

8. WHEEL CHAIR ACCESS TO SUMNER AND SCARBOROUGH BEACHES RR 9353

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Corporate Plan Output: Foreshore Development Works.	

The purpose of this report is to update the Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board on proposals for wheel chair access to Sumner and Scarborough Beaches.

INTRODUCTION

This report follows an investigation into improving wheel chair access to Sumner and Scarborough beaches and reviews a trial period using light boardwalks to provide access over the soft sand at central Sumner. The initial report was presented to the board on 5.2.97. following a written request to the community board in November 1996.

THE DESIRED RECREATIONAL OUTCOMES

Firstly wheel chair users wish to be able to gain access from the sealed carparks and footpaths out onto the sand to be with other beach users. Secondly they wish to access the firm sand below the high tide mark, in order to move easily along the beach as do other walkers and get close to the waters edge to either swim themselves or be with other family members using the water.

PROBLEMS TO OVERCOME IN ORDER TO PROVIDE ACCESS

The first problem to over come is crossing the wide area of soft sand between the formed surfaces and the firm sand. The second problem is the often 3-4 metre high bank or seawall between the formed surface and the firm sand. The third problem is the unstable nature of the surface of the rock seawall between Cave Rock and Scarborough Park.

RESULTS OF TRIALS SO FAR

The trial use of a light wooden boardwalk to a deck out on the beach, while initially appearing promising, failed in several ways. Firstly the wooden deck was overwhelmed and buried regularly by the rapidly rising levels of sand on the beach. Secondly the wooden boardwalks themselves were perceived as a source for firewood for beach bonfires and they were also seen as a hazard by other beach users. One woman claimed to have tripped over the boardwalk, which lay flush with the sand surface, and this resulted in an injury so it was removed immediately. Thirdly they required almost daily attention to maintain them to a safe standard in the situation at Sumner.

While the boardwalk may have provided a small amount of access onto the sand it could not enable access out beyond the high tide mark.. The light boardwalk is not suitable to use where it could be disturbed by the surf at high tide. The boardwalks were high in maintenance requirements and low in effectiveness so are not seen as a long term solution to enable the desired outcomes.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS

In order to provide stable low maintenance access to the beach below the high tide mark then access points must be at the point of closest proximity between a hard formed surface and the firm sand below the tide mark.. It goes with out saying that this area will experience considerable surf and surge activity The access point must therefore be stable enough to anchor a solid structure of timber or concrete to a secure foundation. Engineers advise me that this confirms the initial recommendations that, apart from expensive engineering works, it is still not practical to attempt to provide simple wheelchair accessible ramps anywhere along the rock seawall between Cave Rock and Scarborough Park. The only exception appears to be a small area of solid wall, presently in several large steps, directly in front of the Scarborough Fare restaurant. This area has the potential to house a solid wheel chair accessible ramp and further design investigations are underway.

Presently wheel chair users can access Scarborough beach via existing concrete ramps. However they don't meet design criteria for slope and usually require the assistance of an able bodied person to get the wheel chair back up the ramps.

The area around Cave Rock has a potential access point on the north side of the rock and at the end of the esplanade. It was however considered an inappropriate site for a ramp, based on a higher financial cost, but most significantly due to the higher environmental cost of the physical impact of such a structure on the natural form and 'undeveloped' nature of the rock. (A landscape architect's comment!). I personally favour the site for reasons of pedestrian flow, recreation advantages and my view that the site is in reality highly modified already. To choose this site for a ramp would require considerable political will and support but could result in far greater recreational outcomes. A ramp at this point would significantly benefit access for the able bodied as well as wheel chair bound users.

The area north from Cave Rock to the Sumner Beach Surf Club has a wide area of soft sand to cross to get to the firm sand and so is deemed inappropriate for access, based on the problems experienced with previous boardwalk trials. The next best site is at Cannons Point on Peacocks Gallop (where the Ice Cream vendor parks). This site is being investigated as a potential location for a solid ramp to provide egress from a carpark directly to the firm sand.

CONCLUSION

Light weight and cheap options up to this point have been generally ineffective and required high maintenance. Any effective, wheel chair appropriate, beach access structures will need to be of a solid, engineered, nature.

For the reasons outlined above the potential points for such a structure are limited to three potential sites outlined below-

1. On the seawall adjacent to Scarborough Park
2. Beside Cave Rock, on the north side
3. At Peacocks Gallop carpark

Recommendation: That designs and costings be prepared, and consent requirements investigated, for solid ramps at the three sites above to enable public consultation and further board consideration.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the above recommendation be adopted.