

Re-making spaces and places for estuary-based recreation: Changes, challenges and opportunities in the northern reach of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary / Ihutai

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The Estuary is the largest, semi-enclosed, shallow estuary in Canterbury. At 700 hectares it is relatively small on a global scale, but this belies its value as a recreational playground and educational resource, and a place special to people for its rich history, plentiful wildlife, beautiful scenery, and mahinga kai (food gathering) potential (Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust, 2012).

Introduction

This paper is drawn from a 10 week research project carried out under the auspices of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary / Ihutai Trust's summer studentship programme³. The research focuses on the impacts of the Christchurch earthquakes on recreation opportunities and facilities situated at the northern reaches of the Avon-Heathcote Estuary / Ihutai. This area (Figure 1, next page) – located at the mouth of the Avon River – includes Rat Island, the South New Brighton Park (or "domain"), associated sports fields and playgrounds, a jetty and boardwalk, and the former site of the Pleasant Point Yacht Club building and Community Hall, both now demolished owing to structural damage caused by the quakes.

Data collection took the form of ten key informant interviews, numerous informal conversations with members of the community, and secondary data analysis. This threefold combination of methods effectively captured: 1) detail of the general impacts of the Christchurch earthquakes on recreation participation and facilities in this part of the Estuary, and 2) information about the responses of those who manage the area, including those currently negotiating the rebuilding of key recreation infrastructure. The stated aims of the research project were:

1. To characterise the impacts of the earthquakes on recreation activities and infrastructure at the northern reach of the Estuary; and
2. To identify the challenges and opportunities confronting local authorities (e.g., CCC and ECan) and recreation providers (clubs and associations) as they contemplate ways to re-configure, build and improve the spaces and places of recreation in this part of the Estuary.

³ The summer studentship programme is jointly funded by ECan and the Avon-Heathcote Estuary Trust / Ihutai and aims to provide a university student with a short (estuary-focused) research experience over a ten week period during the summer break. The fund is contestable.

The report begins with a summary of the methods used for data collection, followed by a brief history of the recreational use of the Estuary from pre-colonial times. The results of the primary research are then presented; this is structured in two parts. Part one reports research participant's perspectives on the *impacts* of the earthquakes on the northern reaches of the Estuary, with a specific focus on recreation facilities, places and spaces and also recreation participation. Part two discusses emerging challenges and opportunities and is drawn from discussions with research participants about how the community (in its broadest sense) is responding to local earthquake impacts, and the ideas they have for re-configuring, building and ultimately improving the spaces and places of recreation in this part of the Estuary. A short conclusion ends the report.



Figure 1: Map of research area (source: <http://www.stats.govt.nz>)

Research methods and participant selection

The strategy developed for this study comprised a mix of qualitative social research methods, including observations, casual conversations with community members and associated photography, interviews and document analysis. The research process (or 'fieldwork') began with short period of contextual work involving a systematic search for relevant newspaper articles and a review of previous research including other summer

studentships with an explicit focus on recreation in the Estuary. Data were used to construct a preliminary picture of the area (including key aspects of the Estuary's evolution as a site of recreation) and an initial outline of "the current problem".

The next and main phase of the study comprised ten key informant interviews. Interviews were structured around the two main aims of the project: 1) to describe the impacts of the earthquakes on sport and recreation in the northern zone of the Estuary, and 2) to identify the opportunities and challenges associated with the re-configuration, building and improvement of the associated spaces and places of recreation.

The criteria for inclusion in the research was that the interviewee (or 'key informant') was actively involved or explicitly interested in the planning and/or the organisational processes associated with the enhancement of recreation spaces and places at the northern end of the Estuary (post-earthquake). Additionally, the perspective from the local iwi, Ngai Tahu, has been obtained to include a cultural perspective. Initial contact with potential interviewees was made by telephone and/or email. All interested participants were provided with an information sheet before being interviewed (Appendix 1), explaining the nature of the research and the interview process.

In all, ten people agreed to be interviewed, and consistent with the principle of informed consent, all signed consent forms before the interview began (Appendix 2). Interviewees were guaranteed anonymity and therefore are not identified by name in the final report (broad descriptors are used). Interviews took between 30 minutes and 2 hours to complete and were conducted at a location and time chosen by the participant. Fieldwork included one guided field trip, facilitated by one of the interviewees, and several days of observation and photography at the location, including informal conversations with local people who were in the area, over the summer break (2012/2013).

Analysis of the interview data involved a process technically known as manual coding. In practice, 'manual' coding is a systematic data sorting process involving the identification of recurrent themes and themes-within-themes both in and across interview transcripts and all other data sources (Lofland and Lofland, 1995). Through this process key analytical categories are derived – those considered to be central to understanding the research problem or answering the research question (Blumer, 1969).

The Estuary as a site of recreation

Before undertaking to identify specific earthquake impacts, it was first necessary to develop a baseline profile of recreational use of the Estuary and associated facilities, spaces and places. To this end, a brief historical analysis of the research area was carried out first. Information gathered from published reports, newspaper articles and two previous summer studentships, both of which focused on aspects of Estuary recreation (Boyd, 2010; Crawford and Fountain, 2010). In the first instance, relevant information contained in these sources (i.e., that which related directly to recreation) was extracted, summarised and then nested in a table (see Appendix 3). The tabled data was then used as a starting point for interpretation. The information showed that the Estuary had long been a social hub for Maori and Europeans, particularly for those whom lived in close proximity to the resource. For Maori, the area was initially a key trading and food gathering (*mahinga kai*) location (for a full analysis of *mahinga kai* in the Estuary see: Fisher and Vallance, 2010), while for Europeans it also gradually developed as an iconic site for boating and yachting, with three clubs established on the Estuary's foreshore during the 20th century (Boyd, 2010).

The preliminary historical analysis also showed evidence of a growing interest in the biodiversity values of the area (and a desire to resolve cumulative water pollution issues), corresponding with a rise in recreation and leisure activities reliant on various aspects of the unique estuarine environment, such as bird watching and other passive forms of nature viewing, including that facilitated by kayaking. It also became evident that many family activities – such as picnicking and sightseeing and general team sports – had gradually become a key feature of the Estuary's recreation profile – their emergence coinciding with the development of council owned parks, reserves and walkways around the Estuary's margins. More recent reporting suggests that along with yachting and boating activities, the recreational profile of the Estuary has continued to evolve and expand, facilitating windsurfing, kite boarding (or surfing) and *waka ama*. This has occurred against the backdrop of on-going environmental concerns over the environmental quality of the Estuary. As Crawford and Fountain (2010) note, drawing on the work of Boyd (2010), central to the development of the Estuary's recreation profile has been the enhancement of the environment, via the resolution of long-existing water quality issues⁴ associated with the use of the Estuary for Christchurch city wastewater discharge:

⁴ The Council's ocean outfall project now takes the city's (treated) wastewater from the oxidation ponds at the Christchurch Wastewater Treatment Plant in Bromley and via an underground pipe

By mid-20th century, the Avon-Heathcote Estuary was regarded by many as nothing but a waste water discharge area; the construction of the Bromley Waste Water Treatment Plant did little to enhance the area (Boyd, 2010). However, since the 1960s there have been a number of concerted efforts to improve the water quality of the Estuary and enhance the conservation and recreation values of the area (Boyd, 2010). There has also been resurgence in recreational activities on and around the Estuary and it is regarded as one of New Zealand's most important wetlands due to a number of migratory birds making the Estuary their home for parts of the year (Boyd, 2010).

A small number of published quantitative surveys support the view that, prior to the Canterbury earthquakes, the Avon Heathcote Estuary/lhutai Estuary (generally) and its surrounding parks and reserves, wetlands and bays supported a wide range of land and water based recreation activities, competitive sporting events, cultural activities and passive leisure-time pursuits. Common across these studies is the assertion that the area has been popular for: 'boating' (particularly yachting – with three yacht clubs located on the foreshore), wind sports (notably wind surfing, but more recently also kite boarding), shoreline (dog) walking and jogging, bird watching, fishing, food gathering and general socialising, including picnicking in the various parks and reserves located around the fringes of the Estuary.

McKenna (1979), in one of the first studies of recreation in the Estuary, noted that it provided Christchurch residents with an ideal venue for a diversity of water and land based recreation opportunities. According to McKenna (1979), three decades ago, the land adjacent to the Estuary (the "land resource") supported: sunbathing and picnicking, painting and sketching, viewing recreation, bird watching, informal family recreation, horse riding, strolling (along shoreline and on tidal mudflats), collecting shells, trail bike riding, scenic walking. McKenna's (1979) survey work showed that these forms of land based recreation were largely informal and reliant on the natural setting. According to McKenna (1979, p.43), some of the most heavily used Estuary areas are situated in the location of this research project (the northern reaches at the mouth of the Avon River) including "...the Pleasant Point-Jellicoe Park region...the Pleasant Point domain and the public walkway adjacent to South Brighton Park [which] provide valuable recreational amenities for those using the Estuary, and for citizens of Christchurch. The walkway, having access from both ends, is a planned half hour walk of scenic and natural history interest".

system, discharges it three kilometres out into Pegasus Bay instead of into the Avon-Heathcote Estuary, as previously practiced (Crawford and Fountain, 2010).

More recently, Taylor Baines and Associates (2004) – in social impact assessment work associated with the ocean outfall for Christchurch wastewater discharge – observed and recorded recreational uses of different Estuary locations over a summer period (1998/1999). In relation to the Northern reaches of the Estuary, they observed participation in the following recreation activities: wind surfing, kite surfing, yachting (most popular between September and May), kayaking and canoeing, power boating (New Brighton Power Boat Club), fishing, bird watching, shellfish and bait collecting, walking, running and passive observation (including families watching sports and/or picnicking). School groups were also observed using the South Brighton Domain for recreation. Taylor Baines and Associates (2004) also interviewed key informants and surveyed people actively recreating in the study area. During their study, respondents were asked to identify the main values they saw in the Estuary. Results showed that scenic views, bird life, peace and quiet, recreational opportunities and proximity to place of residence were highly valued.

Rob Greenaway and Associates (2007) also carried out a study of the recreational values of the Avon Heathcote Estuary area, and the built and natural resources which support those activities. The surveys work was carried out at different locations across the Estuary, including areas in the Northern reaches at the mouth of the Avon River. Survey findings suggested that, in general, the Estuary was primarily used for walking, dog walking, cycling, wind / kite surfing and sailing. Most relevant to this research was the finding that one of the most popular entry points to the Estuary was the South New Brighton Reserve, with the highest levels of activity recorded between South New Brighton Park and "the Spit". Interestingly, the Greenaway survey (2007) found that people enjoyed visiting the Estuary because it was in close proximity to their homes, suggesting that the majority of the users reside in suburbs surrounding the Estuary, consistent with McKenna's (1979) much earlier suggestion that the Estuary has locational advantage⁵.

Crawford and Fountain (2010) also carried out research in the area with the purpose of assessing the current usage, awareness and perceptions of tourism and recreational

⁵ As noted by McKenna (1979) in one of the first studies of recreation in the Estuary, its popularity as a recreation resource can perhaps be attributed to its favourable location on the Eastern fringes of Christchurch, now New Zealand's second largest city – population 372,600 in June 2009 (CCC, 2010). The estuary is located just 12 km from the Central Business District (CCC, online) on the Pacific coast where it is flanked by numerous residential suburbs, including Bromley, South New Brighton and Bexley and others situated on the Port Hills at the Estuary's southern end. According to McKenna (1979) this geographical position has provided the Estuary with a great deal of "locational advantage" – allowing it to become recognised locally and regionally as a key, very convenient and much valued site for urban recreationists.

opportunities. Their survey work found that the most common purpose for visiting the Estuary was for exercise and/or walking a dog, followed by taking children there to play. Crawford and Fountain (2010) also found that among the most popular places for people to visit at the Estuary were the Estuary walkway and South New Brighton Park. Consistent with the findings of Taylor Baines and Associates (2004) and Greenaway (2007), Crawford and Fountain (2010) discovered that Estuary visitors had quite strong opinions about the value of the Estuary to Christchurch – almost unanimously agreeing that it represented a great recreation resource for Christchurch residents. Consistent with the Greenaway report (2007) and pertinent to the current study was the finding that the South Brighton Park, walkway and jetty were among respondents' *favourite places around the Estuary*. Crawford and Fountain (2010) reported the following comments from respondents which relate to each of locations and which speak volubly of the value of these sites for community recreation and leisure and general well-being:

South Brighton Park

"Kids love playing there; it's refreshing; Nice sheltered spot, it's nice to sit and relax there; nice trees so the dogs can sit in the shade, it's great for kids as there is a lot of space to run around, sheltered and peaceful, great for kids; sheltered and has memories of my childhood; lots for kids to do there - playground, shell hunting and playing in the trees; it's sheltered and the dog can run around; Kids like digging in the sand for shells and crabs; relaxing and nice view"

South Brighton walkway

"The track and the birdlife; good place to walk; quiet time for reflection; it's sheltered, shady and quiet, it's a nice place for the dogs to rest and read a book, can sit and look out over the Estuary; quiet and tranquil; the birds and it's peaceful; mainly because it is such a peaceful and relaxing walk, so handy to home and a beautiful resource; fresh air and lots to show and entertain the kids; walking along at high tide it's peaceful and pretty"

South New Brighton park jetty

"Watch the birds at low tide; sit and watch the birds, can read a book there it's peaceful; got everything, hills/water/trees; view; good spot for lunch; great for photographing birds; calming view"

Consistent with past analyses of Estuary recreation, the key informants in this study identified 25 specific recreation activities which commonly occurred in the Northern reaches of the Estuary *before* the Christchurch earthquakes of 2010 and 2011. The water-based activities mentioned included: yachting (the most significant activity noted for this part of the catchment), kayaking, *waka ama*, rowing, wind surfing, (shell) fishing and sea worm collection. They also reported a range of recreation activities occurring on surrounding lands – i.e., in the parks, reserves and sports fields surrounding the northern part of the Estuary – included: orienteering, croquet, BMX, bowls, tennis, picnicking, bird watching, camping and general field sports. A high ropes course was also noted as facilitating recreation in the area. Cycling, (dog) walking and running were also mentioned by our interviewees as locally significant estuary-related activities, a great deal of which reportedly took place on a walking track located in South New Brighton Domain – referred to locally as “the boardwalk”.

In addition to “the Boardwalk”, interviewees noted that the area has numerous recreation *facilities* and, as noted by Greenway and Associates, 2007, historically, relatively easy access to these recreation sites is highly valued by the community. The interviewees of the current study identified at least 20 sport and recreation resources – two of which have now been demolished owing to earthquake damage, namely the Pleasant Point Yacht Club and the South Brighton Community Hall. Other facilities in the area include: a bowling, croquet and tennis clubs, camping ground and associated picnic and BBQ area, high ropes confidence course and flying fox, various playgrounds, general spaces and places for sports (such as open sports fields), and access points to the Estuary – including a boat ramp commonly called “the Jetty”.

Earthquake impacts and local change (recreation)

The Christchurch Earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 greatly altered the estuarine environment of this much valued urban recreation resource and also impacted much of the local recreation infrastructure. Liquefaction ducts (or “sand volcanoes”) now stipple the Estuary’s floor while land tilting and subsidence have significantly altered intertidal water levels affecting where and what type of recreational activities can occur. The earthquakes – particularly those which occurred in February 2011 – have also significantly compromised much of the built recreational infrastructure located in and around the estuary, including the headquarters of local sport and recreation clubs (particularly yachting and boating), public facilities located in parks and reserves, (boat) ramps and walking tracks. Such impacts have presented a range of challenges and opportunities for those who use and manage the Estuary as a recreation

resource. This section describes earthquake related changes to the northern reach of the Estuary, as identified by research participants, which have either had a direct or indirect impact on pre-existing patterns of recreation activity and/or the associated and local recreation infrastructure.

One of the most dramatic impacts reported by all out interviewees was the loss of the headquarters of the Pleasant Point Yacht Club, a building which stood as a key community landmark on the Estuary foreshore. The September quake significantly damaged this building, and as a result only restricted access was permitted. The February quakes, however, “signed the death warrant for the building” (The South Brightside Newsletter, 2012c, p.3) with land subsidence leaving the site flooded at high tide, requiring the building to be demolished and the site abandoned.

For the Pleasant Point Yacht Club, this has forced the membership to carefully “consider the [future] direction of the club” (local yachting expert) and to engage with council to determine where to locate a new headquarters. One interviewee – a local yachting enthusiast – noted that the club was finding it “difficult to get a [new] space on the water front” for the rebuild, associating this with the complexities and uncertainties surrounding the acquisition of building consents for new structures on TC3 land⁶. Over the course of this delay (which interviewees expected would continue), the club had experienced a fall in membership numbers and was concerned that this trend would continue with any further delays in the re-siting and re-building of the clubhouse (yachting enthusiast). The Canterbury Yachting Association was, however, involved in an earthquake recovery strategy for yachting (and boating more generally), which included a plan to co-locate or “hub” all water sports which make use of the Estuary. While there was a sense of sadness associated with the loss of the local club (house) the idea of the hub was described by several of the interviewees as a positive step towards the survival of Estuary yachting (generally), which like many organised and traditional ‘clubs’ sports was facing membership challenges prior to the quakes. Of particular note, the Canterbury Yachting Association is looking at this idea of hubbing as a means toward preservation of their sport. It is felt that a water sports-type hub is integral to the survival of yachting. This would mean other water sports such as kayaking, waka ama

⁶ TC3, which stands for Technical Category 3, is a descriptor officially assigned to land after the Christchurch earthquakes and refers to how the land is expected to perform in future quakes. It also relates to the foundation systems most likely to be required in the corresponding areas. It is defined as land on “which moderate to significant land damage from liquefaction is possible in future large earthquakes. Site-specific geotechnical investigation and specific engineering foundation design is required” (<http://cera.govt.nz/residential-green-zone-technical-categories/overview>).

and jet-skiing which would potentially be included in this hub. Yacht club members understand that they have to move with the times, and without incorporating these 'newer' water sports, yachting could become a small and "exclusive" sport. Realisations like this by sporting codes can further support the idea of a hub or precinct being established in this area.

Incidentally, most of the research participants discussed the related concepts of hubbing, co-location and precincts – ideas also central to the post-earthquake *Spaces and Places Plan for Sport and Recreation in Greater Christchurch (2012)*. According to that plan, a hub is described as having a significant land area, and a single integrated facility which allows a range of sport and recreation activities to be carried out at the site. The Spaces and Places Plan also describes a precinct. This is an area larger than a hub, and is a major regional destination. It is a cluster of facilities, within close proximity of each other but operating independently from each other. Precincts could include more than one hub, and one or more sports partnerships. Respondents from the Yacht Club and from the Bowling Club mentioned hubbing favourably and could see potential for their recreational codes in it.

This research uncovered a positive curiosity about hubbing, with every respondent mentioning the idea, although not always with a similar understanding of what was meant by the term. It follows that a community workshop on 'hubbing' could provide the platform for officials to generate local discussion and ensure that residents are fully aware of what exactly is meant by the term. This would remove some of the ambiguity which surfaced during interviewing – differences in views about what a hub might look like and encompass – and allow the community to decide whether this was a feasible option. It is important that the local community does not have raised expectations that cannot be fulfilled.

The Pleasant Point yacht club was located close by the Bridge Street Bridge which was also severely damaged during the February 2011 quake (Figure 1, over page). Prior to the quakes, this bridge was the main direct access point to South New Brighton (beach) and the domain (and associated recreation facilities) adjacent to the Estuary. As a result of the February quake, the bridge was closed until remedial repairs enabled it to reopen for passage, but only as a one-way bridge – an exit point for residents. Those coming from town to the Estuary area are currently diverted to central New Brighton. Given the importance of the bridge as an access point to the community and associated businesses and recreation spaces, one resident has suggested opening the Bridge to two-way traffic during the weekends, however, SCIRT – the organisation responsible for infrastructure repairs city-wide – has stressed this is not yet a feasible option (The South Brightside, 2012b, p.2). Many of our

interviewees believed that people were not coming to the area as a result of this access issue. Interviewees were also concerned about the sedimentation build up which has occurred as a consequence of the necessary repairs to the Bridge. According to one recreationist interviewed as part of this study, this change to the local estuarine environment and, more generally the damage to the bridge had not been good for the area's recreation profile.



Figure 2: Bridge Street Bridge under repair

Another building requiring demolition (Figure 2, next page), ("red-stickered" immediately after the quakes), was the South Brighton Community Hall, which was used by various community clubs including Tae Kwon Do and the local Choral Society. It was also the site of the local Toy Library and was used by South New Brighton School for their school assemblies. Once red stickered, these groups were left displaced (the school, for example, forced to hold assemblies outdoors when the weather permitted). The rebuilding and *re-purposing* of the Community Hall has become a considerable priority and point of interest for the local community who valued their access to this amenity. Given the local and public interest, the Christchurch City Council has placed the hall on their list of 30 priority projects

(post-quake), thereby giving it precedence for funding, further investigation and where possible repairs and/or replacement. One of our interviewees believed that any newly built community hall should be designed as a multi-purposed facility for the community and should be professionally managed to ensure the community are able to take advantage of any new building.



Figure 3: Demolition of South New Brighton Community Hall

Another major impact to the Estuary environment was damage to the pine tree plantation located in the South New Brighton Domain through which the main walking track wound, one which provided access to surrounding parks, sports fields and picnic areas. The Christchurch earthquakes damaged many of the pine trees, causing some to uproot and fall, and many others to lean precariously over walkways and publicly accessible areas of the domain. The damaged and unstable trees were immediately identified as a significant public safety concern, making tracks, parks and playgrounds highly hazardous and unsafe for usual recreation. The obvious risks the trees presented led authorities to close the domain after the February quakes in 2011 until the trees could be felled. This decision resulted in a loss of access to key recreation spaces, including playgrounds (Figure 3, below).



Figure 4: Damaged and unstable pine trees require certain areas of the South Brighton Domain to be closed

For example, the playground at the entrance of the South Brighton Park has barrier fencing surrounding it. The playground itself is safe, but an adjacent tree is deemed unstable, therefore putting the playground out of commission. In the words of one respondent "Why don't they just whack it down?" Some of the respondents wanted to see the trees removed, a process they thought had taken time too long. This pine tree issue illustrated the frustration of the respondents in terms of the length of time these often complex processes have taken. As quoted by one respondent "Time to get moving. The community wants to see evidence of things happening. People want to see progress".

The controversy of the local pine tree plantation emerged as a major discussion points in this research, with many respondents divided in their views on how the planation should be dealt with and managed into the future. One of our interviewees was concerned about a loss of bird habitat associated with the decision to remove the damaged trees, which he believed would have the flow on effect of reducing opportunities for bird-watching. It was noted that a plan had been implemented to retain some bird habitat (i.e., trees that were not a public health and safety concern) although one other interviewee, who also frequently observed bird life in the area, believed that this had had limited success.

A related issue was with what new trees to replace those which had been destroyed and subsequently removed. This had to be carefully considered as the physical environment of the Estuary has changed. This northern reach of the Estuary has gained water depth due to a south to north tilt as a result of the earthquakes. This has affected the tide levels. Flood levels are now coming up higher, sediment and salination levels have changed, as have the salt marshes. The question now is whether replanting pine trees remains a suitable option for this new environment. There appears to be a (local) split in opinions on this matter. Some of the respondents felt the trees should be removed completely, as they will present a risk in case of future earthquakes. Others took the "like for like" view, and would like to see the area replanted in pine trees – one respondent commenting that it was the pine trees that created the atmosphere whilst walking there. Other respondents saw this as an opportunity to replant with New Zealand native trees. A suggestion was made that a workshop should be held on this issue, as residents felt so strongly about this matter. Such an event would provide an opportunity for information sharing between tree experts, local authorities and the residents.

Another key feature of the Estuary damaged during the Christchurch earthquakes was “the jetty” – a wooden structure which had long provided boaters with access to the water and walkers with a unique Estuary viewing platform/opportunity. It was subsequently closed and remains fenced off to the public (Figure 4, below). The walkway – or “boardwalk” was also damaged (Figure 4, below) and, as mentioned above, was closed owing to the risk posed by damaged trees.

One other impact mentioned by interviewees was a change to the water levels in the Estuary, most notably the deepening of the channel. It was noted that this could potentially enhance yachting opportunities in the area, and present new opportunities for recreational activities requiring deeper water (especially crafts with keels or fins). As noted by one Pleasant Point Yacht Club member, this is “the best sailing area in the Estuary now, due to the tilt”.



Figure 5: Damage to the jetty and boardwalk

Challenges

Over the course of interviewing, key informants discussed a number of key challenges associated with the re-making of the spaces and places for estuary-based recreation in the northern reach of the Avon Heathcote Estuary / Ihutai. These challenges are discussed in this section. There is some overlap with previous discussions; impacts and challenges were often difficult to separate.

Much of the interviewees' talk about challenges was linked to confusion surrounding the earthquake recovery process, particularly where the Estuary and surrounding areas linked into "the bigger plans" for the region. Some interviewees felt (and feared) that South New Brighton and its surrounding estuarine environment was not a "priority area", as opposed to the Central City or other "red zoned" locations. By extension, many felt disempowered to act, assuming that their ideas would be ignored on the basis that they were not on the local councils' list of "things to do".

Also linked to the complexity of formal processes associated with earthquake recovery was an underlying local concern about the acquisition of consents for rebuilding. After the earthquakes, land in the research area was rezoned as TC3 which stands for Technical Category 3. According to CERA (2012) TC3 means that "moderate to significant land damage from liquefaction is possible in future significant earthquakes. Site-specific geotechnical investigation and specific engineering foundation design is required". Under this land reclassification, key informants were concerned not only about the ability to procure consents and permits for new buildings, but were also worried about the time that might be involved in this process.

There was also some shared concern about "fractured planning" (as put by one interviewee). This relates to the perceived difficulty (if not impossibility) of uniting the different plans and priorities of the different agencies who have vested interests in the Estuary and its use as a recreation resource (in relation to Yachting, to take just one example: the Christchurch City Council, the Canterbury Yachting Association, Sport Canterbury and the various Yachting clubs located around the margins of the Estuary). Additionally, it would be timely to note at this point that Ngai Tahu also conduct their own Cultural Impact Assessments and values reports. This work attempts to explain impacts and also recommend mitigations. These reports have both negative and positive impacts and are conducted by specialists from Ngai Tahu. This illustrates another layer of planning practice within the rebuilding process.

Many interviewees noted the importance of transparency through the process, and open and constant communication to ensure a coherent plan is devised which involves consultation with, and the synthesising of input from, all parties.

There was often also a brief reference to the challenge of funding. Despite this being a reoccurring theme, none of the key informants were able to elaborate on this matter. It seemed that while all informants had an awareness of the need for large amounts of funding required to rebuild, upgrade or implement new ideas, none of them seemed to know where this funding would come from, or how funding was allocated.

According to many interviewees, the loss of community members presented another big challenge. To date it was reported that already 400/500 South New Brighton residents had shifted away from the area, largely due to housing damage. This had resulted in the fracturing of the community. In the most extreme case, further to the north of the Bridge Street Bridge, is the Bexley area: a whole community displaced by quake damage, with clusters of abandoned homes now resembling a ghost town. It was noted that the loss of residents in this area meant there was no representatives for Bexley sitting in at community meetings. It was quoted by one informant that "these could have been the movers and shakers of the community". On the upside, some of the residents that were forced to leave the Bexley and South Brighton area, were still very eager to have a say in the future direction of the area, and despite now living away, some were in fact returning to participate in workshops and residents meetings.

As noted in the previous section, one of the most interesting challenges the community is dealing with presently is what to replant in the damaged pine plantation in the now significantly altered environment. Many of the trees have been, and continue to be felled by tree arborists, leaving the area exposed. Furthermore, ecological changes have occurred in the estuary since the earthquakes. One informant reported that the estuary is now more exposed on low tide, and there is an increase in the salt marshes. These changes raise questions about whether replanting "like for like" is the best option. The local iwi felt that this was one of the challenges- getting people to see beyond these views. "If we rewind 150 years, we would see that the area was probably full of natives (trees)". It appears that there is a difference in opinion on this matter, with many people wanting to replace "what was there" and others taking this as an opportunity to replant with native trees, and some saying just to remove them completely.

Opportunities

Notwithstanding the impacts and challenges outlined in the previous sections, interviewees all had positive visions for the area, highlighting the strong sense of attachment they, (and/or others they knew or worked with), had with the research location and their associated desire to be involved in its re-establishment as a place of sport and recreation. Implicit here is their recognition of the continuing high amenity value of the area, interviewees persistent with their view that the location is a place where local people and visitors should, in the future, continue to congregate to play (sport), relax and recoup, keep fit, socialise, and learn about and enjoy the outdoors.

Interviewees who lived close to the Estuary (particularly those in South New Brighton) expressed a strong sense of attachment to the research location. Most noted that their connection to the area had developed and strengthened over time through use of the estuary waters and its surrounds for informal recreation activities, (particularly, but not limited to, walking, running and boating), club sports and general social interaction (most notably picnicking and field sports in the domain). For some, the area was also highly valued as a biodiversity-rich reserve, with future opportunities identified for observing, interacting with and learning about the unique flora and fauna of the (local estuarine) environment. Both instances were described as key reasons for (remaining) living in the area.

Over the course of the fieldwork it became apparent that interviewees' strong attachment to, and identification with the northern reaches of the estuary extended to a strong sense of ownership of the location and desire to be involved in its post-quake restoration. This local sense of connection (to place) was also recognised by the estuary experts interviewed (i.e., those professionally involved in the post-quake restoration, some of whom also lived near the resource and/or whom worked closely with members of the local community to rectify the damage caused by the quakes). These key informants recognised that the local community were eager to be involved in the area's restoration, despite some acknowledgment of impending technical and policy-orientated challenges.

One interviewee reported that the local community had forged ahead with "the bigger project" (i.e., the restoration of the Estuary and its surrounds), proposing many new initiatives and also sharing and debating innovative ideas for the location's re-development. Conceptually, their activities and interactions can be characterised as an expression of citizen activism – a key component of resiliency which contributes positively to the recovery of local individuals and communities (Nelson, 2007, p.46). To take just one example, community

planting days in the domain and also around the Estuary – coordinated by the local City Council ranger – were reportedly being well supported by community volunteers. Such events were enabling the community to be involved in the area’s restoration, which was also working to reaffirm and strengthen their sense of connection to the area. Another example which underscores the community’s strong sense of attachment to the location is the proposed “rail of remembrance”. While this project’s title may immediately conjure up thoughts of loss; it in fact refers to a railing to be erected with the initials of community members inscribed along its length – a symbol of the community’s desire to connect with and be involved in the remaking of this place in the post-disaster climate.

The main opportunity people commented on was the idea of “hubbing”. As noted earlier, this idea was first put forward in the *Spaces and Places Plan for Sport and Recreation in the Greater Christchurch* (March 2012), by the Sport and Recreation Leadership Group. A hub is described as having a significant land area, and a single integrated facility which allows a range of sport and recreation activities to be carried out at the site. Respondents from the Yacht Club and from the Bowling Club mentioned hubbing favourably and could see potential for their recreational codes in it. The *Spaces and Places Plan* also describes a precinct. This is an area larger than a hub, and is a major regional destination. It is a cluster of facilities, within close proximity of each other but operating independently from each other. Precincts could include more than one hub, and one or more sports partnerships. Schools and/or tertiary education providers within the area could form partnerships with the sports and recreational clubs within the precinct, and utilise the facilities.

The latter idea of a precinct seems a more apt opportunity for this area, given the diversity of the sporting and recreation codes i.e. bowling, yachting, cycling, tennis, high-ropes course. It could also encompass the beloved Community Centre which was severely damaged and subsequently demolished in January 2013. The centre was deemed uneconomic to repair and the council is looking at options for the long-term future. The loss of the Community Centre saw many groups who regularly used this facility displaced after the quakes. Martial arts, a toy library, and a choral singing group to name a few, all relocated after the impact of the quake destroyed this popular amenity.

Access was another strong feature when it came to discussing ideas and opportunities. Many respondents wanted all current access ways repaired and/or upgraded. The jetty was now “munted”. If this was repaired, yachters, kayakers, canoeists and waka ama could all launch their vessels from here. Respondents looked further than just the existing local access ways, and described linking boardwalks and creating cycle ways as ways of enhancing the

recreational value of the area. One proposal was a cycleway from Rat Island right through to Humphreys Drive. Repairing and reopening the walk known as the 'Estuary Walk and Naughty Boys Island' was also mentioned. This walk begins in New Brighton and proceeds down to Southshore. Additionally, it can link further north right up to Spencer Park via beach access. Another idea pertaining to access was that when the Bridge Street Bridge repairs were complete, the council could leave one of the ramps they have built on both sides of the bridge. This could be utilised in the future as an access way for emergency vehicles if required.

Further upstream along the Avon River tributary, respondents favoured the idea of redeveloping the Kerrs Reach area into an international standard rowing facility. It was largely felt that this would have a positive flow-on effect for water sports on the Estuary.

The earthquakes have encouraged the local South Brighton community to be more proactive in engaging in local activities. A Residents Association has been formed. To date, the association has initiated local events like the Christmas Carols in the Park, which elicited a good turnout. The association now also produces a newsletter every six weeks, which is informative, educational and specific to the local community. One respondent suggested that the earthquakes have provided an opportunity for increased social contact for the aged community of South Brighton. He felt this had been one of the positive impacts of the earthquakes, but was mindful that social contact may not be sustained, particularly as temporary social service providers move out of the area.

Further, community planting days have been successful. Coordinated by the local ranger and his team, these continue to provide an opportunity for the community to contribute to the rebuild. It was quoted that these planting days give people "a sense of ownership, a sense of identity, and a sense of place". The planting days also have an adoption focus, whereby community members adopt a tree which contributes to this ownership and sense of place.

Ideas and opportunities pertaining to the physical environment in this part of the Estuary were boundless. One feasible idea was that some of the playgrounds in the "red zones" could be relocated into the South Brighton Domain. A unique spin could be put into this playground area, as suggested by one informant, that a kid's exercise park could be established. Of course this would be subject to safe access ways, including the stability of the surrounding pine trees.

Many respondents also felt that the local Scout Hall was under-utilised. It has been used as a storage facility since the 1990's, and many suggested that with the Community Centre being

demolished, this premise could have served as a temporary relocation for the many recreational groups that were displaced with the damaged Community Centre. The Croquet Club was not affected by earthquake damage, but has closed its doors due to low membership numbers. It is hoped, by a few respondents, that this hall is now sufficiently utilised, hopefully by filling a gap left by quake damage.

The opening of new toilet facilities was also suggested. This would accommodate freedom campers and would address the issue of litter that frequented the area. Additionally, outside showers would benefit the area.

Ideas for enhancing passive recreational opportunities in the domain were frequently made. One of the most common was related to the enhancement of barbeque opportunities. South Brighton Domain currently has one free gas barbeque. This is well used, particularly in the summer months, and it was felt more barbeques would re-attract families to the area. Pre-quake, this area was extremely popular for picnickers. Businesses from the central city would hold family days at the domain (akin to what occurs currently at the Groynes reserve), and cultural groups would gather to play their sport there.

One informant thought that passive recreation was a growing area, and the Estuary and its surrounds provided the right environment. He felt that family values were changing in terms of recreation, and people were changing to accommodate these values. Particularly, with the high costs of petrol, people were more inclined to use what is on their back doorstep. With this in mind, he recommended that there should be bigger wildlife areas and reserves. This comment has a direct relationship with the high bird diversity and populations in the area. Occasionally enjoyed by birdwatchers, there is potential for this passive recreational activity to be promoted and enhanced in the area. It was further suggested that the trunks of some of the affected trees could be left and serve as 'poles' and with the addition of netting this could provide a predator-free aviary for the more exotic birds.

A proposal has been put forward for a spa/sauna facility. To date, the proposal has approximately 400 signatures of support. It is proposed that the spa be developed in the South Brighton Domain area. The proposal has been put forward by a local resident, who believes that the spa/sauna complex has potential to provide a much needed service and to grow the area, economically and socially. It also could be developed in stages, with the spas and saunas being developed first, with potential for further development of services later i.e. a coffee shop or hairdressers. Other ideas and opportunities that were suggested that could enhance the recreational value of this research area included increasing licenses for

businesses in the parks and reserve spaces. These might be in the form of coffee caravans or hire facilities for kayaks or mountain bikes, or as one informant put it: “provide a space, celebrate it and get people to own it”.

Interestingly, reflecting on the idea of ‘potential developments’ in this area, Ngai Tahu felt that the damage caused by the earthquakes (tree damage and housing) now leaves an opportunity to increase the buffer zone between the built and natural environments. When asked to elaborate, the respondent replied “red zone areas and other damaged areas have opened up the opportunity for human encroachment to step back from wahi taonga (special places), and allow these places to build back up naturally”. It is thought that doing this will assist in the balance between the natural and built environments. Furthermore, the Ngai Tahu respondent felt there were opportunities that lie within this concept. Harvesting kai for future generations, and as a means to reinforce the relationship with nature (Tane Mahuta, trees), were two of the micro-opportunities.

As a place to end, an interesting question/statement was posed during one interview. “Why can’t we have floating structures on the Estuary? The Yacht Club could have a floating clubhouse, and that would save the land issues they are having. Imagine a floating coffeehouse on the Estuary.” While this question represents one of the more imaginative ideas, such a vision is typical of the strong desire the participants in had to see new and innovative ideas incorporated in the planning and rebuilding of the places and spaces for Estuary recreation.

Conclusion

The Avon Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai has always been a highly valued amenity for recreation. From the mid-seventeenth century with the arrival of Maori, who used this area for food gathering and trading, to modern day, where the area facilitates sports such as yachting, kayaking, and waka ama, and newer sports such as windsurfing and high ropes activity.

This research characterised the impacts of the September 2011 and February 2012 earthquakes on recreation activities and infrastructure in the northern reach of the Estuary. It identified the challenges and opportunities confronting local authorities, recreation providers and the community as they contemplate ways to reconfigure, rebuild and improve the spaces and places of recreation here. These earthquakes have provided a rare opening to

reassess previous usage, trends and assumptions of this community and local authorities towards recreation, and to test the sustainability of existing practices, policies and beliefs.

The impact of the earthquakes to the physical environment in this area forced a drastic change in recreation. This included cutting off or restricting access, largely due to pine tree damage and instability. Access to popular walking tracks, the high ropes course and playgrounds subsequently suffered. The main entry/exit point for vehicles to this part of the Estuary (Bridge Street Bridge) was also majorly affected. The impact is thought to have contributed to lower numbers utilising the area. The jetty also endured major damage. It continues to remain inaccessible, leaving kayakers and canoeists without an obvious access point.

A range of challenges were highlighted in this research. The research location is now categorised TC3, meaning it is prone to moderate to significant damage from liquefaction in future large earthquakes. Geotechnical investigations and certain engineering foundation design is now required in this area. This takes time. The local community and recreational clubs felt that due to long and complex processes, clubs were losing membership and ran the risk of people joining clubs in other areas. Further to this, some of the interviewees felt that the research location was not a 'priority area' for local authorities' considerations, as opposed to the central city or other red-zoned areas.

On the upside, the earthquakes opened up a range of opportunities. Underlying the abovementioned issues and challenges, was an air of optimism about what the community would like to see in the future for this area. Significantly, this research uncovered a community who had become more socially engaged. A newsletter with South Brighton specific issues is now circulated, as well as a Facebook page. Events have been arranged by the community, such as tree planting days and Christmas Carols in the Park which have had been supported by the community. Workshops have been held which provided information and community consultation opportunities. This integrated approach provides effective communication and transparency between local authorities and the community. Furthermore, new ideas have emerged. From a spa/sauna complex being proposed to floating buildings, to name a few of the more imaginative aspirations, to sports gear hire facilities and coffee carts as a way of re-attracting families and recreationists (back) to this area.

The South Brighton community identified strongly with the Estuary and the surrounding parks and reserves. There is a real sense of place, place attachment and place ownership

among this community. Opinions about “where to from here” were strong and varied. Throughout the continuing process, it will be imperative that community consultation, integrated approaches, policies and practices are carried out, as well as on-going momentum, in order to avoid a disheartened pro-active community.

Finally, it seems the ultimate challenge for the community and local authorities is successfully maintaining the fine balance between allowing the natural capital of the area to be restored and improved upon, whilst establishing new recreational spaces and places that restore the socio-economic value of the area.

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Appendix 1: Information Sheet for Participants

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled: ***Re-making the spaces and places for estuary-based recreation: Changes, challenges and opportunities in the northern reach of the Avon Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai***. This student research project – sponsored by the *Avon Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai Trust* – will provide a preliminary investigation into the changes which have occurred to the recreation spaces and places at the northern reach of the Estuary, as a result of the Christchurch earthquakes. It will also consider the aspirations of those who manage and/or use this part of the Estuary for recreation. The project has two main aims:

1. To characterise the impacts of the earthquakes on recreation activities and infrastructure at the northern reach of the Estuary; and
2. To identify challenges and opportunities for local authorities and recreation providers as they consider ways to re-configure, build and improve the spaces and places of recreation in this part of the Estuary.

Given your knowledge of the Estuary and/or your interest in estuary-based recreation, I am interested in hearing your views on the above topics. Should you be willing to offer your viewpoint on these subjects, you will be asked to partake in a 30 minute interview. You are free to determine the time and location of the interview, however, please note that the research will be conducted between December 2012 and February 2013. I will seek your permission to tape record the interview.

Throughout the project and in any published results you can be assured of your anonymity. Under no circumstances will the identity of participants be made public, or made known to any person other than the researcher and her supervisor and the Human Ethics Committee at Lincoln University, without the participant's consent. Further, your name and any personally identifying information will not be used during the processing of data, nor in the final report which will be published (with other completed student projects) on the Trust's online research catalogue. In the final report, participants will only be identified using broad descriptors.

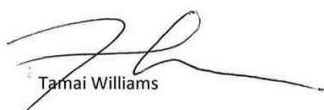
You can withdraw from the study, including the withdrawal of any information you have provided, anytime within the four week period after your interview. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please contact my supervisor or myself using the following contact details:

Researcher: *Tamai Williams* Tamai.Williams@lincolnuni.ac.nz

Supervisor: *Dr Michael Mackay* Michael.Mackay@lincoln.ac.nz 03 325 2811 ext. 8765

The project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. Thank you for taking time to read and consider the above information. I look forward to speaking to you again to confirm if you are willing to participate in my research.

Yours Sincerely



Tamai Williams

Summer Studentship Awardee (Lincoln University)

Appendix 2: Consent Form

Name of Project: *Re-making the spaces and places for estuary-based recreation: Changes, challenges and opportunities in the northern reach of the Avon Heathcote Estuary/Ihutai*

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project within the four week period after my interview, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Name:

Signed:

Date:

Appendix 3: Evolution of recreation in the Estuary at a glance

Who	Era	Significant Activities at the Ihutai	Social Impact	Catalyst for Change
Maori (Waitaha, Ngati Mamoe, Ngai Tahu)	1500's -1840	Food gathering and associated tool and implement making. Cultivation of edible root crops i.e. kumara and aruhe (fern root). Trading of food and resources	The Estuary provided a hub whereby whanau, hapu and iwi would travel the feeding network of waterways and come together at the Estuary to exchange commodities. In later years this trade was also extended to sealers and whalers.	Increased development and pollution from European settlements saw Maori move to more favourable areas north of Christchurch such as Kaiapoi and Tuahiwi.
European Settlers	1840 – 1900	Transport Route – 1851, Charles Crawford (entrepreneur) operates a ferry between Southern to the Northern Banks of the Heathcote river. Key trading post. Ships bringing provisions for farming i.e. livestock and machinery	People were now able to continue their journey to Christchurch via Ferry Road. These ships also provided welcome social contact for the surrounding isolated communities.	As the Estuary and the feeding waterways were being used less for trade and travel, the value of recreational activities for this region increased. Industry was developing rapidly, and the surrounding areas of the Estuary were fast becoming thriving commercial areas. Subsequently, the rivers became convenient places of waste disposal.
20 th Century Cantabrians	1900 - 2000	Following in the footsteps of Maori, early settlers began to establish clubs around the Estuary. Canoeing and rowing clubs were popular. A favoured picnic destination by those wishing to escape from the inner Christchurch. South Brighton Progress League established in 1923 Pleasant Point Yacht Club established at Rat Island in 1921. Mount Pleasant Yacht Club established at Morten's Jetty in 1930. Christchurch Yacht Club established in 1936.	Rowing regattas were held. Community galas were held as fundraisers and profits were used to construct a playground, seats at the domain and a band rotunda. These galas drew big crowds from all around Canterbury. From its inception social activities were integral to this Clubs' functioning. Activities such as regattas, picnics, open days and weekly dances were all coordinated by the Club. Christchurch Yacht Club continued to operate, and run races throughout the war years. Members who remained helped care and	Clubs in and around the Estuary battled with waning numbers during the years of both World Wars' I & II. The depression also impacted upon the falling membership numbers of these clubs. By the early 1900's, levels of pollution had risen to approximately 4.5 million litres of industrial discharge being disposed of into the Heathcote River each day. Additionally, with the outflow of human waste from large communal septic tanks, Christchurch's rivers had become filthy and the source of illnesses such as typhoid. This discharge is seen to have changed the biological balance of the Estuary. The arrival of sea lettuce has been problematic, and rotting vegetation around the shorelines contributes to a foul stench. Despite recreational activities continuing

		<p>A wide range of recreational activities were happening on and around the Estuary by the 1990's. Kayaking, rowing, yachting, walking, jogging, and bird-watching were some of the popular activities enjoyed by Cantabrians.</p>	<p>maintain the boats of absent members.</p> <p>1996 saw the first "Farewell to the Godwits" celebration, which saw Cantabrians assembling to witness the bar-tailed godwits commence their journey from the Spit to Alaska.</p>	<p>throughout this era, this century saw the Estuary being regarded as a dumping ground, rather than a valued recreational area.</p>
21 st Century Cantabrians	2000 -	<p>Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust is established in 2003.</p> <p>The proposed outfall pipe is completed in 2010. Discharge is now carried 3 kilometres further out to the ocean.</p> <p>Large earthquakes shake the Christchurch region in 2010 and 2011.</p>	<p>This was a merger of previous existing advocacy groups, as well as having representation of recreational groups. Other representatives included Christchurch City Council, local runanga (Ngai Tuahuriri) and Environment Canterbury. The Trust oversees everything pertaining to the Estuary i.e. management plans, research, publications and community activities.</p> <p>It is hoped that this is the first important step towards restoring the natural balance of the Estuary, with the overarching hope of it once again becoming a safe mahinga kai.</p> <p>The Estuary is affected with 'sand volcanoes' stippling the Estuary's floor. Parts of the Estuary rose or dropped as much as half a metre. This has impacted upon the drainage and intertidal water levels, disrupting the animal and plant life. In the South New Brighton park area, large pines trees fell, affecting access to popular walking tracks. Mount Pleasant Yacht Club's building was destroyed and subsequently demolished. Recreational activity in and around the Estuary in general is impacted, due to restricted access, offensive smells (due to discharge), and health warnings issued by local authorities.</p>	<p>In 100 years, discharge quantities went from 4.5 million litres to 150 million litres of wastewater being pumped into the Estuary daily.</p> <p>Damage to spaces and places in and around the Estuary as a result of the Earthquakes</p>