

Reserve honours Leigh Auton

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Decades of service have earned Leigh Auton a rare privilege.

Manukau City Council chief executive's name has been stamped on a stunning piece of coastal reserve land with support from the local iwi Ngai Tai, the Clevedon Community Board and Manukau city councillors.

"I am really touched," he says. "The reserve is in a beautiful area with outstanding views."

The Leigh Auton Reserve is part of the Beachlands-Maraetai coastal walkway project and is still under development.

Chief adviser Phil Wilson says it's a fitting tribute.

"If you're standing in this council building you can literally look out the window and Leigh's had a significant hand in the development of just about everything around here, like the rail terminals and roads."

The reserve land has "the type of status you would expect for somebody of Leigh's mana", he says.

Mayor Len Brown and deputy mayor Gary Troup asked Mr Wilson to investigate options to acknowledge Mr Auton's long service.

A number of possibilities came up but Mr Wilson says the Spinnaker Bay headland was "suitably significant".

"Obviously he has been chief executive in recent years but he led planning here for a very long time.

"It's a beautiful piece of land in the long-term development of the city."

Mr Auton reaches 32 years of employment with the city council this month and will be its last chief executive.

He also feels a personal connection to the area having been involved in nearby development.

"I also sponsored the Beachlands-Maraetai sewage treatment plant project and have been actively involved in land issues in Whitford, Beachlands and Maraetai."

A section of the walkway from Te Puru Bridge to the start of Second View Ave has also been named Kelly's Walk to recognise the Kelly family's long-standing historic connection to the area.

Leigh Auton Reserve will be formally opened before October 31.