

Vehicles on Dunes Starts Debate Online

Jacob Brookie

The sight of a car transporter packed with off-road vehicles heading towards the Foxton Beach dunes sparked a heated online debate last weekend.

The photos, posted by a concerned local on Facebook, attracted angry comments with some calling for all vehicles to be banned from beaches.

Horowhenua District Council said it was "gutted" over the images, stating "These dunes aren't just piles of sand; they're natural barriers that protect our coastline from erosion and storms, and provide resilience to our coastal communities... It takes a lot of mahi and care to help bring these dunes back to life, and just minutes to undo it."

One of the off-roaders contacted by Horowhenua Chronicle said it was a "social thing".

"We are a group who go all around the country, just a group of mates having a good time. We used to go down to Foxton all the time and never had an issue... we spent half an hour going through the dunes."

The driver, who wishes to remain anonymous, was surprised to hear of the community reaction.

"We don't go out to upset people; we are sensible adults using seat belts and helmets. We were driving around bare sand. Some people have too much time on their hands [and complain]. The tracks have all gone by now."

"It's a public beach. If it is so important why isn't it fenced off?"

While some online commenters supported the group's day out, New Zealand Four Wheel Drive Association committee member Grant Purdie didn't agree.

"The Association is 100% against this type of behaviour. We work with local councils and communities to protect these areas."

He hoped Council can take enforcement action against those responsible.

"If they are Association Members there will be trouble," he said, emphasising that there is signage telling drivers to keep off the dunes.

In a statement to the Chronicle, Police said there had been no complaints raised with them as of Tuesday afternoon.

Local conservation volunteers restoring the dunes are often greeted with tyre tracks crisscrossing the sand, and while these particular tracks have faded, the debate around vehicles on the beach has already left its mark.



Left: Image from Facebook of the car transporter of vehicles at Foxton Beach.

Right: Tyre tracks from off-road vehicles discovered on the dunes at Foxton Beach.

