

The Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade is a staged project. Stage one focuses on the pools and lower promenade to address key safety, accessibility, and water-quality issues.

How is the project being funded?

The \$9.5 million recovered from the sale of the Fred Ash building helped fund the Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade, along with \$3 million in funding from the NSW Government's Public Spaces Legacy Program.

How long will the Stage 1 construction take?

The baths closed on Sunday 13 March and the stage one upgrade commenced on Monday 14 March. It is expected that the stage one work will be completed by mid-2023 and the ocean baths will remain closed during this time.

Will the bleachers and boardwalk be retained?

Yes, the historic bleachers will be retained as part of the revitalisation of Newcastle Ocean Baths. The boardwalk is being replaced with a new, wider boardwalk, still using timber slats to maintain the look of the original boardwalk.

What's happening with the pump and pumphouse?

Due to the operational constraints of the existing pump and surrounding infrastructure, the pump will be decommissioned, but the iconic pumphouse will remain in place.

A new pump system will be installed in a location which allows easier access for maintenance. The new pump system will improve water quality through increased water circulation helping to minimise the opportunity for algae to grow.

In addition, the new pump has the capacity to completely replace the water of the baths within six hours. This is a significant improvement on the current system which is largely dependent on tidal movement to refill the baths.

Will the pool surrounds be resurfaced?

New concrete surfaces are being constructed across the entire site to meet current safety standards.

Will the ocean view be maintained?

The stage one design does not impact the view to the ocean.

Will the pool deck level be raised?

Yes, a new reinforced concrete surface will be layered over the top of the existing pool deck, providing a more stable surface around the edge of the pool. The depth of this layer will vary across the site depending on the existing surface (ranging between 200mm to 300mm).

The baths upgrade considers a 50-year design life. Planning advice has been taken into account when considering the height for the new pool deck, including the *Newcastle Coastal Zone Hazards Study 2014*, which showed likely coastal inundation hazards for the 2050 and 2100 planning horizons.

Raising the deck provides resilience to predicted future sea-level rise and increased inundation risk.

Why is the pool floor being capped?

We've consistently heard from the community that water quality is a key issue at the baths. Capping the bottom with engineered concrete will allow for improved cleaning and maintenance of the baths, which will enhance water quality for years to come.

Capping the pool bottom will also improve safety by minimising uneven edges on the floor and sand will continue to build up on the pool floor as it does now.

What impact does this have on the depth of the pool?

The overall depth of the pool will be maintained as we are increasing both the deck level and the floor level. Raising the pool will allow the baths to be used more days per year, reducing the need to close when seas are too high and dangerous.

Will the pool still have a sandy floor?

Yes. The sand on the floor of the pool comes from the occasional overtopping of the baths, which will continue to happen even after the increase to the pool deck height and the capping of the floor.

We will also consider manually replacing fresh sand in the pool following its annual clean depending on the forecast swell and weather conditions.

Why have the walls been replaced?

Community engagement and heritage assessments through the design phase of the project showed a preference for maintaining the original aesthetic of the site.

During the design phase investigations into the walls of the pool showed they were in reasonable condition, and therefore the intent was to retain the original walls in keeping with community preferences.

As construction progressed the walls were found to be structurally inadequate to meet

the upgrade's intended 50-year lifespan and therefore a full replacement of the walls is underway.

Will the northern vehicle access ramp be retained?

The northern vehicle access ramp will remain with minor modifications to be made during stage one works to facilitate maintenance access to the facility.

What's happening to the central pedestrian stairs and southern pedestrian ramp?

The new design incorporates the existing central pedestrian stairs within upgraded seating and improvements to ensure they meet current standards and provide access from the main entrance through to the pool. The southern pedestrian ramp will be replaced with a ramp which is compliant with modern accessibility and safety standards.

Will there be beach access from Newcastle Ocean Baths?

Yes, the existing access to the Cowrie Hole will be upgraded and maintained as part of stage one works.

Has accessibility been considered in the design process?

Yes, we engaged accessibility consultants, City of Newcastle's Access and Inclusion Advisory Committee and the Community Reference Group accessibility representative to provide input to the design. The design includes ramp access and improved handrail support into the pool.

For disabled and low mobility pool users, the design also considers the route from a vehicle at the entrance to the facility and down into the pool.

Will handrails be included?

Yes, handrails have been included to support access into and out of the pool.

Has heritage been considered in the design process?

Yes, we engaged heritage consultants and worked with the Hunter Regional Committee of the National Trust, who are represented on the Community Reference Group, to have input into the design. In particular, the art-deco inspired circular stairs, the iconic bleacher seating and the boardwalk have been maintained in the final design.

Can the diving board be brought back?

The diving board was removed many years ago due to user safety concerns relating to

the inconsistent depth of the pool. The diving board will not be reinstated.

Has a Review of Environmental Factors been completed for the site?

Yes. City of Newcastle commissioned GHD to prepare a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) in 2021, after it was assessed that the proposed activity was subject to the provisions of Part 5 of the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979*. The purpose of the REF is to outline the proposed works to be undertaken, identify all environmental impacts and mitigation measures and to minimise impacts to the site during the construction phase.

City of Newcastle have assessed to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting, or likely to affect, the environment as a result of the construction of the stage one work. We have reviewed the recommendations outlined in the REF and have provided the required information to the construction contractor for their action.

City of Newcastle is obliged to ensure that the recommendations outlined in the REF are addressed by the construction contractor, during the construction of the proposed works.

How was the community engaged with in the design process for the upgrade?

Over summer 2019/2020, we carried out a range of engagement activities with the community to better understand how they use and value the Ocean Baths, and to gain insight into future improvements.

The following activities were carried out from 22 November 2019 to 1 March 2020:

- Online ideas wall to allow for engagement via ideas boards. A total of 1094 comments or ideas were submitted on the walls by 354 people
- 898 telephone (poll) surveys
- 218 intercept (face-to-face) surveys
- 4,400+ visits were recorded to the Baths' dedicated 'Have Your Say' web pages.

In 2020 and 2021, we continued to seek community input on various aspects of the Newcastle Ocean Baths upgrade through the Newcastle Ocean Baths Community Reference Group (CRG). This group was formed to help the planning process for the revitalisation of the Baths through discussions and co-design workshops. The CRG had the opportunity to review and have input into three rounds of designs including preliminary designs, concept designs and final designs for the stage one upgrade.

What does stage two of Newcastle Ocean Baths revitalisation involve?

Stage two of the upgrade of Newcastle Ocean Baths will focus on the pavilion and surrounding public areas, and is subject to ongoing community consultation.