Mauao Base Track

Key messages

Background

Council staff and external experts have been looking at ways to clear the April 2017 slip on Mauao so that it is fully accessible to wheelchairs and prams.

Ideally, the new section of track will open before Christmas.

The process has involved the Mauao Trust, Heritage New Zealand, the mayor and other key stakeholders.

A large number of site meetings, workshops and coordinated efforts have taken place and a preferred plan has been developed.

Resilience, cost, timeframes, constraints, consent requirements, archaeological impacts and feedback/requirements of the Mauao Trust have all been considered.

The preferred option is resilient enough to be acceptable to the council and the Mauao Trust, and could be opened (but not fully completed) before Christmas.

This option includes minor tree pruning, minor earthworks, 'soil nailing' to stabilise the bank and the installation of a handrail.

Pruning began on November 19, with the main work to start on Monday, 25 November.

Key messages

1) Speed

It's time to get moving on Mauao Base Track repairs.
We're working as fast as we can to repair the track by Christmas.
Meetings are occurring daily to get things underway.

Note: care should be taken with making definitive promises about the new track's opening date – it is preferable to soften this message with "aiming for Christmas" or "working as fast as we can".

2) Cost-effectiveness

We've not yet determined the exact cost of the repairs, but we expect it to be a fraction of the approved budget.

Note: the previous council approved a budget of $2.5m, increased to $4.65m during the last annual plan process.

Note: the agreement with the contractor is commercially sensitive for now.

3) Consultation

We're working with the Mauao Trust, Heritage New Zealand and other partners to ensure we get this right.

This could not have happened without close collaboration with iwi.

4) The plan itself

We've almost settled on a plan to repair the track.

The plan involves:

Clearing the slip away from the existing track
Minor re-alignment of the existing track along the slope
Minor excavation into the slope
Installing a hand-rail
Minor pruning of some trees (we're not cutting them down)
Improving drainage
Stabilising the slope with landscaping, geotextile cloth and a method called 'soil nailing'

<u>Risk mitigation</u>

The above messages may prompt questions about why the original plan took so long to prepare and was so much more expensive (more than $5m).

We recommend being up-front about the limitations of the new plan, rather than delivering a track that fails to meet expectations.

The new track is cheaper and faster to build because:

1) It has a life expectancy of 10-15 years
2) It will be relatively narrow
3) It will be less resilient to slips and erosion than the track in the original plan
4) The focus has moved to expediency and lower cost, rather than resilience