

## **EASTERN BAYS SHARED PATH**

Consent hearing December 2020  
Lowry Bay Residents Association

Tēnā koutou katoa.

I will start by acknowledging the many years of terrific mahi by Eastbourne residents like Derek Wilshere, Robert Ashe and Virginia Horrocks, and the Hutt City Council team which has brought us to this hearing this week.

I am a member of the Lowry Bay Residents' Association committee and a member of the Eastbourne Community Board. I am representing the Lowry Bay Residents Association today.

If there is time, I would like to add a few brief personal comments at the end of my presentation.

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Lowry Bay is an established neighbourhood with 244 households. The Lowry Bay Residents' Association has been an incorporated body since 1955, and fifty percent of households have paid membership to the Association this year.

**The Lowry Bay community is in desperate need of a safe walking and cycle path along the beach in Lowry Bay and to connect Lowry Bay to the rest of Eastbourne and Petone, the Hutt and the greater Wellington region.**

The Lowry Bay Residents Association supports the Eastern Bays Shared Path and asks that priority is given to the construction of the path through Lowry Bay.

**I will start by describing the current situation.**

Residents have no safe access from one end of the Bay to the other, and north to Petone and south to Eastbourne, except by vehicle.

■ North of Point Howard and south of Lowry Bay, the speed limit is 70km/hour. There is no footpath linking Lowry Bay to the communities north and south, and the road shoulder is narrow or non-existent and drops into the sea.

■ Within the Bay, the speed limit is 50km/hour. The landward footpath along the waterfront within Lowry Bay is narrow, uneven and dangerous, and few people use it.

A high wall borders the footpath for most of its length, and there is no kerb in places. It is on the outside of a gently curved road and therefore inherently at risk from the impact of centrifugal force on a speeding vehicle – we know of at least three cases where south-bound cars have driven over the footpath and hit the wall. (And John Morgan was correct yesterday when he said a young girl was killed there nearly 30 years ago).

In other words, people using the footpath are at risk, and there is nowhere for them to go to avoid a vehicle that has lost control or is travelling too close – the side mirrors of trucks and buses are at adult head height and are often terrifyingly close.

Much needed work and maintenance on the footpath has been repeatedly deferred for years because the shared path “is coming”.

■ A 2018 Hutt City Council study confirmed that fifty percent of vehicles travelled faster than the speed limit through Lowry Bay. The 85th percentile speed was 56.9 km/hour. In other words, fifteen percent of vehicles (or more than 1100 per day) were going significantly faster than the speed limit.

Many Eastbourne residents commute daily through Lowry Bay. According to the same Council study, there are 7,550 vehicle movements through the Bay each day, including buses, trucks, large SUVs and utes all trying to fit within narrow lanes on a narrow road. Much of this traffic movement is concentrated into the peak commuting times.

Also, because there is a good line of sight in Lowry Bay, it is used for passing, often at speed.

Hutt City Council responded to residents’ concerns two years ago by installing digital speed signs at each end of the Bay in an effort to slow traffic.

■ Our observation is that many vehicles, especially during commuting periods, activate the red warning triangle which shows they are travelling faster than 55km/hour. (For clarity, I am referring to the southern sign. The sign at the north end of the Bay is close to a tighter corner and approaching traffic generally slows to less than 50 km/hour).

Police tell us that enforcement is difficult due to the curve in the road and lack of suitable parking spots for enforcement vehicles.

■ These factors create conditions that are dangerous for adult walkers and recreational cyclists and terrifying for people with children.

The situation forces most Lowry Bay residents into their cars to travel short distances within the Bay. Some residents living along Marine Drive take their cars the short distance to the bus stop to avoid the footpath, especially on wet days when pedestrians are sprayed with water from passing vehicles.

The lack of safe footpath means that few residents make use of the wonderful area at Whiorau Reserve, at the south end of Lowry Bay, unless they drive there.

Few if any children in Lowry Bay walk or cycle the 5 km to primary school in Eastbourne or 6 km or so to secondary school in the Hutt. Few if any residents regularly walk or cycle the 2.5 km to or from the ferry in Days Bay. It is easy to see why. In the morning, the walk south to the ferry is next to commuting traffic travelling an arm’s length away at 70km/hour.

■ Cyclists are forced to use the road which leads to dangerous driving behaviour with ■ vehicles speeding-up to pass, and long lines of traffic.

■ In summer, cars often park (illegally) straddling the road shoulder and beach, making it even more dangerous for cyclists.

I asked members of the Lowry Bay Facebook group for photos to show how dangerous and unpleasant Marine Drive is for pedestrians and cyclists – in short, to show why they don't use it. I have used some of their photos, and here are some more.

■ During summer, dogs are not allowed on the beach, but walking them along Marine Drive is dangerous, and there is no room for the dog and its owner to be side by side.

■ Pushing even a small pushchair along Marine Drive is dangerous. Adding a toddler walking beside the pushchair is impossible.

■ All footpath users must walk in single file.

■ Overhanging greenery is an added risk. On wet days footpath users are drenched with spray from passing vehicles. On Mondays rubbish bins block the path.

#### **I will now address four aspects of the shared path plan.**

1. We note in the section 42A report that Windy Point is to be constructed first followed by Point Howard, Sorento Bay and then Lowry Bay.

We would like to see the Lowry Bay section constructed earlier for the reasons I have already discussed. This would benefit all Eastbourne residents and visitors because it would address the issue of sea surges in the north end of Lowry Bay which send waves over cars at high tide during a southerly.

■ Wave surge happens regularly – including at least three times in the last month. It results in the road being closed several times a year.

(Video). Eastbourne residents will confirm that what this video shows is not unusual or even noteworthy – it happens often. I took the video a few weeks ago, and an hour after high tide, so the waves were not at their peak.

We appreciate that Windy Point is a dangerous squeeze point for cyclists travelling between the Marine Parade turn-off and Days Bay. However, Windy Point has a well-formed footpath which is well used and comparatively safe compared to the footpath in Lowry Bay. It is wide enough for pedestrians to walk side by side and it is inherently safer being on the inside of a curve in a 50km/hour zone on a tight corner where vehicles slow down.

2. ■ We note that the Section 42A report states there will be no new boat ramps, but there is no mention of replacing the two existing small ramps in Lowry Bay – one by the bus stop and one opposite the Kaikōura path. While the southern

ramp isn't important now while the beach is nearly level with the road, it will be necessary if there is a step to the beach from the new path. We request that consent be granted with a condition that the Lowry Bay beach ramps be replaced as per the other existing ramps in the Eastern Bays, so that residents can launch small dinghies and kayaks from hand-pulled trolleys. Residents support this, but are strongly opposed to a ramp which will allow motorboats and jetskies to be launched.

3. ■ We also note there are no steps or beach access south of Cheviot Rd even to replace the existing steps opposite Taumaru Crescent. Again, much of the beach south of Cheviot Road is nearly level with the road but ready access will be required when the shared path is built. We note that following recent storms, there is now a shallow drop from the road to the beach just north of Taumaru Crescent and even this small drop makes beach access difficult for older residents, children, and those with pushchairs and kayaks. Beach access opposite Taumaru Crescent and Gill Road relies on the existing steps because there is always a drop there from the road to the beach. We request that easy beach access at the south of the beach is a condition of consent. (It is clear, having heard witnesses over the last two days, that there is no guarantee that the new beach level will reach the top of the shared path so provision should be made for access).
4. Finally, cyclists, especially those riding road bikes (with thinner tyres), experience punctures on the Marine Drive road because seagulls drop shellfish from a height resulting in sharp broken shells which puncture tyres. Residents wonder if a softer rubberised surface might dissuade birds from dropping shells.

Residents know that a shared path will impact on our precious beach. Still, despite that, the Lowry Bay Residents Association committee is aware of very few dissenting voices – the great majority are in favour of the proposed shared path.

**We urge you to consent the Eastern Bays Shared Path project and to prioritise construction work in Lowry Bay.**

What I have just read has been circulated and supported by the Lowry Bay Residents' Association committee. It was based on the Association's submission which was circulated to all residents with no disagreement received.

I would now like to add some comments in response to what I have heard over the last two and a half days.

I have six brief comments to add:

1. **Crossings:** Lowry Bay residents have been requesting a crossing for many years and have been told the traffic and pedestrian criteria do not meet the requirement. That may well change with the shared path. It would be sensible

to include provision for a crossing in the plans even if it is not made available immediately.

2. We have heard much about **Whiorau Reserve** in the last few days. The Community Board and Lowry Bay Residents have been asking for toilets to be installed at the Reserve for the increasing number of visitors who use this area. The shared path will make this even more important. Frankly, the area of bush that will be fenced off to protect the penguins is the current public toilet.
3. **Seagrass:** I live close to the seagrass and until this week had no idea how important it is. It worries me that so much effort is going into protecting it, yet it would be so easy for it to be inadvertently damaged by careless anchoring or dragging a kayak at low tide.
4. **Duckbill flaps:** There is what I now know is a duckbill flap in Lowry Bay just north of the bus stop. It is an eyesore and I am happy to support Dr James's view on these.
5. **Parking:** I have watched a car park on the York Bay path. It was SUV and had no trouble negotiating the concrete nibs.
6. **Speed:** I am greatly encouraged to hear the conversation turn to reducing the speed limit from Days Bay north to Lowry Bay. It would be wonderful if the shared path helped to bring about this change. I know a reduction would be supported by many, including our local Police, and is consistent with what we see happening on coastal roads in Wellington.

That is all thank you.

I am happy to answer any questions.

Belinda Moss  
Lowry Bay Residents Association  
Eastbourne Community Board  
17 December 2020