

Q&A – Cathedral Cove, Coromandel

Landslide risk assessment report, remediations, next steps

Why has it taken DOC so long to make a decision and then inform the community?

It was vital we had robust geotechnical and landslide risk information before we made a decision.

Obtaining this information took time: specialists we commissioned made several visits to the site. Those visits were at times hampered by aspects beyond DOC's control, for example the weather – there was no point in our experts visiting the site if they couldn't access it, or if the roads in the peninsula made access to the cove difficult. The Landslide Risk Assessment also required a peer review process fundamental to the robustness of the information.

Once we had the final Landslide Risk Assessment report, we worked through an internal process – including reviewing it within our visitor risk framework – and our need to manage a number of overlapping complexities.

We absolutely understand the high level of interest in this site and that's why we're proactively sharing the information we have and explaining our decision and the process which led to it.

How long have you had that final report?

We received a final version of the report on 28 July. Receiving the report prompted us to undertake further vital work guided by DOC's processes and need to cover all aspects of a complex challenge. **Why couldn't you just do some work and open the track to the cove?**

This was not considered a safe or pragmatic option. Cyclone Gabrielle washed away complete sections of the track and we were not prepared to risk staff or contractors' safety by commissioning work at a site where access was challenging and the land was still moving.

Also, we don't want to invest in short-term solutions to what are long-term challenges. We need to plan for resilience against climate change and regenerative tourism that connects communities to nature.

What did the Landslide Risk Assessment report tell you?

The report confirmed ongoing risk of rockfall and landslides at the site, meaning there is risk to visitors and our staff who go there - a view we have consistently



held and shared, and now supported by independent and advice.

The report identified several areas around Cathedral Cove and Hahei where significant hazards exist, and outlined a range of complex and potentially costly repair options we now need to consider. We've made the report available online.

Why can't people make their own decisions about accessing the sites by foot, using the tracks? Isn't the decision about risk on the individual visitor?

We're not reinstating the tracks based on our assessment of information available to us. DOC has a responsibility to manage and inform visitors of the risk in areas where they are going. There is risk to anyone who uses those tracks. Reinstating them would be a complex and potentially costly job, with no "quick fixes". Visitors will be able to reach the beach from the sea, but there is still risk and signage at the beach will reinforce this.

Why are you allowing access to the beach again, but not reopening the tracks?

Access from the beach mitigates the risk associated to people using the tracks, some of which are extensively damaged. People visiting by boat should still stay clear of the cliffs, be alert for rockfall and landslides, and not enter the archway.

What are the next steps and what does "re-imagining Hahei" actually mean? And how long is that going to take?

We've engaged a project manager to lead work on plan which will aim to develop a new and resilient visitor experience at Cathedral Cove and Hahei. This will involve engagement with the community and stakeholders to develop options and is expected to take between six and 12 months. We're focussed on regenerative tourism which connects communities to nature and the environment, and which results in a visitor offer which is resilient to climate change.

Having Cathedral Cove unavailable has had a massive impact on local businesses – what do you say to them?

We understand and acknowledge this has been very difficult for the local business community, particular those in the accommodation and visitor sectors. We'll be working with our local business community closely as part of our engagement on reimagining the Cathedral Cove-Hahei coastal visitor experience, and we know their input will be vital to coming up with long-term resilient solutions and visitor offers.