Te Kaunihera o Te Tairāwhiti
GISBORNE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

26-200

Title:	**26-200 Wainui & Ōkitu Coastal Access Framework**
Section:	Liveable Spaces
Prepared by:	Natalie Waihi - Capital Projects Programme Manager
Meeting Date:	Thursday 1 October 2026

Legal: No	Financial: No	Significance: **Low**

Report to ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNITIES/NGĀ WHAKAMAHI - TE TAIAO ME NGĀ HAPORI for decision

PURPOSE - TE TAKE

The purpose of this report is to share the recently completed Wainui-Okitū Coastal Access Framework report completed by LDE and seek Council direction on the future approach to public coastal access infrastructure along the Wainui–Okitū coastline.

SUMMARY - HE WHAKARĀPOPOTOTANGA

Wainui and Okitū beaches are accessed from a range of public and private access points, many containing build access structures such as stairs and ramps. Council owns eleven public access stairs, many of which are at end of life, and subject to increased coastal erosion.

A further six access assets have been removed since 2023 due to asset failure and storm damage. The remaining eleven assets are ageing and will require ongoing maintenance and eventual renewal.

The circumstances under which the original access structures were constructed have also changed. Many of these structures wouldn't meet modern building standards and consenting requirements, which makes any renovation a significant expense.

To inform future investment in and management of these structures, Council staff engaged LDE to undertake an assessment of the existing coastal access network along Wainui and Okitū beaches and to develop a Wainui and Okitū Coastal Access Framework, to guide investment into more sustainable coastal assets moving forward. The LDE Professional Advisory Report (Attachment 1) considers the condition and vulnerability of existing access structures, coastal processes, opportunities for resilient and accessible access, and recommends where structures should be retained, renewed, relocated or provided through less formal means.

The overall intent is to move to proactive maintenance and renewal of these structures, with investment focussed where it can provide the greatest long-term community benefit, resilience, accessibility and amenity.

The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **Medium** significance in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

RECOMMENDATIONS - NGĀ TŪTOHUNGA

That the Environment & Communities/Ngā Whakamahi - Te Taiao me Ngā Hapori:

1. **Endorses the Wainui–Okitū Coastal Access Framework as the strategic basis for management of Council stairs and accessways on Wainui and Okitū Beaches.**
2. **Notes that the Framework will inform budgeting and priorities in future Long-Term Plans, and that the community will be engaged in these investment decisions.**

Authorised by:

Michele Frey - Director Liveable Communities

Keywords: Wainui-Okitū, coastal access framework,

BACKGROUND - HE WHAKAMĀRAMA

1. The Wainui–Okitū coastline has a longstanding network of formal and informal beach access, both public and private. Council's network of assets has developed incrementally over time and includes structures of varying age, condition and exposure.
2. There are a large number of stairs and accessways along Wainui Beach. The majority of these are private structures on a mixture of private land and Council esplanade reserve. 11 of these are Council owned public access structures.
3. These have typically been developed informally over time, and are simple, low-cost structures.
4. Significant weather events across recent years, as well as the ongoing failure of assets has required the removal of six of these structures between 2023 and today.
5. The remaining structures continue to be inspected and maintained while they are safe and practical to do so. Six-monthly condition assessments are undertaken with additional inspections following major storm events.
6. The key issue for Council is what happens when these remaining assets reach the end of their useful life.

DISCUSSION and OPTIONS - WHAKAWHITINGA KŌRERO me ngā KŌWHIRINGA

7. Many of Council's 11 remaining stair sets and accessways will reach end of life in the coming ten years.
8. The existing access assets were constructed under historical design, safety and regulatory requirements. Coastal conditions have also changed since many of these structures were established. Where a structure now requires substantial reconstruction, Council must consider the requirements that apply to a new or substantially renewed structure, rather than assuming that the historic design can simply be replicated.
9. These requirements can result in more substantial structural requirements, improved safety features, accessibility considerations, different foundations or locations to respond to erosion, stormwater and drainage upgrades and resource consent requirements; coastal access structures will generally trigger resource consent under the relevant coastal management, coastal hazard and earthworks provisions of the Tairāwhiti Resource Management Plan.
10. Consequently, significant expenditure on an individual access point should only occur where Council is satisfied that the location provides a sustainable long-term outcome.
11. To inform sustainable investment into, and management of stairs and accessways along Wainui and Okitū beaches, Council engaged LDE to provide a Coastal Access Framework for this stretch of coastline. The report is provided as **Attachment 1**.

12. The LDE report concluded that:

    a. All existing formal and informal access points along Wainui and Ōkitu are vulnerable to coastal erosion, storm events and changing beach levels, with risks expected to increase as sea-level rise and climate-change effects develop.

    b. There's a need to move from reactive replacement toward a planned, resilient access network.

    c. Future investment should focus on a consolidated network of primary and local access points, rather than replacing every existing or lost structure.

    d. In northern Ōkitu, access should be consolidated and directed through selected, more resilient routes using signage, planting, informal paths and small robust structures where necessary, in line with best practise dune management.

    e. New and replacement structures should use modern, durable designs and materials, including fibre-reinforced grating in highly exposed sections, alongside improved stormwater management and dune planting.

    f. Concept designs and high-level cost estimates should be developed to support ongoing discussion with Ngāti Oneone and Wainui Beach coast care representatives.

    g. A single global resource consent covering the proposed access network is recommended, enabling individual sites to be developed progressively while reducing duplicated consenting and compliance requirements.

    h. Two access structures were identified as requiring immediate removal due to safety, at Whales and near Okitū Store/White Fence. These have been removed.

13. The Framework proposes that Council manage coastal access as a network rather than a collection of individual structures. This means:

    - retaining and maintaining existing access while it remains safe;
    - removing structures when they become unsafe or unsustainable;
    - not automatically replacing every failed structure;
    - concentrating capital investment at strategically important locations;
    - retaining appropriate informal or semi-formal access where it provides a safe alternative; and
    - using signage and wayfinding to connect the network.

14. The Framework categorised coastal access points into Primary Access and Local Access based on their role within the wider access network, rather than simply their existing infrastructure.

15. Primary access points are locations that serve a broader community function and have greater potential to provide a sustainable, resilient and higher-quality access solution. The assessment considers factors such as level of use, local catchment, existing facilities and amenities, parking, reserve size, existing access infrastructure, topography and opportunities to improve accessibility. Primary locations are further divided into higher and lower priorities to guide the sequencing of future investment.

16. Local access points primarily serve nearby residents and local users and are intended to continue providing more localised beach access where this can be sustained. These locations are managed more selectively, with existing structures monitored and renewed where justified, while informal or semi-formal access may be appropriate where it provides a safe alternative to constructed infrastructure.
17. The Framework therefore uses the categorisation to match the level of investment to the role and long-term suitability of each access point—concentrating significant investment at strategic primary locations while maintaining appropriate local access without necessarily replacing every existing structure.
18. This approach recognises that not every access point can or should be maintained indefinitely and that investment should be directed towards locations capable of providing the greatest long-term community benefit. Renewal projects would be delivered in a way that is efficient, effective and appropriate to present and anticipated future needs.
19. Stock Route, Pines and Whales were identified as suitable, priority primary access points for future investment. These locations already provide significant community value and have supporting facilities.
20. Investment could address multiple outcomes, incorporating improved parking and more accessible beach access, resilient structures, stormwater management, planting, amenity and cultural interpretation.
21. Future investment would remain subject to LTP funding, detailed design, engagement, consenting and site-specific assessment.

ASSESSMENT of SIGNIFICANCE - AROTAKENGA o NGĀ HIRANGA

Consideration of consistency with and impact on the Regional Land Transport Plan and its implementation
This Report: Low Significance

Impacts on Council's delivery of its Financial Strategy and Long Term Plan
This Report: Low Significance

Inconsistency with Council's current strategy and policy
Overall Process: Low Significance
This Report: Low Significance

The effects on all or a large part of the Gisborne district
This Report: Low Significance

The effects on individuals or specific communities
Overall Process: Medium Significance
This Report: Medium Significance

The level or history of public interest in the matter or issue
Overall Process: Medium Significance
This Report: Medium Significance

22. The decisions or matters in this report are considered to be of **Low** significance in accordance with Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

OR

23. This report is part of a process to arrive at a decision that will/may be of **Medium** level in accordance with the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy

TREATY COMPASS ANALYSIS

Kāwanatanga

24. Council continues to seek advice from hapū and iwi partners regarding early land use, areas of significance and strategic outcomes for the management of coastal reserve sites and assets. Cultural and environmental impact assessments appropriately inform activities, and we seek guidance and support on resource consent matters, critical outcomes and use of natural resources.

Rangatiratanga

25. Rangatiratanga can be of individual significance to iwi/hapū and should be acknowledged and understood when engaging on matters related to land use, public recreation, development of and strategic direction for Council managed land. Opportunities for iwi/hapū participation will be explored at a project level to ensure we understand the significance of site and the vision and aspirations of mana whenua.

Oritetanga

26. Council has sought to recognise and redress equity by engaging mana whenua early in the planning and development of the Okitū Access Framework, including discussion of strategic outcomes. Hāpū are supportive of the framework and the opportunities it provides to strengthen storytelling and protect areas of cultural and historical significance.

Whakapono

27. Council staff will engage with mana whenua in early planning stages to ensure the significance of the area and cultural values were well considered and suitable practices are embedded in the project arising from the framework. Shared decision-making and acknowledgement of the aspirations and desired outcomes of our partners remains at the forefront. Manaakitanga guides us in developing strong relationships with representatives and listening to their feedback on where we can improve our processes to empower mana whenua.

TANGATA WHENUA/MĀORI ENGAGEMENT - TŪTAKITANGA TANGATA WHENUA

28. Council staff engage with mana whenua in early planning stages to ensure the significance of the area and cultural values were well considered, and suitable practices are embedded in the project arising from the framework. Hapū representatives have been supportive of the framework outcomes and welcome the opportunity to increase storytelling and protection of areas of significance. Engagement will continue though implementation and project specific consent processes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT - TŪTAKITANGA HAPORI

29. Council has maintained connection and communication with the local community and other interested stakeholders regarding coastal access ways and the work occurring to develop a strategic framework that will inform decision making on coastal access and future upgrades. Several panui and letterbox drops have been completed over the past two years relating to the removal of access assets and where residents have provided feedback Council staff have encouraged residents to make a submission in the Long Term Plan consultation.

30. Some feedback has been sought and received from community members on the framework to date, particularly that the level of local use of the accessways at Wainui Stream is understated, and that the report doesn't consider the needs of horse riders also.

31. Council appreciates and acknowledges the feedback of community and will continue to work with community members on the design and consenting of future access structures, particularly the Wainui Coast Care Group, who are a wealth of knowledge on Wainui-Okitū dune systems.

CLIMATE CHANGE – Impacts / Implications - NGĀ REREKĒTANGA ĀHUARANGI – ngā whakaaweawe / ngā ritenga

32. The Okitū Access Framework considers climate change by providing a strategic approach to future access that can inform resilient, sustainable and adaptable decision-making. The framework supports consideration of coastal activity, hazards and environmental change when determining the location, design and long-term management of access points.

CONSIDERATIONS - HEI WHAKAARO

Financial/Budget

33. Budget to implement strategic outcomes of the framework would be consulted through the Long Term Plan process which is currently seeking community feedback on the priorities of our community. There is $30k capital budget allocated in the current FY for the Okitū-Wainui Coastal Access Framework costs.

Legal

34. Reserve Management Plan requirements have been considered in developing the framework. As the existing plans provide general provision for accessways and do not prescribe specific numbers or locations, no significant legal risks are anticipated as a result of adopting the framework.

POLICY and PLANNING IMPLICATIONS - KAUPAPA HERE me ngā RITENGA WHAKAMAHERE

35. The recommendations from the framework are not yet considered in annual plan priorities. Future investment remains subject to Long Term Plan processes and funding.

36. The Wainui Adaptation Plan does not consider strategic direction for coastal access assets within reserves or at the site-specific level this framework considers.

RISKS - NGĀ TŪRARU

37. Health, Safety and Wellbeing - regular and post-storm inspections required to maintain until failure and prompt removal of unsafe structures. Requires appropriate signage and prioritise development of safe alternative access.

38. Financial - Endorsement establishes a strategic direction but does not resolve the level or timing of future capital funding. Priority access improvements may require significant investment.

39. Publicity / public perception and Council's reputation - Communities may perceive the consolidation of access as a reduction in service, particularly where a familiar access point is not renewed. Expectations may also increase following endorsement of the Framework.

40. Regulatory and Legal Compliance - The TRMP specifically recognises coastal erosion and storms as natural hazards requiring consideration in development decisions. Future works will still require appropriate design, assessment and consenting.

41. Environment - Consolidating access may increase use at selected locations and could create additional pressure on dunes or sensitive coastal areas if not appropriately designed and managed.

NEXT STEPS - NGĀ MAHI E WHAI AKE

Date	Action/Milestone
Sep 2026	Include the development of priority access points in 2027 – 2037 Long Term Plan for community consultation.
Ongoing	Engage with key community user groups to inform the priorities for the Long-Term Plan, and the design and consent of future accessways