

Good Morning,

It was suggested to me that I should talk to the Commissioners as though they know nothing about Ohoka so excuse me if I state the obvious and I thought I should introduce myself and it might explain why I am here today.

My name is Ngaire Borlase and I have lived at 447 Mill Road Ohoka and have done for nearly 25 years. My husband and I met in 1975 in London and we became engaged shortly after and unofficially married at Gretna Green that same year. We worked in London during the terrorist bombings and I have picked up the phone at work and been told, 'there is a bomb in your building you have twenty minutes'. On our honeymoon, after our official wedding, I unknowingly, sunbathed on top of a terrorist bomb that exploded thirty minutes later leaving a huge crater on the beach where our sunbeds had been. In London, I was Head of Business studies in a very large school and I was fully aware the pupils carried weapons, not for attack but for defence. We wanted better for our children.

So we emigrated to New Zealand with a 7 year old, a 9 year old and a five week old baby. We could have chosen anywhere to live in New Zealand but we found Ohoka.

What is so special about Ohoka?

Ohoka is a very popular place to choose to live. That is THIS Ohoka.

People drive out to Ohoka from 'town' at the weekend just for a drive, pop into any open homes for a nose around and visit the domain. Freedom campers park in the domain overnight which they are allowed to do.

Ohoka has fabulous amenity value. Amenity values refer to those environmental characteristics of an area that contribute to the pleasantness and attractiveness of that area as a place to live, work or visit. They are not to be confused with amenities, ie shops, takeaways, cafes.

One of the first amenity values that strikes you is the sky. There is so much sky. The sky goes to the ground, all around you. In urban areas the sky is obstructed from view by buildings and the sky is above you. But in Ohoka the sky is everywhere. A subdivision will obstruct those sweeping views and block out this wonderful amenity value that Ohoka has.

At night it is very dark in Ohoka. When we first arrived in Ohoka we would sit at night admiring the beautiful night sky, we had never seen anything so incredible. Now we can see the light pollution from Rangiora in the distance and our dark sky feels like its days are numbered if a subdivision is built in Ohoka.

It turns out our dark sky is quite valuable too.

An economic impact report commissioned by Enterprise North Canterbury says a dark sky reserve could generate \$4.6 million of visitor spending in Waimakariri alone, as well as creating up to 24 jobs. "There is a huge amount of potential for working with other districts to create a dark sky trail and ChristchurchNZ has shown an interest in funding the promotion of it," stated Miles Dalton business support manager.

The report said the prospect of a Canterbury dark sky trail, linking Oxford, Tekapo, Methven, the Saint James Conservation Area in the Hurunui district and Kaikoura, could generate \$45.8m to the region from dark sky travellers. I have attached the newspaper report.

Of course we need to protect our dark sky to protect our flora and fauna and protect human health. The increase of sub-divisions in rural areas has an adverse effect on our night skies. 700/850+ homes and associated roading will have a serious adverse effect on our environment. We are all realising how important insects are to our food production and to our wildlife and how human activity is affecting their life cycle. Everyone knows how attractive a light is at night to moths and insects but if you imagine this on a grander scale, the front of your car after a night trip, a subdivision, humans are making a big impact on the insects that pollinate our crops, feed our birds and small mammals.

Did you know that eels trek across our wet paddocks at night? Yes we have eels in swampy Ohoka and when the flood water flushes them onto the road they are promptly put out of harms way back to the paddocks. If we build on our swampy paddocks, drain the nuisance water away we take away the route the eels have used for hundreds of years. Eels (tuna) are of course mahinga kai.

I learnt a lot about eels on holiday on the West Coast this year and have a great deal of respect for these creatures. The Kaitiaki at the 'eel experience' encouraged the eels to leave the water and we stroked them which they appeared to enjoy! I stroked an eel and I liked it!!

When an eel is ready to breed (between 24-34 years for a male and 30-60 years for a female) they embark on a long six month journey back to deep ocean trenches near Tonga; after spawning they die. Their young take approximately 18 months to swim back to the freshwaters of New Zealand. We have these guys in our paddocks and we should and do treasure them. So why would we build a subdivision in their rural habitat?

There are trout in Ohoka stream you see them dart about and we had a visitor appear in Ohoka stream looking for snacks. He had to be taken back from where he had come but we loved hosting such a character. The seal was looking for a salmon fishery and had taken a wrong turn apparently. The news article is attached.

Ohoka has wide roads and sweeping views across paddocks with sheep grazing, alpaca, horses, donkeys, cattle and deer and they all contribute to our rural Ohoka amenity values.

Residents either grow grass for their animals or so they escape to a few hours of solitude on their ride on mower wearing earbuds listening to their favourite tunes. Some folk leave their paddocks to nature. All those paddocks are maintained by residents as part of their lifestyle and it is their choice. It is hard work and time consuming and it is those endeavours that add our amenity values. No wonder so many submissions were set in on this proposal to build a satellite town people felt the need to defend their lifestyle, homes and choices.

Those same Ohoka folk volunteer to maintain the Ohoka Domain and the Ohoka Bush. My lad is 24 years old now and he remembers going on an Ohoka school trip to the Domain where the children planted natives, were taught the value of working together to improve our environment for ourselves and the wildlife and we are guardian of both. He jogged around the Ohoka Bush last week and happily reported his tree was doing well and much taller than himself. These activities anchor us to this place, encourage us to defend our environment and appreciate our rural lifestyle. It is an amenity value that we treasure.

The Ohoka domain is a dropping off spot for Ohoka school children that choose to scooter or bike to school on the cycle path just over a kilometre away. Many play on the equipment then head off to school. There are no dangerous roads to cross, Mill Road can be busy but parents feel confident enough to let their primary age children head off to school along the path on their own. I see the children go by every morning and it is lovely to see the familiar school uniform, the children active and out in the fresh air. I believe that the adverse effects of increased traffic flows along Mill Road due to the subdivision will make this activity feel less safe for parents and children. That is an amenity value to me, the pleasantness of a bike ride to school along a cycle path on a rural road.

I am seriously concerned the impact of domestic cats from the subdivision will have on our bird life. I put out a "trust the chef" menu for our birds and they reward me with their presence and antics. Quails, sparrows, silver eyes, starling, black and white tailed fantails, finches, plovers, paradise ducks, pukeko, owls, bellbirds, even a kereru (considered mahinga kai) and last year Kotuku (white heron) came to visit our pond. The kingfishers helped themselves to our pond fish until we covered it, they still visit but just to lick their lips. When I lived in London I would wake up at sparrow's cough now I listen to all the bird song as I start the day. Another amenity value I treasure.

So here we are again defending our rural lifestyle from over development. Ten years ago a developer wanted to build a subdivision on Mill Road and the community worked together to let the council and commissioners know their feelings. This time I understand the developer has a Plan B which he has mentioned. Larger sections that will have lesser environmental impacts, lesser adverse affects to our amenity values and really much of the same that Ohoka already has. We wouldn't be here today if Plan B was operative.

Please reject this, "carbuncle on the face of an old friend".

Ngaire Borlase

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canterbury

Canterbury dark sky trail tipped to generate \$45 million

David Hill Local Democracy Reporter • 15:13, Jul 13 2023



IAIN MCGREGOR/STUFF

Light pollution from city street lights is seen as a major problem for dark sky sanctuaries.

Protecting Oxford's night sky could bring astronomical sums into the Waimakariri district, with neighbouring regions also ripe for visiting stargazers who could

Protecting Oxford's night sky could bring astronomical sums into the Waimakariri district, with neighbouring regions also ripe for visiting stargazers who could bring in tens of millions of dollars.

An economic impact report commissioned by Enterprise North Canterbury says a dark sky reserve could generate \$4.6 million of visitor spending in Waimakariri alone, as well as creating up to 24 jobs.

Enterprise North Canterbury business support manager Miles Dalton said the report was prepared by Benje Patterson, who has worked with the Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve in Tekapo. It was commissioned to support the Oxford Area School Observatory in its efforts to garner community support in applying for dark sky reserve status.

"There is a huge amount of potential for working with other districts to create a dark sky trail and ChristchurchNZ has shown an interest in funding the promotion of it," Dalton said.

The report said the prospect of a Canterbury dark sky trail, linking Oxford, Tekapo, Methven, the Saint James Conservation Area in the Hurunui district and Kaikōura, could generate \$45.8m to the region from dark sky travellers. Dalton said the figures were based on the experience of the Mackenzie Dark Sky Reserve.

Oxford Area School Observatory volunteer Raul Elias-Drago has announced the observatory is working with the Department of Conservation to apply to the International Dark Sky Association for dark sky park status for the 11,350 hectare Oxford Forest Conservation Area.

The goal is to secure community support for an application for dark sky reserve status that will include the town where the observatory is based. Dalton said the project would seek support in next year's 2024/34 Waimakariri long term plan, but would not be seeking funding from the council at this stage.

Some provisions have already been included to protect Oxford's night sky in the proposed Waimakariri district plan and further changes may be needed to complete dark sky reserve status. "It is about restoring and preserving Oxford's dark sky," Dalton said.

But Oxford would not be left in the dark, he said.

Good lighting policies could reduce light pollution, improve melatonin levels in humans and improve animal welfare.'

"As Raul says, 'it is about better living through better lighting'," Dalton said.

"Sports clubs will still be able to do their sport at night and people can still be out on the streets."

Feedback from businesses indicated there was general support for the concept.

"Some businesses are concerned about how it might affect them, so there is still a bit to

work through,” he said.

Seal's epic trek for North Canterbury salmon foiled

Charlie Mitchell and Jonathan Leask • 19:07, Sep 10 2015

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JONATHAN LEASK/FAIRFAX NZ

A seal had hoped to return to the salmon farm it had been evicted from several times but was foiled by authorities.

A seal's insatiable hunger for fresh-farmed salmon has ended in an epic 130-kilometre trek around the South Island.

John Lynn discovered the small fur seal while walking his dog in the North Canterbury suburb of Ohoka on Thursday morning.

When Lynn called the Department of Conservation, local ranger Anita Spencer sensed an old foe. She had a feeling she knew this particular seal.

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Three weeks prior, she had removed it from a nearby salmon farm, when the manager found it sitting outside the sliding doors on his deck.

She took it to the river, shaving a small patch of fur from its head so it could be identified.

It returned to the salmon farm three days later and was quickly evicted.

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The rangers decided to release it at Birdling's Flat about 75 kilometres away, hoping it would not return.

"It has to pass all these seal colonies, two marine reserves . . . I really didn't expect to see it again."

But it came back, fatter and healthier than before. Over three weeks, it had swum around Banks Peninsula, along the east coast and back up the Kaiapoi river, a journey of around 130 kilometres.

The shaved patch confirmed it was the same seal.

It had likely hoped for a triumphant return to the salmon farm but missed its turn-off, ending up further inland at Ohoka.

Spencer, again, foiled the seal's plans – this time she took it to Taumutu, about 100 kilometres away, hoping the extra distance would be a deterrent.

"It's got another 30km to swim this time but it seems quite determined . . . we've got at least another three or four weeks before it comes back again.

"Seals just do these things and we've just got to enjoy them."

latest video



Police investigate after Queen St incident

0:34

Residents in the area reported hearing several loud brings and people yelling.



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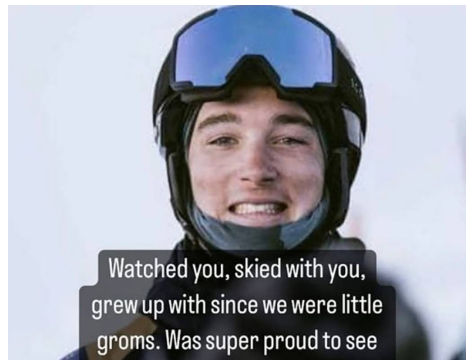
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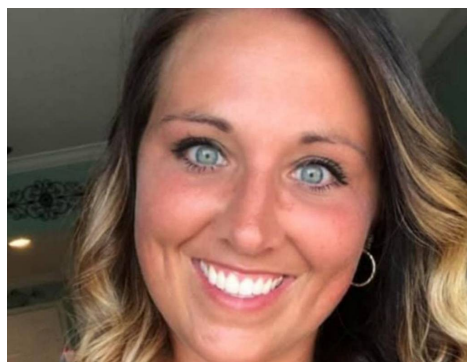


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It appeared to be exhausted, snoozing on the bank of a stream 11km from the coast.

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Three weeks prior, she had removed it from a nearby salmon farm, when the manager found it sitting outside the sliding doors on his deck.

She took it to the river, shaving a small patch of fur from its head so it could be identified.

It returned to the salmon farm three days later and was quickly evicted.

The rangers decided to release it at Birdling's Flat about 75 kilometres away, hoping it would not return.

"We joked about how long it would take to get around the peninsula," Spencer said.

"It has to pass all these seal colonies, two marine reserves . . . I really didn't expect to see it again."

But it came back, fatter and healthier than before. Over three weeks, it had swum around Banks Peninsula, along the east coast and back up the Kaiapoi river, a journey of around 130 kilometres.

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