

## **Opening of loop track connected to first stage of our Walks project possibly delayed due to scrub fire.**

The build of a new loop walking track - which will connect the existing Cathedral Cove Track and be a section of our Walks project - has been affected by a scrub fire that broke out yesterday.

The fire which started between Cathedral Cove and McHanns Bay burned approximately 500m<sup>2</sup> of bush, mostly undergrowth. The fire also damaged the newly constructed viewing platform on the Andlinger Track.

"An initial inspection indicates the damage to the platform is not extensive, but there has been some damage to external facing section of the structure," says project manager Ross Ashby. "As the health and safety of potential users is our top priority, we'll now be doing a thorough inspection of the structure to see if anything needs to be replaced," says Mr Ross Ashby.

"Until that assessment is completed we won't know whether we may need to delay the official opening of the track, which was planned for late June," he says.

The new walking route which is unofficially known as the Andlinger Track, is approximately 1100m long. The newly built viewing platform, which is on the new route, takes in vistas of Mercury Bay and looks down to McHanns Bay (locally known as Driftwood Bay).

"We will continue working with DOC and local iwi Ngati Hei about arrangements for the official name for the track and scheduling the official opening," says Mr Ashby.

In other updates around the Walks project, our Council has been facilitating discussions between the Giblin Group (a company that provides strategic advice to councils, Māori organisations and trusts wanting to attract external funding for capital projects) and local iwi Ngati Hei. This is to explore options for funding cultural interpretation to promote the rich, cultural and historical features and significance of the area, especially at the twin pā of Te Pare and Hereheretaura. It's planned that the terraced nature of these sites will be introduced through landscaping that will highlight the site's sensitive state.

Comprehensive and engaging interpretation is also planned along the Walk route, which will promote the significance of Ngati Hei as mana whenua, as well as the history of European settlement along the coast. The plan is that the Walk will also protect historical sites from the demands of increasing visitor numbers

The Giblin Group is also investigating external funding options for the Purangi Crossing as well as Stage Two of the "Cathedral Coast Walkway," through to Hot Water Beach. Meetings are being organised next week with commercial operators from the wider Mercury Bay area, seeking expressions of interest for crossing options. Outcomes of this will be communicated to all interested parties at the earliest possible stage. We are also holding a meeting at **Cooks Beach over Queen's Birthday weekend - 9am at the Cooks Beach Hall, Saturday 4 June** - to give an update on the Walks project, and for feedback and general discussion with the local community on the track alignment through the Cooks Beach area. .

Currently for those who don't mind getting their feet wet there is a natural path already to cross the estuary at low tide already.

## **Car parking around the Walks project.**

Meetings and progress continues with Mitchell Partnerships working on the resource consenting of a car park at Lees Road. A number of details are being worked through with engineers for the design of the road and entrance. It's anticipated that these will be ready for internal review by the end of the month, with meetings with Lees Road residents following this.

We're also still working through notification process to affected parties for the consent for the Hahei Entrance car park. This is on a section of Council land beside the Wastewater Treatment Plant, which has the capacity for more than 100 car parks and could be used for a park and ride so people can park and be shuttled up to Grange Rd, which is a main feeder into the already well-established Cathedral Cove Walk. If consents run smoothly this car park should be ready for summer 2016-17,

### **About the first planned Walk.**

The full route of our first planned Great Walk will link Whitianga through to Hot Water Beach and longer term, span north towards Kuaotunu and south to Tairua, Pauanui and beyond. The Walk route is being constructed in a staged approach. Stage 1 is approximately 10km in length and ties in the iconic "Blowhole," at Te Pupuha Recreation Reserve at Hahei through to Whitianga township via the Purangi Estuary and Cooks Beach. It takes in Public Conservation Land (DOC), Council reserve and Stella Evered Reserve Land.

There will be a total of 5 viewing platforms along Stage 1A and AB which are integral to the first Walk. As well as providing vantage points across world-class scenery, the viewing platforms are essential for walking safety.

At this stage a project update report is scheduled to go to Council in June, this will cover an updated project timeline, high level project programme and Terms of reference for the Governance Board.