

SUBMISSION

I oppose the change to make additional areas of the Taylor River 'on-leash' areas. In the remaining 'off leash' areas the river is often dry and there is no concrete path.

The Taylor River should remain a place where dog-owners can go to have 'family outings' (young children on bikes/trikes/scooters or in a pram), 'friend outings' (adults behind and older children and their friends scooting ahead, and 'exercise outings' (walking/running in the sunshine) - all with the family dog able to run free - sniffing, swimming, and socialising with other dogs.

These sorts of outings are important for the health and wellbeing of individuals and families and for enhancing social connections between people and between dogs. It also helps reduce stress as children and dogs tend to be better behaved for their caregiver after a pleasant outing.

Removing the areas of the river with a path and swimming opportunities from the current off-leash area would have a significant impact on these outings. It is difficult to manage prams and young children on bikes and scooters when holding onto a dog who wants to engage in normal dog behavior.

Reasons given for the proposed change are 'potential conflict between users' and 'issues with uncontrolled dogs and dog fouling'. I frequently go to the area in question and have not seen issues with uncontrolled dogs. Most dog owners behave responsibly and pick up their dog's poo.

No details are provided of how common or serious the 'issues with uncontrolled dogs' have been? But there are potential conflicts and occasional issues in most areas of life – and I find it hard to imagine that occasional issues or 'potential' conflict could outweigh the benefits of this part river remaining off-leash.

The Taylor River is a large area with lots of connections to surrounding residential areas. At present people can enjoy the river with their dog off-leash from many parts of Blenheim without driving. The proposed changes would require more driving and more parking areas.

Many things in society are changing: Marlborough has an increasing population and smaller residential sections, there is more traffic, e-bikes are now common, life keeps getting busier, with new technology young people happily fill their time with screen-based activities, and people's mental health is an increasing issue.

In addition, the enhanced area at the Taylor River (with recently widened concrete walkway) encourages use of this fantastic area by a wide range of people.

Perhaps, if there have been reported issues at the river with dog, it is partly because of an increase in population and popularity of the area – rather than because dogs are particularly unruly off-leash?

All Taylor River reserve users need to share the area responsibly and respectfully. For the small number of dog-owners (and others) who aren't using the area respectfully and responsibly, I would suggest that a better answer is education, monitoring and enforcement (not making almost the whole area on-leash).

There are plenty of alternative recreational areas for people who do not want to be around off-leash dogs – but very few alternative off-leash areas for dog owners, and none that offers what this stretch of the river has.