



Designing a new MARINE PATHWAY

In Mount Maunganui, Tauranga City Council sought a ‘feature’ solution to move people along the coastal margin for the 3.5km from the War Memorial opposite Pacific Avenue to Ocean Beach Road roundabout, with minimal impact on the natural environment. The resulting new Marine Parade Coastal Pathway was achieved on a very tight budget, with the anchor project (a beachfront nature playground) opening before Christmas, and the project to be completed before Christmas this year. By **Kathleen Kinney**, Boffa Moskill.

The dunes within the coastal margin along Marine Parade in Mount Maunganui come right up to the edge of the road and are an iconic and instantly recognisable feature of the Bay of Plenty.

The site holds significant landscape, ecological, cultural and recreational values, is highly utilised by the community, and is a destination for national and international tourists.

The Marine Parade Coastal Strip was an obvious gap in the walking and cycling network in and around ‘The Mount’.

“The Mount is one of the North Island’s premier beach destinations, and there has been a long-term desire to greatly enhance the recreation opportunities along the coastal margin of Marine Parade,” says Guy Protheroe, Tauranga City Council’s acting Team Leader for Design.

“We also wanted to significantly improve the experience for cyclists, scooter users and those with impaired mobility.”

Community consultation on previous related projects affirmed support for the

upgrades. The 2020 ‘Innovating Streets at The Mount’ project was an initiative by TCC to investigate and trial temporary multimodal transport options for residents and visitors to the peninsula.

While that project didn’t reach the implementation stage, the extensive community engagement and feedback provided insight and outcomes that informed the proposed walkway connection along Marine Parade.

Building upon the work that had been done previously, Boffa Miskell led the re-development of the design for TCC in partnership with local iwi, in particular Ngai Tukairangi and Ngati Kuku Hapu.

“The Marine Parade coastal strip is a challenging area to design within, as the dune environment is constantly changing from wind and wave erosion, and is extremely sensitive in terms of ecological, landscape and cultural values,” says project lead Bryan Sanson, a landscape architect at Boffa Miskell.

“The area is highly used in many ways. Council wanted to provide a strong

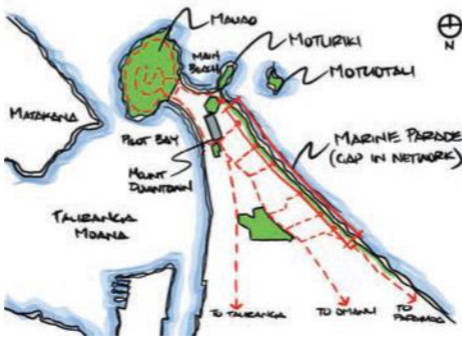
movement corridor for pedestrians, cyclists, and other users so that the community can get the most out of this area.”

Public consultation over the December 2021 – January 2022 period showed strong support for continuing the pathway (88 percent) and for the design proposed by Boffa Miskell, which follows the contours of the sand dunes (73 percent).

While the site is zoned as ‘Conservation Reserve’ in the City Plan, it is also classified as a ‘Coastal Reserve’ in the 2019 Tauranga Reserve Management Plan. Coastal reserves are highly valued for the recreational opportunities they provide and are considered one of the best natural features in the Bay of Plenty region.

Additionally, coastal reserves are areas of significant biodiversity and appropriate management is vital to sustain a healthy beach environment.

Protection and enhancement of natural dune processes is a key driver of the Coastal Pathway design. An intact dune system, stabilised by native dune



natural character and landscape values. Protection of these areas is proposed to protect and enhance the dune habitat and mitigate coastal erosion. The back dunes, while a sensitive dune habitat with high natural character, have had some form of modification. The intent is to ‘tread carefully’ and limit the extent of any design elements to minimise the environmental and visual impacts.

binding vegetation provides natural protection from coastal hazards such as erosion, storm events and inundation. The presence of native dune species also ensures the natural character and landscape values of the coastline are maintained.

Currently, the active dune processes are impacted by urban modification which has resulted in informal walkways, introduced pest plant species, a reduction in dune vegetation and the presence of domestic animals.

“The landform consists of undulating dunes, which includes a typically steep and active dune face at the foreshore, followed by a dune crest and undulating landform to the west before fronting onto Marine Parade, says Bryan Sanson.

“As the site is completely open to the public, and runs the length of Marine Parade, a wide range of users and groups regularly occupy the space.” Moving from the water’s edge, back to the road the site was separated into specific character ‘zones’ that represent different sensitivities and/or constraints.

The beach area is highly sensitive ecologically and highly utilised by the community. No formalisation or activities are proposed other than access through.

The front dunes are also very sensitive natural ecosystems with high

Existing lawn areas spread along the coastal reserve strip, predominantly between the back dunes and Marine Parade, with reserve features, furniture and modification service the recreation needs of the community. These areas will continue to provide for high level of passive recreation use, as part of the design response, including specific enhancement at identified specific areas.

Marine Parade runs along the entire length of the coastal reserve strip and acts as the landward side boundary, providing for the parking and lateral pedestrian access to the reserve. Considered interfacing, integrated and improved pedestrian access and safe parking will form part of the design response.

The design team of Boffa Miskell and GHD as engineering subconsultant, brought together experienced technical experts in landscape architecture, ecology, planning, engagement, engineering, geotechnical, structural, and coastal processes. The final design outcome exceeds the brief and has strong stakeholder support. Boffa Miskell also led the consenting, assessments and DOC permitting for the project.

The Coastal Pathway will be built with a combination of concrete and timber depending on the specific environment it is moving through. These material selections will reduce impacts on the natural environment,

particularly at the points where the pathway crosses into the dunes.

There is a consolidation of other pathways and beach access points, the enhancement of all activity and picnicking areas, offering eating, seating and play spaces. The design also includes extensive dune revegetation, enhancement of stormwater treatment areas and native trees for shade.

With support from local iwi specific points along the dune system were identified where wide vistas and strong visual connections were present. These points provide opportunities for place identification and cultural recognition.

“The two local hapu have been integral to the development of the concept and later stages of the project,” says Guy Protheroe.

“This partnership is planned to continue even once the infrastructure of the path is completed, as a commitment has been made to add further cultural and artistic elements over the coming years enhancing its relevance and distinctiveness.”

Construction is underway and ongoing, but at the start of the summer season, an ‘anchor project’ opened opposite Te Ngaio Reserve; a location for families to gather and interact, with logs and boulders in a natural play space serving as a transition point into the dune environment and giving locals and visitors a suggestion of things to come.

“Overall, the Coastal Pathway is expected to take at least eight months to construct,” says Protheroe.

“It’s providing a consistent stream of work for local suppliers and contractors. On completion it is anticipated to become a highly-used and distinctive attraction for both locals and visitors, and adding to the financial and social health of the district.” **LG**