

# Dune boardwalk wins backing

Laurel Stowell

Any talk about grooming Castlecliff Beach needs to go wider than just saying Whanganui District Council shouldn't clear sand away, councillor James Barron says.

During the workshop before the Coastal Restoration Trust conference in Whanganui on March 9, coastal scientist Jim Dahm said the best way to capture windblown sand was to use a spinifex dune.

He wondered why there was no dune at the Castlecliff Beach to prevent sand blowing into the carpark. Instead, Whanganui District Council uses earthmoving machinery to clear sand and driftwood from the beach during swimming season.

The cost was more than \$50,000 a year, Barron said.

"We could build something quite interesting with that money."

In 2004, the district council got a five-year consent to continue the practice, with the requirement to come up with alternative methods.

That consent had expired, Horizons Regional Council regulatory manager Greg Bevin said. Since 2010, "beach grooming" has fallen under rules in the regional council's One Plan.

Disturbance of the foreshore and removal and deposition of material from it is permitted, the plan says, provided no toxic materials are used, everything is removed when the activity is finished, there are no refuelling spills and the activity stops if historic heritage, human remains or artefacts are found.



New arrangements at Castlecliff Beach are worth talking about, Whanganui District councillor James Barron says.

Photo / Bevan Conley

Such activity is not monitored by Horizons unless it gets a complaint.

Barron has hinted there will be beach matters in the council's Long Term Plan. And Deputy Mayor Jenny Duncan has said the community will be asked for input on beach management.

"I hope and expect that does happen," Barron said.

"I'm keen to have a conversation that's a lot smarter than people pointing fingers."

He would like the talks to be about more than beach grooming, but was sympathetic to the idea of using a natural dune to capture windblown sand. It would be easy to do, because there was plenty of driftwood to use as a foundation.

The beach carpark was seldom full and could be smaller, and people could also park in the reserve. It was important for people to be able to

drive to the coast, park and see the sunset, he said.

From the reserve, a short boardwalk to the beach would be wheelchair friendly and give better access.

Added into the conversation could be the state of the Duncan Pavilion, which would last only another 10 years because salt was corroding the reinforcing steel in its base. It would be a pity to lose it as a community asset, Barron said.

The Surf Club also needs work. A \$100,000 grant towards that has not been uplifted, because the Whanganui Surf Lifeguard Service and Progress Castlecliff failed to agree project terms.

Castlecliff Beach had changed little since the 1950s, Barron said, and the main barrier to improvements there would be inertia.