

Cowes Boat Ramp Upgrade

Information Bulletin: May 2023

Better Boating Victoria is funding the delivery of the Cowes Boat Ramp upgrade. The project will raise and extend the existing ramp to provide boaters better access by reducing sand accumulation. The adjoining jetty will also be raised and extended to create more space and access for temporarily berthed boats.

Construction works are due to begin shortly at Cowes Boat Ramp.

Better Boating Victoria is collaborating with Bass Coast Shire Council to deliver the Cowes Boat Ramp upgrade. To improve boating at this popular facility works will include a new raised boat ramp and the adjoining jetty will be raised and extended.

Project Background

The Cowes Boat Ramp is a popular boat launching destination on the southern side of Western Port Bay. With the ongoing growth in demand for boating and the difficulties faced with launching, Cowes has been identified for an upgrade.

The project will deliver an improved ramp and extended jetty making launching and retrieving of boats easier.

Better Boating Victoria has progressed detailed engineering designs, permits and approvals in consultation with the facility manager Bass Coast Shire Council, government agencies, recreational boaters and community members.

Project Construction

Bass Coast Shire Council has awarded a contract to Bridgewater Marine and construction is due to commence from late May 2023.

During the works the boat ramp will be closed for public safety reasons with expected completion in Spring 2023.

Bass Coast Shire Council will oversee the delivery of the upgrade.

Construction works will include the following improvements to the facility:

- Upgraded boat ramp which will sit higher on the beach, reducing sand build up.
- Ramps on the sides for pedestrian and vehicle access during times of sand erosion.
- Raising of the existing jetty to improve access during greater tidal ranges.
- Extension to the existing jetty to improve berthing capacity.



Frequently Asked Questions

Why has this project been funded? The Cowes boat ramp is an important part of the boat ramp network on Phillip Island. Local boaters access the ramp year-round with summer seeing use increase significantly as the holiday population on Phillip Island grows. The current ramp sits beneath the natural height of the beach and is regularly impacted by sand which accumulates over the ramp and requires regular clearing to remain operational. The lower landings on the jetty are also difficult to use at higher tides, when they become inundated.

What does the upgrade include? The project will raise and extend existing ramp to reduce sand accumulation and improve usability for boaters. The adjoining jetty will also be raised and extended to create more space for temporarily berthed boats over greater tidal range with an additional lower landing.

How much and where is this upgrade being funded from? \$2.8m has been allocated through the Better Boating Fund (BBF), which returns all of the funding collected from marine licensing and registrations for recreational boating.

When is construction due to start? Works are anticipated to commence in late May 2023, with indicative completion of Spring 2023 subject to weather conditions etc. Works will include:

- Delivery of the materials to site
- Raising and extension of the jetty
- Placement and building up the new ramp

Will I be able to use the boat ramp when construction is taking place? No, once works begin there will be no access to the boat ramp for public safety.

Where can I launch and retrieve my boat while the Cowes boat ramp is closed? The nearest boat ramps include Rhyll and Newhaven. For more information on local boat ramps please visit <https://www.boating.vic.gov.au>

Who will be managing this project? Bass Coast Shire Council will manage the construction phase of the project and have appointed specialist marine contractors Bridgewater Marine to deliver the project.

What's happened so far? Community consultation for the project took place from July to August 2021 to develop concept plans for improvements to the boat ramp and jetty. A final concept was released to the public in August 2022.

Why is a marina or groynes not being installed? A marina is not feasible at this location due to the shallow seabed, coastal processes and significant sand movement along that section of coastline. An earlier design showed timber groynes and dredging that would be used to manage the accumulation of sand on the ramp. During detailed investigations, it was determined that the construction of a solid structure such as groynes or marina would trap sand on one side but also starve the beach of sand on the other side, resulting in significant erosion elsewhere along the beach to the east.

Will the jetty height be increased? The jetty height will be increased to make it more available at a greater range of tide levels. This will be achieved by re-using and raising the existing deck. The jetty will also be extended and include 3 landings of different heights to accommodate for varying tides.

Will the ramp width be reduced? The new ramp will be 25m in width, keeping within the same existing footprint. There will be no reduction from what currently exists. The ramp will not have marked lanes and there would be room for multiple car and trailers to launch at once, as is currently the case.

How will the new ramp reduce sand accumulation? The new ramp will still require periodic maintenance to manage sand build up. However, as the new ramp will sit higher on the beach compared to the existing and it will require

significantly less maintenance. The reduced sand build up means that boaters will no longer be reliant on contractors to regularly dig the ramp out for access as often.

Due to the high levels of sediment movement and cycles of growth and erosion, the beach will continue to fluctuate in size as it has done in the past. However raising the boat ramp will make it more resilient to future changes and reduce the need for frequent maintenance.

How will we mark the jetty extension? The jetty extension will be marked with fenders and reflective markers so the lower landings will be visible at higher tides. Navigation lights will be attached to the marker to identify the jetty at night-time.

Will there be any dredging? No. Given the high volume of sand moving along the beach, regular dredging is not feasible and dredging would ultimately lead to ongoing issues with sand accumulation and very regular maintenance.

Will the ramp be made steeper? As a beach access facility, the new boat ramp will remain at the current grade of the existing. The toe of the boat ramp will be extended beyond where it currently finishes to provide an improved launching experience. Increasing the gradient of the ramp would require raising the ramp to levels that would impact sediment movement and create adverse impacts to the surrounding beach.

Will there be any increases in parking? Bass Coast Shire Council recently completed an upgrade to the eastern carpark. The new upgrade will focus on the ramp and jetty extension to improve the launching experience for boaters.

Will there be pedestrian access to the beach still? The design incorporates a pedestrian and vehicle access ramp to the beach on both sides. This will become important at times when the sand at Cowes is reduced. The finished boat ramp surface will be at beach level and therefore will not impact existing pedestrian use of the beach.

Will we get regular updates to let us know how the project is progressing? Monthly updates will be provided on the Bass Coast Shire Council website and Better Boating Victoria's website. For updates on project progress and more information please go to: <https://betterboating.vic.gov.au/ramp-upgrades/Cowes>

Need more information?

Find out more about the government's recreational boating initiatives at www.betterboating.vic.gov.au

