Gisborne District Council

WAINUI & OKITU COASTAL ACCESS FRAMEWORK

Wainui & Okitu Coastal Access Framework – Professional Advisory Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

The Wainui and Okitu Beach coastal environments include public access infrastructure such as stairs, tracks, and informal entry points. These assets are increasingly exposed to coastal erosion, storm events, and tidal effects, leading to:

- Frequent closures and asset loss
- Reactive maintenance and repair costs
- Increasing public safety risks
- Uncertainty around long-term investment decisions

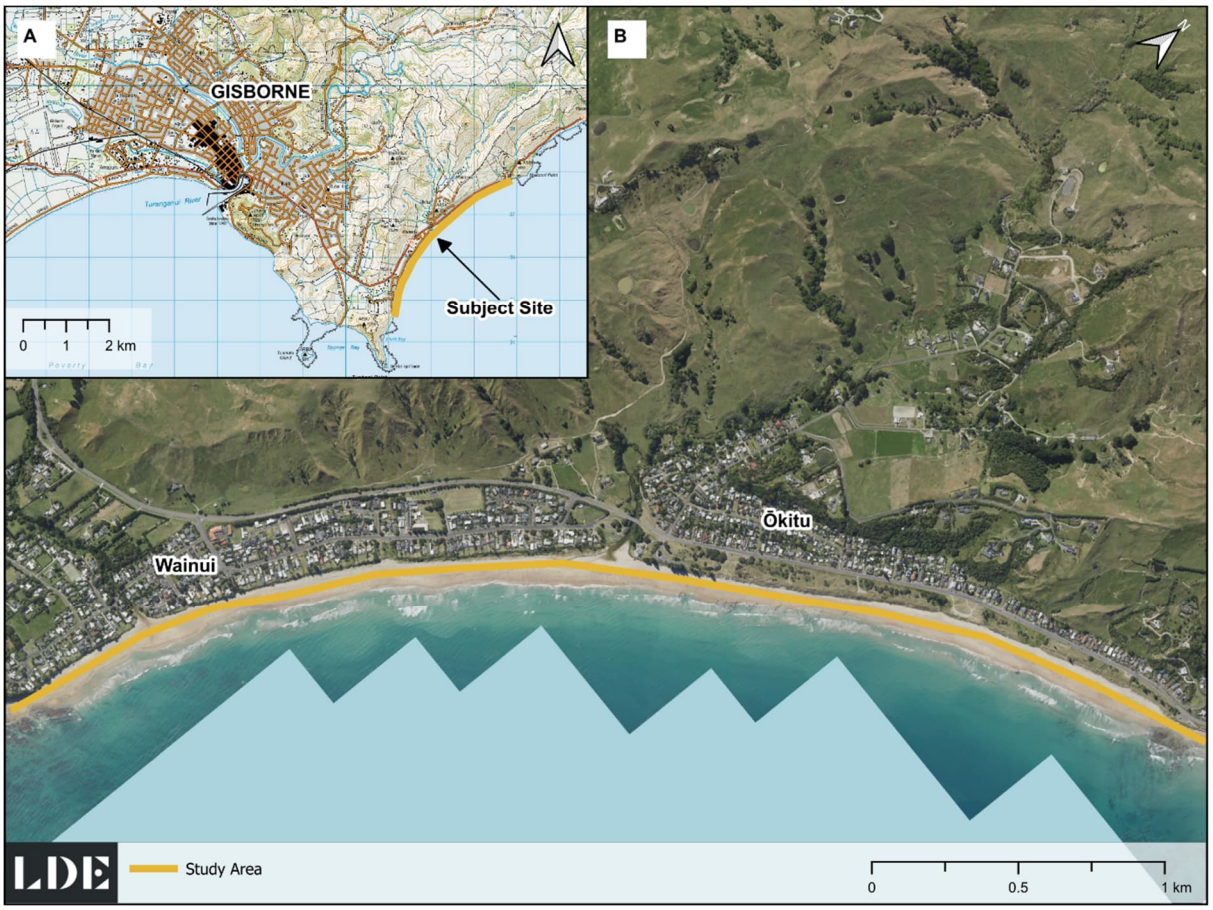


Figure 1

Gisborne District Council (GDC) needs a structured, evidence-based framework to support the Parks and Reserves Activity Management Plan (AMP), Long Term Plan (LTP) activity planning, and future decisions on coastal access. Rather than expanding the current access network, Council is seeking a strategic approach to provide a resilient network of access assets for the future.

GDC recently commissioned LDE Ltd to prepare a professional advisory report to:

- Assess the sustainability of existing coastal access infrastructure and advise on current and alternative locations for long-term resilient access.
- Provide risk-informed recommendations on whether existing assets should be retained, renewed, or retreated.
- Identify areas along this coastal stretch that are suitable or unsuitable for future resilient access infrastructure.

1.1 Report Structure

The report has been prepared through a combination of site visits, ground truthing and GIS analysis. For consistency the ID values for respective public access points were adopted from the Wainui Beach Coastal Structures Condition Assessment document produced by WSP in 2024. Site visits were undertaken to log and measure the structures into a GIS layer and attribute table. During the site visits the overall viability of the structures were considered over the short to medium term. The following structures have removed in the past 2 years as a result of storm activity and progressive degradation.

- Tuahine Crescent (PA1)
- Wainui Stream South (PA3)
- Okitu Carpark 1 (PA15)
- Okitu Carpark 2 (PA17)

A summary of short to medium term recommendations is provided in Section 3 below and further detailed contained within Appendix A and the attributes table within the GIS layer (also provided as spreadsheets).

For the assessment of the Future Coastal Access Network we also identified existing informal access points for the assessment. We cross referenced those and the formal access points with their relative housing catchments, associated infrastructure and existing knowledge of how the different spaces are used.

2 COASTAL HAZARD ASSESSMENT

Short term erosion potential along Wainui Beach has been estimated by WSP in their recent work for the Wainui Coastal Adaptation Plan. As can be seen in Figure 2 below all of the identified formal and informal access points along Wainui are potentially vulnerable to coastal erosion and inundation during storm events and ongoing associated effects. This is inherent to the nature of such structures and the relatively narrow dry beach margins that characterise Wainui Beach. As such the majority of structures have had the lowest tread exposed at different times in the recent past.

The issue is more pronounced at the northern and southern ends and across Okitu, where the structures tend to sit seaward of the dune face. This is likely in part associated with long term erosion trends and leaves the structures

more vulnerable to coastal processes. The issues are compounded by historically poor design and construction approaches.

Beyond the 10 year scope of this investigation it is expected that there will be increased pressure on coastal access points as the impacts of climate change and predicted sea-level rise are realised.

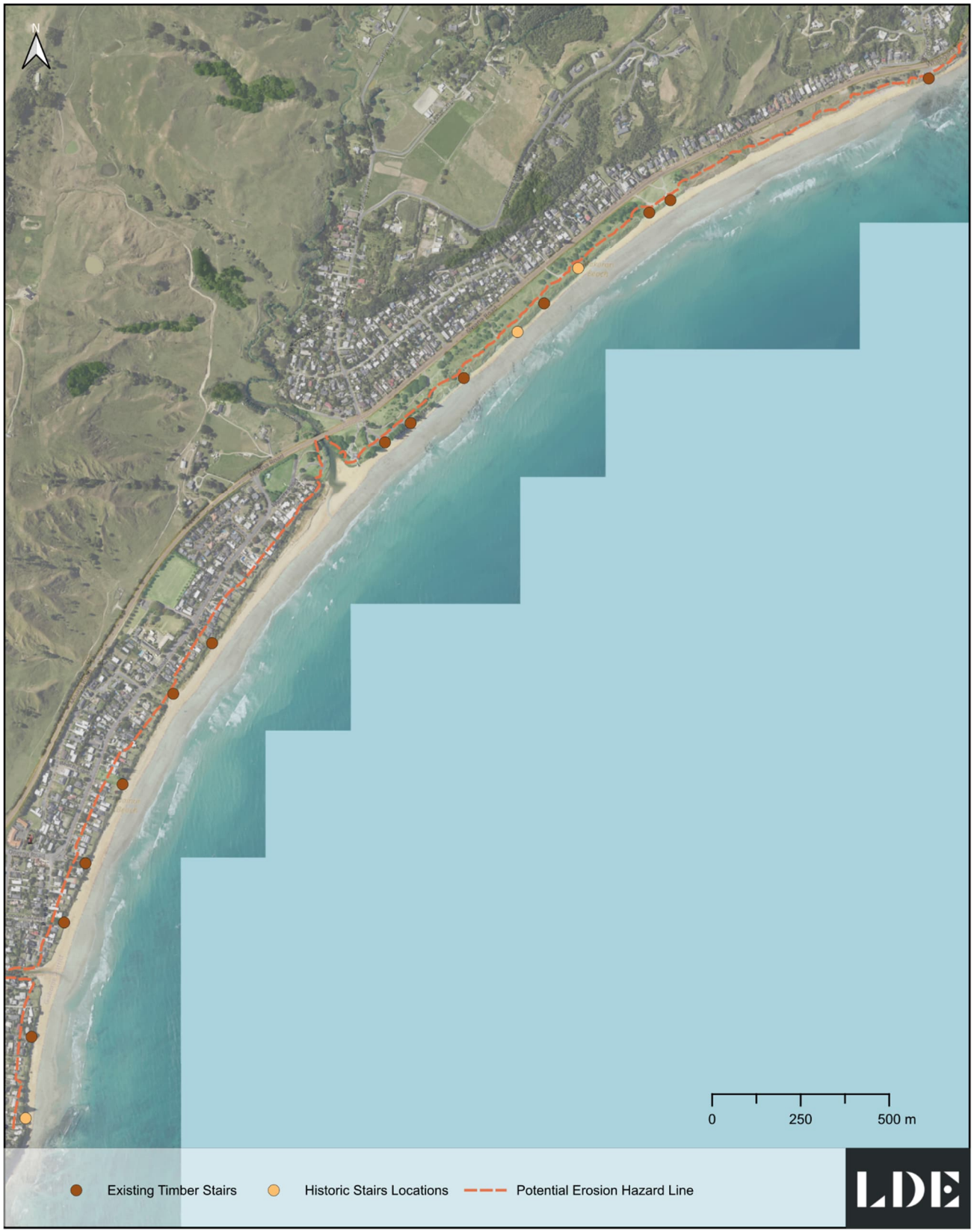


Figure 2: Access structure locations and potential short term erosion extent (Source: WSP, 2024).

3 SHORT- AND MEDIUM-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the risk to structures is linked to storm activity and present-day beach fluctuations, it is difficult to delineate between short- and medium-term risk profiles. Accordingly for this report we have considered both risk profiles at the same time and the recommendations relevant for both timeframes.

Based upon recent deterioration and the current condition it is our recommendation that the following structures be removed immediately:

- Okitu Store Boardwalk (sand ladder) and Stairs (PA14)
- Whales Stairs (PA20)

Both sets of stairs have had their foundations compromised and remedial work would require a complete rebuild. The sand ladder leading to PA14 has settled unevenly over time which when combined with a relatively steep slope makes access problematic.

At Whales the opportunity to develop less formal access just south of the carpark should be taken and utilise existing informal access points and favourable topography. This should be undertaken in conjunction with removal of the stairs to encourage beach access from the carpark to an appropriate place

The end of the boardwalk at Hamanatua Stream- South has also been lost and maintenance work undertaken to repair this. Given the current proximity of the stream to the end of the boardwalk, stairs are considered to be the most practical option until longer term considerations have been resolved.

It is also recommended that the remnants of the access structure on the southern side of Wainui Stream should also be removed as soon as practicable. It is also suggested that signage be placed warning people that the beach access is compromised and use at your own risk.

Within the attribute table there are seven structures highlighted as potentially more susceptible to coastal erosion. This is based upon their observed exposure over the recent past. However, in our opinion a condition assessment on the remaining structures should be undertaken on a six-monthly basis and post storm activity to identify any required maintenance.

In general, where maintenance is to be undertaken investigation and investment into more robust material is strongly recommended. For example, using Fibre Reinforced Polymer (FRP/GRP) Grating to replace stair treads presents a longer-term solution.

4 FUTURE ACCESS NETWORK

The framework for the Future Access Network has been to classify different access points into Primary and Local access types. The rational for respective assignment of the different access points is provided in the discussion below.

4.1 All-access locations

Locations that allow for all access along Wainui and Okitu are limited due to the steep topography of the backshore margins. The following locations have been identified based the topography required to achieve the requirements under The New Zealand Building Code. Optimal gradients for wheelchair access are considered to be 1 in 33 for pathways and 1 in 14 for ramps, with some steeper gradients acceptable in some situations. Below is a summary of approximate existing slopes and high-level summary of matters for further consideration.

Stock Route- Existing Slope of ~1 in 8

- Reconfiguration of accessway from carpark would be required to allow for unassisted wheelchair access
- Ability to achieve the optimal sloped may be restricted by reserve size
- A series of switch backs may be able to enable slopes to be achieved
- Allowance for stormwater and overland flow will need to be made

Hamanatua South- Existing Slope of ~1 in 34

- Modifications to the existing walkway could be made to achieve required slopes
- Extending the structure seaward would be required to allow for fluctuations in sand levels
- Stream will often cross in front of the end point of the accessway discharging users into the stream.

Cooper Street- Existing Slope of ~1 in 9

- Reconfiguration of accessway from carpark would be required to allow for unassisted wheelchair access
- Ability to achieve the optimal sloped may be restricted by reserve size
- A series of switch backs may be able to enable slopes to be achieved
- Allowance for stormwater and overland flow will need to be made

Chalet South- Existing Slope of ~1 in 5

- There is available space within the reserve area to achieve the optimal slopes
- Extending the structure seaward would be required to allow for fluctuations in sand levels
- Any potential design should avoid exiting on to the small ephemeral stream mouth to the south

4.2 Primary Access Points

As noted above primary access points have been identified based on an understanding of current usage, the presence of amenities such as toilets, parking, stairs and picnic tables, the size of the associated reserve, and anecdotal evidence of historical use. The primary access points have been divided into higher and lower priorities based upon the understood level of usage.

4.3 Highest Priorities

4.3.1 Stock Route

Stock Route is identified as a high-priority primary access point because it provides carparking and toilets, is the first main entrance from town, is located close to the café, and is recognised as a surf spot.

Recommended works at Stock Route include investigating wheelchair access to the beach, allowing for some form of access ramp suitable for prams or similar users, providing a wider set of access stairs, upgrading the stormwater treatment and outfall to a softer design, and working with Ngati Oneone to provide context and history for the area.

4.3.2 Pines

Pines is identified as a high-priority primary access point because it provides sufficient carparking, serves a large local catchment, offers views of the beach from the carpark, is close to the Wainui Surf Life Saving Club and patrolled swimming area, has a nearby playground, includes additional adjoining parking and open space, and is recognised as a surf spot of national significance under the New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement.

Recommended works at Pines include upgrading accessways to modern standards, securing the main access at the current southern local, and creating additional amenity through pull-over areas where landings are required. The existing southern access point is the current focal point for access and reduces the potential conflict with existing trees and need for extensive earthworks. The carpark should also be reconfigured to address stormwater and erosion issues, including soak pits or retention along the back margin with associated planting. Further work should be undertaken with Ngati Oneone to provide context and history for the area, and discussions should be held with Wainui Surf Life Saving Club regarding the potential for wheelchair access from the ramp.

4.4 Lower Priorities

4.4.1 Chalet

Chalet is identified as a lower-priority primary access point because it provides carparking, picnic tables and toilets, offers views of the beach from the carpark, and is recognised as a local surf spot.

Recommended works at Chalet include upgrading the accessways to modern standards, making them wide enough for two people to pass, investigating wheelchair access at the southern access point, working with Ngati Oneone to provide context and history for the area, and incorporating planting and restoration within the reserve.

4.4.2 Whales

Whales has been identified as a lower priority primary access point due to facilities such as carparking and toilets. Ocean views are available from the carpark and it provides access to the Makarori Headland walk. Recreationally, this part of the beach is used to launch kayaks, kaimoana gathering, fishing and surfing.

Beach access should be moved north to reduce the size of the structure with a falling topography and utilise rock exposures for founding. It would also be pertinent to provide better connection to the accessway and carpark to the south to prevent pedestrian impacts on the dunes. It is understood there it is an area of cultural significance to Ngati Oneone and there is the opportunity to provide context and history of area. Given the proximity to the rocky shore habitat at the base of Makarori Headland the access should allow for small vessels (e.g. kayaks) and other equipment to be transported to shore.

The less formal access in the southern extent through the dunes developed with the removal of the stairs should remain. This would provide access to a sandy part of the beach when sand levels in the north are low.

4.5 Local Access Points

4.5.1 Local Access- South

The existing access points noted below are considered to be valuable as local access points in the southern portion of the beach. These have been distinguished from the Primary Access point based upon aspects such as carparking A list of amenities for each reserve is provided within the GIS layer provided

- Lloyd George
- Cooper Street
- No Access
- Empty Section
- Hamanatua South

It is recommended that the condition of the existing structures be monitored regularly and replaced with modern structures as required. The lower section of treads (below RL 4m) shall use Fibre Reinforced Polymer (FRP/GRP) Grating to minimise loading on structure and improve overall resilience. Investigate the opportunity to include wheelchair access at Cooper St and Hamanatua South. Appropriate planting should be undertaken on the adjoining reserve margins to improve embankment stability and longer-term resilience.

4.5.1.1 Tuahine Accessway

Tuahine access provides value to a local catchment of approximately 28 houses. It also serves as a staging point for people walking to the lighthouse or recreating south of the groyne. The accessway is supported by a turnout and parking.

Given the more exposed nature of the access point, any access structure at this location would need to be more robust than other sites in the southern extent of the beach. The type and extent of the structure is further complicated by approximately 7-8m of low seawall for a structure to span across, which is considered to be in average to poor condition in the vicinity of the accessway. The site is also complicated by a storm water outfall and poor embankment composition. All these issues would need to be addressed simultaneously to ensure the long-term resilience of access at the site. Specifically, the following would need to be considered:

- Long term viability or renewal of the coastal protection structure
- Stabilisation of the exposed soft mud in the embankment face
- Appropriate discharge method of storm water
- Fender piles at seaward end to absorb debris impact
- Lower section of treads (below RL 5m) shall use Fibre Reinforced Polymer (FRP/GRP) Grating to minimise loading on structure

Assuming consent for the coastal protection structure is obtained as a separate process, indicative costs for this work is estimated to be well in excess of $50k and subject to outcome of more detailed considerations.

4.5.1.2 Wainui Stream South

The viability of the accesses stairs is compounded by potential stream bank erosion as well as coastal erosion. The stream has also at times shown to accumulate significant amounts of woody debris. Woody debris moving up and down the stream mouth under storm condition has the potential for impact damage on any structure, and as such a potential design would need to account for this Any structure at this location is also heavily reliant upon the adjoining retaining walls supporting the stream bank, which is considered to be in average condition and there is no guarantee a protection structure will remain in this location.

There are approximately 20 houses in the Wainui Stream South catchment, but the local catch is served by access points at Llyod George and Wainui Stream North, which are 150m and 30m away respectively. Therefore in our opinion reconstruction access at Wainui Stream South should be given the lowest priority.

4.5.2 Local Access- North

In general, the narrow beach margin and steep dune across the Okitu section of Wainui Beach reduces the number of resilient access opportunities. It is noted that two access structures, Okitu Carpark 1 (PA15) and Okitu Carpark 2 (PA17), along the Okitu stretch have been lost recently. We recommend reducing the number of access routes through dunes by improving signage and wayfinding to consolidated access points. Semi-formalise selected access

points with path widening and rope and bollard type guidance. Include inground steps as required to reduce full structural requirements and reduce future maintenance costs.

At transition from dune to beach allow for inclusion of small robust stair structures PA 15 and PA17. These should be positioned to take advantage of lower topography and existing informal accessways to reduce the scale of structures. Founding will need to take into account potential future erosion with embedment into either the bedrock or embankment required.

Appropriate planting shall be undertaken on the adjoining reserve margins to improve embankment stability and longer-term resilience

The sites highlighted below have been identified based on their proximity to infrastructure, local catchment, existing access routes and topography.

- White Fence (PA15)
- Combine Douglas Street and Okitu Carpark 2 (PA17)
- Lone Pine
- Whales 2.0

5 RECCOMENDED APPROACH

It is recommended that concept designs be developed for all of the access points noted above. The concept designs should be developed to enough detail to enable a consultation process and a resource consent application. A high level planning assessment should be undertaken to highlight any potential issues early on in the process.

Consultation should occur with Ngati Oneone as potential partners in the development of the sites. The wider public should also be consulted to gauge feedback and input to the overall framework and concepts.

With the concept plans, high level costs for each respective section should be provided so that these can be included in the Long-Term Plan funding process.

As the project evolves it is recommended that a global consent framework and application be developed. This is discussed in more detail below.

5.1 Global Consent Framework

The construction of access structures along Wainui and Okitu will generally trigger the requirement for a restricted discretionary or discretionary consent. This is generally associated with provisions under Coastal Management, Coastal Hazards and Earthwork sections of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan (TRMP).

A well-structured global consent will provide the flexibility to undertake the development of all of the access point noted above at different times. It is recommended that all of the potential structures be applied for under one resource consent application. General details of each site should be provided to allow for the assessment with finer details able to be supplied for approval under conditions of consent. For example, detailed design and erosion and sediment control plans for respective locations supplied a certain number of working days prior to physical works commencing.

This approach will allow the regulators to include matters for consideration within the consent condition. Through the approval of the consent condition the compliance team can ensure that those matters have been addressed. This approach reduces the amount of duplication across different applications for individual access point. It also simplifies any future consent compliance matters and potential consent renewal requirements.

6 LIMITATIONS

This report should be read and reproduced in its entirety including the limitations to understand the context of the opinions and recommendations given.

This report has been prepared exclusively for Gisborne District Council in accordance with the brief given to us or the agreed scope and they will be deemed the exclusive owner on full and final payment of the invoice. Information, opinions, and recommendations contained within this report can only be used for the purposes with which it was intended. LDE accepts no liability or responsibility whatsoever for any use or reliance on the report by any party other than the owner or parties working for or on behalf of the owner, such as local authorities, and for purposes beyond those for which it was intended.

This report was prepared in general accordance with current standards, codes and best practice at the time of this report. These may be subject to change.

Opinions given in this report are based on visual methods and subsurface investigations at discrete locations designed to the constraints of the project scope to provide the best assessment of the environment. It must be appreciated that the nature and continuity of the subsurface materials between these locations are inferred and that actual conditions could vary from that described herein. We should be contacted immediately if the conditions are found to differ from those described in this report.

APPENDIX A- BEACH ACCESS INVENTORY

Date:	25/06/2026		
LDE Project Ref:	31102	**Inspected by:**	R. Sanguinetti
Project:	31102 - Wainui & Okitu Coastal Access Framework – Professional Advisory Report		
Personnel Present:	N/A		
Weather:	Showers, wet, cloudy		
Site Hazard Form Completed:	Yes		

Introduction

This report presents the condition assessment of timber beach access stairs, ramps and dune access points at Wainui and Ōkitu, inspected in June 2026. The inspection focused on the physical condition and measurable attributes of timber access structures along both beaches. Inspected assets comprised formal timber stairs, access ramps, platforms and informal dune accessways; for each asset we recorded structural dimensions, handrail details, and visible fastener and connector materials.

GNSS data were collected using RTK with real-time corrections streamed via NTRIP over a cellular connection. The GPS rover was connected directly to the official LINZ PositioNZ network to compute positions instantly in the NZGD2000 coordinate system and NZVD2016 vertical datum. Measurements and observations were taken with tape measures and a laser distance meter, and fastener material was assessed visually. High sand levels during the inspection limited visibility and access at some sites; such constraints are noted in the individual records and photographs.

The deliverables from this inspection contain a summary table of measured dimensions, handrail heights and fastener materials, accompanied by detailed photographs.

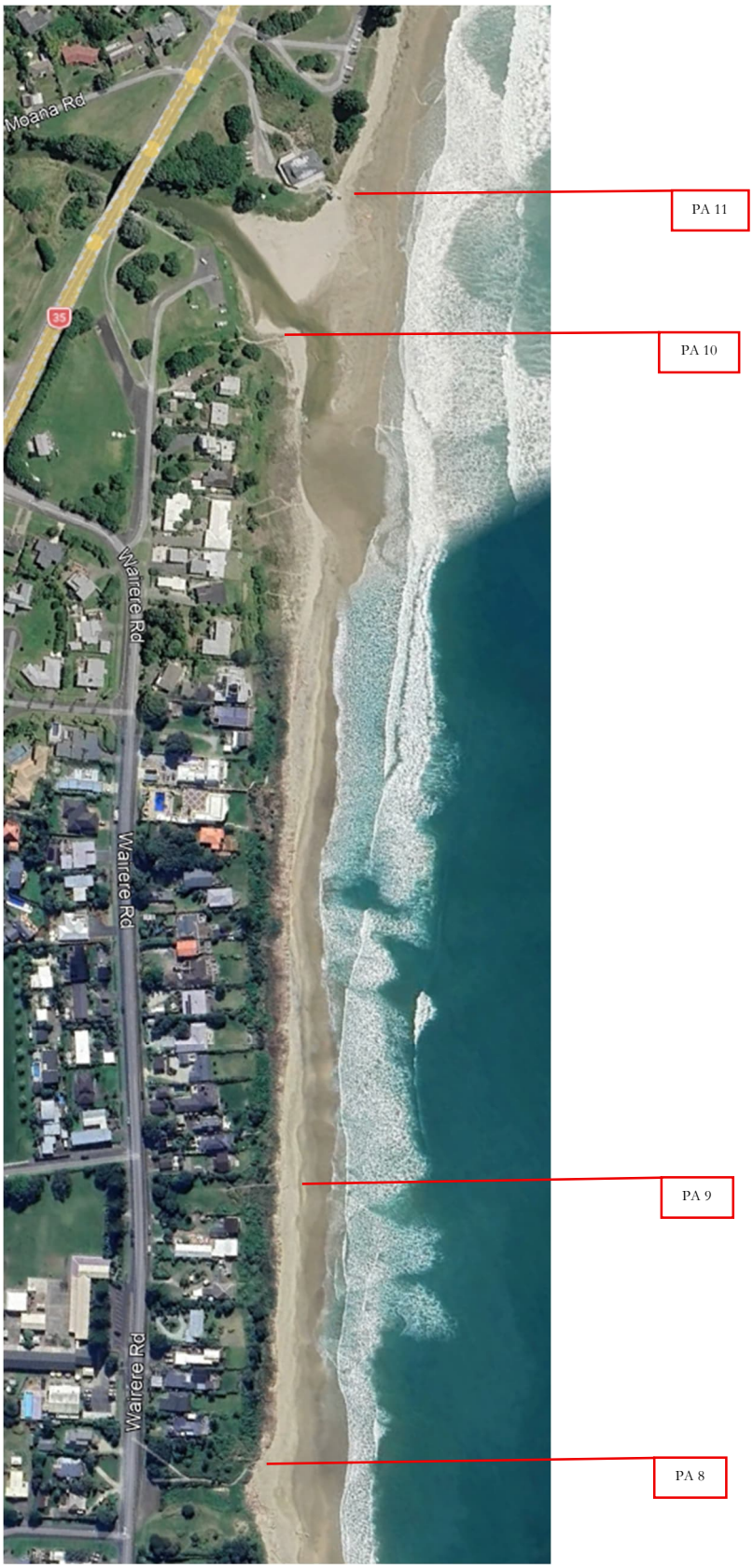
Wainui Beach Map 1



Wainui Beach Map 2



Wainui Beach Map 3



Wainui Beach Map 3

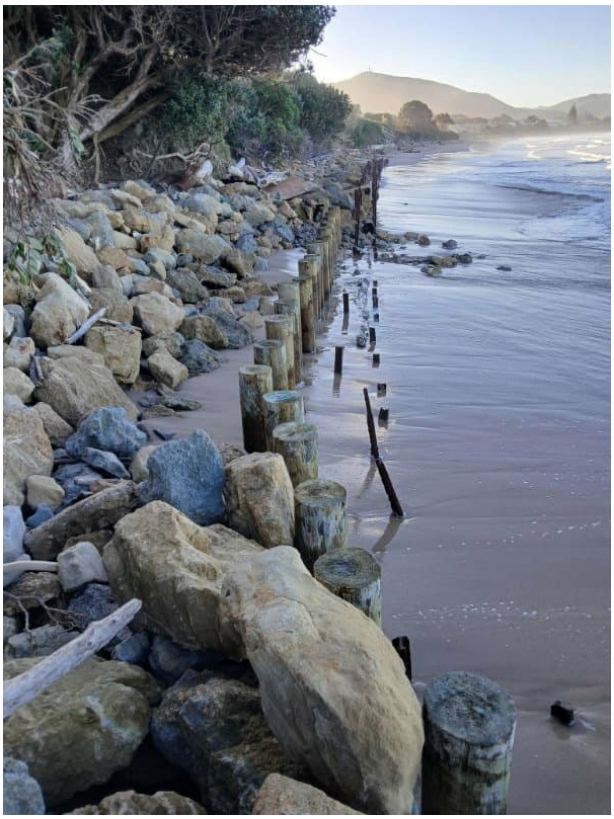


PA 01

Access	Removed
Length	12m



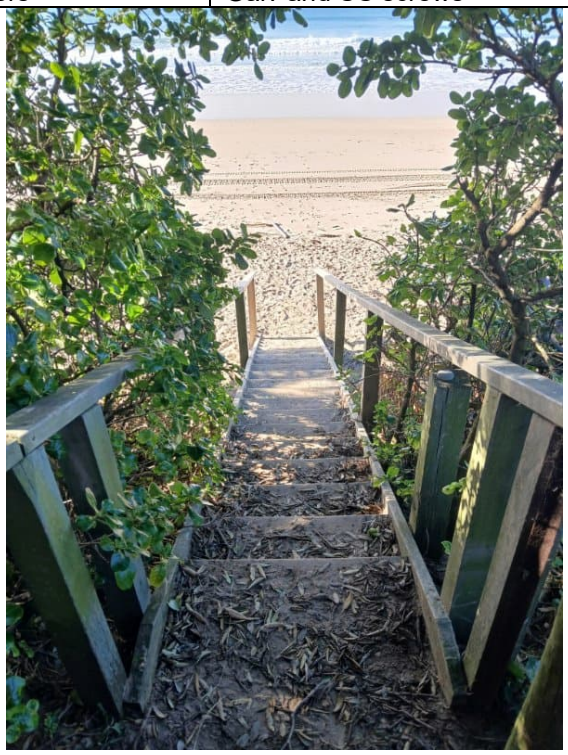


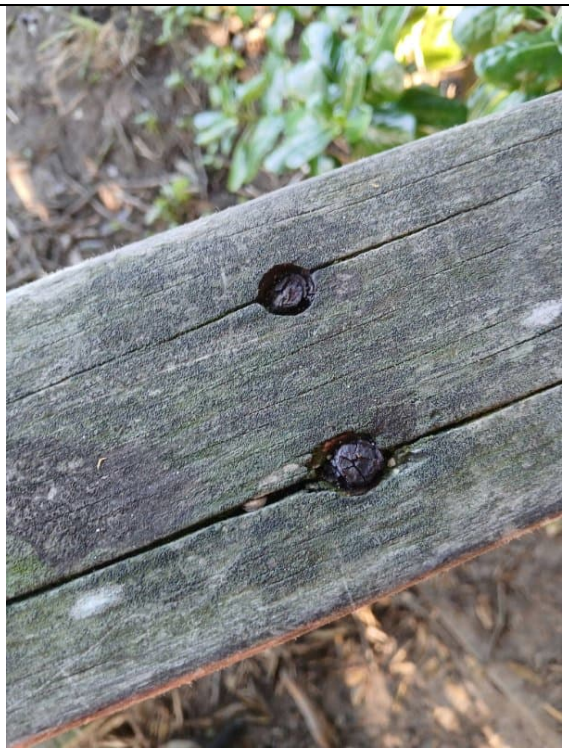




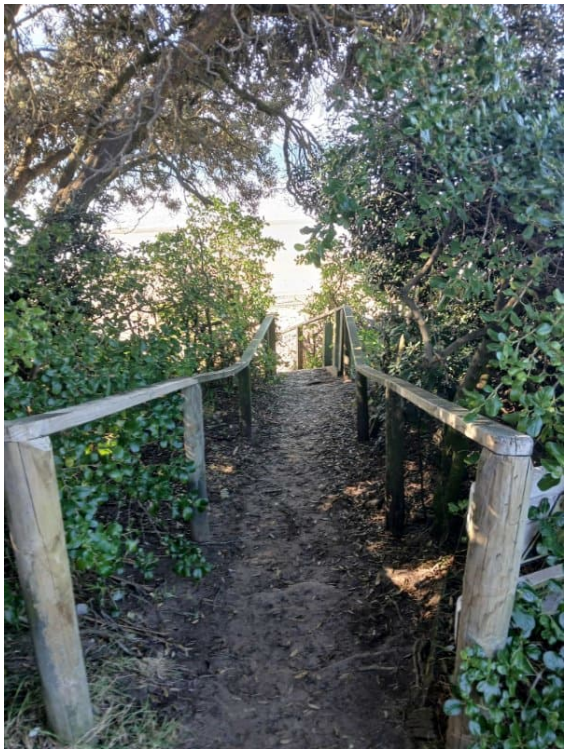
PA 02

Access	Timber Stair
Length	6.5m
Treads No.	20
Tread size	850x300mm
Handrail height	1.0m
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws

















PA 03

Access	Informal through existing retaining wall, no stairs remaining.
Retaining wall	Part of the wall present failure, piles remain onsite.









PA 04

Access	Ramp from Pare Street
Ramp	3.0m wide. Used as access for beach works, not able to determinate pavement conditions





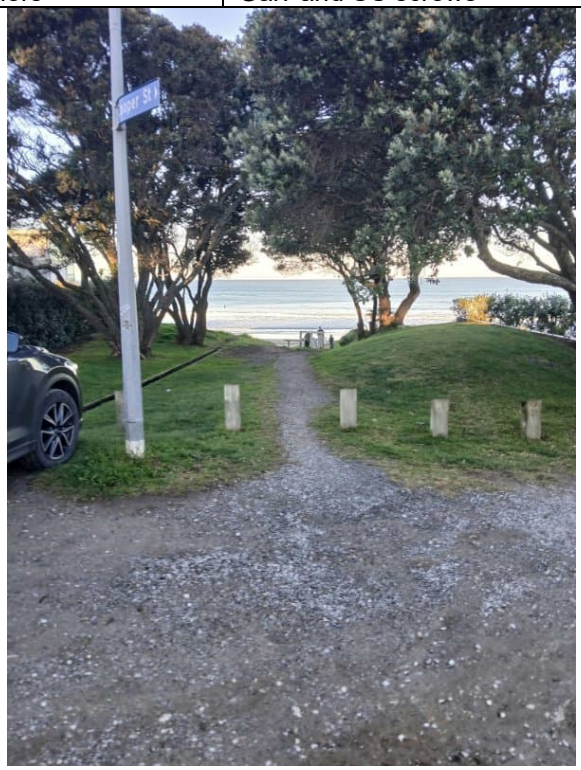




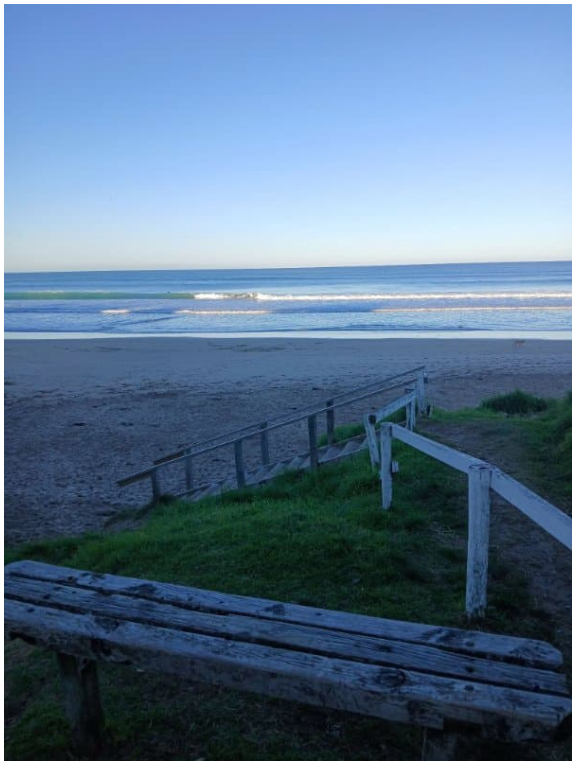


PA 05

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	5.5m
Treads No.	16
Tread size	900x320mm
Handrail height	1.0m. Some areas are disconnected and have rusted fasteners
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws























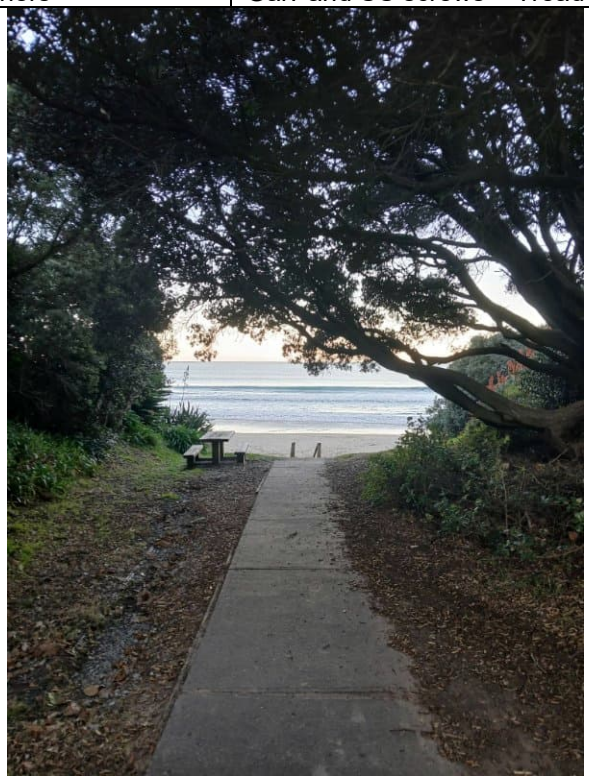


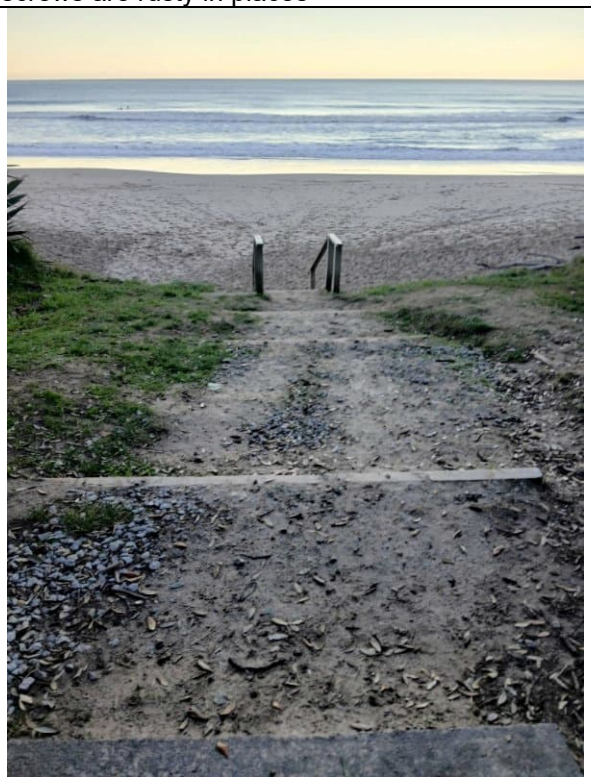


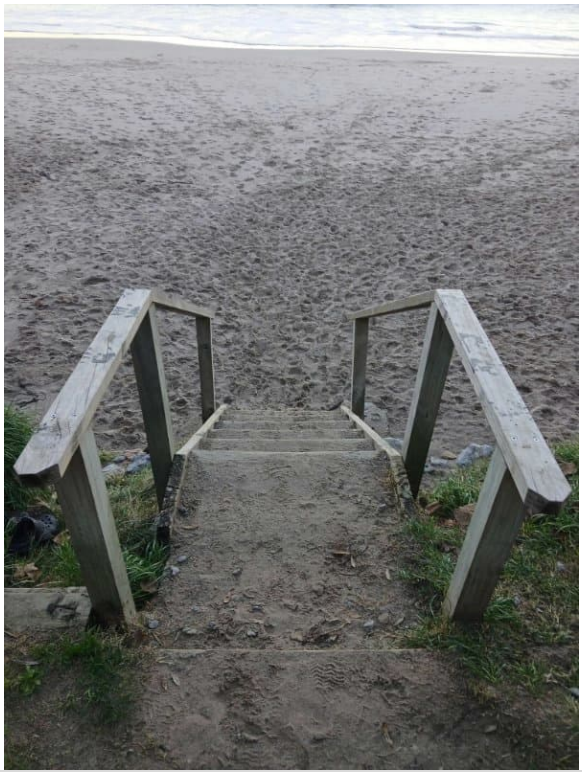


PA 06

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	2.1m + 1.1m Platform
Treads No.	5
Tread size	900x300mm
Handrail height	0.8m.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws – Tread screws are rusty in places



















PA 07

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	11.5m
Treads No.	30
Tread size	900x370mm
Handrail height	0.8m.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws- some rust















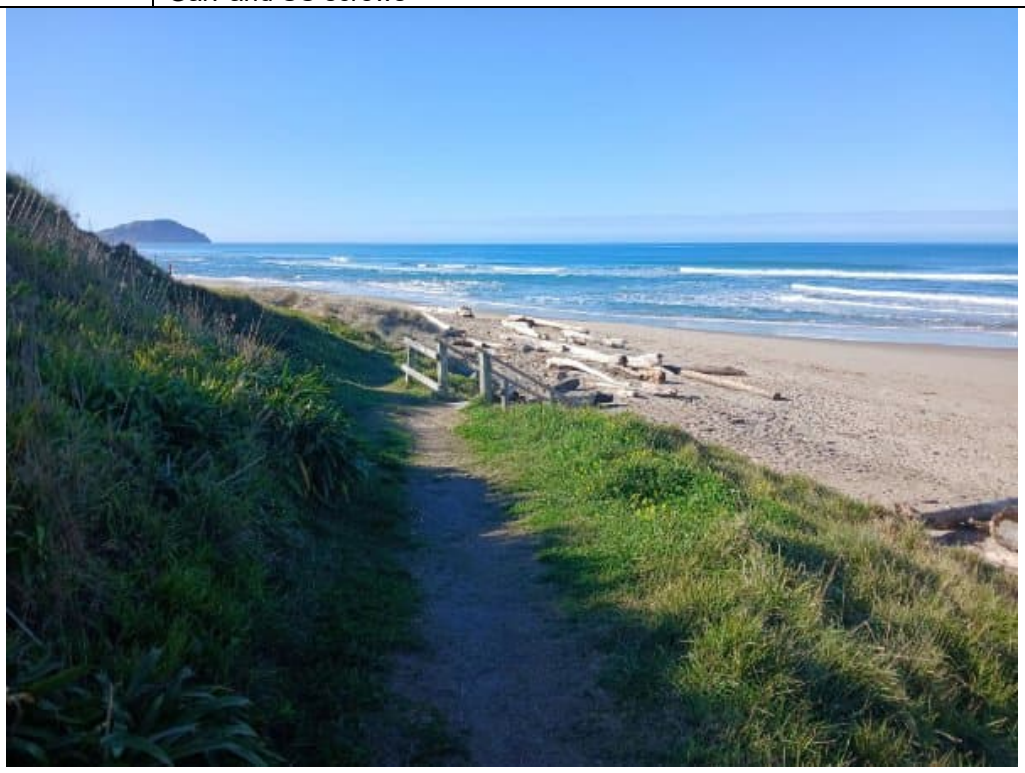






PA 08

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	2.5m
Treads No.	8
Tread size	1000 x 320mm
Handrail height	0.8m.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws

















PA 09

Access	Timber stair structure
Top Length	16m
Top Treads No.	42
Top Tread size	900 x 370mm
Top Handrail height	0.8m.
Bottom Length	4m
Bottom Treads No.	10
Bottom Tread size	900 x 350mm
Bottom Handrail height	0.74m.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws

































PA 10

Access	Timber platform structure
Length	18m
Width	1.6m
Handrail height	0.8m.
Retaining Wall Length	16m + 10m buried in the sand (Steel beams)
Fasteners	Galv






























MARK
DISTURB



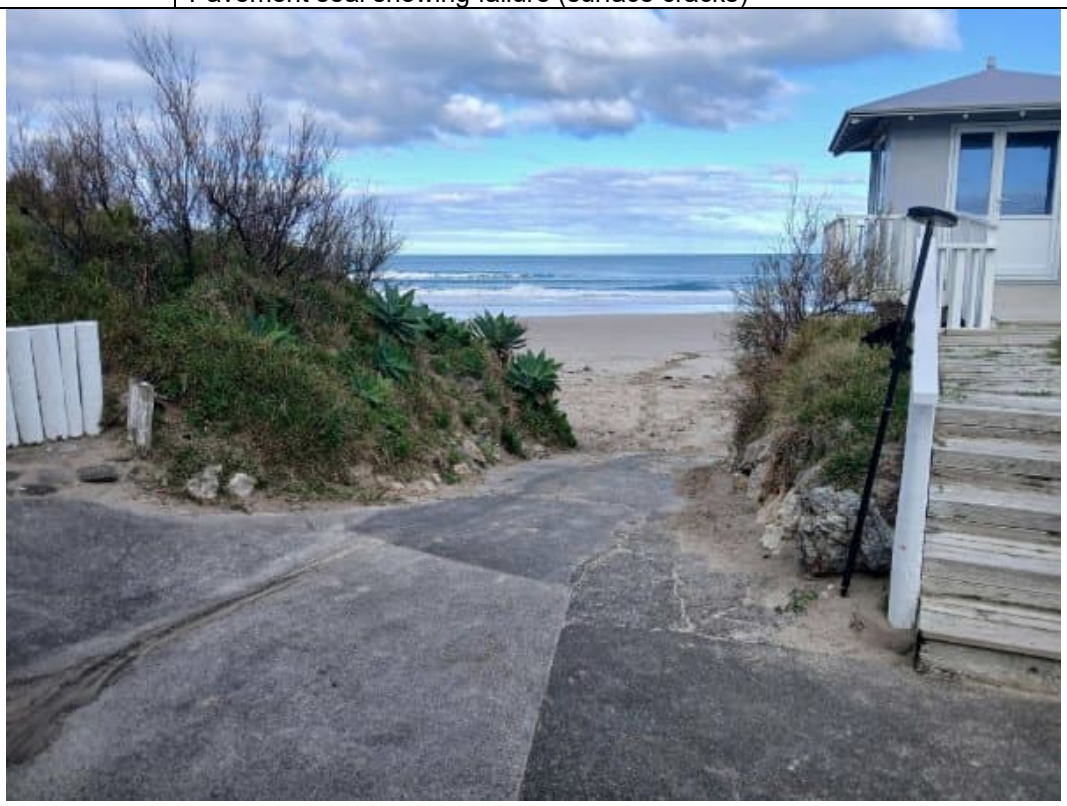






PA 11

Access	Wainui Surf Club Ramp
Length	9.5m
Width	2.8m
Conditions	Pavement seal showing failure (surface cracks)













PA 12

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	15m
Treads No.	43
Tread size	900 x 320mm
Handrail height	940mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws, Reinforcement Galv plates

























PA 13

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	9.2m
Treads No.	24
Tread size	1000 x 300mm
Handrail height	1.0m.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws
Comments	8 tyres at the top approaching area. Bottom structure repaired, new treads, Galv plates and missing handrail

































PA 14

Access	Timber stair structure
Length	6.6m
Treads No.	21
Tread size	900 x 300mm
Handrail height	850mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws
Comments	Middle frame exposed and disconnected from anchor pile Access platform has not support underneath, dune slip.































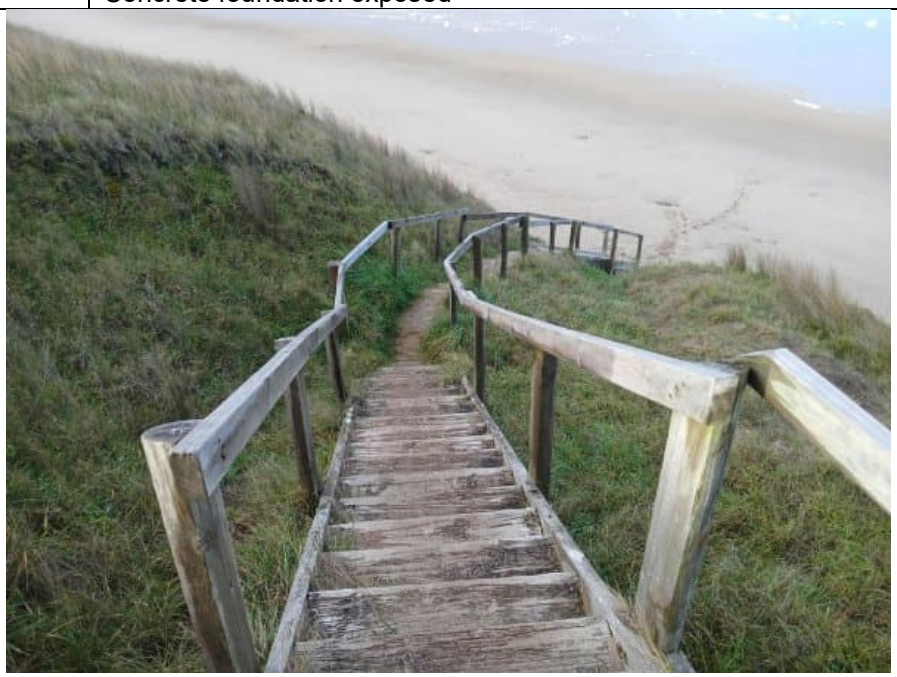






PA 16

Access	Timber stair structure (3 sections)
Length	18.5m
Top Treads No.	13
Top Tread size	830 x 300mm
Middle Treads No.	14
Middle Tread size	930 x 330mm
Bottom Treads No.	24
Bottom Tread size	850 x 260mm
Handrail height	850mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws
Comments	Concrete foundation exposed





















PA 18

Access	Timber stair structure
Platform	7.5 x 1.0m
Length	11.5m
Treads No.	27
Tread size	920 x 190mm (double)
Handrail height	850mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws

















PA 19

Access	Timber stair structure
Platform	1.2 x 0.9m
Length	18m
Treads No.	34 - Good conditions
Tread size	920 x 200mm (double)
Handrail height	850mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws

















PA 20

Access	Timber stair structure
Platform	1.1 x 0.9m
Length	9m
Treads No.	26
Tread size	1100 x 300mm (double)
Handrail height	850mm.
Fasteners	Galv and SS screws
Comments	Access closed – slip affecting side and underneath stair structure

























IA 001

Access	Dune access









IA 002

Access	Dune access x 2















IA 003

Access	Dune access









IA 004

Access	Dune access













IA 005

Access	Dune access







IA 006

Access	Dune access







IA 007

Access	Dune access









IA 008

Access	Dune access







IA 009

Access	Dune access
Length	19m









IA 010

Access	Dune access













IA 011

Access	Dune access
Length	19m





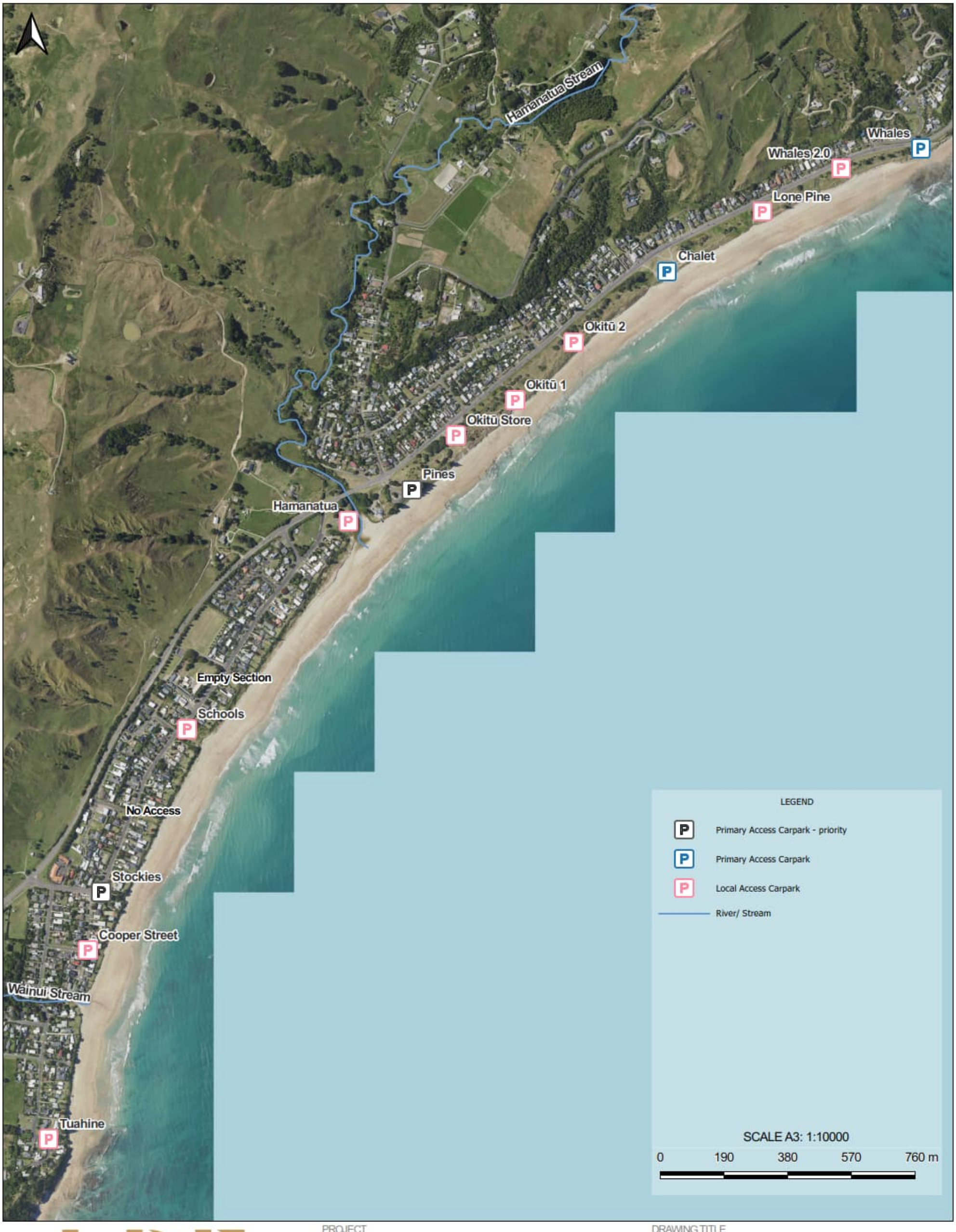








APPENDIX B: MAPS



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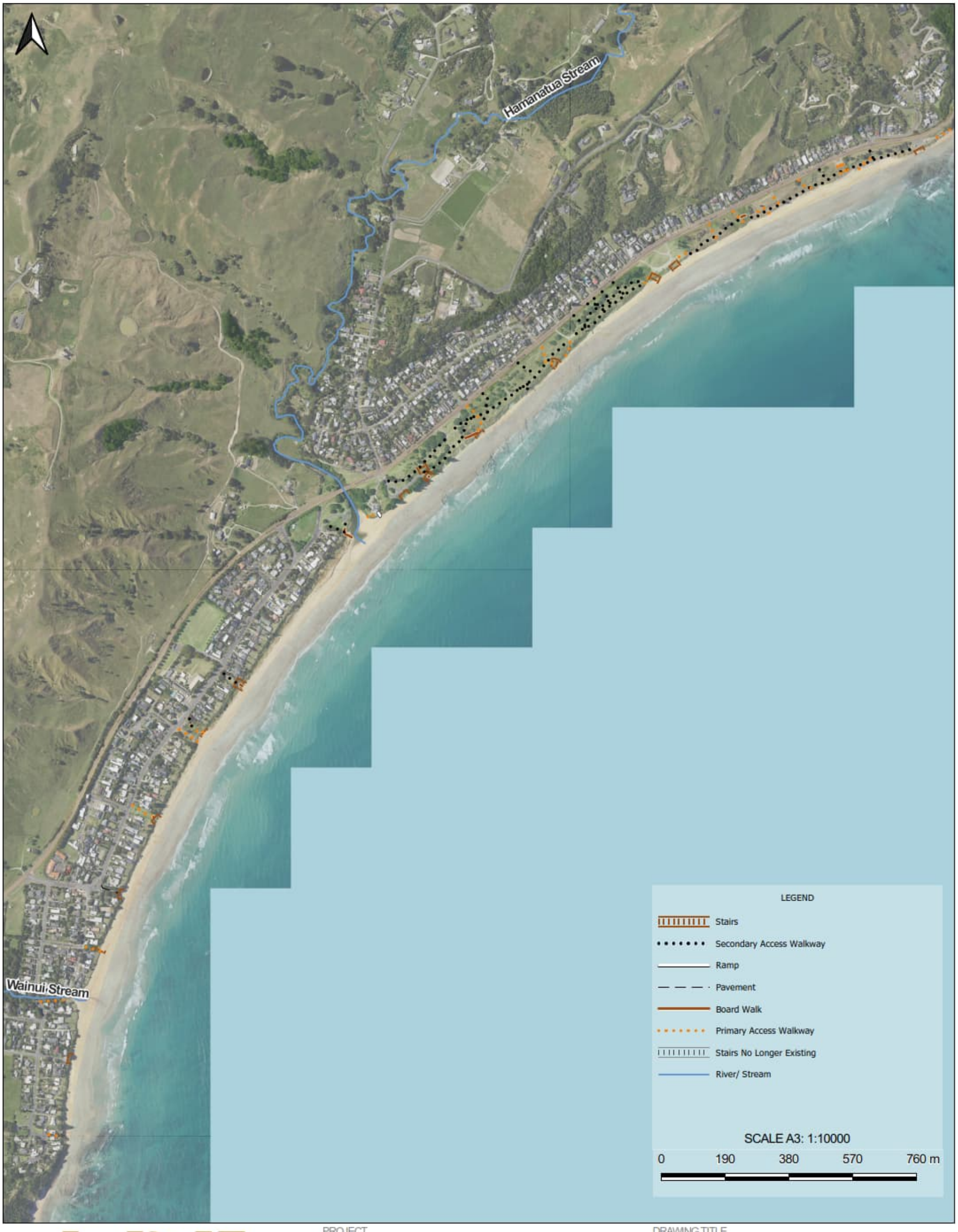
PROJECT
Area Maps for Wainui Beach Access Assessment
Wainui & Ōkitu, Gisborne

NOTES
1. Aerial basemap and property boundaries sourced from LINZ Data Service (CC-BY 4.0).
2. Topographic contours derived from LiDAR data.
3. Investigation locations shown approximately only.

DRAWING TITLE
Existing Access Carparks

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	WBA-01	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
08/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
M-FILES\LDE - Project\41724-31102\Geo QGIS Zip Folder (ID 79084)\31102 QGIS Site Maps\31102 - Wainui-Okitu Beach Access Stairs.qgz



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DRAWING TITLE
Existing Beach Access Routes

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	WBA-02	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
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DRAWING TITLE
Okitū Beach Access (N)

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	BA-01	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
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Area Maps for Wainui Beach Access Assessment
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DRAWING TITLE
Okitū Beach Access (S)

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	BA-02	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
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PROJECT
Area Maps for Wainui Beach Access Assessment
Wainui & Ōkitu, Gisborne

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DRAWING TITLE
Wainui Beach Access (N)

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	BA-03	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

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DRAWING TITLE
Wainui Beach Access (Central)

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	BA-04	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
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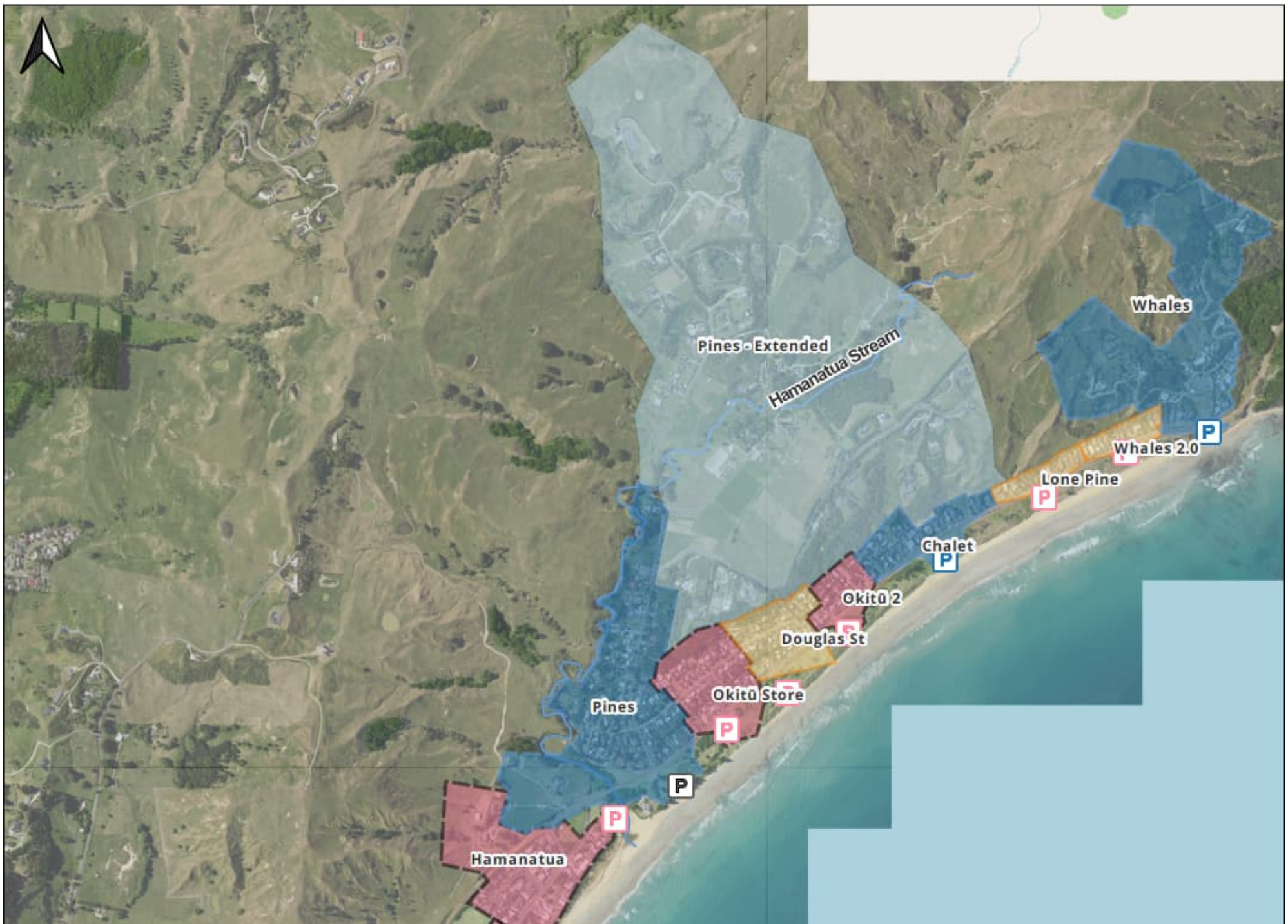
PROJECT
Area Maps for Wainui Beach Access Assessment
Wainui & Ōkitu, Gisborne

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DRAWING TITLE
Wainui Beach Access (S)

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	BA-05	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

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DRAWING TITLE
Inferred Access Point Catchment Areas

PROJECT REF	DRAWING REF	REVISION
31102	CA-01	A
DATE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
07/07/2026	HAP	SM

FILE PATH
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