

Note: The Track Recreation Activities Policy consists of policy points 5.1 - 5.7 under 5.0 Network Principles of the Open Space Access Plan

## **5.0 NETWORK PRINCIPLES**

**These overarching principles apply to the whole open spaces network. All new tracks should be consistent with these principles.**

**Over the period of this plan, the existing network will be upgraded to comply with these principles; this will include track maintenance and the provision of suitable signage.**

- A wide range of skill and fitness levels, abilities and interests will be catered for by the access network.
- Key destinations will be able to be easily accessed from main entrances, where possible.
- Tracks will be shared use, for example, by pedestrian and cyclists wherever this is appropriate. Tracks are open for biking unless otherwise stated.
- The access network will be integrated with the wider city and regional access networks, and the transport needs of pedestrians and cyclists.
- Tracks will cater for demonstrated recreation demand where possible and appropriate.
- All track uses will be physically sustainable and have minimal environmental impact, as far as possible.
- Pest control, emergency services, and general management purposes will be catered for by the access network, where appropriate.
- Tracks will be signposted and maintained, to defined standards, with significant hazards identified and/or mitigated.
- Designated tracks may be declared open for horse riding.
- All tracks are closed to motorised vehicles except by special permission on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with policies within the Reserve Management Cluster Plans.
- Some tracks within the network will be accessible to those with limited mobility, push chairs and wheelchairs.

## **5.1 RECREATION ACTIVITIES**

The Wellington region offers a wide variety of high quality mountain biking and travelling by foot opportunities that can be enjoyed by all age groups and levels of ability. In order to enhance those opportunities, the open space track network will be improved so that it:

- increases recreation and tourism opportunities
- improves access for users
- connects communities and recreational nodes
- provides alternative transport routes.

The open space access network provides for a range of track uses including; walking, running, tramping, mountain biking/cycling, horse riding and four-wheel driving. Each of these user-groups has a variety of needs that places demands on the network:

- Walkers and runners often seek a choice of interesting routes that are accessible throughout the year
- Trampers enjoy varied terrain and accessible look-out points
- Mountain bikers/cyclists seek inter-connected tracks that provide for a wide range of skills and abilities
- Four-wheel drivers require clear information regarding the restricted areas, and where they can drive throughout the network.

Good information regarding permitted track uses both manages expectations and improves the safety of the track network for all track users.

To balance various user-group needs, the tracks shall be managed in accordance with the following framework:

## **5.2 TRACK DESIGN**

- All new tracks will be designed and constructed in a way that is consistent with the network principles (see 5.0 above).

### 5.3 TRACK NETWORKS

- The criteria for setting track-work priorities, including new tracks, and track upgrades such as extensions or re-contours, are:
  - network significance - contribution to the overall network
  - access, linkages, connectivity – level of importance
  - demand – level of public interest in the work being done
  - diversity of uses – breadth of uses catered for
  - associated risk – level of legal difficulty such as easements
  - context factors – other local factors such as development plans
  - strategic alignment – contribution to other Council objectives.

### 5.4 TRACK USE ASSESSMENT

Shared-use tracks are preferred within the open space network to optimise usage rates.

In considering the suitability of a track for user groups, the following criteria will be taken into account:

- *Public safety* – Speed of travel must be controlled for safe, shared use of tracks. For example, bike speeds may be slowed using track construction methods such as tight corners, or “switchbacks”, and reverse gradient designs.
- *Environmental impact* – Tracks must be well planned and maintained, taking into consideration local priorities and actions to protect and restore biodiversity in accordance with Council’s Biodiversity Action Plan. The impact of track use is most significant in areas that are vulnerable due to factors such as soil structure, aspect, slope, drainage, conservation value, vegetation type and track construction. Where track maintenance and environmental protection is not practical or possible in vulnerable environments, mountain biking/cycling, horse riding and four-wheel driving will be excluded and/or directed elsewhere.
- *User group conflict* - A track is unsuitable for shared use when social conflict is unable to be mitigated.

Track suitability dictates that a number of tracks and areas are closed to mountain biking/cycling (refer Schedule A to view list). These tracks and areas are reserved for walkers to facilitate quiet contemplative outdoor experiences. Reviews of track status will be carried out in terms of implementing track upgrades as part of this Plan, and/or reserve management plans or as new proposals for opportunities where additional funding is required.

When there are significant safety, environmental and/or user conflict issues that can not be managed, Council officers may close a track or change a use designation.

Specific use tracks are those designed to meet the needs for a particular use. On these tracks the priority belongs to the specific user group and other users must give way. Consideration will be given to specific-use tracks, such as a BMX or mountain bike park tracks, based on the merit of the recreational opportunity. The Council is generally supportive of the provision of such facilities provided that there is a low user demand in the area by other open space users.

Exclusive use tracks are those designated as open for only one type of use such as a specialist downhill or jump/free-ride track. Other users may be excluded from such areas in alignment with the public safety, environment impact and user group conflict criteria outlined above.

## **5.5 WALKING, RUNNING & MOUNTAIN BIKING/CYCLING**

Tracks are open to walkers, runners and mountain bikers/cyclists unless declared closed for a specific purpose in accordance with this policy. The Council intends that use of the majority of tracks is shared between bikers, walkers and runners. In particular, easy mountain bike tracks and connector tracks are well suited as shared-use tracks. Opportunities to increase the number of these tracks may be investigated as new initiatives through the draft Annual Plan process.

The current track network does not provide down-hilling facilities. The Council may identify future opportunities to develop suitable site(s) for this activity group.

### **5.5.1 Information and Education**

Information for track users is available on the Council's website. Council officers will update this information which includes; maps of open tracks, limited mobility tracks, dog exercise areas, information about tracks closed to mountain bikers/cyclists and a Mountain Biker's Code.<sup>1</sup> The Mountain Biker's Code outlines expectations about mountain biker/cyclist behaviour towards walkers and other users. This voluntary code states that mountain bikers should respect others and give way to people on foot unless it is a priority or exclusive use area for mountain bikers.

Shared use tracks provide optimal accessibility for open space network users. They also encourage users to develop an understanding and respect for other user group needs and rights. Track design and signage improvements will be made where possible to reduce the incidence of user conflict.

Walking and running are recreational activities that are accessible to everyone. Opportunities are being sought wherever possible within the open space network for tracks that can also be used by older persons, people with limited mobility, push chairs and wheel chair users.

### **5.5.2 Walking, Running, Equestrian and Biking Events**

Council approval is required for walking, running, equestrian mountain bike and cycling events. Approval is required to ensure that Council is satisfied that risk of damage and other legacy issues are properly managed.

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<sup>1</sup> The Mountain Biker's Code has been developed by Mountain Bike New Zealand in liaison with the Department of Conservation and other key stakeholders. It is a voluntary code of behaviour that is self monitored.

Written applications must include:

- a comprehensive safety plan
- estimates of the number of anticipated participants, officials and spectators
- wet weather arrangements
- the impact on regular users
- likely damage and cost of repairs
- an agreed plotted track course
- requirements for car parking, toilets and other facilities
- a public safety and awareness plan (see 5.5.2.1 below)
- a signage plan – (see 5.5.2.2 below)
- an assessment of the environmental effects of the event, such as track damage or vegetation removal, and means of minimising them.

The Council will process applications for events and notify applicants of the outcome within 20 working days. Successful applicants will be required to do the following:

- Complete a site visit of the proposed course with a Council officer
- Pay the Council a refundable bond. The bond amount will depend on the scale and the potential impact of the event. The cost of any remedial work the Council needs to carry out on the site at the conclusion of the event will be deducted from the bond prior to repayment of any remainder
- Pay a race fee for holding the event. Council may charge a race fee to reflect the opportunity cost of the use of public space. No fee will be charged to charitable trusts or non-profit groups.

#### ***5.5.2.1 Public Safety and Awareness***

- The event organiser must give notice to the public 14 working days prior to the event by signage at key entry points to the event area.
- The event organiser must provide written notification to all immediate neighbours to the event area seven days prior to the event.
- The event organiser is required to provide a sufficient number of marshals and adequate signage to ensure the safety of event participants and other users of the area.

### ***5.5.2.2 Signage***

- All event signage must be approved by Council officers prior to the event.
- All signage will be at the expense of the event organiser
- All signage will be removed promptly by the event organiser after the event.

Heavy or prolonged rainfall prior to the event may mean Council officers need to require the event organiser to postpone the event. Event postponements or cancellations are at the discretion of the Parks and Gardens Manager.

## **5.6 MOTORISED VEHICLES**

The roads and vehicle tracks in open spaces, including parks and reserves form an essential part of the open space access network. They provide vital access to recreation areas and are critical for operational management such as pest control, vegetation management, volunteer schemes and fire control.

### **5.6.1 Motorised vehicle access**

- Motorised vehicle-based recreation is not permitted in reserves, except in accordance with reserve management plans.
- Signage and physical barriers shall advise of motorised vehicle access restrictions in open space areas.
- Clubs may request motorised vehicle-based access permits from the Council for organised events providing that all vehicles are registered and warranted as required.

## **5.7 HORSES**

Tracks and open spaces are generally closed to horses due to potential track damage and the incompatibility of horse riding with other track uses. Horse riding is best suited to dedicated specific-use tracks and areas. Council may investigate horse riding demand and explore the suitability of tracks and open space areas for horses in accordance with this policy (see 5.1 - 5.4 above and Public Places Bylaw clause 20). Areas of open space land and tracks declared open to horses are listed in Schedule B of this policy.

**Schedule A): Open Space Areas and Tracks Closed to Mountain Biking/Cycling (last updated January 2009).**

Berhampore Golf Course  
Bolton Street Memorial Park  
Eastern Walkway (including Rangitatau Reserve)  
Hue Te Taka (Moa Point)  
Huntleigh Park  
Izard Park  
Johnston Hill Reserve, Karori (excludes Skyline track)  
Katherine Mansfield Park, Thorndon  
Kelburn Park Exercise Track  
Khandallah Park/Johnsonville Park (excluding Sirsi Crescent to Kau Kau summit track)  
Karori Sanctuary  
Larsen Crescent Reserve, Tawa  
Otari – Wilton's Bush  
Polhill Reserve, Aro Valley  
Queens Park (including Goldies Brae)  
Redwood Bush Reserve, Tawa  
Southern Walkway (Oriental Bay to Palliser Road section)  
Tinakori Hill (apart from the Northern Walkway track, Huntingdon Street to Ridgeline track, the Ridgeline track, West-East Connector track, Grant Road track)  
Trelissick Park  
Truby King Park, Melrose (apart from the sealed driveway)  
Waimapihi Reserve (apart from a new proposed track between the wind turbine and Aro Street)  
Wellington Botanic Garden (except the road around Anderson Park from Glenmore Street to Kinross Street)  
Wellington Zoo, Newtown  
Wilf Mexted Scenic Reserve, Tawa

The list of tracks and areas closed to mountain biking will be updated with deletions/additions by officers at the conclusion of any review process and posted on the Council's web site.

**Schedule B): Open Space Areas and Tracks Open to Horse Riding**

Woodburn Reserve  
Old Coach Road, (Johnsonville – Ohariu Valley)  
Te Kopahou, South Coast

**Current leased horse grazing areas**

Glenside Reserve  
Happy Valley  
Houghton Valley  
Chartwell Drive, Crofton Downs