

# Whitianga Esplanade Waterfront Redevelopment: User Focus Group 3 Conversation Notes

Monday 26<sup>th</sup> August, 6:00 - 7:30 pm, Mercury Bay Rugby Club  
Rooms, Lyons Park

24 participants with reasonably diverse local backgrounds and interests attended the session. This third focus group session brought together various local waterfront users to present concepts on the waterfront redevelopment and discuss feedback from the focus group to inform scoping and prior to wider consultation.

The focus of this session was trailer boat facilities. A register of attendees was recorded. The following interests were recorded on the attendance register – charter boat operators, Lyons Park sports clubs, local Robertson Road residents, event organisers, commercial fishing, recreational fishing, marina, community board member, Ngati Hei. Apologies were received from ferry operator and commercial fishers. For privacy reasons the names of individuals has been withheld from these notes. Instead, their interest group are used for statements below.

## Whitianga Esplanade Waterfront Redevelopment Presentation – Focus on Trailer Boat Facilities

A Powerpoint presentation was delivered by the project manager, Lorenzo Canal to the user focus group on suggested concepts . A copy of the PPT is attached to the notes.

## Focus Group Discussion Notes

- **Fishing Wharf and separate new pier and pontoon**
  - Based on the graphics presented, the group were generally in support of the concept as was the feedback in the second user focus session.
  - Concept of using the inside face of pontoon for short term was generally supported, but must have sufficient depth.
- **Whitianga Wharf Boat Ramp**
  - Support to keep boat ramp open.
  - Idea of narrowing the vehicle entrance for pedestrian safety reasons was challenged. Charter operator questioned narrowing the entrance to the wharf

ramp. Congestion and difficulty for bigger boats to turn. (Consider if this is still an issue if toilet removed). Agreed by a few people.

- **Trailer Parking within Whitianga Waterfront (a key topic with plenty of debate and differing views as can also be expected with future wider consultation)**
  - Reasonably strong resistance from boaties to fully exclude boat trailer parking from waterfront area.
  - Marina representative made mention of Whitianga Marina Soc that they do not support removal of boat trailer parking on the waterfront.
  - Charter boat operator voiced that people use gravel park area for parking to go to his business.
  - Charter boat operator suggested reclamation that could be progressed over a number of years. The idea has been previously discussed in WS2 and discounted due to high risk of not obtaining resource consents and high cost. Difficult to justify coastal reclaiming for boat trailer parking in the context of NZ Coastal Policy.
  - Room for a new toilet/changing room and drop off facility generally supported to service a new pier.
  - A reasonable idea was suggested of having a suitable surface to operate the waterfront area as a landscaped multiuse area (events, open space and parking) was put forward by an event organiser. This would allow a position of trailer parking to remain outside event periods.
  - The use of Taylors Mistake for trailer parking all year was supported. Suggestions that instead of a turning circle, a way is found to exist cars and trailers through to Monk Street. This would improve circulation and maximise number of parks.
  - Taylors Mistake could be also multiuse for events and trailer parking.
  - Suggestion by a charter operator to consider using section on 6 Monk street and possibly other sites for parking.
  - A further idea was made by a charter operator for TCDC to purchase the Esplanade properties between Taylors Mistake and Monk Street and demolish all in the area to make a trailer park. This would be extremely challenging and involve many private land owners' consent.
  - Suggestion of piping and infilling stream to create more parking space was raised and discussed. This was countered with the need to carefully consider stormwater and environmental impacts.
  - Toilet block removal mitigates safety concerns along with a fence at ramp end for child safety.
  
- **Ideas Suggested for Alternative Boat Ramp Locations**
  - A previous study was carried out to investigate alternative location for a boat ramp and parking. The study resulted in the upgrade of Robertson Road ramp and no feasible alternative were identified. This included Stormont Lane and the Whitianga Water Ways area.
  - Ngati Hei representative suggested the idea of moving the boat ramp facility upstream to where the transfer station is located and dredge a channel. This would provide a potential solution with ample parking, however the ongoing maintenance dredging required for the channel and the distance from the entrance would present disadvantages.
  - A commercial fisher questioned Stormont Lane as a possible boat ramp option. This has been investigated and is not feasible as it required significant reclamation and cost.

- **Dundas Street Boat Ramp and Lyons Park**
  - Acknowledgement from all that it is only a tidal ramp that is not suitable to upgrade. Support to leave it as is.
  - A Lyons Park sports club member presented the history and importance of Lyon Park. Support for not changing Dundas Street and not using Lyons Park for parking. Reserve Management Plan has a condition that prohibits boat trailer parking. Want to put this to bed once and for all with Council and Board. It is imperative it is kept as a memorial for use of community as per the deed of gift.
  - There is no support or desire to use Lyons Park for boat trailer parking amongst the group.
- **Robertson Boat Ramp Upgrade**
  - The upgrade of the boat ramp with an additional lane and pontoon was not opposed. The local residents are concerned about the growth in boat trailer traffic and do not support the ramp being the primary all tide boat ramp for Whitianga. All existing boat ramps are to be kept operational.
  - Ngai Hei representative expressed the iwi position that the whole coastal reserve is culturally sensitive and important, but expressed that compromise may be required to allow existing parking to continue. However, it is important to protect and keep away from Toumuia.
  - The idea of a drop off jetty and pontoon was supported as a good idea. However, it is mentioned that currents and wake from passing vessel needs to be carefully considered in the design of the ramp.
  - Operational concerns about the wake caused by passing vessels contributing to coastal erosion was mentioned. The existing vessel speeds require more policing and enforcement by the WRC harbour master.
- **Overflow parking at Hilton Reserve**
  - Reasonably well support from boaties and event groups with some concerns from residents.
  - An events organiser and charter boat operator mentioned, if promoting using Robinson, then it makes sense to use Hilton Park which is underutilised. Needs sign posting at ramp for toilet. The current area at Robinsons is not busy except for a few peak times a year.
  - Distance to Hilton not raised as a significant issue as pick up jetty reduced walking distance. Hilton park overflow will be the last option for boaties who will first favour the closer parks at Whitianga Wharf and Robertson ramp.
  - Residents voiced concerned about the growing number of trailer boats in the area and the impacts they may bring. Comment raised by resident - people that border reserve, how will they deal with people parking there at 4.30am. It was also discussed that this situation was unlikely as early boat launching would obtain parks close to boat ramp first, with Hilton Park being the last to be occupied during busy periods.
- **Summation and Closing Comments**
  - Concept of 2nd pier/ pontoon and existing wharf to be used for fishing is reasonably well supported.
  - All boat ramps to be kept open was well supported.
  - Multi use on waterfront and Taylors Mistake to provide for open space, parking and events to be further explored. Need to allow space for drop-off, short term parking and toilet facilities to support new public pier.

- No desire or use case for trailer boat parking at Lyon's Reserve due to location and reserve management plan restrictions.
- Robinson Road is an all tide ramp that could be improved as part of a network of boat ramps in the area.
- Sensitivity for Robinson Road boat ramp and Hilton Park use from local residents needs to be taken into account.