

Newcastle Beach Community Infrastructure Renewal Project, Stage 1 Bathers Way - South Newcastle

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What is the Newcastle Beach Community Infrastructure Project?

The Newcastle Beach Community Infrastructure Project (Newcastle Beach Project) aims to improve the facilities between King Edward Park and Newcastle Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC), including upgrades to the Bathers Way and South Newcastle Skate Park. The project will see the area re-activated as a community hub, with the inclusion of a kiosk, new public amenities, landscaping, artwork, shade and seating, exercise equipment and viewing areas.

The area isn't really utilised, and attracts anti-social behaviour, why would we build here?

The area between King Edward Park and Newcastle SLSC is predominantly remnant road infrastructure, with most of the adjacent assets such as amenities, skate park, stairs and paths at the end of their life and beyond repair. This results in poor amenity and leads to decreased usage. This in turn results in increased anti-social behaviour due to a lack of passive surveillance. By renewing deteriorated infrastructure and investing in new facilities, the area becomes a vibrant and attractive place to visit, and the resulting increase in usage leads to increased surveillance and a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

The completed sections of the Bathers Way have seen a 50% increase in usage, with Merewether one of the busiest areas along the coastal stretch due to the additional facilities provided. City of Newcastle is expecting a similar transformation as a result of the Newcastle Beach project, by re-activating this dormant section of our coastline and providing community facilities for all to enjoy.

What about car parking?

No new parking will be provided in addition to the on-street parking available adjacent to the site, however a drop off zone is provided as part of the new works to assist those with mobility issues to access the site. The Bathers Way is wheelchair accessible between Newcastle Beach and Nobbys Beach and the site is near the new light rail terminus in Pacific Park.

There is a skate bowl at Empire Park already, why do we need another one?

The Empire Beach Skate Park provides for a high skill level and has limited street-style facilities. The South Newcastle Skate Park will be suitable for all ages and abilities and includes a bowl that caters for beginners and intermediate level users, as well as a large plaza area, all of which are wheelchair accessible from the Bathers Way.

Will the bowl fill up with sand?

The bowl will be subject to sand and water ingress during severe weather events, which is the case for our coastal assets. This has been taken into account, and appropriate drainage has been incorporated into the design. As for sand build-up, City of Newcastle will work with the skateboarding community, as we have done at Empire Park for many years, to ensure that the facilities remain safe for all to enjoy.

What was the consultation process?

A Community Reference Group (CRG) was established for works associated with the Bathers Way – South Newcastle project. City of Newcastle meets with the CRG to understand the needs of the community and keep the community informed of upcoming works.

Feedback on the original concept plan was sought from the CRG and other members of the community in 2018. In response to the feedback we received during this process, we revised the design and sought further community feedback on these revisions in July and August 2019, with 80% of respondents supporting the project.

What will the project cost?

The current contract cost is \$14.4 million, which takes into account the skate park, bowl sub-contract and contract variations. Variations include additional work required to develop and deliver a solution, in consultation with the National Trust, to preserve South Newcastle's 113-year-old stone arches, and costs relating to additional cliff stabilisation works and waste removal.

When did construction start, and how long will it take?

Early works commenced on site in June 2020, with crews undertaking drainage works, as well as maintenance of the cliff face and extension of the existing rock catch fence. Our contractor Lloyd Group commenced on site in August 2020. A second tender followed for the skate park element of the project, recognising that this requires a contractor experienced in delivering similar projects.

Work has continued to progress on the project despite impacts of Covid-19 and the resulting supply chain delays, and what has proved to be the wettest calendar year in more than a decade. We expect completion of the project in Autumn 2023.

Why is there fencing on the sand at South Newcastle?

Safety of the community is our key priority. In order to safely deliver the works at South Newcastle we need to create an exclusion zone around the perimeter of the works area, and we need to restrict access to the works area to ensure community safety. We have temporarily created a raised area of sand (a "bund") to help manage the stability of our fencing and of our construction site during large swell and other weather events. Following completion of construction the fencing will be removed and sand levelled to normal conditions.

We consider weather forecasting and work with our Contractor to plan ahead considering swell and tidal predictions. Should significant swell be predicted we will put extra measures in place to monitor the site and rectify any fence movement when safe to do so.

Why is City of Newcastle delivering this project now, when there are other priorities such as Stockton Beach?

On ground management of erosion at Stockton and the delivery of a Coastal Management Program for Stockton remain a priority for City of Newcastle. Our Coastal Revitalisation Program which encompasses the Bathers Way project is also a priority. This project received a grant from Infrastructure NSW via the Restart NSW funding program, and we have made a commitment to deliver the project. This is a commitment to Infrastructure NSW and a commitment to the residents of the City of Newcastle, who will benefit from these upgrades.