay Road</i>	The Access issues need to be dealt with, not dodged by stating the roads are outside the scope of the plan.. They need to frame the usage of the park in a way that does not increase road usage, or the management plan needs to signal that the Council will have to improve Te Oka Bay road with passing bays and more seal or it will create a dangerous situation.
Page 25 Community Involvement Objective 15	Change wording to: <i>15 Establish a Reserve Management Committee for the Te Oka Reserve</i> <i>Policy 15.1 A Reserve Management Committee is to be established for Te Oka in line with the Council's Reserves Management Committee Terms of Reference and may include stakeholders from the local and wider community</i> <i>Policy 15.2 The Reserve Management Committee will develop a Landscape Plan in</i>	Reserve Management committees are a way to keep the reserve in touch with its neighbours and other interested parties. A local group should be the ones to oversee a Landscape Plan in conjunction with Regional Parks staff.

Reference	Suggested amendment or comment	Reason
	<p><i>conjunction with Council staff within 2 years of its appointment to foster appropriate development in the reserve</i></p> <p><i>Policy 15.3 Representatives from neighbouring properties, Wairewa Runanga and Kennethmont Farm will be invited to sit on the Reserve Management Committee.</i></p> <p><i>Policy 15.4 The Reserve Management Committee may involve the wider community in the management of the reserve by organising volunteer opportunities and events.</i></p>	The public need a greater role in management
Page 25 Add new objective	<p>4.17 Carbon sequestration</p> <p><i>OBJECTIVE: 17 Earn an income for the park through financial recognition of its carbon sequestration</i></p> <p><i>Policy 17.1 Register the Park under the ETS for carbon credits. Re-use the income to support the development, management and maintenance of the park.</i></p>	There is a potential revenue source here that should be seriously investigated. Other large reserves such as Hinewai are supporting their staff costs through the sale of carbon credits.
Section 5 Background Section 5.7	<p>Add information on the Akaroa Wairewa Summits and Bays walking brochure</p> <p><i>The main track in Te Oka Reserve is promoted in the Akaroa Wairewa Summits and Bays brochure produced by Rod Donald Banks Peninsula Trust available at Information Centres throughout the Peninsula and Christchurch City, and via the online resource www.bankspeninsulawalks.co.nz under the Greater Banks Peninsula tab.</i></p>	We include relevant sections of this brochure as an appendix.

Appendix 1 Akaroa Wairewa Summits and Bays brochure



Cover of the Akaroa Wairewa Summit and Bays brochure and main map locating Te Oka reserve and the signposted track down the spur ridgeline as #5 on the map

5 TE OKA RESERVE



2 hrs 30 mins one way,
540m altitude change.

Allow extra time for beach

SAFETY ADVICE

Keep to marked track.

Listen for vehicles on Te Oka Bay Road. Te Oka Bay Road unsuitable for campervans. Keep at least 20m from seals on the beaches.

Best done downhill as a spectacular walk from summit to swimming beach if a vehicle picks you up at the bottom, or climb back up as well for a jolly good workout!

Getting There: Take the Okuti Valley turnoff from SH75 just south of Little River, and continue up to the junction with Bossu Road where the track starts.

Directions: Climb over the stile and through the gate straight ahead. You are now on a double-fenced "stock route" until you reach Te Oka Bay Road near the bottom. Leave gates as you find them on the way—taking care if some people go ahead to respect this.

An open gate can lead to stock escaping, a closed gate can deprive them of access to water. Walk slowly past sheep, avoid eye contact, and give them space to run back past you so you don't crowd them into the next gate. See if you agree with our count of 18 gates on the way!

The wide view to the ocean and the bays below is fabulous, but keep an eye for the minutiae too. Landmarks near the top include a group of mature "old man pines" and a stock pen where 6 different paddocks come together. The gnarled old fence posts along the stock route are made from the totara trees that once covered this land. Lower down you pass bush featuring Manuka (rare on Banks Peninsula). Look for the fallen tree in a barrel and the double cabbage tree gate.

When you reach Te Oka Bay Road, turn right for Tumbledown/Te Kaio Bay or left for Te Oka. Its about 20 minutes down the road to either beach. Tumbledown is a gentle sandy beach with safe swimming. Please respect that the Tumbledown foreshore is private land belonging to Wairewa rūnanga, who kindly allow the public beach access, so keep strictly to the marked track with the ladder stiles through this sensitive area. Te Oka is a wilder rocky beach with sand exposed only at low tide and stronger surf. The strange cries you hear at either are seals. Keep at least 20m away (four car lengths) and respect this is their home.

There are no toilets at either beach, but plans underway to place some at Tumbledown.



Description and illustration of the spur ridgeline walk.

At the time of developing this brochure (January 2018) there was no sign of the other walks shown on the Reserve Management Plan and the farm lessee declined to have information about the rental accommodation included in the brochure.

There are now two listings on www.holidayhomes.co.nz that may be these accommodation facilities, and the Trust would be keen to promote them if they are now available for booking.

Appendix 2 Council signage at Te Oka



Signage on the spur ridgeline track indicating public access to both Te Oka and Tumbledown beaches.

As of January 2018 this was the only signage in evidence.