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### **Proposed Dog Control Bylaw Review 2020**

Marlborough District Council

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in response to the request for feedback on the aforementioned proposed changes to the Dog Control Bylaw.

While I feel that some of the changes are indeed positive in terms of being more 'dog friendly' there are some proposed changes that seem as though dogs and their owners are being further restricted in the areas that they can use freely. As a Picton resident I will focus mainly on the areas that are more local to me.

- 1) Access to Memorial Park – this is an access route that we frequently use to walk our dogs (on the lead) through to the Memorial Park area, which is also the most traffic free walking route into Picton CBD. If this access option is to be closed to us walking our dogs, the nearest one would then be Surrey Street. To use this route to gain access to the dog exercise area in Memorial Park means walking through the 'Emergency Service vehicle only' entrance way. This 'road' is frequently used by non-emergency service vehicles, some of the drivers (ignoring the signage clearly stating the fact that this is purely for emergency service vehicles) using this access also blatantly disregard pedestrians. This is why we generally no longer use this route as an option. I think limiting entrance to this end of the park through the genuine pedestrian route may cause further safety issues. Please also note that during busy periods in the Picton Marina this area is also used as 'overflow' vehicle/trailer parking which means that it can be unsafe at times to have a dog off lead with the vehicle movement around the area, which again limits usage of areas where dogs can have off lead exercise.
- 2) There are now far more mountain bike designated tracks and I agree that walkers / dogs and mountain bikes probably don't make a good combination. However, there are times of the year when these designated bike tracks are often not used widely. Would council consider some seasonal restrictions on these tracks so that during quieter/low usage some of the tracks could be considered shared areas with dogs on leads?
- 3) The walking tracks on the foreshore side of the Victoria Domain appear to be changing from areas where dogs can be walked off leash to on leash only. I think that this is unfair on responsible dog owners who have spent time and effort training their dogs to be well socialised and behaved in public. Our two are small, friendly dogs who walk close to us at all times, but love the freedom of being able to have time off the lead. The vast majority of dogs that we meet are also well behaved, or if the owners are unsure they have been on a lead. By removing off leash walking access this is potentially penalising those of us who are responsible in terms of how both we and our dogs conduct ourselves in public.

- 4) Picton Foreshore – Looking at the map it looks as though dogs are now being denied access totally. Whilst this means that we will no longer be able to take a seafront walk into town for a Sunday coffee with the dogs, I do appreciate that this could alleviate the confusion that many people seem to have over what has / hasn't been allowed. However, this could also be alleviated by much clearer signage stating that dogs can only traverse through the area on the paved sections. Again, restricting access to locals who opt to do the right thing when in public areas.
- 5) Essons Valley (Humphries Dam/ Taylor Dam) again more areas where people have been able to walk their dogs off leash now being changed to on leash. I am unsure why this has been chosen as this is an area away from roads so should be a safer environment to allow dogs a bit of freedom.
- 6) Endeavour Stream/Huia/Ranui St Walkway – it's interesting that out of all the walkways this is the one proposed to remain as an off leash area. I see this as more potentially hazardous than some of the other areas. There are several cul de sacs which could result in dogs/walkers and traffic using these areas as turning points or parking and there is a paddock that often has horses in it. This is a stretch of the pathway that also sees regular cyclists going between Picton and Waikawa which is another potential hazard which doesn't exist on the Victoria Domain tracks on the foreshore side. Access to this area starts from the far side of Endeavour Park which is a no go area for dogs (rightly) which, again means for a 'loop' walk rather than there and back would result in walking through the housing estate.
- 7) QC Lookout – as this is part of the Link Pathway which allows people to walk their dogs on leads will walkers be able to cross this area if they wish to continue using the pathway. I am not aware of any other access options to continue along the walkway.
- 8) Pollard Park – totally appreciate that dogs should not be near the playground side, however, would council consider allowing dogs on lead only in the garden side of the stream.
- 9) Taylor River Park – we have enjoyed using this as an area to walk our dogs when we have been visiting Blenheim and I think it is a shame that both sides now look as though they will be restricted to lead walking only. Possible compromise to have one side where dogs could be walked off the lead?

I understand that most of these areas are not just used by dog owners and that not all dog owners are prepared to do the right thing. However, some of these new restrictions feel like all dog owners are being penalised for those that won't take the time and effort to train their dogs. The vast majority of our interactions with other dog owners has been positive, with a few exceptions. However, I feel that those who opt not to stick to the rules or do the right thing should be educated and 'punished' rather than just restricting everyone. I would also like to point out that changing the rules to take out confusion or grey areas is unlikely to change the attitudes, opinions and behaviours of those who opt to ignore current signage and rules. I frequently see dog walkers on Nelson Square, dogs loose on the Shelley beach area

Dog fouling is a huge issue despite the rules stating that owners need to carry 'poop bags' and the council providing these in some areas. We have seen examples where dogs have pooped right under the stands holding the bags and some of these owners clearly don't see this as their responsibility. We have challenged a number (nicely by suggesting we give them a bag) and usually it has the desired effect.

I also note in the rules that there are specific guidelines for those exercising a dog while on a bike. On numerous occasions I have seen dogs dropped at the bottom of the road access up to the top of the Victoria Domain and

'exercised' by following the car. In many of these instance I doubt the driver has visibility of the dog or (fully) the road. This is one of the reasons why I no longer run this route.

As dog owners facing restrictions imposed on them in these shared areas I would like to request that accountability is also asked of other users of these areas. There have been a number of instances over time where cyclists have blatantly ignored signs that bikes should not be used in specific areas (Shelly Beach to Bobs Bay track, Coathanger Bridge to name two). A number of these seemed to be totally oblivious to the signs (they're really not that obvious in the area behind the new boat club on Shelley Beach) and the cyclist that I spoke to who was going hell for leather over the bridge amidst several families with young children basically wasn't interested and my polite pointing out that the signs said no cycling (and it was polite) pretty much told me to go forth and multiply

In summary I appreciate that areas where a variety of people undertake recreational activities there has to be responsibility from ALL parties not just penalise one group of users (perhaps based on a minority of poor choice makers). It seems even harsher as the majority of users of mountain bike track users are not locals, whereas the dog walkers and walkers are.

Warm regards,

**Emma Chilton**