

**Report 99.353**

21 June 1999

File: R/2/3/1

Report to the Landcare Committee  
from Susan Edwards, Manager, Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

## **Mountain Bike Park Proposal : Tunnel Gully**

### **1. Purpose**

To outline a proposal to construct a mountain bike park in the plantation forest adjacent to the Tunnel Gully Recreation Area, and to seek Committee approval to the concept outlined in Part 1 of the proposal.

### **2. Outline of the Mountain Bike Park Proposal**

Several keen mountain bikers have come up with a proposal to form a mountain bike park (similar to the one in Whakarewarewa Forest in Rotorua) in the Council's plantation forest (Martin's Block), adjacent to the Tunnel Gully Recreation Area. A map of the area, incorporating the *Signature* for the Martin's Block and surrounding forest areas, is included as **Attachment 1**.

The mountain bikers will organise themselves as the Rimutaka Downhill Club with the intention of working with the Council to develop the Park (to be available to the public at no cost). The Club will apply for funding for the development and use volunteer labour to construct the tracks and facilities. The Club seeks assistance from the Council in the form of some staff and equipment time, and possibly some materials.

Geoff Nicholls, a member of the proposed Club, will attend the meeting to outline the proposal and answer any questions members may have.

The proposal consists of three parts:

#### **Part 1 : Below the Railway Formation**

The Club proposes to build a series of "downhill trails" on the ridge spurs descending from the railway formation to the Tunnel Gully Recreation Area car park, utilising the natural contours where possible. These trails will incorporate expert level obstacles but with bypasses to allow less-skilled riders to enjoy the ride. Access will be from Tunnel Gully car park, along the access road to the old railway formation, then along the formation to the top of the trails.

## **Part 2 : Above the Railway Formation**

The Club proposes to develop trails and a “terrain park” on the land above the railway formation in two parts by:

- clearing the existing bulldozed tracks leading up from the railway formation and the skid site to gain access to land above the pine plantation, running a technical, slow-speed downhill trail into and out of the scrub down to the skid site;
- building a terrain park/skills area on the skid site, which will be incorporated into the trail network. This terrain park would consist of a variety of jumps and bermed turns and provide a flow-on point from the upper level to the lower level below the formation.

## **Part 3 : Mt Climie Events**

The Club proposes to develop trails in the plantation forest on the west of Mt Climie for one-off downhill race events.

### **3. Comment on Part 1 of the Proposal**

This will be a new service level for mountain biking, as it will extend the track network available for mountain biking. There could be some costs to the Council during the development of the facility, although these are likely to be fairly minimal as the Club hopes to undertake most of the work using voluntary labour and sponsorship. Ongoing maintenance is an issue that still needs to be resolved.

Through the Plantation Forest Exit Strategy, Regional Parks identified the Martin’s Block as a site for developing a mountain biking track facility in the future, very similar to the one being proposed. Therefore, Regional Parks’ officers support the concept outlined in Part 1 of the proposal. However, there are still a number of details that require finalising prior to final approval being granted. Officers are of the view that Part 1 should be a trial phase to determine demand for Parts 2 and 3, and to see how the partnership works between the Council and the Club. Therefore, approval to Parts 2 and 3 should not be granted in the short term.

Issues to be worked through with the Club include:

- track and facility design, detailed location and development standards;
- ownership of the tracks and facilities;
- maintenance of the tracks and facilities;
- potential conflicts between users of the main access road and the cyclists;
- car parking requirements;
- public safety and Occupational Health and Safety;
- public liability insurance during construction of tracks and facilities.

The Council’s Plantation Forestry Manager does not have any concerns with this part of the proposal provided he approves the final location of the tracks and construction does not damage the tree crop. He also requires that the Club accept that the tracks will no longer be available when the forest is harvested in approximately six or seven years.

#### 4. **Where To From Here?**

If the Committee agrees to the concept outlined in Part 1 of the proposal, then:

- Club members and Wellington Regional Council officers will meet to resolve all outstanding issues and concerns relating to Part 1;
- Club members will develop detailed designs, track location and development standards for Part 1;
- Club members will formalise the Rimutaka Downhill Club and become an incorporated society;
- Club members and Wellington Regional Council officers will prepare cost estimates for the work and negotiate who will pay for which aspects of the work;
- Council officers will report back to the Landcare Committee seeking final approval to Part 1 proceeding;
- The club and the Wellington Regional Council will enter into a formal agreement on Part 1 of the proposal incorporating all conditions required by the Council;
- Club members will approach sponsors and seek grants to pay for development costs;
- Once sufficient funding is obtained and all issues are resolved, then construction of Part 1 will commence;
- Club members and Wellington Regional Council officers, and other relevant parties, will work through outstanding issues relating to Parts 2 and 3 of the proposal.

#### 5. **Territorial Authorities Comments on the Proposal**

Regional Parks officers have contacted all the territorial authorities in the Region (except Masterton District Council) as requested by the Committee at the Landcare Committee meeting in May, with particular reference to Wellington City Council's Makara Peaks mountain bike park.

##### **Upper Hutt and Hutt City Councils**

Parks and Information Centre staff from Upper Hutt City Council strongly support the proposal. They consider it will be very beneficial for their community and businesses in Upper Hutt.

Hutt City Council staff were also supportive of the proposal and consider that people from the city would utilise the facility.

### **Other Territorial Authorities**

Parks Officers in all the other territorial authorities in the region do not have any concerns about the proposal.

### **Kennett Brothers**

The Kennett Brothers (who are also involved in the Wellington City Council Makara mountain bike park) have advised us that they support the development of a mountain bike park in the Martin's Block.

## **6. Communication**

Once the proposal is finalised, the Regional Council and the Rimutaka Downhill Club could issue a joint press release outlining the project. Media coverage could also occur when work commences on the tracks and an official opening of the tracks could be held.

## **7. Recommendations**

- (1) *That the Committee receive the report and note its contents.*
- (2) *That the Committee approve the concept of Part 1 of the proposal (development of the downhill trails in the Martin's Block), subject to the resolution of outstanding issues to be reported back to the Landcare Committee for final approval.*

Report prepared by:

Approved for submission:

SUSAN EDWARDS  
Manager, Regional Parks (Strategy & Marketing)

ANDREW ANNAKIN  
Divisional Manager, Landcare

BARRY LEONARD  
Manager, Plantation Forestry

Attachment 1 : Martin's Block Map