

Responsible Camping FAQs

What does the Freedom Camping Act 2011 allow/not allow?

There cannot be a blanket ban on freedom camping across the district. Camping can be banned or restricted in specific areas for one or more of the following reasons.

1. Protect the area
2. Protect the health and safety of those that visit the area
3. protecting access to an area

Rules can be created about the type of vehicles or tents that are allowed, or the hours or duration of stay in permitted/restricted areas.

A bylaw would have to comply with the Freedom Camping Act 2011. If council is going to ban camping in some areas, it has to show areas of where people can camp.

Why don't we have a bylaw

A bylaw can only be used if it is "the most appropriate and proportionate way of addressing the perceived problem in relation to that area".

Council does not believe a bylaw is the best way to help people camp responsibly in our district. Instead, we are working with our community through the Responsible Camping Working Group to encourage visitors to use commercial campgrounds or, if they choose to 'freedom camp' to do so in a way that makes sure impact they have on our home and our economy is as positive and sustainable as possible.

A bylaw would cost money to develop, more money to enforce and wouldn't solve most of the issues our community experiences around freedom camping.

What would a bylaw cost?

It wouldn't be cheap. Experience in other areas in New Zealand shows that bylaws can be expensive to develop and enforce. If we were to develop a bylaw we may need more staff to enforce it, placing extra costs on the ratepayer. Other Councils have also found chasing campers for fines for breaking a camping bylaw isn't cost effective.

Other Councils are also having to review their bylaws regularly and experiencing legal challenges, adding to the costs.

Who is on the Responsible Camping Working Group?

The Responsible Camping Working Group is made up of a number of agencies, stakeholders and partners. Some of these entities have been represented by more than one person. The full list of participating agencies is below.

Te Rūnanga o Kaikōura
Department of Conservation
New Zealand Police
New Zealand Transport Agency
Kiwi Rail
Canterbury District Health Board
Environment Canterbury
Kaikōura Youth Council
Te Korowai
New Zealand Motor Caravan Association

Kaikōura Board Riders
Kaikōura Camping Ground Rep
Mangamaunu Marae Group
Mangamaunu Area Advisory Group
CamperMate
ECCO
Tramping Club
Public Representatives x 4

Formal minutes of the meetings were not taken but publically available information can be found in the Responsible Camping papers to council which can be found here <https://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/our-council/meetings/>

What has been done for 2018/19?

What is Council trying to achieve this summer?

Council's goals with our responsible camping work this summer are to decrease incidents of unwanted behaviours, support local (commercial) alternatives to freedom camping, and increase ability of affected residents to report issues/act as guardians for camping areas.

How is this being done?

For the 2018/9 summer the Responsible Camping Working Group assessed 50 different locations across the district and identified three sites to be trailed as responsible camping sites.

Choosing these sites and planning how to encourage visitors to respect Kaikōura's wildlife, people and environment was a joint effort by community members including, business, youth, community, environmental, regulatory and iwi representatives. Council would like to thank everyone involved for their hard work, passion and dedication to Kaikōura.

The sites are:

- **Pohowera site** off SH1 south of South Bay. Temporary toilets have been provided. The site is limited to up to 30 campsites, CCTV is being used to monitor vehicle numbers. It is suitable for tents or self-contained campers.
- **Scarborough Street Recreation Reserve** near Innovative Waste Kaikōura - This site is grass and may only be suitable for 4x4 during or after heavy rain. Temporary toilets have been provided. It is suitable for tents or self-contained campers and is fenced to limit numbers.
- **South Kēkerengū** – Self-contained only site

A flier with more information and site maps can be found here <https://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/our-district/freedom-camping/>

As well as recommending the Pohowera site, the working Group requested several steps to help manage the impact on the dotterels who live there. This included signs, fliers and education. These steps are continuing to be implemented.

To ensure the selection of responsible camping sites was unbiased and achieved the goals of the working group, the working group developed criteria against which all sites were assessed. Criteria included aspects such as distance from residential or commercial properties, amenity and cultural values. All three sites chosen were those that ranked best when assessed against these criteria.

For the details of the criteria, please see the Council Report from September 2018 which can be found here <https://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/our-council/meetings/>

How will the issues raised this summer be dealt with?

The Responsible Camping Working Group is meeting again on February 7th to discuss all the issues and agree what they believe should happen now.

Why is the Pohowera area so large?

Council worked with NCTIR to prepare the site. Before being prepared for use as a responsible camping site, the area was where material from the harbour remediation was stockpiled. It was very uneven and had no clear boundaries. To help ensure the site was safe for visitors and had clearly marked boundaries, the whole area that had been used to dump the harbour material was cleared and flattened. Rocks were then placed in various locations to mark boundaries and help direct traffic movements.

Where did the 30 figure for the Pohowera site come from?

The Working Group recommended a limit of 20. The 30 figure on the sign was a misprint. Depending on the feedback from the Responsible camping working group and the Council the signs may be updated in the future.

How is Council monitoring responsible camping?

Council staff have been monitoring responsible camping in the following ways, site visits, using CCTV to track vehicle numbers, discussions with stakeholders such as campground owners, residents and businesses local police and fire, monitoring Facebook and local media, recording and responding to complaints. The goal is to understand the issues and impacts around camping as a whole rather than to focus just on tracking numbers. We estimate that up to 10 staff have taken some role in this monitoring.

What has Council done to educate campers and encourage them to camp responsibly?

Council has made it as easy as possible for visitors and residents to find information about responsible camping and report issues through improved online information, flier drops and radio advertising.

Council has also installed signs and written newspaper and newsletter article and worked with CamperMate to provide information to visitors through their app.

Without a bylaw, Council has no legal authority to prevent visitors from camping. We are encouraging voluntary responsible camping behaviour through education.

How is the rubbish being managed?

No rubbish bins have been provided. Research and experience across NZ has shown that providing rubbish bins often causes more issues than it solves with locals and visitors abusing provided bins and leaving excess rubbish. Instead, Council is following the 'pack in, pack out' approach and encouraging all campers to camp responsibly and remove and rubbish they generate, either taking it with them or disposing of it at Innovative Waste Kaikōura.

Who is paying for this and how much?

Over 2018/19, Council has spent \$40,000 on responsible camping related issues including signs, education and toilets. Toilets are emptied as often as is needed.

Council also has \$35,650 from the Tourism Infrastructure Fund specifically for the Kiwa road area.

What will the Tourism Infrastructure Funding be used for and how will it work?

The funding will go towards funding consultation and a feasibility study that will look at the costs, benefits and opportunities around:

- Providing adequate facilities for day and overnight visitors and for events
- Working with the community to enhance the tourism experience and welcome tourists to this area
- What infrastructure, education or regulation is needed to preserve the environment
- Working with the Rūnanga and local community groups to share the unique cultural heritage of the area with residents and visitors
- diversified tourism opportunities in the area, allowing for business development and employment

Under the terms of the funding, the outcome of the consultation and study must be reported to MBIE by April 2019.

To date, Council has contacted residents and area users and sought their ideas. Kim Goodfellow (The Goodfellow Group) is assisting in bringing the ideas into a landscape plan. Please get in touch if you would to be involved: jacob.turnbull@kaikoura.govt.nz

From here a draft plan will be developed and the wider community will have a chance to provide feedback before the final plan is put together.

Who is involved with the work towards a permanent solution for the issues at Kiwa Road?

Groups with an interest in the area including: Kaikōura Boardriders, Surf Groms, KiwiRail, NZCMA, NZTA, Mangamaunu Marae, and residents to name a few.

Read more about this <https://www.kaikoura.govt.nz/latest-news/council-welcomes-funding-to-help-investigate-solutions-for-freedom-camping-trouble-spot/>

Banded Dotterels (Pohowera)**How rare is the banded dotterel?**

The banded dotterels, double banded plover or Pohowera are a nationally vulnerable bird. There are estimated to be between 50,000 and 20,000 in NZ. Their breeding success is low meaning their numbers are thought to be decreasing rapidly.

Banded Dotterels are spread throughout New Zealand however, they are more commonly located around northland coastal areas and around near off shore islands, as well as dense population located on [Stewart Island](#).¹

They are known to nest on riverbeds and in farmlands. They are also known to be quite adaptable. As a ground nesting bird, dotterels have similar problems to a lot of NZ bird's such as having limited defence against introduced predators.

Read more about them here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double-banded_plover

How significant is south bay's banded dotterel population

South Bay is a popular recreation site with locals and visitors using the beach for fishing, dog walks, quad bike riding and now, camping. All of these activities do affect our dotterels, so beach users have always had to keep an eye out for them.

According to the South Bay Banded Dotterel study, the dotterel population at South Bay has had limited breeding success over the last few years.

We are working with DOC and the Banded Dotterel South Bay study group to understand more about the importance of our local population.

What is council doing to protect them?

The Department of Conservation (DOC) administer the Conservation Act 1987. Doc is a member of the working group that collectively recommended the use of the Pohowera site as a responsible camping site. The group felt it may be possible to help reduce any negative impacts with signage and information and if needed a roped off sections of the beach.

Council is continuing to work with DOC, the Banded Dotterel South Bay study group and the responsible camping working group to continue to educate the public about the dotterel. This includes naming a responsible camping site after the birds to raise awareness and producing signs, fliers, website and newspaper information.

Issues, community involvement and background

How do I report issues?

Ensuring campers camp responsibly is a joint effort between Council and other regulatory agencies such as the Police, DOC and Fire and Emergency. Police and Fire and Emergency are continuing to enforce their respective regulations to control antisocial behaviour, nudity and fire lighting. In addition, Council is continuing to encourage responsible camping behaviours through education and communications campaigns.

Life threatening situations including fire safety call 111

Safety concerns, nudity, drug/alcohol abuse call Kaikōura Police 03 319 5038

To request toilet cleaning call 03 319 7148

Report people leaving rubbish/littering call 03 319 5026

Why are you asking for donations?

Feedback from visitors and residents has shown that many people would like to donate to help fund the costs that come with responsible camping. Anyone who wants to can make a donation towards responsible camping work:

Donations of any amount can be made to Kaikōura District Council, No. 02-0856-0011698-006

Bank BNZ, Branch Kaikōura, GST 57-987-146

The donations will be used for measures such as clean ups and improving the facilities available to campers.

\$120 has been donated to date.

How can the community get involved with responsible camping?

The community is encouraged to provide feedback to Council or to any member of the working group so that their views and ideas can contribute to finding sustainable solution to managing camping.

Community members can also take steps such as helping with flier drops and education efforts or offering areas for people to stay through channels like the CamperMate App.

Depending on the views of the Responsible Camping Working Group, Council may consider working towards a community guardian/custodian programme around camping similar to those used by other Councils such as Taupo.

Is Council concerned about the effects of allowing so many campers there on other businesses, particularly campgrounds?

Kaikōura has many holiday parks and campgrounds, Council encourages all visitors who choose to camp to support local businesses by choosing to stay at one of these. For those who choose not to, responsible camping sites are provided. Research also shows that campers vary their accommodation options, choosing to stay in a mixture of freedom campsites and paid holiday parks during their visit.

How is CamperMate involved?

CamperMate is one of two apps officially endorsed by the national responsible camping forum. It contains information about dozens of tourist attractions, sites and businesses that help tourists visiting Kaikōura to get the most out of their trip, brings revenue to many local businesses and encourages responsible camping.

A very high percentage of campers in NZ use the CamperMate app, making it one of the most effective ways to reach campers in NZ. CamperMate is also at the forefront of trialing various technologies to help educate campers, manage camper numbers and other issues related to camping.

CamperMate are a member of the RCWG and have been closely involved in working towards a solution for camping in Kaikōura.

What work have we done with other councils

We continue to talk to other Council's to hear their experiences. We also advocate for the central government to have more national direction on this issue.

How many complaints have been received and what is the nature of them?

Oct 17-Sept 18 - 11 complaints or requests for service entered into Council's system

Oct 18 – early January- 18 complaints or requests for service entered into Council's system

The nature of complaints varies from general disapproval of the provision of responsible camping sites to complaints about numbers or behaviour of campers. Reasonable steps taken to date include adding more signs in key areas, site visits, printing and distributing fliers with information about camping, facilities and our wildlife.

Council has also received several positive pieces of feedback.

Other issues

Do self-contained rental companies give a discount to people returning vans with unused toilets?

As far as council is aware, this is a myth. In January 2018, Responsible Camping Forum convenor Steve Hanrahan said the claims had circulated for a couple of years, but inquiries among forum members, who represent 80 per cent of the country's motorhome rental fleet, found no evidence of the practice and they certainly would not condone it.

There is sometimes a surcharge applied if campvan toilets are returned unemptied which may be where the rumour came from. Read more here <https://i.stuff.co.nz/business/100836203/confusion-over-use-of-campervan-loos-and-potty-discounts-may-encourage-public-defecation>