

Wynyard Crossing Bridge update for the New Zealand Herald

23 April 2024

Eke Panuku provided the following update to the New Zealand Herald in response to questions about the Wynyard Crossing Bridge.

These covered the intermittent technical issues, background and funding, current work underway and alternative access to Wynyard Quarter. A summary is included at the end.

Below is the full response sent to the New Zealand Herald.

Wynyard Crossing bridge intermittent technical issues.

Wynyard Crossing bridge began experiencing intermittent technical issues in November last year. Any faults that have arisen have been responded to in a specific and direct way, again, with a focus on keeping the bridge operating to ensure little or no disruption for pedestrians and marine traffic.

We managed to get through the summer with very few days where the bridge wasn't working.

Now, we are at a point where it is critical that we perform the major preventative maintenance programme that would be applied to a long-term asset, because, due to budget constraints, a brand-new bridge is not an option.

The series of minor recent technical faults (November 2023 – March 2024) have shown that these maintenance works cannot be delayed any longer and must happen now for us to be able to provide a reliable and safe bridge going forward. We want to complete the full programme of necessary work in one closure, rather than dragging it out and potentially having more disruptions.

Experienced project manager RCP has been appointed to project manage the work on the bridge.

Background and funding

Eke Panuku, and before us Waterfront Auckland, have included a new bridge as part of previous long-term plan proposals, to improve connectivity across to Wynyard Quarter. Alongside this has been requests for funding adjoining improvements of Eastern Viaduct and Te Wero Island. This was part of the public realm improvements envisaged in transformational move 8, the "harbour edge stitch", in the City Centre Masterplan 2012.

In the December 2017 [report](#) to the Governing Body, it was outlined that the delivery of a range of city centre and downtown projects would be brought forward in time for the 36th America's Cup (AC36). This followed the September 2017 [approval](#) by the Planning Committee of an updated direction and intent for implementation of the City Centre

Masterplan and Waterfront Plan, which included a replacement of the Wynyard Crossing Bridge.

As part of this process, \$35m was allocated to Auckland Council's Development Programme Office (DPO) for a replacement bridge. However, in May 2018 Auckland Council's AC36 Joint Executive Steering Group decided to reduce this to \$20m, in order to prioritise other urgent work required to host AC36.

Work was progressed to see if the bridge could be replaced for \$20m before the start of AC36. Following a subsequent updated cost assessment that pushed a replacement bridge well beyond the available funding, along with technical constraints on the site and unfavourable mana whenua feedback, work on the replacement was paused to reconsider the best approach. This was all pre-COVID.

Given the cost pressure that council is under following COVID, along with other key strategic priorities across the waterfront, there is little choice but to extend the lifespan of the existing bridge instead of fully replacing it at this stage.

Current work underway.

We are progressing with the necessary maintenance work needed to re-open the bridge as soon as practicable, so that it can reliably operate for years into the future. To do this we are fully overhauling the bridge's old components, including replacing the winches and cables, as well as completely scrubbing and re-applying new anti-rust coating to protect the steelwork.

The disruption from the bridge being closed is difficult for those affected. However, in this case it is unavoidable as the work we must do requires the bridge to be fully closed. We are currently testing ideas to see if we can possibly shorten the time the bridge is closed. We also want to be in a position to provide more certainty on a reopening date.

We have received queries around whether it would be possible to open the bridge to pedestrians at intervals through the work. Unfortunately, this is not practically possible.

A large part of the work that will be carried out over this time will require the bridge to be scaffolded, sand blasted, and coated with anti-rust coating. Therefore, it would be impossible to make the bridge accessible to pedestrians through that process. Lowering the arms to leave the bridge open for public use when it has known technical issues also poses an unacceptable health and safety risk.

Additionally, it can't be left down while the work is underway. We have a legal obligation under the bridge's resource consent conditions to leave it open when out of operation so that boats can enter and exit Viaduct Marina.

Due to the nature of the technical issues that have been identified, several parts need to be replaced for the bridge to be able to operate reliably. These parts need to be brought in from overseas and have long lead times. Some of the new parts will require work to tailor them for Wynyard Crossing bridge as there are no off-the-shelf options open to us for some of the parts required.

While the works are carried out, as a legal obligation under the bridge's resource consent, it will need to remain upright to allow free access to marine traffic.

The specialist engineers undertaking this work have advised that we can expect the bridge to be ready for next summer (late 2024). Updates will be provided throughout this time, and more firm timings will be advised as work progresses.

The maintenance programme that is currently underway is budgeted at \$2 million and will allow the bridge to reliably operate for many years into the future.

Alternative access and promotion of Wynyard Quarter

Eke Panuku has provided regular updates to our stakeholders, tenants, partners, which are also publicly available here on the [Eke Panuku website](#).

We have been running a public information campaign on alternative routes and transport options. This includes signage around the waterfront, digital street furniture, pavement street decals, digital screens on board ferries, digital advertising space inside Wilson Parking Buildings and digital screens inside downtown office buildings. We have also been promoting the existing, excellent service from City Link bus. This goes from the bottom of Queen Street to Wynyard Quarter every 7 minutes.

This month we worked with Port of Auckland Limited and Auckland Transport on a free bus pass offer for cruise visitors. Ambassadors physically handed the passes to visitors as they landed after docking and provided assistance to direct them to the nearby City Link bus stop. While I don't have data available yet, we have been told this was a very popular initiative.

We are also investigating options for providing alternative access, however, there are significant challenges with some of the options that have been raised, including operator capacity, logistics, times of operation, health and safety considerations and potential clashes with existing services.

We remain open to exploring ideas from staff and stakeholders to provide workable alternatives to the bridge or help reduce the impact of its unfortunate closure.

Wynyard Quarter marketing campaign and stakeholder engagement.

We have also been working closely with a number of key businesses and hospitality venues, including the Park Hyatt, Baduzzi and Auckland Theatre Company, on a major marketing campaign to attract continued patronage to the Wynyard Quarter during the maintenance works, which is due to launch at the end of this month.

In addition, we continue to offer direct engagement with key stakeholders, including:

- Wynyard Quarter Transport Management Association briefings
- Heart of the City direct engagement
- One-to-one meetings with effected businesses to respond to concerns and partner in marketing initiatives
- Drop-in sessions for Wynyard Quarter residents
- Regular email updates for all key stakeholders

- Monthly email newsletter
- Responding to direct requests from stakeholders who wish to meet.

We are collaborating with the Council Whanau through:

- Weekly meetings with Tātaki Auckland Unlimited on the bridge maintenance programme
- Partnering with Auckland Transport and Auckland Council to communicate through their public facing channels

Summary

The Wynyard Crossing Bridge provides an important and convenient connection between downtown Auckland and Wynyard Quarter. Due to ongoing technical faults with the bridge over this past summer period, we have brought forward a major programme of preventative maintenance work to ensure the bridge can re-open to the public in time for next summer, and operate reliably for many years into the future.

At the moment we are focused on three things:

- Firming up the work programme to ensure it can be done as quickly as possible
- Investigating options for alternative access over the water
- Ensuring people know about the existing alternative options for reaching Wynyard Quarter.

While the work is underway, we are working with our partners at Auckland Transport and Tātaki Auckland Unlimited on supporting events and promoting Wynyard Quarter as a key waterfront destination.

Our engineers advise that that they expect the work to be completed before next summer (late 2024). Due to the nature of working in a marine environment it's not possible to give a definite date for completion at this stage, however we hope to be able to provide more firm timing as work progresses. Like everyone else, we too want to restore the bridge to full operation as soon as we can.

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