

Beach bonfire ban sparks debate

By Samantha Motion

Bonfires may be banned on Tauranga's beaches if proposed changes to council rules go through.

Kontiki users and quad bike joyriders would also face new limitations under the draft Beaches Bylaw approved for community consultation by a Tauranga City Council committee yesterday.

Under the current bylaw, fires less than 1m wide are allowed on beaches between 5am and 11pm below the high tide mark.

Council staff said the rules were "largely ignored" and recommended a blanket ban on beach fires.

Issues included people lighting fires above the high tide mark, not putting fires out correctly and leaving broken glass bottles and litter on the beach.

Population increases in beach suburbs could exacerbate the issues.

Most councillors were not keen on a total fire ban.

"It's kind of part of our heritage really, isn't it, lighting fires on the beach," said Max Mason.

He suggested there might be designated areas on the beach for bonfires instead of an out-



The traditional Kiwi bonfire could be banned under proposed new council rules.

PHOTO/GETTY IMAGES

right ban.

Councillor Steve Morris said he did not think the council should "be the fun police" and "bring down the ban hammer" yet on the issue.

He said he had seen no evidence from the fire service that fires lit in accordance with the current bylaw had spread to dunes or other areas.

People deliberately lighting fires in the dunes was arson,

and another issue altogether, he said.

The councillors, however, decided to leave the proposed ban in the draft bylaw and hear the community's feedback on it.

The draft bylaw also proposed allowing all-terrain vehicles — including quad bikes — on the beach only for recreational fishing purposes.

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Tauranga City Councillor Max Mason

They would still only be allowed in Papamoa East, between the approved access at 105 Karewa Parade and the Kaituna estuary.

The fine, however, would be reduced from \$750 to around \$100, as bylaw and parking enforcement team leader Stuart Goodman reported that police had "no appetite" for issuing the larger fine.

Following complaints about anglers' kontiki — electric long-line systems — and other long lines drifting towards swimmers, they also included a provision in the bylaw to allow it to "impose seasonal restrictions" on the fishing methods.

Council staff said that issues relating to dogs on the beach would be dealt with when the council reviewed its dog control bylaw later this year.