

Ref, Cooks Bluff.

Date, 24th August, 2015.

Cooks Bluff Recreation Reserve, off coast contour assessment.

An initial assessment of land contour with a view to identifying the possibility of establishing a coastal walk between McHands Bay and Stella Evered Memorial Park was carried out by boat courtesy of Cathedral Cove Water Taxi.

A passenger on the boat was Charlie Adams whose presence proved extremely valuable along with an interested party with a drone which provided some valuable photographic evidence.

This initial exercise has proved valuable revealing some very good sections of unbroken Pohutukawa forest combined with a mix of reasonably easy contour ranging up to near vertical cliffs resulting from relatively recent land movement events.

A significant length of this section of coast would be regarded as difficult for track construction purposes but not impossible?

A further three to four locations will be seriously challenging and will need to be assessed on the ground. It is likely significant built structures would be required.

A significant issue exists at a location on the coastal boundary and immediately adjacent to the properties of Adams and Wood.

A slip from around 12 years ago with a second event of around 4 years ago, Charlie Adams (pers com) has not only left a near vertical face for what appears to be the full width of the reserve, plus a bit?, at this location, it is also identifying significant instability in the cliff face generally. A third much larger vertical cliff consisting of very white chalky material appears to have dropped from a point, again most of the way through a narrow section of coastal margin reserve. Vertical contour and obvious land instability is likely to determine coastal access within/on public land at this location.

If we are to pursue this idea further, survey definition is required to establish the legal location of reserve boundaries. It is very likely this will need to be undertaken by establishing off set marks. Investigation beyond this would require professional rope work.

Before progressing further there are a number of other considerations that need to be factored in to this initiative;

The current route and track design for stage 1 has been planned to meet day walk standards with extra ease of use by reducing much of the 15 degree slope sections back to 10 degrees and keeping steps to the absolute minimum. The trail is of a standard that will provide for an enjoyable experience to the widest cross section of public possible, from the very young to the very old. Some will walk it in a day, others two to three days, some may only ever walk some individual sections.

Along the walk there is a story to tell of this lands history and heritage, both cultural and natural.

Along the route or just off it there are a wide variety of commercial opportunities ranging from accommodation at all levels to cafes, ice cream , local brewed beer, fresh fruit by the truck load, chocolate covered macadamias local wine, avocado and superb art work. One would expect road side stalls to become very popular?

The route has also been designed to enable several hundred metres of gorse covered coastal margins to be re established in native cover with a focus on increasing the presence of native wildlife.

A couple of kilometres of the trail has been designed to fit adjacent to streams and constructed wetlands that will be retired from grazing and planted appropriately. The opportunity for animal pest control along the route within natural areas could provide an opportunity for community groups to take ownership and contribute to their local natural environments.

The last three paragraphs represent the “triple bottom line”, social, commercial and environmental benefits that could be expected from this investment.

A route confined to the coastal margin and predominantly located on public lands will be restricted to back country adventurer standard. This will seriously limit the range of age classes and capabilities that could, (should) take on this challenge. Inevitably people will over estimate their capability, in anticipation of this and to meet legal requirements fall heights over 1.5m may will require safety railing, this could extend to significant lengths of timber fencing. Attaching it to a cliff face, if they are stable, will be extremely challenging? Salvaging the foolish from off these cliff faces and/or the lower slopes would not be easy. The Cathedral Cove track is already a challenge and it has a community minded neighbour who allows access to emergency response teams for ease of recovery. The easy going within the excellent pohutukawa forest will present few if any views from anywhere but right on the waters edge. This route is/would be both a physical and mental challenge and extremely limiting in its “triple bottom line”, benefits.

There are potentially serious legal liabilities for key members of the Cathedral Coast Walk partnership? Having said this I would recommend the hiring of RMS Surveyors to establish set back survey marks at potentially three points adjacent to the common boundary of the Cooks Bluff Recreation Reserve with the Adams and Wood properties and east and west of the actual corner peg.

It would be appropriate to confirm what we believe we could see from the water. This is a key contributing factor to consideration of this proposal. It should be noted it is not the only point where physical on ground difficulties could determine not progressing with this development option?

I believe the potential for this option to proceed is remote, if it is considered suitable for development it should only be on the basis of “as well as the existing planned route and not in place of the planned route”.

John Gaukrodger.