

Information Agenda

Date: Friday, 13 June, 2025

Elected Members: His Worship the Mayor Vince Cocurullo
Cr Gavin Benney
Cr Nicholas Connop
Cr Ken Couper
Cr Jayne Golightly
Cr Phil Halse
Cr Deborah Harding
Cr Patrick Holmes
Cr Scott McKenzie
Cr Marie Olsen
Cr Carol Peters
Cr Simon Reid
Cr Phoenix Ruka
Cr Paul Yovich

For any queries regarding this meeting please contact
the Whangarei District Council on (09) 430-4200.

1. Information Reports

1.1 Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project Completion Report 3

2. Public Excluded Business

1.1 Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project Completion Update

Meeting: Information Agenda
Date of meeting: 13 June 2025
Reporting officer: Jim Sephton, Manager – Transport and Community Infrastructure

1 Purpose / Te Kaupapa

The purpose of this report is to update Elected Members on the completion of the Waterfront Facilities Upgrade Project at the Town Basin.

2 Background / Horopaki

Council approved a project to upgrade the Waterfront Facilities within the 2019/2020 Annual Plan to upgrade bus stop capacity, wayfinding signage and visitor information in preparation for a significant increase in visitors and arrival of the first ever cruise ships to Whangārei planned in late 2020 and early 2021, as well as the international attention expected from the opening of Hundertwasser Art Centre, Women's Rugby World Cup, and touring America's Cup visitors. Additional traction for Whangārei as a destination created a need to upgrade the current facilities in the Town Basin area to enhance the overall visitor experience and have them return.

In December 2019, a Funding Application to Round 4 of the Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TIF), administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), was approved. This provided an additional \$1.67 million of funding to upgrade various key high-use visitor areas of the Town Basin, including upgrading and extending bus facilities, public toilets i-site/visitor centre, landscaping of pedestrian areas, digital information, and a visitor management plan. A key feature of TIF funding was that applicants were expected to co-fund to the maximum extent they were able. The TIF grant represented approximately half of the total project cost.

3 Discussion / Whakawhiti kōrero

Close-Out of TIF Grant

As at end of March 2025, the full value of TIF funding approved has been claimed in full. The final claim of \$470,000 was submitted on 12 March 2025 for work already completed and has been received.

TIF funding covered costs associated with engagement, feasibility, design and consenting, as well as cultural impact assessment. Physical works costs were also funded, including upgrades to bus areas and carparks, pedestrian areas, temporary loading zones, traffic flow changes on the road network, rubbish and recycling facilities moved away from the main pedestrian area, and wayfinding signage. Project management, site supervision and handover documentation were also covered.

Project delivery staff successfully navigated several challenges during the design and construction process. Delays associated with COVID-19 were experienced throughout the project, impacting on community engagement, resourcing and delivery timeframes. It also delayed the first cruise ships coming to Whangārei by three years, with the first ship arriving in February 2024. Reporting requirements and other contractual obligations of MBIE were fully met. The project now commences the Closure Phase in accordance with Council's Investment Management Framework.

Outcomes Achieved

Construction works were staged between June 2022 and September 2023 to minimise disruption to businesses and visitors. The Town Basin bus and visitor facilities were reopened in September 2023, enabling Whangārei put its best foot forward for tourists and the wider community. The construction contractor, Robinson Asphalts, won an award for this project at the Northland Civil Contractors annual awards in 2022 which has featured in the Northern Advocate.

Tour buses and cruise ship buses can park safely to drop off visitors, and follow a clear and safe route bus stops and layover areas added on Lower Dent St. A one-way laneway and a loading zone were also implemented.

Parking spaces were upgraded, and mobility-friendly parking has been increased, providing safe entry and exit for private vehicles. It is noted that there are increasing parking demands in the area, and this will be addressed through the City Centre Parking Management Plan and Parking Supply.

New public toilets and a canopy were constructed with an accessible facility close to the playground, allowing tourists and community members in the Town Basin to utilise toilets without having to cross the road or carpark, addressing capacity and safety issues.

Pedestrian footpaths were upgraded, landscaping added, and a new crossing built on Dent St to provide better sightlines and improve amenity and safety, notably in areas where foot traffic would increase.

In addition, wayfinding signage was added around the Town Basin area to direct individuals to Pūtahi Park, Hundertwasser Art Centre with Wairau Maori Art Gallery, the About Time ball-clock installation and the city centre. A collaboration with hapū ensured that cultural narratives were integrated into furniture, pavement design and building architecture.

Deferring Town Basin Pop-Up Visitor Information Centre

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Elected Members at the time made the decision to permanently close the Town Basin visitor information centre. The closure of the centre means Council no longer have a presence in the Town Basin and has caused confusion for visitors attempting to navigate their way around the city.

To resolve this issue, a flexible Pop-Up Space at the Town Basin was proposed. Staff considered options including co-locating an information centre in Clapham's Clock Museum or in a relocatable pod within the Town Basin. However, neither of these options would achieve the outcomes sought. A conversion of the current Whangārei Arts Museum building was proposed, providing more flexibility for multiple uses. For example, the space could be used by Council staff to provide visitors with information and otherwise be used during events and community consultation.

Detailed drawings were completed in February 2025 and a Building Consent was granted based on the Whangārei Arts Museum location. Indicative costs to complete the project are

\$300,200 excluding GST. Landscape improvements in front of the Whangārei Arts Museum to improve visibility and accessibility, and provide a greater outdoor gathering space, were also completed in preparation for this work.

The submission of the final TIF claim in March 2025 for the wider Waterfront Facilities project confirmed that there was no additional funding from TIF available to complete the Pop-Up Visitor Information Centre project. Staff agreed that an appropriate course of action would be to defer this project and seek funding in a future Long-Term Plan. The rationale for this is that the project is not urgent, and not completing this project now will not breach our agreement with MBIE.

3.1 Financial/budget considerations

Funding may be considered in a future Long-Term Plan for the Pop-Up Visitor Information Centre project.

4 Significance and engagement / Te Hira me te Arawhiti

The decisions or matters of this Agenda do not trigger the significance criteria outlined in Council's Significance and Engagement Policy, and the public will be informed via agenda publication on the website or Council News or Facebook.