

Wadeson Island Development Concept plan

Te Kohanga (Nursery, nest, birthplace, cradle, homeland, stronghold, bastion)

1. Project title

Wadeson Island Development

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to envision possibilities, establish priorities and build consensus amongst stakeholders concerning the short to long term development of the area known as 'Wadeson Island', Hokitika.

The plan does not assign resources or responsibilities to carry out the plan.

Figure 1: Schematic diagram of current situation on Wadeson island



3. Vision

To realise the potential of the Wadeson Island area, Hokitika for nature and for passive recreational use by the Hokitika Community.

4. Background/ context

Historically, Wadeson Island would have been part of a mosaic of natural estuarine ecosystems such as still exist on less modified river systems further south. These include lush riparian margins of flax, rushes, kowhai and cabbage trees.

The place known as Wadeson Island, is a recently deposited landform, comprised of river gravel overlaid with silt on the northern side of the tidal estuary of the Hokitika river. Early maps, from around 1866, show it connected to the south bank with ocean-going ships tied up where the Island is now. The area is approximately 1km inland from the sea and rises about 2 metres above normal river level. It is partially administered by Westland District Council (WDC) as a Recreation Reserve and partly administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) as Stewardship Area. The stop bank to the northern edge is administered by the West Coast Regional Council (WCRC).

The Wadeson island area has long been utilised by the Hokitika community as an open space for recreation and many efforts over the last 20 years have been made to realise it's potential. This started with a draft Restoration Management Plan (2003). The work proposed in the plan aimed to maintain the naturally functioning tidal channel adjacent to Hokitika and make the area accessible for the benefit of residents to the town. Progress was made on planting and track development through a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 2004, between WDC and DOC.

Further progress was made, in 2016, with funding from Westland Milk Products (WMP), whose factory is located at the eastern end of the area. The funding supported habitat restoration for whitebait and wading birds. In 2019, Conservation Volunteers New Zealand (CVNZ) undertook some work in partnership with WMP and DOC. A DOC Community Fund grant enabled CVNZ to continue the habitat restoration through creation of more channels, native plantings and weed control.

Whitebait continues to be an important food source for West Coasters and is of cultural significance to West Coast Māori (Poutini Ngai Tahu) due to important connections between traditional food gathering (mahinga kai), customary practices, and their identity as mana whenua.

Therefore, it was a natural progression to include the next steps of the Wadeson Island Development in the Jobs for Nature Programme that supported economic recovery and conservation post COVID-19. Under the DOC Jobs for Nature Sustainable Wild Whitebait Fishery project led by WCRC, CVNZ are undertaking activities including planting, weed control and channel creation to support and enhance the whitebait fishery at the western end of Wadeson Island.

Figure 2: Planting and channel creation activities in progress





lease



5. Stakeholders

The stakeholders who have an interest in the Wadeson Island Development include, amongst others:

- Te Runanga o Ngāti Waewae
- Department of Conservation
- Ministry for Primary Industries
- Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment

- Westland District Council
- West Coast Regional Council
- Te Waka Kotahi

- Westland Milk Products

- Hokitika League Club (currently have practice grounds at the eastern end of Wadeson Island)
- Local residents
- Whitebaiters
- Concessionaires (e.g. gravel removal)

6. Key elements to be incorporated into design

When considering the key elements that must be incorporated into the design, any development needs to ensure adequate flood protection and stormwater drainage for Hokitika.

The different stakeholders have identified a variety of aspirations for Wadeson island and what it might look like in the future. These have been taken into consideration when developing the key elements and include:

- Natural wetland and terrestrial habit including sustainable whitebait habitat
- Recreation area that includes opportunities for biking and walking as well as dog walking (potentially in a separate area),
- Opportunities for active community engagement and continued appropriate use for all stakeholders
- Opportunities to learn about and understand the history and habitats

The key elements are identified in Table 1.

Table 1: Key elements to be included

Element	Purpose
Stormwater drainage	Ensuring the area continues to protect Hokitika from flooding by allowing stormwater collected in town begin to drain
Flood protection	By preventing the Hokitika River inundating the town
Waterways/channel creation	Creating and enhancing water channels to maximise fish habitats
Fish habitats	To enable whitebait to proliferate with the creation of suitable waterways and flora to all fish to flourish
Plantings for inanga (whitebait)	Essential to allow both hatching and mature adult habitat
Tracks, incl bridges	To allow maximum passive recreational enjoyment and experience, with surfaces suitable for each use of cycling, walking and parking as appropriate.
Carparking	To increase service levels available to the Hokitika community
Dog park	To educate and stimulate
Information panels	To continue to provide essential services
Existing concessionaires	

7. Key risks

The key risks and mitigations are identified in Table 2.

Table 2: Key risks and mitigations

Element	Mitigation Mechanism
It is unknown if the hydrology / waterflow will allow the creation of additional channels	Seek hydrological advice, build into design
Creation of sustainable whitebait sanctuary may be unsustainable due to river erosion.	Agree set back level to allow ebb and flow at river edge. Delineate an agreed max point for erosion.

Existing concessionaires (eg gravel take) may be required to move or modify their operations	Consult early, incorporate into design
Timeframe, funding, building of expectations are unknown at this stage and may lead to reputational risk	Consultation with the community by inviting responses to /submissions to the plan: clarity that the concept plan is not an agreement to resource
Safety for people in the area (it's dark, enclosed)	Ensure that design is fit for purpose, ensure maintenance plan is part of the implementation plan/ MOU
Negative public feedback	Communication with the community as above, build on momentum of work already begun
Stakeholder relationships, making sure that they continue to flourish.	MOU, clarifying stakeholder expectations in governance document

Figure 3: A Picture of Possibility



