



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WITTON BLUFF BASE TRAIL

What is the Witton Bluff Base Trail project?

The Witton Bluff Base Trail project involves the construction of a shared use pathway around Witton Bluff, between the foreshore at Christies Beach and Port Noarlunga. The project will seal the existing gravel path behind the rock seawall leading from the Christies Beach foreshore to the mid-point of the Bluff and continue with a new boardwalk pathway around the base of the cliffs and above the limestone shelf to the Port Noarlunga foreshore.

How did the concept first come up?

The idea for a trail around Witton Bluff can be traced back to the existing path heading south from Beach Road, built to construct the original seawall. This was built by the Coastal Protection Board in the 1970s. This path is likely to have started the idea to extend the trail to Port Noarlunga and has generated support over the years.

The idea was also considered by Council as part of the delivery of the state government's Coast Park vision developed in 2001 for a 70km coastal linear park from North Haven to Sellicks Beach. The Witton Bluff Base Trail now forms part of the state government's Coast Park vision and the City of Onkaparinga's Coast Park Plan (approved in 2019).

Why is the path important?

The Witton Bluff Base Trail forms part of the state government's Coast Park. Within our council area we have 31km of the Coast Park with 17km already completed. The Witton Bluff Base Trail will provide a considerable tourist drawcard, creating a unique experience with the shared use path close to the water's edge.

How is the project being funded?

In June 2020 Council was successful in obtaining a grant from the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure to match Council's contribution towards the construction of the Witton Bluff Base Trail. The total project cost is estimated at \$5.3M, with funding split 50/50 between council and the state government.

When will the path be completed?

An application for authorisation under section 23 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988 has been submitted to the Department of Premier and Cabinet – Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (AAR) for the Witton Bluff base trail project following a report to Council on [29 June 2021](#).

Whether the Witton Bluff Base Trail impacts on Aboriginal heritage is a matter that the Premier, as the Minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation, will need to determine within the Section 23 application.

AAR have advised that the Section 23 process is expected to take a minimum of six months.

Council remains committed to working with local Kurna representatives throughout the delivery of the project.

Construction of the path will commence once the Section 23 is completed.

How will construction impact the surrounding area?

The Witton Bluff Base Trail will be a significant construction project. During construction, parts of the project site and surrounds will be inaccessible to the public. This will include the existing unsealed section of trail, the Port Noarlunga Boat Ramp and areas around the Christies Beach toilet block.

There may also be temporary impacts during construction works including traffic restrictions (road or lane closures), reduction in car parking, additional noise and a potential loss of coastal views. We will keep the community informed when these changes will come into place.

What will the path be made of?

There are many options for the path which is being explored through the design phase of the project. The final path material will be long lasting, easily maintainable and need to retain character over its life.

Are ongoing costs being considered in the design?

Council has engaged a specialist consultant to develop the design parameters for the boardwalk structure. These parameters consider the site conditions during the project lifespan and account for predicted impacts of climate change.

Whole of life cost analysis will be incorporated into the design and materials selection which will consider ongoing maintenance costs.

Council currently manages and maintains approximately \$3 billion worth of assets on behalf of the community, which range from large items such as roads and buildings through to park furniture and play equipment. This significant community investment is managed through the Strategic Asset Management Plan. On completion the base trail will be added to the asset register and maintained throughout its lifecycle.

Why aren't there separate walking and cycling paths?

The Witton Bluff Base Trail forms part of the Coast Park Plan. Delivery of the Coast Park within Onkaparinga is based on providing a shared use path that can be enjoyed by both pedestrians and cyclist. Shared use paths are designed in accordance with Austroads guides to be an appropriate width for both pedestrian and cyclists to use.

To date council has provided 17.1km of shared use path as part of the Coast Park.

How will the cliffs be managed?

Council has an ongoing role in the monitoring, assessment and management of risks to people and council infrastructure associated with coastal cliffs and slopes within the City of Onkaparinga, including the Witton Bluff area.

A recent review of the risk associated with the adjacent cliff and potential impacts on the path design recommended minor alignment changes and the targeted installation of catch drains and fences to further protect against potential, future cliff changes. These recommendations will be further considered as part of the detailed design.

What impact will the path have on the natural environment?

Two-thirds of the path length will be built on the existing track that was installed to construct the seawalls. The seawalls and rock protection were installed between 1975 and 2014 to protect the toe of the cliff from further erosion.

The proposed boardwalk would also define the current access across the limestone shelf. Controlling pedestrian movements to the path will limit ongoing environmental impact and cliff degradation resulting from people currently walking on the shelf and cliffs. The boardwalk structure will sit above the level of the existing shelf and is proposed to use shallow footings in the limestone. There are historical pictures of a beach shelter previously constructed on the shelf, with evidence of the footings still visible today.

How are climate change impacts being integrated into the project?

In designing the Witton Bluff Base Trail the impacts of climate change and future sea level rise have been considered. This includes considerations such as setting the height of the boardwalk so that it allows for sea level rise and ensuring the structure is designed for future ocean conditions.

The protection of the Witton Bluff cliffs from coastal erosion has been a long-term strategy of Council and the

State Government. Past works include the construction of the existing seawalls to protect the cliff from further erosion.

Ongoing monitoring of the coastline and cliff faces will continue to inform our coastal adaptation strategy and what further protection work may be required in the future. The base trail is being designed to allow for future adaptations.

How will the boardwalk integrate with the landscape?

The design process will consider how the boardwalk can be integrated into the landscape so that the structure is dominated by the existing landscape from key views (such as the view from the jetty). The cliff backdrop is of an appropriately large scale that the base trail structure will not dominate the view.

Additionally, methods to reduce the visual impact will be explored during the design process including:

- reducing the scale of the structure (i.e. by minimising the structural member size, using open and transparent handrailing)
- limiting the contrast (i.e. selection of colours and materials that integrate the design into the landscape)

How high will the boardwalk section be?

The height of the boardwalk above the limestone shelf will be guided by several considerations including:

- a minimum height based on the coastal conditions in the area (allowing for tides, storm surges, wave effects, future sea level rise etc)
- the level of the existing shelf (which gets higher as it moves from South to North)
- ensuring the grade of the path meets the required standards.

Previous design work using similar design constraints showed that the boardwalk would vary between 0.6m and 3.5m above the limestone shelf and about 6.5m above the beach in the embayment area.

Will the project impact any Flora and Fauna in the area?

A Flora and Fauna Assessment was undertaken in August 2020 to assess the impact the base trail will have on the flora and fauna. Whilst there are sections of remnant vegetation along the proposed trail route, it is generally in poor to moderate condition.

Will the path need to be closed during storm events?

It is likely that the path will need to be closed during certain weather conditions to manage risks to the public. This will be similar to what currently occurs with jetties along the coast.

The coastal conditions will be considered during the design of the project and these will set things like the height of the proposed boardwalk structure and how far the structure is set-back from the edge of the shelf. This should result in the path being usable for most of the year apart from infrequent events.

Were any other options considered?

Alternative locations for a trail either along the cliff crest (adjacent to the Esplanade) or across the gullied slope of the cliff were previously investigated and considered unfeasible as it would pose a risk to path users as well as the path infrastructure itself, because of the potential for eventual eroding and collapse of the path structure.

An option to reclaim a strip of beach or sea immediately in front of the limestone base platform to provide a corridor for the path was also investigated but considered unlikely to be feasible from an environmental impact and a cost perspective.

How is the local Kurna community being involved?

The coast of the Fleurieu Peninsula is significant to the local Kurna people with local sites key elements of the Tjilbruke Dreaming story, the predominant dreaming of Southern Kurna country.

A Cultural Heritage Survey concluded that the project could be undertaken without impacting known Aboriginal

sites. This Survey was completed with Kaurna representatives.

Council will continue to seek feedback from, and work with, the Kaurna community to ensure that opportunities to integrate Kaurna cultural considerations in the project are pursued.

Will the history of Witton Bluff be incorporated?

Witton Bluff took its name from the brigantine ship the David Witton that was wrecked nearby in 1839.

One of the key historical features of Witton Bluff was an isolated free-standing piece of land off-shore, which was referred to as Table Rock. Table Rock, which acquired its name due to its square flat top, was approximately 50 metres from the cliff face, ten metres long and ten metres high. This notable landmark was believed to have collapsed in 1912.

Existing drill holes on the limestone platform have been identified as supports for the platform of an early 1900s beach shelter utilised by locals for recreational purposes.

The key historical features, table rock and the beach shelter, will be acknowledged through interpretive signage with descriptions and photographs on information boards along the trail, adding an element of historical bearing to the surrounding environment.

Is public art proposed?

An artist will be selected and engaged to design and construct public art. The public art process will be managed in close consultation with the Kaurna community.

Further information?

For further information please contact us on 8384 0666 or email mail@onkaparinga.sa.gov.au