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# **A summary of Draft Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park Master Plan**

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NOVEMBER 2016

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# Introduction

Since it was established in 1998, the Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park (Makara Peak) has grown to become the region’s most significant mountain bike destination. The park was mainly set up for mountain biking, but it is also used by local runners and walkers. It has continued to expand and respond to the increasing demands of a growing mountain bike market.

Makara Peak is made up of 250 hectares of bush clad hillside situated at the western end of Karori. It forms part of the 2000-hectare Outer Green Belt stretching from the south coast through to Spicer Forest and Porirua. It contains around 40 kilometres of bike trails, most of which have been sensitively built within a regenerating native forest. The park is managed in partnership with Makara Peak Supporters (the Supporters) who have built and resourced most of the track network and manage an extensive habitat restoration project.



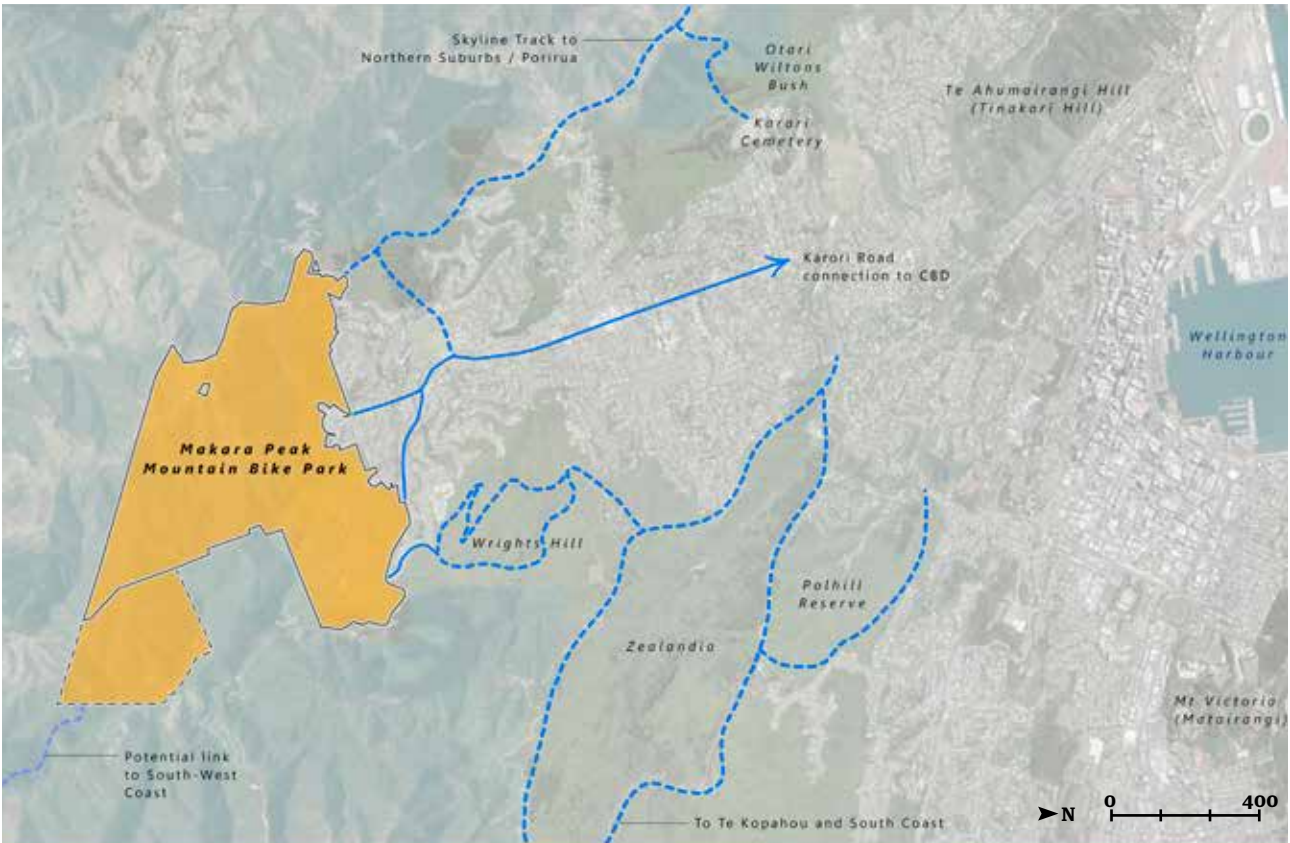
## Regional context

The growth in recreational mountain biking has led to the establishment and development of other mountain bike destinations across the city and region. These include other bike priority sites (such as Wainuiomata Trail Park and Rangituhi in Porirua) and other locations where track networks have been developed to create formal and informal riding destinations. These locations and facilities collectively form the basis for Wellington’s aspiration to increase its national status as a high-quality mountain bike destination.

## Master Plan

The master plan provides a framework around which the future management and development of Makara Peak takes place. In particular it proposes the following:

- Makara Peak should be a world-class regional facility serving the wider Wellington region
- The track model and facilities such as entrances, car parking and so on should be compatible with this status
- Development will require adequate resourcing and funding
- Management shall continue to be a partnership between the Council and Supporters



Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park and surrounding reserve network



Track network

The current track network comprises over 40 kilometres of bike priority tracks catering for beginner (grade 2) through to extreme (grade 6) riders. The current trail network has been built almost entirely by hand by volunteers and is primarily focussed on loops that start and finish at the main car park on South Karori Road.

There are currently a limited number of itineraries or loops available for intermediate (grade 3 and 4) riders at Makara Peak. In addition, significant parts of the track network in the South West sector and Summit Road sector near Makara Saddle are currently underused as they do not link well with the wider track network in the park and beyond.

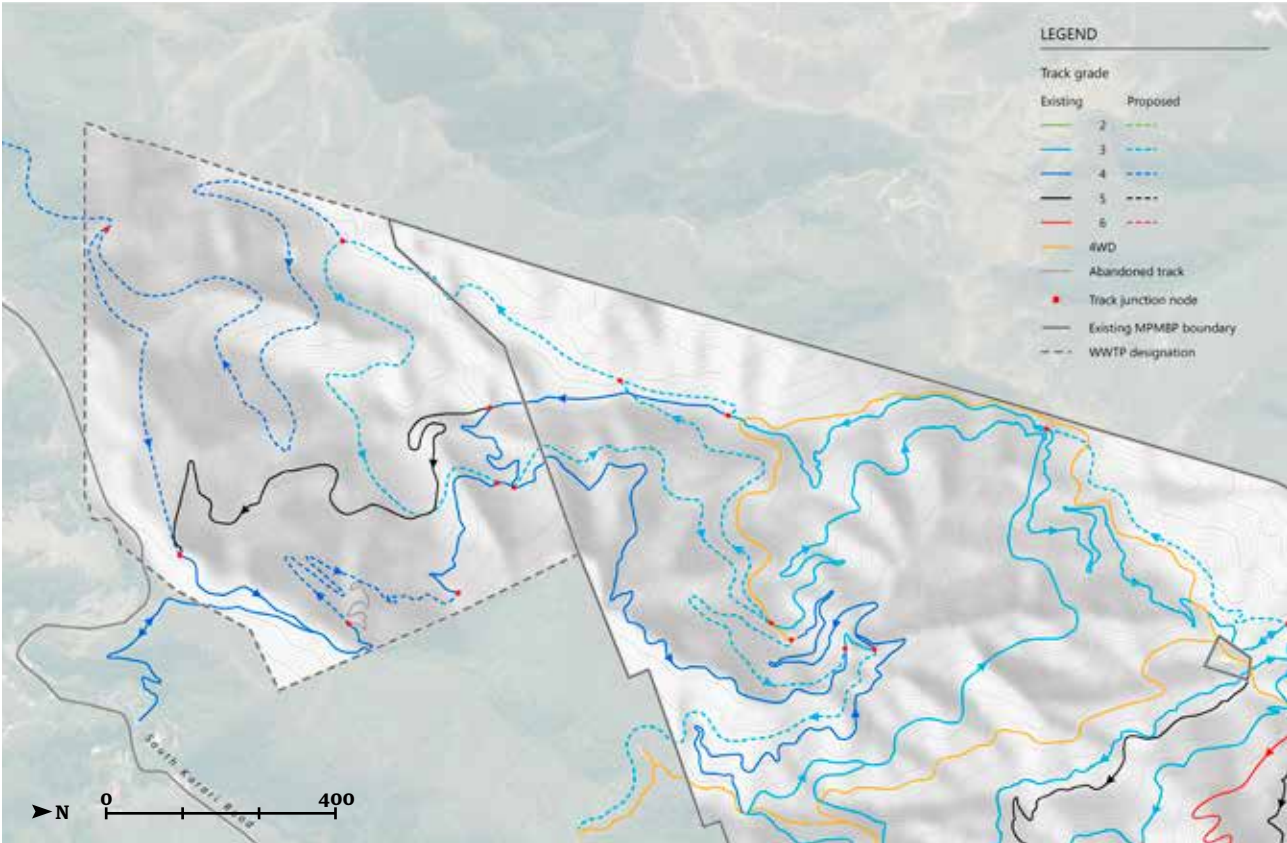
The objective of the new trail model is to provide a greater choice of riding options and give riders opportunities to spend more time at the park.

It is proposed that over the next 10 years up to 24 new track sections (16 kilometres) will be developed and

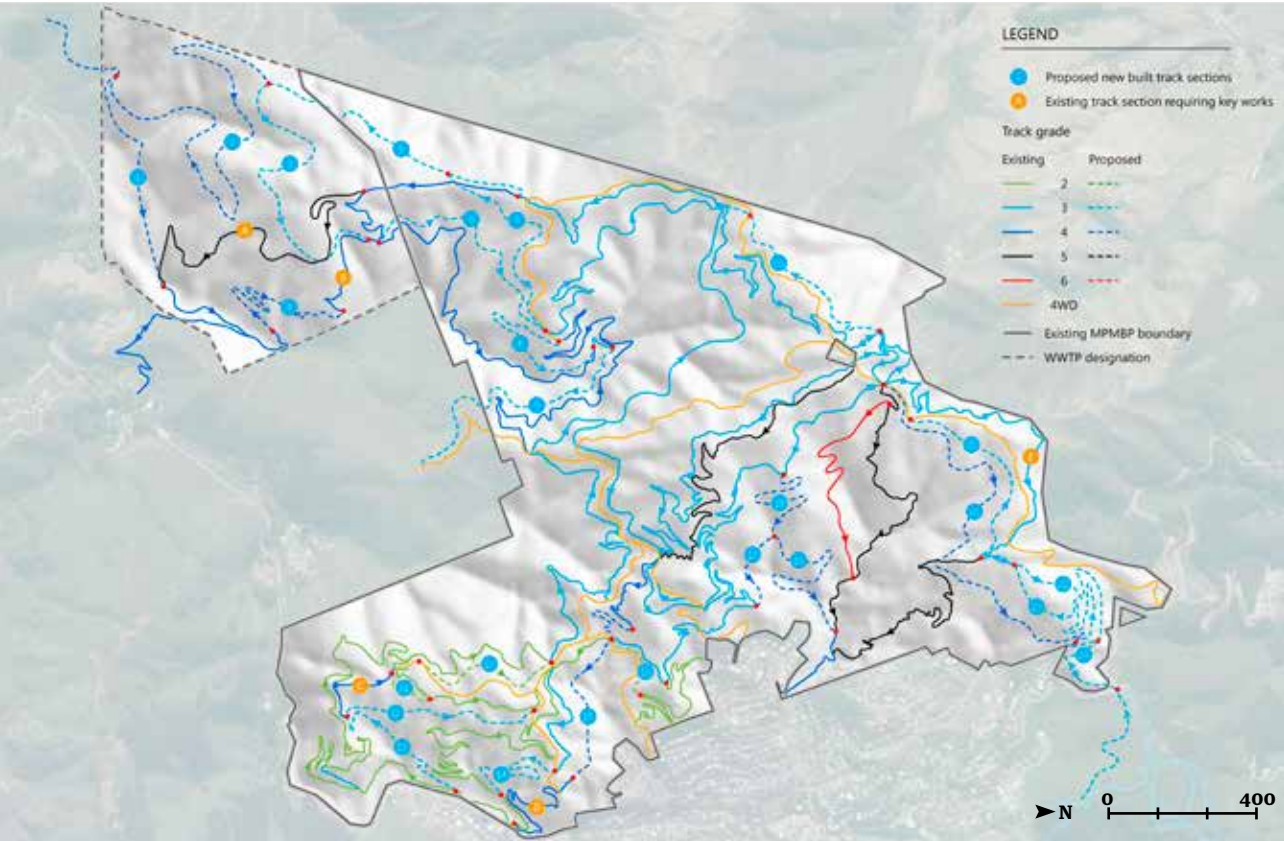
3.5 kilometres of existing tracks upgraded (subject to funding). This will enable the park to accommodate up to 1000 people per day. It is proposed to have a clear hierarchy of tracks ranging from grade 2 to grade 6 with an emphasis on grades 3 and 4. A summary of the proposals is shown in Maps 1- 4 and listed below. The tracks have been developed as three interconnecting sectors (Main Carpark, Summit Road and South West) with each providing a different user experience. Riders can link between sectors to provide longer, more challenging experiences within the park. It is proposed that work should be finished on one sector before starting on the next.

In particular the plan proposes the following:

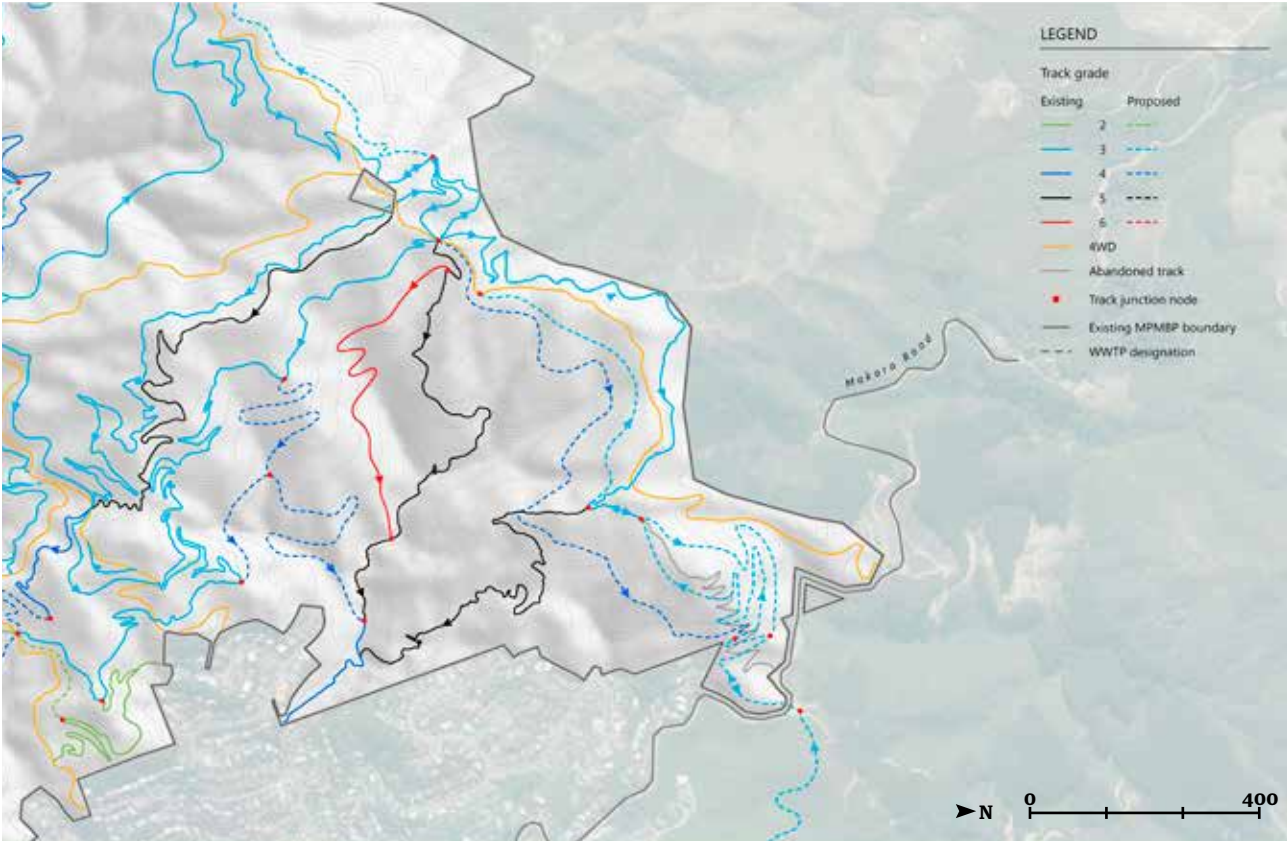
- A more coherent and attractive system of tracks in the south west area linked back to the summit and key nodes on the existing track network
- New tracks that enable more grade 4 descent options to be established from the summit to the main car park



Proposed trail map - South West

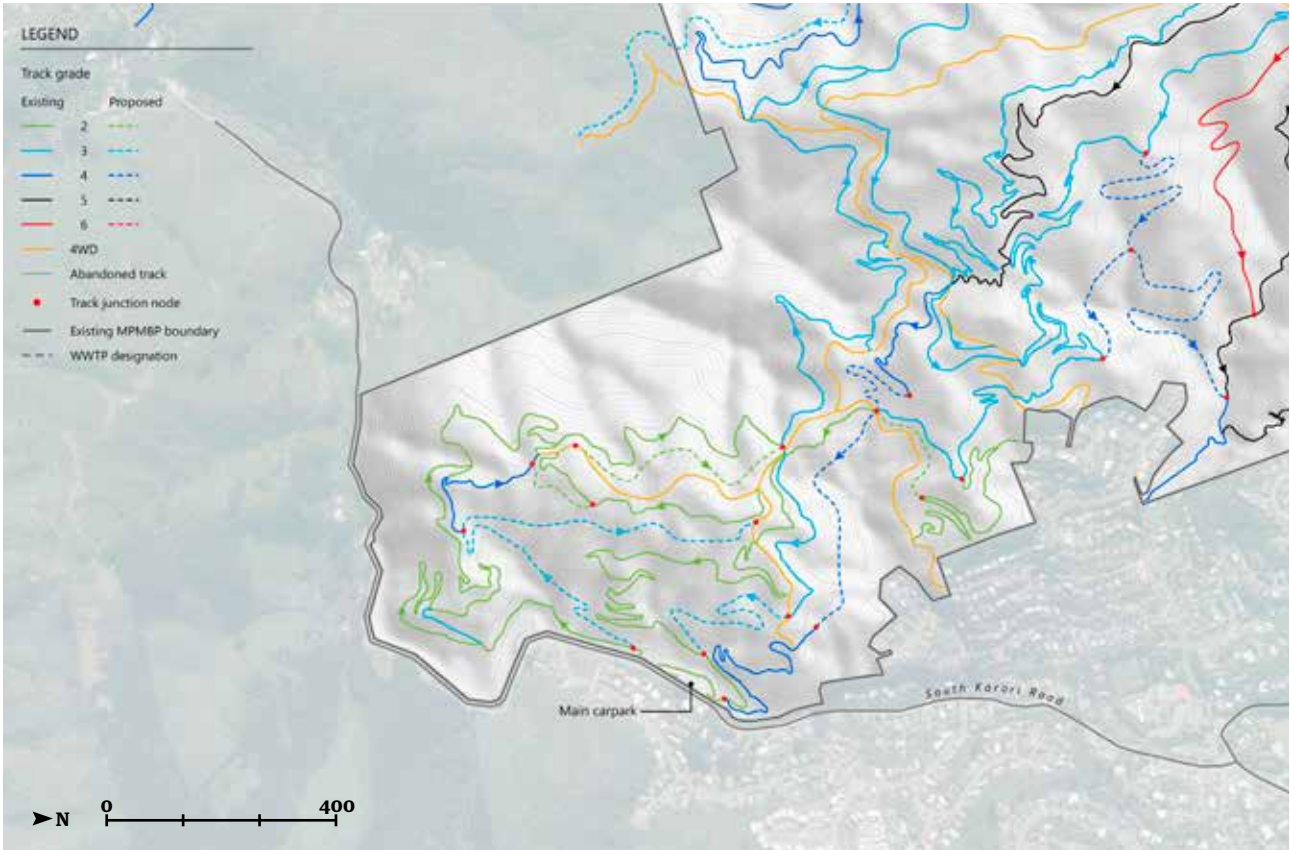


Layout of proposed track network.



Proposed trail map - Summit Road





Proposed trail map - Main Car Park

- To create a coherent and consistent grade 3 descent from the summit to the main car park
- New grade 3 outward leg from the main car park to ease conflict and pressure on Koru and provide more of a challenge for intermediate riders
- Grade 3/4 loops in the northern area that are linked to a safe crossing of Makara Road to join the Skyline Track above Karori Park

The proposed track network will comprise: grade 2 (19 percent), grade 3 (45 percent), grade 4 (30 percent), grade 5 (9 percent), grade 6 (1 percent).

**Criteria for track development**

The development of new tracks and upgrading of the existing track network has the potential to significantly impact on the landscape and ecological values of Makara Peak. An assessment of environmental effects should be carried out before starting any major track work. The building and use of new tracks should not have a negative effect on natural ecosystems<sup>1</sup>.

**Infrastructure and facilities**

The main entrance is on South Karori Road and contains a small car park with 24 parks, a toilet and wash-down facility and trail information. The car park is often full with cars parked along the road and in neighbouring suburban streets. There is also no safe place to drop off riders and no separation between riders and cars when riders arrive or leave the trail network.

It is proposed that the main car park continue to be the focus for access to Makara Peak. The track system will continue to be accessible from other locations via the secondary accesses into Karori or to the wider Outer Green Belt track network.

To make the main entrance more of a hub for visitors to Makara Peak, this area should be redesigned and more parking added. The attached plan shows a proposal to add parking for up to 36 cars as well as an area for overflow parking. The design will also allow for space between bikers and cars.

The potential for developing a crossing of Makara Road coupled with key track developments in the Summit Road sector should be considered as this could have a significant effect on how the track network is accessed and used. Future links through to Karori Park will need to be considered as part of these proposals.

A formal southern exit onto South Karori Road and down to the south coast should be investigated as this will enable the most effective use of the proposed tracks in the South West sector.



Aerial of proposed parking development at the main entrance off South Karori Road.

<sup>1</sup> Consistent with the criteria in the Open Space Access Plan 2016

Signage and wayfinding

The recent design and installation of signage has significantly improved wayfinding across the park. It focusses on naming multiple (often short) track sections rather than signage around loops and itineraries. These itineraries are presented on the main sign boards (and online). In line with the proposed track model, way marking should be reviewed to make it easier for users to follow the loops. This could involve the re-naming of some tracks with a single name to enable long continuous rides (such as descents from top to bottom).

In addition to track marking signage, information panels should be provided to raise awareness of issues such as history (both of the site and the park itself), cultural connections/stories, conservation/biodiversity and role of the Supporters.

Rest areas and shelter

Development of the park should include dedicated rest/picnic areas so riders can take a break. These should cater for a range of users, from beginner riders (and young kids) who may be challenged on uphill sections, through to advanced riders who will access remote parts of the park for the unique views and solitude.

Makara Peak is particularly exposed, especially in the upper sections. Shelters can provide valuable refuge in bad weather and improve the rider’s experience. At the least, shelter should be provided at the summit, at the far south west extremity (once developed) and at the base of the Nikau Valley.

Conservation and biodiversity

The development of Makara Peak is based on a shared vision of ongoing conservation alongside track development. This adds value to the site in terms of the rider experience and the role of the park. Twenty years ago, the area was dominated by exotic weeds and pasture – now, thanks to re-planting efforts, it is mostly indigenous vegetation at various stages of succession. Over 35,000 eco-sourced natives have been planted by the Supporters since 1998.

Makara Peak is well positioned to complement and benefit from the ongoing restoration of the region’s forest cover and indigenous fauna. In particular, it is connected with Zealandia and Otari-Wilton’s Bush and the wider Outer Green Belt, which are managed for pests such as possums, rats, stoats and hedgehogs. The longevity and scale of pest control at Makara Peak makes a significant impact on biodiversity and is fundamental to realising the benefits from the extensive planting programme.

The active use of the park by mountain bikers, runners and walkers does set limits on the potential for some bird species to establish and may cause them stress, particularly during nesting.

Track alignments have been planned and developed with a clear ethos around protecting native vegetation and using the tracks to increase the scale of pest control, planting and weed management. Areas such as the mature remnant to the west of Koru have been protected from track development and maintained as intact forest, which provides undisturbed habitat. Plans for new tracks must include revegetation planting to stabilise cut batters and follow the ideal of planting a tree for every metre of track.

Governance and management

Management of Makara Peak and implementation of the master plan will be a partnership between the Council and the Makara Peak Supporters through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

It is proposed that a person employed by the Council with responsibility for park management carry out this work and have the following role:

- To ensure good governance of the park
- To ensure an effective working partnership between the Supporters and Council
- To ensure the effective management and maintenance of the tracks (including new builds)
- To co-ordinate and facilitate effective habitat restoration and conservation work and manage volunteers
- Carry out a 5-year implementation plan

This will require an increase from the current level of service provided by the Council.

Land acquisition/zoning

Makara Peak is constrained on the western and southern sides by private land. In addition, Council land to the south provides a buffer to the Karori Treatment Plant. There are opportunities to investigate expanding the mountain bike park by acquiring adjacent land or access through it – in particular, lands to the south west and south to provide a linkage to the south coast via Karori Stream.

Implementation of the plan

Following consultation, the Council and Makara Peak Supporters will prepare a long-term implementation plan. New tracks will be built by the Council (subject to funding through the Long-term Plan) and/or by the Makara Peak Supporters.

The main entrance redevelopment will be built by the Council subject to funding through the Long-term Plan.



## Have your say

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### You can have your say:

- By making a submission online at [wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay](http://wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay)
- By sending an email to: [makarapeak@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:makarapeak@wcc.govt.nz)
- By filling in a submission form and sending it to us by post:

FREEPOST 2199  
Makara Peak Master Plan 178  
Wellington City Council  
PO Box 2199, Wellington 6140

Submission forms are available from our Service Centre at  
101 Wakefield Street, from Wellington libraries, on our website  
[wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay](http://wellington.govt.nz/haveyoursay) or by phoning 04 499 4444.

### Open Days

Karori Recreation Centre, 251 Karori Road (opposite Karori Mall)

Saturday 26 November      -      10am - 12pm  
Wednesday 30 November      -      7pm - 9pm

Tell us what you think by 5pm **Monday 12 December 2016**.







**Absolutely Positively**  
**Wellington City Council**  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke