

9.1 ATHENREE TO WAIHĪ BEACH CROSSING - FEASIBILITY REPORT**File Number: A4069544****Author: Peter Watson, Reserves and Facilities Manager****Authoriser: Gary Allis, Deputy Chief Executive & Group Manager Infrastructure Services****EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Waihi Beach Community Board (through Council) funded a feasibility report to initiate the Athenree to Waihi Beach shared pathway / connection project. Through a procurement process, Council engaged Tonkin & Taylor to prepare the feasibility report, included in **Attachment 1**, which has identified crossing option 4 as the preferred crossing.

The feasibility report was discussed during the Waihi Beach Community Board workshop held 10 May 2021, where staff explained the next steps required to advance the project.

An Archaeological Assessment Report has since been completed (refer **Attachment 2**) to further inform any future discussion and planning about this project.

It is proposed to undertake engagement with the wider community and the Athenree property owners on the preferred option – crossing 4. This would help inform the resource consent application, noting that formal public consultation on the cycleway application will be a fully notified process upon lodgement of the application.

Community Board approval is now sought to accept the Feasibility Report and approve funding to advance the planning stage.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That the Reserves and Facilities Manager's report dated 9 August 2021, titled 'Athenree to Waihi Beach Crossing - Feasibility Report', be received.
2. That the Waihi Beach Community Board accepts the Tonkin & Taylor Waihi Beach to Athenree Shared Pathway Connection Preliminary Feasibility Report and notes that crossing 4 is the preferred option.

And

3. That the Waihi Beach Community Board approves funding of \$75,000 over 2 years to advance the Athenree to Waihi Beach shared pathway / connection project planning stage, from the Waihi Beach Community Board roading account.

Funding source	2021/2022	2022/2023
Council (Walking & Cycling activity budgets)	\$37,500	\$37,500
Waihi Beach Community Board (Roading Current Account)	\$37,500	\$37,500
TOTAL		\$150,000

BACKGROUND

This report is the *formal starting point* for the proposed project.

Desire to connect Waihi Beach to Athenree with a shared pathway has been a topic for several years within the Waihi Beach, Bowentown and Athenree communities. In November 2016, the Waihi Beach Community Board resolved (28 November WB1.10.1) that a “Waihi Beach to Athenree linkage” investigation was a priority on the Board’s roading priority list and allocated a budget of \$20,000. **Attachment 1** is the result of the initial feasibility investigation.

The Waihi Beach Community Plan, dated 28 January 2020, highlights the Waihi Beach (Island View) to Athenree shared path / linkage project as one of the top social objectives of the plan. Consequently, the Waihi Beach Community Board rate this project as one of their top priorities.

The Walking & Cycling Strategy Action Plan (revised 2020) identifies the Waihi Beach to Athenree linkage as an important section of the trail network that will eventually transit across the Western Bay of Plenty District, connecting with other regions.

There is no specific project budget but the 2021-2031 Long Term Plan (LTP) has approved increased walking & cycling activity funding to implement the Walking & Cycling Strategy Action Plan. Note that the LTP funding is not project crossing specific deliberately to enable timing flexibility and respond/contribute to external funding opportunities when they arise.

Project costs could be drawn (in part or in full) from the respective Transportation and Recreation capital budgets for walking & cycling which are as follows (in thousands):

	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
Transport	700	950	1,200	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Recreation	150	200	250	300	300	300	300	300	300	300

The Waihi Beach Community Board could contribute to the planning stage; there is currently an uncommitted WBCB Roding Current Account budget available, refer to the Infrastructure Services Report Waihi Beach Community Board August 2021. Note that Council’s financial policy does not allow for non-capital expenditure from the Community Board General Reserve Account.

There are three distinct cost stages required to implement this project:

- (a) **Planning Costs.** The estimate for this stage is up to \$150,000, expended over 2 to 3 years due to the high level of information gathering required. This estimate allows for community pre-engagement, crossing design investigations, concept/preliminary design, and environmental affects assessments (cultural effects, landscape/visual, ecological, environmental and archaeological). Note that most of the planning cost is already included within the feasibility report crossing options estimates.
- (b) **Resource Consent Application Hearing Costs.** The resource consent application will be a fully (public) notified process which is likely to include a Public Hearing. These costs may be absorbed within the planning stage but additional funding may be necessary if consent application costs escalate.
- (c) **Final Design, Tendering, Construction & Lifecycle Costs.** There is no specific funding for this stage yet. The Feasibility Report indicates crossing construction costs of between \$1.3M and \$2.9M, depending on the crossing option and construction type. Lifecycle (maintenance, repairs and refurbishment) costs have yet to be considered/calculated but would be funded from rates. Once the preferred crossing and design are consented, funding options will be worked through.

Tangata Whenua Involvement

It was very important to understand at the earliest stage, potential crossing routes that could be supported culturally, versus crossings that were very sensitive / wahi-tapu.

Consultation with Te Whanau A Tauwhao Ki Otawhiwhi began with a site visit 28 August 2020 to consider crossing options.

The Community Board, Waihi Beach Ratepayers Association and Project Archaeologist were also present at the site visit. A further site visit between staff and Tangata Whenua to consider crossing option 4 was conducted 13 April 2021. The feasibility report identifies one crossing route (crossing option 3) that is not supported culturally. Wider Tangata Whenua input will be sought once the planning stage commences and it is expected that a strong cultural/artistic presence will be included as a component of the concept design. Attachment 2 is an Archaeological Assessment Report to inform crossing options discussion.

As per standard practice, staff have also held pre-engagement meetings with the Bay of Plenty Regional Council (BOPRC), Department of Conservation (DOC) and Forest & Bird to understand how they expect to be involved in the project and what their main issues / concerns are. All were supportive and the key feedback includes:

- (d) DOC & Forest and Bird prefer any crossing route is outside of the designated sensitive ecological areas. Crossing options 1, 1A, 2 & 4 in that the feasibility report satisfy this preference, whereas crossing 3 does not.
- (e) Forest & Bird also supported the discounting of crossing option 3 because that area is a highly sensitive bird life habitat.
- (f) BOPRC clarified Tangata Whenua consultation requirements for any future resource consent application.

The Feasibility Report recommends crossing option 4 mainly because the visual and recreational impact / use of the Waiau Estuary is less compared to the other crossing options. Council could proceed directly to prepare a resource consent application for crossing option 4 but it would be prudent to pre-engage with the community in advance of resource consent application lodgement to improve the quality of the application itself.

Next Steps

Obtain Council approval for \$150,000 of funding for the planning stage. This stage broadly covers the following outputs:

- (g) Procurement / engagement of a planning consultancy
- (h) Community pre-engagement about the project during the next Christmas holiday period.
- (i) Council (via the planning consultancy) to co-ordinate/obtain:
 - (i) Cultural impact assessment
 - (ii) Geotechnical investigation
 - (iii) Bathometric survey
 - (iv) Environmental assessments
 - (v) Landscape & visual impact assessments
 - (vi) Preliminary / concept design
 - (vii) Prepare and lodge an Archaeological Authority Application
- (j) Preparing all of the above into a resource consent application for a fully (public) notified process.

SIGNIFICANCE, COMMUNICATION AND ENGAGEMENT

In terms of the Significance and Engagement Policy, the recommendation decision is considered to be of low significance. A communication & engagement plan will be prepared for the project once funding has been confirmed. It should also be noted that in addition to the proposed community engagement, that there will be further opportunity for community feedback through the publicly notified Resource Management Act consent process.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS ASSESSMENT

Funding is required for this project to proceed to the next stage. Options include:

- (k) Option A – \$150,000 funding approved, split between Council and the Community Board.

Option A		
<p>That the Waihi Beach Community Board approves funding of \$75,000 over 2 years to advance the Athenree to Waihi Beach shared pathway / connection project planning stage, from the Waihi Beach Community Board roading account.</p>		
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TOTAL	\$150,000	
<p>Assessment of advantages and disadvantages including impact on each of the four well-beings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic • Social • Cultural • Environmental 	<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progresses a high priority Waihi Beach Community Plan project; • Community Board funding share provides a sense of ownership over this project; • Provides safe alternative non-vehicular transport connections between communities; • Supports all of the objectives of the Walking & Cycling Strategy and Action Plan and is another link in off-road connectivity across the network; • Will bring some certainty to this project (there is a lot of speculation and rumour-mongering in the community about this project); • Provides opportunities to celebrate and share cultural history; • Provides improved recreational, health & well-being opportunities; <p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success depends on community support • Risk of backlash from some within the community; • Less funding available for other walking / cycling projects elsewhere in the District; • No specific project / budget for construction yet in place. 	
<p>Costs (including present and future costs, direct, indirect and contingent costs).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposed funding is a sunk cost and relies on a positive outcome from community engagement and construction funding in place within the next three years; • The requested planning budget is a high level estimate with a small contingency factored in. 	

Other implications and any assumptions that relate to this option (Optional – if you want to include any information not covered above).	None identified.
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STATUTORY COMPLIANCE

The funding sought within this report's recommendations is aimed to advance the Athenree Crossing Project by responding to Resource Management Act and Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act statutory compliance requirements.

FUNDING/BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

The Waihi Beach Community Board Roothing Current Account (which appears to have sufficient uncommitted budget available) is the appropriate account to contribute project planning funds from. Policy does not allow for non-capital expenditure from the General Reserve Account.

Council contribution to this project could be drawn (in part or in full) from the respective Transportation and Recreation capital budgets (subject to other priorities) for walking & cycling, which are as follows (in thousands):

	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	29/30	30/31
Transport	700	950	1,200	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Recreation	150	200	250	300	300	300	300	300	300	300

ATTACHMENTS

1. **Waihi Beach to Athenree Shared Pathway Connection Feasibility Report**
2. **Archaeological Assessment - Athenree to Waihi Beach Crossing Options**