

Ōpārara Arches Project Update

December 2020

In 2018, \$5.7m Provincial Growth Funded was approved to upgrade McCallums Mill Road and the tracks and amenities in the Ōpārara Basin.

The Ōpārara Basin in Kahurangi National Park has significant conservation and biodiversity values. The Ōpārara Arch is the longest limestone arch in Australasia, while the Honeycomb Hill Caves systems are one of the largest cave systems in New Zealand and contain important fossil records.

The Ōpārara Basin hosts a wide range of biodiversity including the short-tailed bat, whio/blue duck, *Powelliphanta annectens*, great-spotted kiwi, kaka, kakariki, *Simplicia buchananii*, *Asplenium 'calcicole'*, pukatea, the cave spider *Spelungula cavernicolai* and the silver fern.



Figure 1: Moria Gate, Ōpārara Basin.

Photo: www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/nelson-tasman/places/Kahurangi-national-park/oparara-basin/

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The Ōpārara Arches project was split into two stages.

Stage One Works are nearing completion, these works included:

Box Canyon Toilet

The existing Long Drop toilet has been replaced with a flushing toilet. A small amount of work is still to be completed and once the certificate of completion received from the Buller District Council it will be open for public use.



Figure 2- New toilet block Box Canyon car park

Security in Honeycomb Caves Restricted Area

Remote cameras and sensors monitoring the restricted area have been installed along the track to the Honeycomb Caves. The final pieces of monitoring equipment will be installed soon. These will help protect the delicate ecological area.

Ōpārara Arch Track-Flat Section

The existing track from the lower carpark to the Ōpārara



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Arch has been upgraded and the track improved to protect the track from flood damage. River rocks have been placed along the edge and the track filled with limestone material which has compacted down for an even, comfortable walking surface. At two sites along the river edge, limestone blocks were placed on site to give a viewpoint of the river while protecting the river edge from visitors.



Figure 3 - New Ōpārara Arch Track Surface

Stage Two Works

Track and structures upgrade

In 2021, work is expected to progress on upgrading the remaining sections of the Ōpārara Arch Track, and rerouting the end of the track to a safer route, while still providing visitors a view of the Ōpārara Arch. Instead of walking the staircase at the start of the track, an elevated boardwalk is being designed to take visitors around the side of the hill overlooking the Ōpārara River. Other work will include installing a staircase at the entrance to Moria Gate, construction of a jetty at Mirror Tarn and extending the Mirror Tarn track back to the main carpark to keep visitors off the road.

Ōpārara Access Road Upgrade

The largest part of the upgrade to the Ōpārara basin is upgrading McCallums Mill Road. Given the narrowness of the road, this will require tricky management of the site. Once a contractor is selected and a plan for managing access to the site is agreed on further information will be sent out.

Site Interpretation

The Gibson Group has been engaged to design the interpretation upgrade of the Ōpārara Basin. Ngati Waewae is working closely with The Gibson Group. Along McCallums Mill Road a viewing area will be constructed which will include a new tōtara pou at the interpretation site.