

Locals' lane causing strain at wharves

Congestion at Matiatia ferry terminal and confusion around the downtown locals' lane are again causing issues, with complaints about Explorer double-decker buses and priority boarding. Residents have voiced concern about the hours of operation and regulation of the Fullers360 locals' lane.

One resident said she and a friend queued in the locals' lane only to find that they were boarded simultaneously with the visitor queue.

"When I questioned the staff member responsible for checking boarding passengers, she explained she had been instructed by Fullers to allow both queues to board at the same time. What a scrum. Surely the intention is to ensure locals get on board and are given priority?"

Another Waihekean said a staff member told her that they have "more or less given up letting the locals' lane on first, as non-residents have caught on to it and are switching over. Clearly, a more formal local identification or ticket type is needed."

Fullers360 began operating the locals' lane from Boxing Day and will continue to offer the service until Waitangi Day.

"The locals' lane is designed to help Waiheke residents get home during busy times of day. It's open 9am to 6pm on the Auckland side and operates from 3pm to 6pm at Matiatia," a Fullers360 spokesperson told the *Gulf News*.

"Outside of these specific hours, our operations team monitors the wharf so they can open the lane as needed when queues are unexpectedly long - which is rare.

"Overall, we think the locals' lane

is running smoothly this season, but certainly welcome any feedback to reduce confusion while boarding. We also encourage locals to ask our ticket office

"The double-decker buses are not the cause of congestion at the keyhole - the congestion has been an ongoing issue for many years, and while we apologise to those recreational boaties wishing to use the boat ramp, it is simply an incredibly busy time of the year for everyone," says Mr Horne.

"Double-decker buses are part of the mitigation of congestion linked with the ferry operation operating on a half-hour timetable over the summer period.

"The overall process has been working well this summer. Our charter and double-decker drivers will also stop

before the keyhole and check if there is room before entering, when possible." • *Sophie Boladeras*



Residents have voiced concern about the hours of operation and regulation of the Fullers360 locals' lane. Photo Emma Haas

staff and wharf hosts for any clarification," said Fullers360 Chief Executive Officer Mike Horne.


Also of concern has been keyhole congestion at Matiatia over the busy summer period. Some boaties have reported not being able to access the wharf due to Explorer buses taking up space and blocking the boat ramp.

Despite past efforts to ban double-decker buses from entering the keyhole area at the ferry terminal, Explorer buses are registered with Auckland Transport (AT) as an exempt public transport service, according to a Fullers representative.


An AT representative said the transport company asked all operators to be considerate of the space restrictions in the keyhole.

"There is no restriction on vehicles in the keyhole that can be enforced."


The transport company has asked small passenger vehicles to park in the P30 spaces during busy times, as large passenger vehicles are not able to use other areas of the car park.




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