

Motupipi Cycleway: Landscape Assessment

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Introduction

1. My name is Elizabeth Gavin (nee Kidson). I reside in Nelson and am self employed as a landscape architect, working for Kidson Landscape Consulting Limited and Canopy Ltd. Prior to April 2007 my landscape practice was based in Queenstown. Before this I was employed by Civic Corporation Limited from January 2000 till April 2005. I hold the qualification of a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (Hons) from Lincoln University, a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Anthropology and a postgraduate Diploma (Distinction) in Anthropology from Otago University. I am a member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and am on the joint Nelson City Council/Tasman District Council Urban Design Panel.
2. My work involves providing landscape assessments for resource consents relating to proposed residential activity in the form of either subdivision consents or land use consents. I have provided landscape advice for Marlborough, Nelson and Queenstown District Councils as an expert witness involving the creation of new zones and have appeared as an expert witness in many Queenstown Lakes District Environment Court hearings associated with landscape classification. I have also worked as a consultant for developers seeking resource consents for land use, subdivision and re zoning.
3. My brief is to provide a landscape assessment on the landscape impacts of the proposed development on the Motupipi Estuary and the surrounding environment, properties, public reserves and from the estuary. The report should also provide mitigation measures to retain or enhance the visual amenity and landscape amenity of the estuary margin.
4. I am familiar with the proposal and the application site/trail route having visited the site on 18th of August 2012, and having previously considered the site in the context of the Golden Bay coastline for a previous landscape assessment of the Outstanding Natural Landscapes and Features of the Tasman Bay on behalf of Friends of Nelson Haven. In this assessment, the Motupipi Estuary was found to be an outstanding natural feature.

5. The Tasman District Council is still in the process of identifying the outstanding natural landscapes and features of the Golden Bay coastline. I have seen the most recent landscape assessment conducted by Andrew Craig on behalf of the Tasman District Council. Within this document, the Motupipi Estuary is found to be an outstanding natural feature. This document is currently in draft form and has not been finalised. I have considered it in this assessment; however I acknowledge that it does not form part of the Tasman Resource Management Plan.

Description of Proposed Activity

6. The proposed Motupipi cycle/walkway trail route under consideration is approximately 1.8km long and runs along the Motupipi sand spit between the NBS Takaka Golf Course (at Boyle Street) and Rototai. The cycleway route as shown¹ is indicative only, to allow for flexibility should any cultural sites be found that require buffering. The path will be formed with imported gravels and materials laid over the surface when on the land or sand spit to minimise ground disturbance, with boardwalks constructed across estuarine areas as necessary. The boardwalks will be constructed of timber, will be 1m or less in height and between 1.5m and 2.5m wide depending on whether single width or accommodating a passing bay.
7. The first section of the track passes along the top of a modified ridge that separates the golf course and estuary. The flattened ridge is planted in exotic tree species (Gum and Pine). This track is situated to the south of the golf course, which creates the dominant landscape character of the land along this portion of the sand spit.
8. The route then traverses across the estuary via a boardwalk through the rushes alongside the southern edge of the sand spit and golf course for approximately 330 metres. This will provide some separation between the existing golf course and its users. The route then heads around the western edge of the golf course.
9. The trail then travels slightly inland from the estuary margin within the sand spit, through an area that is dominated by weed species (pine, lucerne, gorse) although some natives (mahoe, kanuka, cabbage tree, akeake, ngiao) are present.
10. At the end of the sand spit, the route crosses to Rototai across the estuary mouth via ramps and a 216 metre long truss bridge before connecting to Nees Road along approximately 90 metres) of trail.

Assessment

11. A short summary has been provided below:
Summary
 - a. Landscape issues considered in relation to the proposal and the Tasman Resource Management Plan (the TRMP) relate to potential visibility of the cycle trail; consideration surface treatment and materials used and their appropriateness in the context of the site and environment, estuary margins and treatment of this sea and land interface; areas where the estuary requires

¹ See Figure 1 of Report

crossing either through the plant habitats or across streams and how this effects the amenity and landscape values associated with this ecosystem, interface areas with different uses and cultural areas.

- b. Motupipi estuary is identified in schedule 25.1F of the TRMP as an area having nationally or internationally important natural ecosystem values, therefore development along its coastal margin needs careful consideration.
- c. The route for the cycle trail is located on either recreation, open space reserve, or the coastal marine area once leaving the Residential Zone of Selwyn Street. On crossing the Motupipi Estuary mouth, the cycleway will be located within Open Space reserve, and Rural 1 land.
- d. The proposed Motupipi Cycleway route travels through parts of landscape with natural character and visual amenity values. This is especially the case where the track is located within the estuary margins.
- e. In my professional opinion, the trail where it is either a boardwalk or within the Motupipi sand spit is recessive and unobtrusive - given the low elevation of the viewer and the flat nature of the trail (which is finished with natural materials). The horizontal form of the trail is sympathetic to the dominant linear nature of the coastal character and will not require handrails. I do not consider it will result in any significantly adverse visual or landscape effects.
- f. The exception to this is the proposed truss bridge approximately 220m long, which has a localised effect on the natural character values of the Motupipi Estuary Mouth. The bridge will introduce an unnatural form into an otherwise predominantly natural area of the estuary mouth. The flat nature of the bridge will help in its integration as it will fit in with the horizontal planes of the landscape in this area, however the form will interrupt the visual access to the sea from the mouth of the estuary when viewed from the immediate areas south of the bridge (see figure 1 attached to this report). This visibility will be most noticeable when within 50 metres of the bridge and up to 250 metres viewing distance. Within this area, there will be a localised adverse effect. If back from the estuary margins (within the Reserve at Rototai), the vegetation within the reserve (such as pines, gum and pittosporum, flax and plum trees) will obscure views out to the bridge site.

DISTRICT PLAN

12. The proposed activity runs through land zoned Recreation, Open Space and Coastal Marine Area. These zones allow for some development; however care has to be taken to ensure that the proposed activity can be absorbed without introducing adverse effects, and that the natural values of the area are protected.

The Recreation Zone

13. The proposed cycleway departs from Boyle Street almost opposite the NBS Takaka Golf Club car park and runs in a westerly direction along an artificial ridge through gum

trees alongside the golf course. At Fairway 6, a boardwalk extends into the margin of the rushes alongside the fairway for approximately 330 metres, before re-joining the sand spit alongside the golf course sand burrow pit². The cycleway then extends approximately 220 metres in a westerly direction along the edge of the golf course before travelling north and west again in to the Open Space Zone within the sand spit to the mouth of the estuary.

14. The landscape has been modified with a layer of cultural activity over the form of the land that has also been re-contoured for the purposes of creating a golf course. This manicured landscape has visual amenity values associated with its aesthetic of green open spaces interspersed with established trees. This aesthetic differs from the rushes and sand/mudflats of the Motupipi Estuary which is more natural in appearance, but also has high aesthetic values associated with this natural character, the reflective qualities of the water and the ever changing vistas created by the tidal activity.
15. The boardwalks situated amongst the rushes will be at a low elevation, with the boardwalk structure itself small in scale. The landscape in this coastal environment is long and linear. The horizontal low lying form of the boardwalk will not be overly noticeable unless in close proximity to the boardwalk and will not interfere with views of the surrounding landscape. The use of wood for the boardwalk will blend in with the natural landscape, and will appear recessive in the landscape.

The Coastal Marine Area Zone

16. The proposed route for the cycleway is located in two areas within the Coastal Marine area. Firstly along the golf course, then again across the mouth of the estuary to Rototai, where the proposed truss bridge is shown. The effect of these two areas differs, due to a different location and type of structure proposed. The golf course area has the low lying boardwalk located amongst the rushes and running parallel to the shoreline, then reed land along the western boundary of the golf course³. I have discussed the effect of the boardwalk in this area under the Recreation Zone heading.
17. The estuary mouth area allows views out through a narrow neck of land on both sides to the open sea. The view here changes depending on whether the tide is in or out, with either mud or sand exposed with water channels running out to sea, or a larger expanse of water in the view. Wading birds are seen feeding here, and on Rototai side, the area is a designated dog exercise area. The crossing here departs from dune land on the Motupipi sand spit, across mobile sand, a cobble field and shell bank to an area shown as dune land at Rototai⁴(see photos 2,3, 4-7).
18. The proposed truss bridge needs to be elevated above MHWS to allow for the free passage of water underneath therefore will provide 3 metres clearance between the base of the bridge and MHWS (mean high water springs). The actual bridge will be 1.4 metres in height and will be 216m long with two 2.4 metre long ramps at either

² See Archaeological assessment Photo 8

³ Summary of the broad scale features of the estuary, September 2007; Motupipi Estuary 2007 Broad Scale Habitat Mapping; Tasman District Council; March 2008; page vii

⁴ Ibid.

end. The proposed length therefore will read as 220.8 metres long and is designed as shown on the plans produced by Nick Barber and Associates. The colour – although yet to be determined will be a recessive paint colour.

19. The end of Rototai Road (where the truss bridge is located and where the Motupipi cycle track joins to the road) is a popular recreational destination for families, horse riders, picnickers, and is a dog recreation area. The land based vegetation is a mix of mostly exotic trees (Pine, Gum and Plum), with native shrubs, flax and Ngiao added to the mix. Recently some amenity planting (additional native shrubs) has been added. The edges to the estuary are not entirely natural; with large blocks of concrete along the edges and old cultural sites (wharfs, concrete structures and an aerial) all these structures reduce the natural character of the land. The naturalness of the landscape increases along the estuary margins, due to the large expanse of the Motupipi estuary, views of the Motupipi sand spit, the tidelands of the land/sea interface to the north and the green introduced grasses and pines of the farmland of Motupipi Hill.
20. The location of the truss bridge – across the mouth of the estuary interferes with views of the horizon line and interrupts visual access to the seascape in a localised area (along the banks of the estuary (see figure 1). It can be seen from this figure, that the visual impact associated with the bridge is largely located along the coastline, where the seascape is otherwise very accessible.
21. The introduction of the bridge in this area, due to the requirement for a more engineered structure that needs to be elevated above the surface of the water, will be noticeable – especially when south of the structure along the estuary beach/margins where it will be seen against the horizon line. The visibility will be most noticeable when in close proximity to the bridge (within 50 metres); and up to 250 metres, which form the localised views along the estuary margin down to Cherry Tree Point, and up to the northern point of the sand spit. After 250 metres, the extent of the visibility and its impact diminishes with distance, to the point where the truss bridge will be visible but not overly noticeable from a view shaft along Rototai Road (see figure 1).
22. The bridge will be visible from Rototai out on the tidal sand to the north when looking south towards the estuary mouth. This will be a noticeable long linear built form in the landscape where in the immediate and local vicinity, which will reduce the natural character of the estuary mouth. I note that this is a narrow visual catchment (see figure 1), and the bridge will have a land backdrop. The bridge will introduce a dominant built form into this view, which will reduce the natural character of this view.
23. From the Motupipi sand spit at the eastern side of the bridge, there will be a similarly localised effect along the estuary margin. Views will not be visible from the land within the sand spit due to the thick scrub in this area. Views from the north along the sand spit/estuary mouth looking south (up river) will see the bridge as a noticeable built form with a land backdrop. This will interrupt the predominantly natural view of the estuary mouth, although the land of Rototai has a large radio tower structure located along the shoreline which will be seen within the same viewing catchment.

24. There will be some views from within the estuary to the south east, but these will be oblique and I imagine this area is not used by the public frequently.
25. The bridge will be visible from some houses on Motupipi Hill from a mid-distance. The bridge will be seen as an unnaturally straight line within the landscape across the mouth of the estuary, from mid distant views.

The Open Space Zone.

26. Open Space Zone (which encompasses the head of the Spit as shown on Planning Map 76) is provided to maintain and enhance recreation, conservation, access and amenity values. This area is currently covered in a mix of weeds including pines, lucerne, gorse and broom, and has in the past been damaged by fire.
27. Coastal Care have been planting natives such as totara, ake ake, ngiao and kanuka in amongst the established vegetation, and native sand binding plants namely spinifex along the sand dunes. This is an area which in terms of re-vegetation would benefit from increased accessibility as this would free up more time for weed control and new planting. I cannot give a professional opinion on the effect this increased accessibility would have on the fauna along the sand spit; however my understanding is that having a path located centrally along the spit locates visitors away from the beach frontage which may be more sensitive from an avifaunal perspective for roosting birds.
28. The visual effects of the boardwalk in this area will be localised and will appear natural and recessive. I consider that this section of the cycle/walkway will in overall be beneficial to the rehabilitation of the head of the sand spit through allowing for improved access to this area.

COASTAL POLICY STATEMENT

29. The site is situated wholly within the coastal environment, so the Coastal Policy Statement 2010 has been considered. There are relevant factors to consider from a landscape perspective in terms of natural character values of the Motupipi Estuary (see Objective 2, Policies 13-15). Some of these values relate to the importance of the habitat as a natural environment and ecosystem. Others relate to the perception of viewers of the naturalness of the landscape. Policy 6(h) of the Coastal Policy Statement requires consideration of adverse visual impacts of development and how these can be avoided in areas sensitive to such effects such as headlands and prominent ridgelines, and require controls or conditions to avoid those effects (as far as practicable).
30. I note that the cycleway by increasing access to this area of the coast is consistent with Policies of the Coastal Policy Statement that relate to public access (Policies 18 and 19), and also enable an improved ability to restore the ecosystem of the coastline (Policy 14) which promotes restoration of the natural character of the coastal environment.

CONCLUSION

31. In general, I consider the Motupipi Cycle/ walking track to be appropriate and recessive in this environment in the location provided.
32. The exception to this relates to the localised effect of the truss bridge which crosses the Motupipi sand spit at the estuary mouth and connects to Rototai. The location of the truss bridge is situated across the estuary mouth, where the sea meets the sky, which has visual amenity and natural character associated with the land/sea interface, the patterns associated with the changing tide, the predominantly natural character of the sand spit and the presence of wading birds. The main visual impact for this bridge will be from Rototai when south of the bridge, with the dominance of the bridge diminishing with distance. There will be a reduction of the natural character of the coastline associated with the introduction of the bridge as this built form will be a dominant feature within the immediate coastal environment.
33. I acknowledge that this is a localised effect where the bridge will only be visible when in the immediate and local vicinity; with the most noticeable effect on viewers along the edge of either the Motupipi sand spit landform or the Rototai estuary edge, when south of the proposed bridge. The aesthetics of a bridge may well appeal to some viewers, and this bridge will provide a new viewing opportunity for recreational users which may be seen as a positive effect.
34. There is a real opportunity to work in with Coastal Care with the increased accessibility provided by the Cycleway to provide for the continual removal of pest species and the on-going restoration of the coastal margin.

Recommendations

1. *The colour of the Truss Bridge shall be either dark grey/brown/green or black have a reflectivity value no higher than 15%.*
2. *A condition should be included to allow for a review of the consent after 1 or 2 years to see if any unforeseen effects require mitigation.*

Signed



17th September 2012

Liz Gavin

Director

CANOPY



PHOTO 1: View of the boardwalk area of the Motupipi Cycle trail from the nearby cemetery.



PHOTO 2: Path of boardwalk along the golf course (sited amongst the rushes no greater than 1m above ground level). NOTE; Dotted line not indicative of path width.



PHOTO 3: Vegetation type within the open space zone of the Motupipi Sandspit.

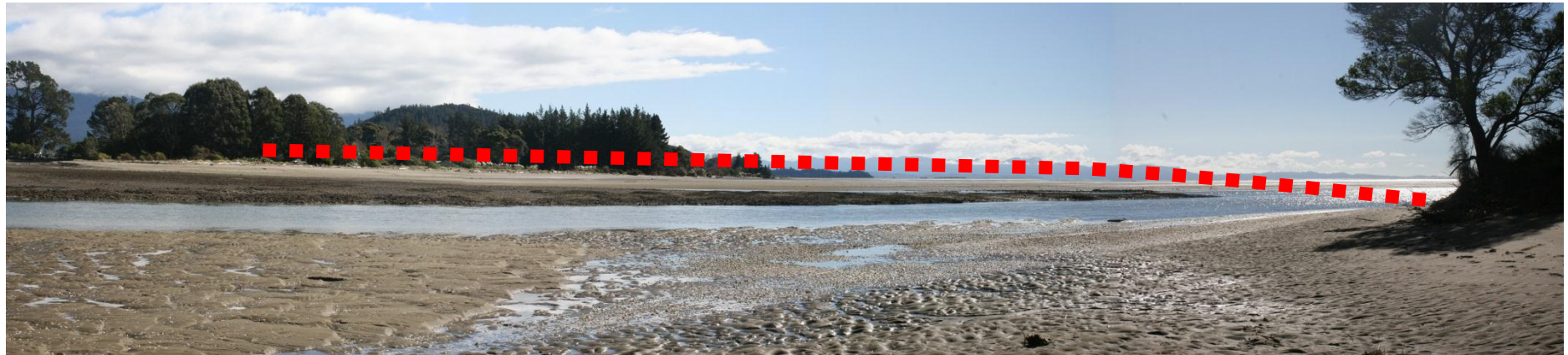


PHOTO 4: Site of proposed Truss Bridge across from the Motupipi sand spit to Rototai. Red dotted line gives rough approximation of Truss bridge location.



PHOTO 5: Truss bridge site looking upstream



PHOTO 6: Truss bridge site from Rototai looking out across the Estuary mouth to sea. Red dotted line indicates a rough approximation of the location of the bridge.



PHOTO 7: Truss bridge site looking back across to Motupipi sand spit from Rototai. Red dotted line shows approximate location of Truss Bridge.



PHOTO 8: From Rototai looking upstream from truss bridge site



PHOTO 9: View from Hambrook Road towards Rototai and the Motupipi Estuary mouth.

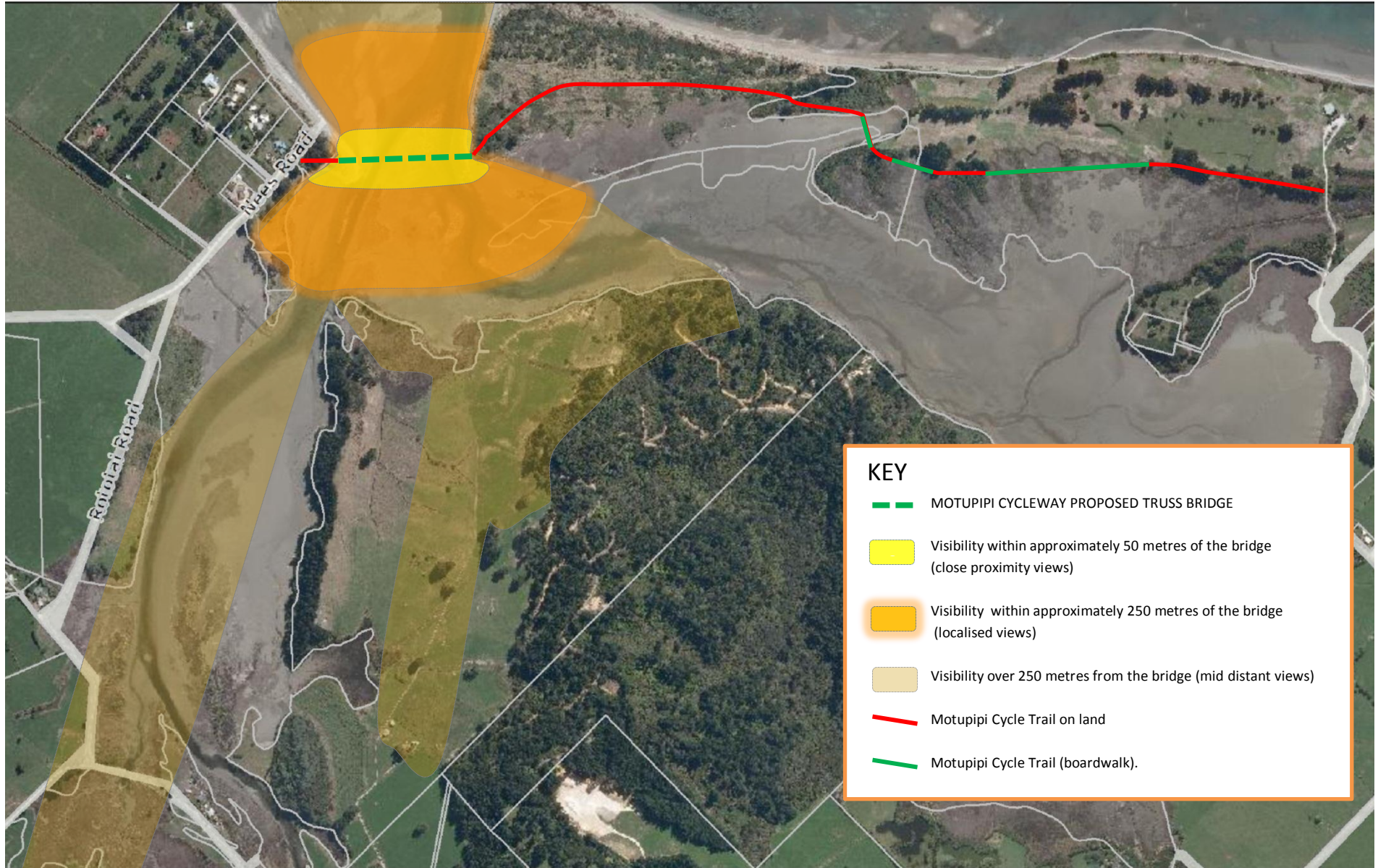


Figure 1: Motupipi Cycleway visibility catchment area for proposed Truss bridge.