

Merit

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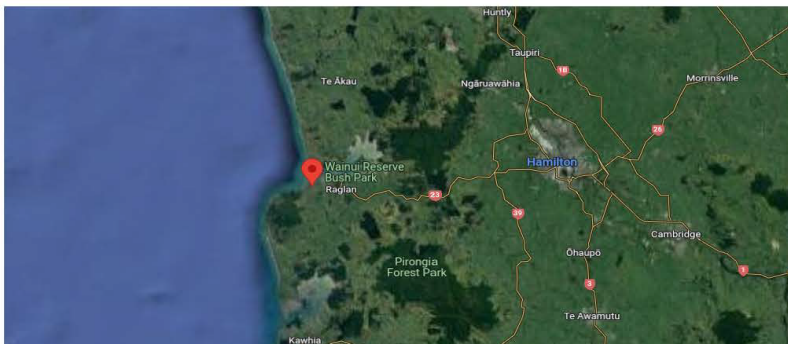
Introduction

Soundsplash Music festival is held annually in Raglan at Wainui reserve at the end of January. Soundsplash occurred last on the 21st -23rd of January 2022. Soundsplash is a music festival where anyone from the age of 16+ can attend without a parent or guardian, which makes it a significant festival among teenagers as most festivals are R18. Soundsplash typically takes place in Raglan's Wainui reserve as its natural amphitheatre and beautiful beach make it an ideal place to host a festival. In 2021 around 10,000 people attended Soundsplash to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

The purpose and significance of the event

Soundsplash is a music festival held in the prime of New Zealand's summer and takes place over two nights at Raglan's Wainui reserve. Soundsplash originated in 2001 and was originally called the Soundsplash Eco Reggae Festival.

Although many music festivals are popular among teenagers, soundsplash can be attended by anyone over the age of 16 without a guardian which makes it very popular for teenagers who otherwise cannot attend other festivals as most of them are R18. Soundsplash occurs in the midst of New Zealand's summer and is located near the beach which makes it a perfect place to spend three days of summer and for people to create lasting memories. Soundsplash says "We strive to create a unique environment bringing together live music, art and culture with a talent-packed line-up, performance art, workshops and speakers.



Map from google maps accessed 16/08/22



Map from google maps accessed 16/08/22

The spatial nature of the event

Soundsplash is held in Raglan's Wainui reserve. Raglan is located in the North island of New Zealand. Raglan is part of the Waikato region and is west of Hamilton. Wainui reserve is on the west coast of Raglan near Ngarunui Beach and the Tawatahi river. It is north east of Manu Bay. Shuttles to the festival run from Raglan's Airfield which is south of Raglan's Pancake rocks and east of Wainui Reserve. Raglan is a 35 minute drive from the busy city of Hamilton. Raglan is a small town with a population of 3,280 (June 2020). Wainui Reserve is 140 hectares or 345 acres which means that there is plenty of space for multiple stages,

camping zones and food trucks. Only a small part of the reserve is used for the Soundsplash festival however. Soundsplash moved to mystery creek in Hamilton in 2022 due to Covid - 19 as mystery creek has 114 hectares of land but again not all of this land was used. The roots of soundsplash are in Raglan and the festival organisers have moved back to Wainui reserve for 2023.

Soundsplash is a significant event because of the amount of people who go there. There are about 10,000 who attend, and because it is one of the few festivals where 16 year olds can attend, it is significant to these people. The event makes a lot of money from ticket sales and other purchases eg food and drinks, which makes this event important. The event has been around since 2001, which also makes it significant.

Specific features or characteristics of the event (geographical) (environmental) (cultural)

Soundsplash occurs in Raglans Wainui Reserve which is within walking distance of Ngarunui Beach where festival goers can swim and enjoy the ocean during the day. Raglan is on the west coast of New Zealand and the soundsplash festival experiences beautiful coastal views during the day. There is an option to camp at Soundsplash and from the campsites you can see Ngarunui Beach and Raglans coastline.



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An image from Waikato district Council of the planned site for Soundsplash

How the event shows interaction between people and the environment

The environment affects people as the reserve is large enough for the event to be held. It is also not too close to other houses so that the noise pollution does not affect a lot of people. But the festival also affects

the environment at the reserve, with a lot of people walking, dancing, camping on the ground which can damage the trees and the grass. People produce a lot of waste at the event, and this is a negative for the environment.

Explain in detail and evaluate the planning and decision-making involved in the event

There are many permits and red tape around planning and organising a festival. These are before, during, and after the event.

Before:

The organisers of soundsplash need to apply for a permit for "Resource Consent under the resource management act to hold the festival on the festival site (Wainui Reserve) and to provide a park and ride at the parking site (Raglan Airfield)" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The most recent resource consent was granted for the soundsplash organisers in 2021 which grants them permission for 10 events to take place between 2022 and 2034. Previously from 2016-2021 there was a previous resource consent. (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). This resource consent permit takes 20 working days but can be "extended for a number of reasons and the timeframe 'clock' gets paused when a request for further information is sent out and only un-paused when the information is provided" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The resource consent granted for Soundsplash in 2021 was lodged on 22nd September 2021 and granted on 6 December 2021" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The resource consent has no fixed fee but costs the soundsplash organisers \$10,000 for the 2021 permit (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The permits are granted by Waikato district council. The resource permit also allows the soundsplash organisers to organise parking at the Raglan airfield.

Building consent is required for each event, for stages, pedestrian bridges, toilets and showers. Building consent is also required for marquees over 100m² (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The timeframe for building consent is 20 days under the building act however "the time frame 'clock' gets paused when a request for further information is sent out and is only un-paused when the information is provided" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The building consent requires final inspections taken once stages, bridges and marquees are set up, which is typically the day or two before the festival begins (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). In order for pyrotechnics to be used during the festival Soundsplash organiser must obtain their pyrotechnics from a professional company (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). They must also submit a plan to the Waikato district Council and finally the local fire department must sign off after receiving a site specific setup and a safety plan (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022).

The soundsplash organisers must gain permission from Waikato district Council to use council owned land for the festival site and car parking site "This application is required to include Management plans including specific site maps, health and safety and waste management plans" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). This is because Waikato district Council is the landowner of Wainui reserve and the carparking site. Waikato Councils event team work with the soundsplash organisers throughout the year and the soundsplash organisers begin submitting their plans to be approved in August (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The council does not grant permission for the festival site until the final building consent is signed off which is typically the day before the festival (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The Waikato Council events team takes "feedback from the Community Board into consideration for their Land Owner Approval" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022).

Soundsplash organisers have to pay a bond which is calculated on a case by case basis and is dependent on the type of impact on Wainui reserve (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5

2022). The bond is estimated to be \$30,000 to ensure any potential damage has no cost on Raglan ratepayers for repairs (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The bond is tailored to each event and is based on the costs for repairs to "fencing, grass restoration damaged bollards and includes the footprint of the event to ensure full and true costs are covered" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The bond set for Soundsplash in 2021 was \$10,000 (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022).

During:

Although many people camp inside Soundsplash's festival, many people also choose to stay in accommodation outside the festival in Raglan. This means they need a way to get from Raglan airfield to the top of Wainui reserve which is about 4km away. The organisers of soundsplash organise shuttle buses that run on the Friday and Saturday from 10am - 2am and on Sunday from 9am - 4pm (Soundsplash, 2019). These shuttle buses are free and are also used by campers at the festival to enter on the Friday and leave on the Sunday. There is also a bus that runs from the Caro street bustop in Hamilton at 9am and 11am on Friday and takes passengers directly to Wainui reserve. The bus then departs on Sunday at 4pm and costs \$35 return. When purchasing tickets for soundsplash you can also buy a parking pass that allows you to drive up to Wainui reserve. The shuttles are helpful for people travelling in and out of the festival but can cause wait times of up to 6 hours on the Friday when everyone including the campers wants to enter the festival. There has been negative feedback by members of the public about this as there is lots of traffic on the Friday of soundsplash (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). "Stuff has received messages from concerned parents of attendees on Friday evening, saying their children were waiting between five and six hours to enter" (O'Dwyer & Lines, 2021). I believe that the soundsplash organisers should be discussing better ways for transport in and out of the festival to cut down on the wait times experienced by people and to reduce the traffic in Raglan.

A large issue with Soundsplash are the time that the attendees wait to catch a shuttle to the festival. "people were having to wait over six hours to get into the popular venue" (O'Dwyer & Lines, 2021) this was due to rigorous search policies as well as inadequate staffing and only one shuttle running from the Raglan airfield to Wainui Reserve which is 4km away. There is an option to drive into the festival to either drop people off or to park your vehicle up at Wainui Reserve however this can cost extra money when purchasing tickets. Although many people choose to camp at Soundsplash, many other people choose to stay outside of the festival which means they go into Raglan and spend money on food, drinks and other items they may need for the festival. There are many small locally owned shops in Raglan which would benefit greatly during the time Soundsplash is on. Before or after the festival campers will come into the town to purchase food and clothes or other items they may need as well, further injecting more money into the local economy.

Soundsplash cannot exceed certain limits of sound when playing music and is also permitted from doing any soundchecks before 9am. They must also have no music playing past 1am which is all to ensure that residents of Raglan are kept happy and that soundsplash can continue year after year. These rules are important as many people are bothered by loud music and this takes into consideration people outside of the festival. The local lifeguards at Raglan surf life saving club are also alerted about the festival so that they can ensure they have adequate members to supervise crowds at Ngarunui beach over the sound splash weekend. The organisers of sound splash also have security guards and first aid readily available to ensure everyone visiting the festival is safe. No drugs, alcohol or weapons are allowed inside the festival and rigorous search policies are in place to prevent these prohibited items from being smuggled into the festival. All of these measures are put in place to ensure the festival is as safe as possible and the town of Raglan is also happy.

Soundsplash aims to be a zero waste festival and encourages festival goers to bring no plastic into their festival. Clearly labelled recycling bins are located around the festival to encourage people to recycle and use bins. These are planned before the event. In 2022 Soundplash diverted 82% of their waste from landfill. By having a zero waste policy in place Soundsplash helps reduce the amount of waste being

brought into their festival in the first place and in turn reducing the amount of litter and rubbish in Wainui Reserve. Many campers at Soundsplash purchase a cheap tent at Kmart or the Warehouse and abandon their tents at the end of the festival which creates a lot of rubbish and waste. To combat this soundsplash offers "Tepee life village" and in the past Bookatent which are pre set up tents that you hire for the duration of the festival and will be packed up for you when you leave. This helps reduce the amount of tents left behind after the festival and helps look after the environment at Wainui reserve.

During the event at soundsplash there are onsite showers available from 7am-11am and 3pm - 7pm due to cleaning purposes. These are very limited hours when 8,000 people camping want a shower. There are only about 30 showers for all 4 of the main campsites at soundsplash which means that there are big lines for the showers. There are portaloos available around the festival that are always open and apart from usually being quite dirty there are many available in many different locations. Waikato district councils resource permit says "During each event, a minimum of one (1) toilet is provided per 100 for all people (not just limited to ticket holders) on site at any one time. This number includes all people on site including ticket holders and personnel working on the site. The units are to be maintained in a clean and hygienic manner." (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). There are also plenty of water fountains scattered around the festival to ensure everyone has access to fresh drinking water to help prevent dehydration. In 2022 when the festival relocated to mystery creek the temperatures were around 25°C during the day (AccuWeather, 2022) so festival volunteers sprayed water on the crowds and also had a "splash zone" where festival goers could walk through a tunnel filled with sprinklers to cool down. Soundsplash also has sunblock stations where attendees can use the provided sunblock to protect from sunburn. From the age 16 you are able to attend and camp at soundsplash without a guardian. This makes it different from many other festivals such as bay dreams and rhythm and vines.

Soundsplash has a few different spaces in the festival to help support and care for anyone who may be in need during the event. They have many medics around the festival and one big medical tent where they can take care of minor cuts and scrapes as well as major injuries. Waikato district council says that Soundsplash must have first aid available on site (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022). The wellbeing hub at soundsplash is an area where festival goers can charge their phones, relax, refresh and speak to a soundsplash "guardian" if they need someone to chat to. These soundsplash guardians also roam around the festival are check in with people who may look like they need someone to chat with. Soundsplash also has KnowYourStuffNZ on site to provide drug harm reduction and drug checking to anyone who may need it at the festival. These programmes are available to help festival goers have a safe and good time at the festival.

Why location was chosen

Wainui reserve was chosen to host soundsplash for a few reasons. " Its familiarity, suitability, and lack of alternative suitable sites is the reason the festival has been held there many times. The Wainui reserve has a natural amphitheatre which acts as the ideal location for the main stage. There are no other reserves in the district that Council manage that would be suitable or able to support the footprint and impact of Sound Splash" (Waikato District Council, personal communication, August 5 2022).

Who makes final decisions

The final decisions on sound splash planning and permits are decided by Waikato district Council and their event management team.

After the event, a review is held of the event. This information is then used to improve things for the next event. One example is the transport issues for the shuttle bus. One stuff online news article said "we will be revisiting the transport logistics for next year's festival to ensure a better experience for all our attendees." This shows that problems from the bus have been reviewed and improvements were planned for the next festival.

Explain in detail and evaluate the social, economic, and/or environmental impacts of the event.

Environmental:

It aims to be a zero-waste event and to embrace and inspire all people". (Soundsplash, 2022). The event is also focused on sustainability and aims to be a zero waste event while also supporting up and coming artists. Soundsplash also has a market area " where you'll find unique, handcrafted goods and cultural taonga (treasures) and ethically sourced products with a focus on fair-trade, homegrown, creative products" (Soundsplash, 2022).

All the food trucks inside the soundsplash festival use biodegradable, recyclable packaging which is better for the environment as it means this packaging can be recycled but it also means that if people are dropping their rubbish on the ground in places that may not be cleaned up it is biodegradable and in most instances cardboard so it will decompose quickly. The R18 area at soundsplash also uses recyclable biodegradable cups and aluminium cans when serving drinks. However soundsplash highly encourages recycling and has many clearly labelled bins scattered around their festival to help decrease the amount of litter.

Because soundsplash aims to be a zero waste festival they try to minimise the effect on the natural environment at Wainui reserve as much as possible. By being aware of the environment and actively advertising their zero waste policy they can help support the sustainability of Wainui reserve in the short term time the festival takes place. Each year soundsplash tries to divert more waste into recycling and as the years continue I am sure they will create more ways to help the environment at Wainui reserve so it can remain the way it is long term. This continued improvement is part of the planning process.

However with a festival it is hard to closely monitor everybody and their waste. A lot of rubbish is dropped at the festival and although it is cleaned afterward there will be bits of rubbish scattered around Wainui Reserve and Ngarunui Beach. Having 10,000 people spend the weekend camping and dancing on grass does cause damage to the grass and surrounding trees and bushes which affects the natural environment in the short term as it looks unpleasant after the festival and in the long term as the grass and trees and bushes may begin to die after being trampled year after year. The stages and food trucks at soundsplash as well as the marquee and tents will severely damage the grass causing muddy patches all over Wainui reserve.

In 2019 so many tents were left behind after the event, that it was called a tent-pocalypse by the news. Many broken tents and tent poles were left behind, all of which needed to be removed and was put into landfill, and taking tens of thousands of years to break down. Soundsplash organisers said they "were really pleased that this year the community group collected approximately 20m3 of tents and camping equipment for repurposing and reusing". This shows that even though waste is a problem, it is improving.

Recently they went into partnership with community enterprise Xtreme Zero Waste to reduce the affect on the environment. They achieved an 86 per cent waste diversion from this year's event. In 2018, it was accredited as a plastic bag free event. It is part of the planning process and review that the impacts of the environment are reduced because of its focus on zero waste.

Economic:

Soundsplash is an event which is a business, so it needs to make money for it to be held each year. There are a lot of costs in holding this event, all of which must be made back through sales of tickets, merchandise, food etc.

During the weekend of soundsplash there is a huge boost in Raglan's economy as 10,000 people visit the small town spending money at local businesses and shops. People who are not camping inside the festival pay money to stay at an airbnb or a bookabach and the Raglan campsite is full during the weekend of soundsplash which means that many locals living in Raglan benefit incredibly during soundsplash. This is a short term effect as the festival takes place over three days. However people may enjoy Raglan so much they continue to visit throughout the year meaning more money is spent during the year having a long term

positive economic impact. So the economic benefits are not just for the owners of the event, the region benefits by people spending money in the area around the event. People from the area are employed at the event, which means people make money for a short time, but also learn skills which they could use in future jobs. People can also volunteer at the event. Although they don't make money from this, they can learn skills which can help employment in the future.

Soundsplash 2022 took place in Mystery Creek Hamilton due to Covid 19 restrictions and to allow for more space for social distancing. This had a negative short term economic impact on the town of Raglan as many people who typically rent out properties over that weekend would not have had that income. The Raglan campground would have also been negatively affected as Soundsplash is one of the busiest times each year for them with the campground being fully booked on a Soundsplash weekend. The local business in Raglan would not have had their boost of income over the soundsplash weekend as well. The local businesses eg food and uber would also not have made money at this time. So the area of Raglan depends on this event being held each year.