



## **Late Reports**

Tararua District Council

Wednesday 25 February 2026

**1. Reports**

**L.1 Approval of Community Viewing Area on Unformed Legal Road – Ormondville Viaduct**

**3**





## Report

Date : 24 February 2026

To : Mayor and Councillors  
Tararua District Council

From : Hamish Featonby  
Group Manager - Operations

Subject : **Approval of Community Viewing Area on Unformed Legal Road – Ormondville Viaduct**

Item No : **L.1**

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### 1. Recommendation

- 1.1 *That the report from the Group Manager - Operations dated 24 February 2026 concerning the Approval of Community Viewing Area on Unformed Legal Road – Ormondville Viaduct be received.*
- 1.2 *That the Tararua District Council approve in principle the establishment of a community-led viewing area on part of the unformed legal road adjacent to the Ormondville Viaduct, with implementation subject to the matters outlined in Section 4 of the report and formalised through a Licence to Occupy.*

## Executive Summary

The Ormondville Hall and Domain Committee proposes a small, community-funded viewing area adjacent to the Ormondville Viaduct, including a short gravel path, interpretation panel, directional signage and a picnic table.

The site is unformed legal road (paper road). While modest and reversible, the proposal represents a change in functional use of the land from dormant corridor to a promoted public viewing area.

Officers support the initiative in principle. Due to the land status and change in use, it is appropriate that Council approve the proposal explicitly, with safeguards incorporated into a Licence to Occupy.

## **2. Reason for the Report**

- 2.1 To seek Council approval in principle for a site-specific exception to Council's standard approach to managing unformed legal roads, enabling a modest community-led viewing area at Ormondville.
- 2.2 The timing of this report reflects recent confirmation that the proposal represents a change in land use requiring Council approval rather than officer delegation, and it is presented now to avoid deferring consideration unnecessarily so that if approved, works can commence during the summer season.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Ormondville Viaduct is a significant historic structure within the district.
- 3.2 The Ormondville Hall and Domain Committee has developed a proposal to improve public awareness and appreciation of the viaduct through a small viewing area.
- 3.3 The proposal includes:
- A short gravel path;
  - An interpretation panel;
  - Directional signage;
  - A picnic table;
  - Minor vegetation management (subject to Kiwirail approval).
- 3.4 The land is unformed legal road (paper road).
- 3.5 Council's typical approach to paper roads has been conservative, generally limiting permitted use to grazing or addressing historic encroachments and not proactively forming these roads due to the increased maintenance requirements this poses on Council. This proposal introduces new visitor infrastructure and promotes public use.

## **4. Description**

- 4.1 The proposal establishes a modest, publicly accessible viewing area within part of the unformed legal road corridor adjacent to the viaduct.
- 4.2 The works are low-scale and reversible. Operational assessment indicates no material impact on the corridor's transport function. Public access remains unrestricted.
- 4.3 The initiative is community-led and community-funded.

## **Implementation Safeguards**

4.4 If approved in principle, implementation would be subject to:

- Confirmation by the roading team that the works do not compromise the corridor's current or future transport function;
- Compliance with District Plan and regulatory requirements;
- Written agreement from any affected third parties (including KiwiRail where relevant);
- A Licence to Occupy being entered by the parties, including conditions relating to maintenance, insurance, inspection, removal and reinstatement.

## **Residual Responsibility**

4.5 The Licence would require the Committee to maintain the improvements at its cost and risk.

4.6 Should the Committee cease to operate or maintain the site, Council may need to address any resulting health, safety or environmental hazards in its capacity as landowner. This would be limited to risk management and does not signal an intention for Council to assume ongoing maintenance of the facility.

## **5. Significance Assessment**

5.1 The proposal is not considered significant when assessed under Council's Significance and Engagement Policy.

5.2 It does not alter the level of service of a significant activity, transfer ownership of a strategic asset, or create a material financial impact.

5.3 The works are modest and physically reversible.

## **6. Options**

### **6.1 Option 1 – Approve in Principle (Recommended)**

Approve the establishment of the viewing area as a site-specific exception to standard paper road practice, subject to safeguards and formalisation through a Licence to Occupy.

#### **Advantages:**

- Supports a positive community-led heritage initiative;
- Enhances visitor awareness of a significant historic asset;

- No direct financial impact on Council;
- Works are modest and reversible;
- Provides governance clarity.

**Disadvantages:**

- Represents a departure from standard paper road management practice;
- May create future expectations regarding renewal.

**6.2 Option 2 – Decline**

Decline to support use of the paper road for the viewing area.

**Advantages:**

- Maintains strict adherence to existing practice.
- Safeguards Council from any future expectations regarding renewal.

**Disadvantages:**

- Missed opportunity for heritage activation led by the community;
- Likely disproportionate to the scale and risk of the proposal.

**6.3 Option 3 – Defer**

Defer pending broader policy review of paper road management.

**Advantages:**

- Allows strategic policy discussion.

**Disadvantages:**

- Delays a modest, time-sensitive community initiative;
- Likely disproportionate given the limited scale of works.

**7. Consultation**

7.1 The proposal originates from the Ormondville Hall and Domain Committee and reflects local support.

7.2 The Committee has worked with surveyors, community groups and adjoining landowners to develop the proposal.

7.3 Given the limited scale of development, the reversible nature of the works, demonstrated community support and absence of financial impact, this is not considered a significant decision and further consultation with the community is not required.

## **8. Conclusion**

8.1 The proposed viewing area is modest in scale, community funded, and assessed as having no material impact on the corridor's transport function.

8.2 While it involves a change in functional use of unformed legal road, officers consider the nature, scale and community benefit meet the threshold for a site-specific exception to Council's standard approach.

8.3 Any residual exposure to Council would be limited to managing health, safety or environmental risks should the licensee cease to operate, consistent with Council's obligations as landowner.

## **Attachments**

Nil.