

Interviewee: Jane Schuitema and Keri Kawa

Title: Animal Control Officers

Interview Date: 01/29/24.

Interview Time: 2:30-3:30 PM

Can you please tell us what your role is with the Hutt City Council?

Follow up: Do you work with GWRC at all in this position?

- They follow up with complaints
 - Walking
 - Roaming
 - Barking
 - These are all issues that they've has conversations about along the corridor
- Don't really work with GW

Can you explain how the work you have done relates to the Hutt River Corridor?

- River corridor is a shared area which dog-walkers use
- They get complaints from the area sometimes

Can you explain how your role relates to dog-walking and users that bring their pets into the River Corridor?

Follow up: do you consider yourself an advocate for dog walkers in the community?

- Some complaints they've gotten include:
 - Dog exercise area
 - Allowed off-lead but must remain under control/supervised
 - People or dogs that have been attacked to bitten
 - Bikes being chased by dogs not under control
- Advocate for the community, not just walkers
 - Represent the community as a whole, regardless of whether they have a dog or not

If someone were to have a negative experience with pets or animals within the Corridor who would they report to?

- They are the ones who generally respond to complaints that come in
- It is well known in the community that the council deals with dog related matters
 - Sometimes the police will be brought in for more serious cases

Has there been any incidents or reports about animals by users of the Hutt River Corridor?

Follow up if yes: Do you know which users typically submit these complaints?

- All recreational users submit complaints to them
 - Cyclists, joggers, and walkers are the most often
- It's less rare than you would expect, there are often complaints

Do you believe recreational use of the River Corridor is important, why or why not?

- The Corridor is a great area for people to use multiuse space, but it has its challenges
 - Some of these includes dogs chasing runners and bikers
- “It’s all about the dog owners managing their animals properly” -Jane

In your opinion, what are the needs of dog-walkers in any recreational space?

Follow up if yes: More specifically, the River Corridor?

- Some dog owners feel entitled about their animals
 - “Dog owners that feel quite entitled” -Jane
 - There can be dog on dog conflict and dog on person conflict
- It’s all about owners knowing their own dog and what to do when dogs are meeting each other
- Sometimes people have no idea of the dog’s intentions
 - May have a fear and get spooked by it running up to them
 - Dog owner may say they’re fine but the recreational user might not see it that way
- Dog owners should have good recall, if not the dog isn’t trained properly

Are you a user of the Hutt River Corridor?

Follow up if yes: What activities do you use the corridor for?

- They are not users of the trail
 - Don't feel safe walking their dogs there knowing what happens
- They know all the things that can go wrong because of their jobs
 - Human nature has challenges

What is your opinion of dogs being on or off lead in the River Corridor which is a shared space?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- Dog control Act of 1996, people are required to carry a lead in a public place when walking a dog
 - Bylaw states that dogs must be leashed in public places
 - Are allowed to be off leash in specific areas
 - Hutt River Corridor is considered off-lead
- The River Corridor has great exercise areas for dogs
 - Dogs having the freedom to run is important
 - But they also see the other side that there's many users and sometimes dogs make their own choices
 - There is no real definition of what "control" means, no control other than a physical lead
 - Sometimes there is too many people and stimulation

What is your opinion on cyclists using bells while passing other users?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- Cyclists using bells is good, especially if they are approaching from behind

What is your opinion on visitors using headphones in a shared space like the River Corridor?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- Headphones are not good
 - "you're asking for trouble" -Jane

Do you believe there is conflict between the users of the Hutt River Corridor?

Follow up if yes: What do you believe could be a solution for the conflicts between users without excluding any user?

- Solutions:
 - Education and signage are a solution
 - Can provide information but owners might not follow through
 - Advertise on the Lower Hutt website training tips for dog-owners
 - This includes recall teachings and tips on how to control your dog

Do you believe the trails along the corridor should be expanded? If so, why?

- Extending trails make sense to give everyone more room
 - They can be narrow in some spots

What are your thoughts on adapting the River Corridor for increased commuter cyclists use?

Follow up: Would this affect you, if so, how?

- “It encompasses so many users and dogs” -Keri
- To eliminate the issues, you would need dogs on leads
 - They are bound to have interactions with other users and dogs
 - Even after using the lead, it isn’t guaranteed

What do you believe is the best way to go about adding a commuter route in the Hutt Valley, and is the River Corridor the space that should be used?

- Cyclist path is great in corridor because it’s a straight shot
 - It might be challenging in dog exercise areas
 - There are many other users that it could be conflicting
- They have had incidents of cyclists hitting dogs recently
- It is dependent on the time of commuting and how that aligns with the times dog walkers use the corridor
 - Could be good to impose speed limits to avoid dog injuries
- Wider paths would be an improvement
- Separation of the cycleway from the dog-exercise area
 - Could do so by fencing the cycling area

