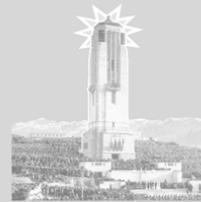


MT COOK! MOBILISED

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Draft Open Spaces Access Plan

16 July 2016

This submission has been prepared on behalf of Mt Cook Mobilised, a group which represents residents of Mt Cook, and is affiliated to the Newtown Residents Association.

Mt Cook Mobilised (MCM) thanks Wellington City Council for the opportunity to comment on the *Draft Open Spaces Access Plan*, June 2016. Mt Cook is situated close to central Wellington, and is experiencing population densification in line with Council's urban growth policy. There has been a noticeable increase in the number of children living in Mt Cook over recent years.

Mt Cook residents value the parks and tracks around Mt Cook, with many residents using the parks and trails. The monthly Papawai Reserve gardening working-bees bring the community together and help to build community spirit. MCM also uses Papawai Reserve (the local name for a section of the Town Belt below Prince of Wales Park) to celebrate our annual Mt Cook Spring Fling, a community picnic.

MCM appreciates that the Wellington region offers a wide variety of high quality walking, running and mountain biking opportunities. We encourage the use of the open space around Mt Cook for active pursuits. As a general principle we would like to see a reasonable balance between the different user modes.

MCM would like to make the following comments on the plan:

Signage

Our open space tracks are a great asset to the city. To help visitors have the best experience possible, and to reduce the possibility of getting lost, we suggest that the signs are always in a prominent place, and are maintained regularly, particularly when they have become sun-bleached and hard to read, or when they have been graffitied or vandalised.

Electric Bikes - MCM suggests that the policy on electric bikes is kept simple as it will be difficult to police electric bikes and ensure they have a maximum continuous rated power of up to 300 watts as well as being limited to 25km/hour.

Dog-walking - The plan lacks details on dog walking areas, which we feel is an oversight as many walkers are accompanied by their dog. MCM suggests that more areas are opened for dogs to be walked off the lead. A possibility for this would be the area recently deforested in Prince of Wales Park, behind the Poneke Dojo and above the Mystic Portal track.

Difficult Mountain Bike Trails - MCM suggests that difficult mountain bike trails should be designated as "mountain bike only" and not for shared use. This will ensure that there are fewer opportunities for conflict on these difficult trails, which are not designed for walking. However, where the trail route goes between points that walkers may also want to get to and from, there should be alternative routes for walkers. (A good example of this is the case of Mystic Portal, where there is already a good alternative sealed track between Connaught Terrace in Brooklyn and the lower Prince of Wales Park).

Mystic Portal– Mystic Portal is an expert-level mountain biking track. It is within Sector 13 – Central City and Waterfront, which includes Mt Cook. There is a portion of the Mystic Portal track going up towards Brooklyn, at the intersection with the City to Sea Walkway in Prince of Wales Park, near Hutchison Road, where there is potential for conflict between mountain

bikers and walkers. Potential conflicts of this type need to be mitigated by designing the mountain bike track in a way that forces a bike's speed to be reduced before it meets the intersection.

MCM is aware that the Wellington Mountain Bike Club, Mystic Portal trail builders and WCC Rangers are in discussions about improvements to the Mystic Portal track to resolve this potential conflict. MCM would like to see the signage improved; clear signage is also needed to ensure that walkers are aware that they are on an expert mountain biking track rather than a walking track. We appreciate that upgrades are being made to the trail's intersection with the City to Sea Walkway, and we are very appreciative of this co-operative approach between WCC and outdoor pursuits groups.

We have identified a further safety issue where Mystic Portal exits onto Westland Road (off Hutchison Road, near Wright Street). There is no signage at the trail exit to warn walkers that mountain bikers may be exiting at speed. The presence of the mountain bike trail is not obvious from Westland road, and the steepness of the last section of the trail requires it to be taken at speed, something that those walking on the road would not anticipate.

MCM suggests that Mystic Portal track be added to Schedule B (Open space areas and tracks that have a priority use for mountain bikes).

Bike Trail Challenges for Children – One of the challenges of living in the city is finding ways to challenge children's skills as they get beyond play equipment for very young children. The 'flying fox' in Central Park, the children's off-road bike track in Island Bay next door to the skate park, and the off-road bike track in Mount Victoria near the Wellington Badminton Hall are all good examples of activities where children can boost their skills and confidence, and these activities help children to gain the cycling skills to allow them to progress to trails in Makara Peak or Karori Park.

MCM suggests that the Mt Cook Play Area, the small park between Wright St, Hutchison Rd and Wallace Street, probably needs further development, as currently the facilities are suited to children under 5 years of age, because they are not that challenging for older children. Possibly additional play equipment or a junior bike trail could be added to the sloped area of the Play Area (near Wright Street), so long as it would not be likely to encourage noisy gatherings late in the evening, as the Play Area is immediately adjacent to several residences, i.e. we would envisage any extra facilities to be used by primary school-aged children up to 13 years of age, rather than more mature young people.

The flat section of the Mt Cook Play Area (the Wallace Street end) is well used as a picnic area, with play equipment for pre-school children. We would expect this type of use to continue on the flat area of the Play Area.

Wayfinding on Tracks - MCM appreciates that WCC is looking to make it easier to find tracks and to make connections between the various areas, both for leisure and for commuting. MCM is concerned that WCC seems to be focusing on digital wayfinding. We believe that physical signage is more effective than digital wayfinding once people are on the tracks, and that physical signage is a worthwhile investment.

MCM supports tracks being open to walkers, runners and mountain bikers/cyclists and agrees that easy mountain bike tracks are well suited to shared-use. A priority would be reviewing the quality of the signs indicating expert mountain bike tracks that are not for walkers to use.

Litter Bins

We would like to see litter bins in the car parking areas at the start of all the tracks, to encourage visitors not to litter.

To re-iterate, MCM appreciates the work WCC has put into the Draft Open Space Access plan and hopes that our recommendations are taken on board.