

Shifting sands on racehorse access to coastal reserve



The area of Long Dune, Tararer coast/Spooky's Beach, Belfast Coastal Reserve that will be opened up to large-scale racehorse training. Image:Chris Farrell Photography.

Carol Altmann – The Terrier

Cracks in the resolve:

Following on from last night's post, I can tell you that at least two W'bool City councillors have changed their minds about dozens of racehorses training at Spooky's Beach in the Tararer coast/Belfast Coastal Reserve.

The fallout from the Weir/McLean saga is starting to bite.

Cr Peter Hulin is no longer in support of up to 40 racehorses a day using a long dune known as "Hoon Hill".

(Doesn't that disgraceful name speak volumes about how this area has been treated over the years? I am going to start calling it Long Dune.)

And Cr Michael Neoh now believes Lady Bay should be enough, given an average of only 22 racehorses a day are now using the main beach.

Here is part of what Cr Hulin said via email:

"In light of recent uncovered abuse of racehorses, I have changed my thoughts of the horses being ridden up "Hoon Hill".

"Not only could this type of training be detrimental to the horse, but also the environment due to the erosion of the dune system. I cannot see how this could be avoided.

"Access to the beach may be also problematic."

Cr Hulin made clear he was still a strong supporter of the local racing industry and believed horse training could still happen along the Spooky's foreshore, provided all the rules and safeguards were followed.

Cr David Owen has always been dead against the idea of allowing 160 horses a day into a coastal reserve, so where does this leave Crs Kylie Gaston, Robert Anderson, Tony Herbert and Sue Cassidy?

Do they still think it is a good idea?

Does it still fit with the focus of a council that has declared a climate change emergency, or was that just more rhetoric?

Aren't we supposed to be aiming for clean and green and looking after our coastal environment?

I don't know what the other Crs think, as none of them responded. (#itsjustablip)

I do know, however, that it is getting harder and harder to justify why the racehorses need to be there. Weir has gone. McLean has gone. The Warrnambool Racing Club this year made a record profit....

I hope Crs Neoh, Hulin and Owen can convince the council to revisit this issue now, not after the damage is done to Long Dune and that precious wild beach that makes Warrnambool such a special place.

Thankyou to the [Walkley Foundation](#) for funding part of my investigative work with this on-going story.



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