



# EVERYTHING IS CONNECTED

PARKS NETWORK PLAN REVIEW  
DISCUSSION DOCUMENT



greater  
WELLINGTON  
REGIONAL COUNCIL  
Te Pane Matua Taiao



Hutt River bridge Kaitoke Regional Park

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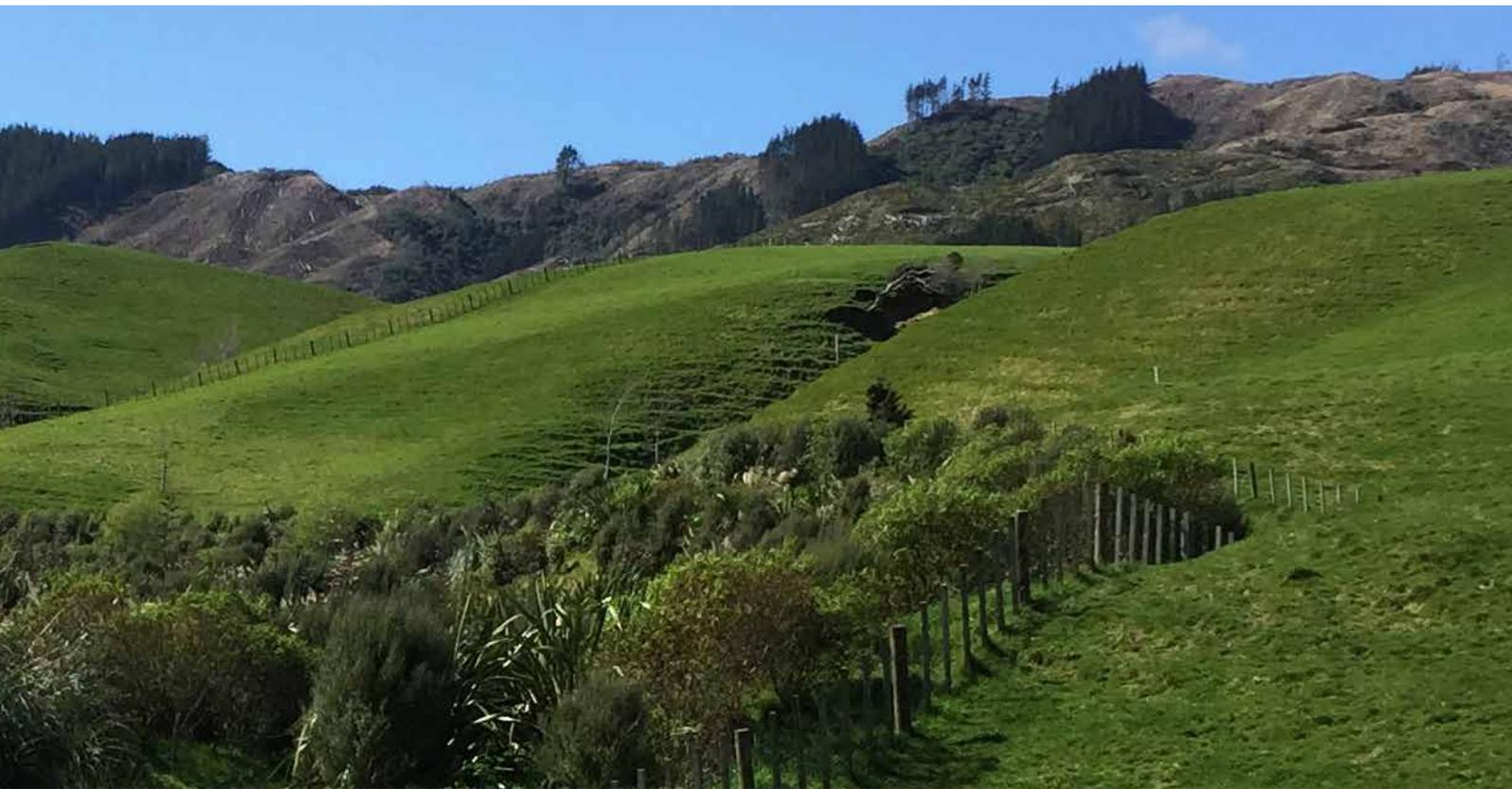
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 33,000 hectares of regional parks in the Wellington region are managed under a composite management plan, the Parks Network Plan (PNP). The current plan was completed in 2011 and is now being reviewed. Our regional parks are interconnected with the community, the economy and part of natural ecosystems. 'Everything is connected' is our theme for the review of the Parks Network Plan to reflect the place of place of regional parks in the Wellington region.

This discussion document explores a variety of issues and opportunities related to parks. Some issues and opportunities are short term, such as providing up to date recreation information and more heritage interpretation, and others are very long term, such as restoring native vegetation and creating ecological corridors for wildlife to connect significant areas of bushland.

Key issues, challenges and opportunities include:

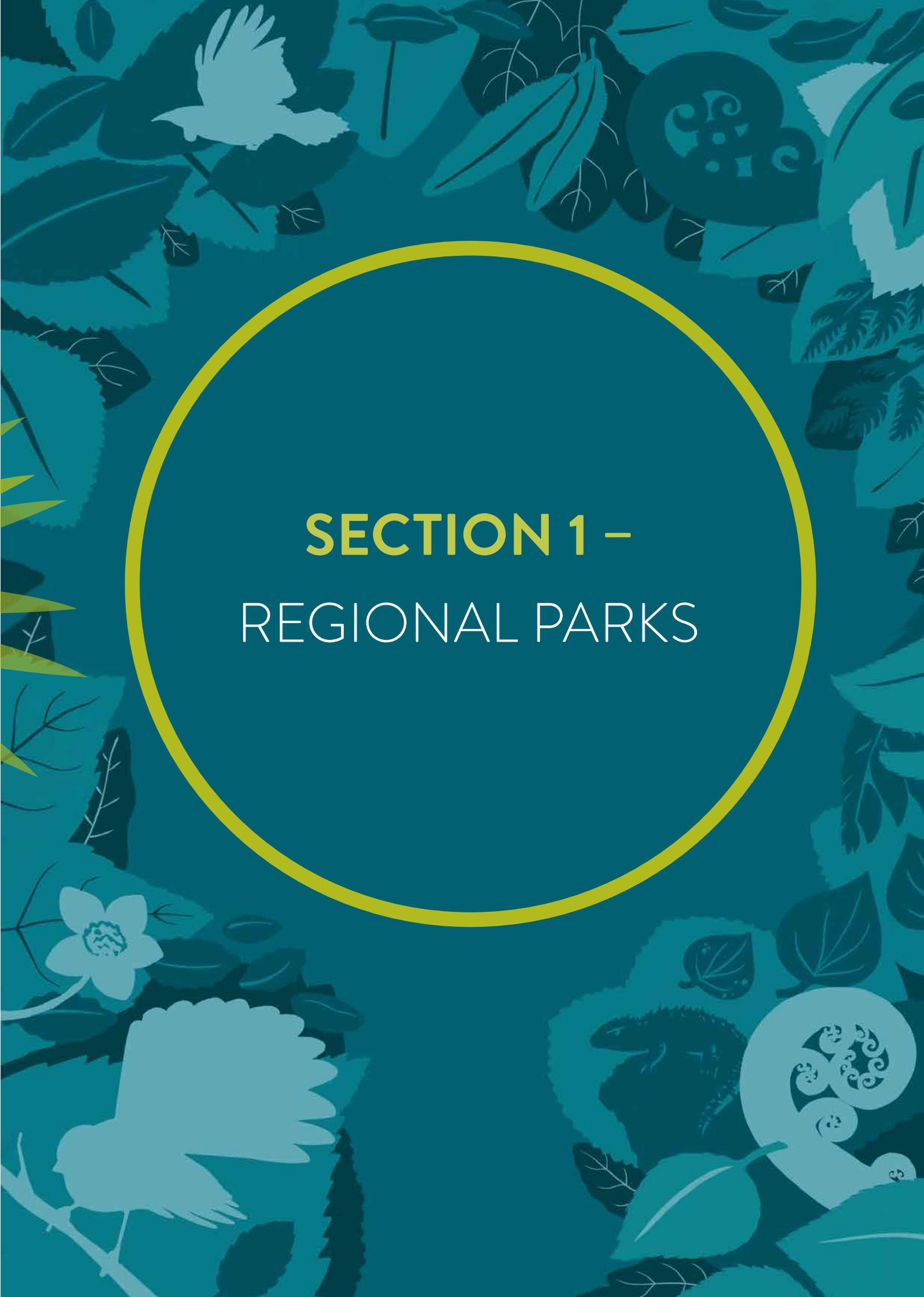
- Working more closely with our **mana whenua** partners in the management of regional parks to achieve shared goals
- Achieving shared outcomes with stakeholders and other agencies, concessionaires, friends groups and volunteers who contribute many thousands of hours of work in parks. This can include working across park boundaries as part of a landscape-scale approach to achieve biodiversity and recreation outcomes, or as part of a catchment-based approach for maintaining and improving water quality. For terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity this means working on **water quality** and enhancing **habitat links**. To ensure regional parks are well connected via recreation trails this means working with DOC, local councils and private land owners neighbouring the parks
- Checking to ensure our parks adequately provide for an ageing population with **more accessible facilities** and opportunities for healthy outdoor recreation activities. **Connecting trails** to and within parks is important, as is managing trails in a consistent way alongside other agencies so the trail experience matches user expectations
- Anticipating and managing for increasing **tourism** numbers (regional and international) which can put pressure on resources to provide necessary facilities and services
- Maintaining quality visitor experiences and providing the right **facilities** in the right places to satisfy a range of demands from more visitors and tourists. This can mean fostering friendly 'share with care' use of trails instead of duplicating them, improving our three campgrounds to better support a longer and more intensive camping season and developing more story telling in parks to reveal interesting stories which deepen understanding about our local cultural and natural history



- Maintaining **heritage assets** particularly in the context of a changing climate and more frequent severe weather events
- Having a range of options to adapt to **climate change** by ensuring that our facilities and ecosystems are more resilient and can withstand higher intensity rain days, more storm events and other effects that our changing climate is delivering, or in some cases managed withdrawal
- **Protecting significant ecosystems from threats** such as pest plants and animals and supporting native biodiversity and maintaining biosecurity programmes such as 'Key Native Ecosystems' to achieve this
- Striking a balance to maintain park indigenous biodiversity values, and responding strategically to pressures on these open spaces, such as demand for single-track mountain bike trails. Undertaking **native bushland restoration** activities with the support of community partners and others and resourcing support for volunteer efforts
- Increasing **commercial activities** in parks such as events, dog walking, bee keeping, filming and concessions for selling food and filming.

There are a range of other issues and opportunities, including those identified in the following illustration. In this discussion document we explore what we believe to be some of the key issues facing regional parks. We present this discussion as 'food for thought' and we welcome feedback which will help inform the planning process to develop a new Parks Network Plan which will guide regional park management for the next ten years.



The background is a teal color with various white and light blue silhouettes of plants and animals. There are ferns, leaves, a bird in flight, a lizard, and a flower. A large yellow circle is centered on the page.

**SECTION 1 –**  
REGIONAL PARKS

# SECTION 1 – REGIONAL PARKS

Regional parks play a different role to the smaller parks managed by local councils and vast national parks and forests with landscapes and features of national significance managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC). Greater Wellington’s regional parks are generally medium sized parks offering Wellington region residents and visitors a variety of recreation experiences in different types of landscapes. They offer bush, beaches and mountaintops to explore and form part of the scenic backdrops to Wellington, the Hutt Valley, Porirua and the Kāpiti coast. The soon to be opened Transmission Gully motorway passes through both Battle Hill and Belmont parks, so these will become more prominent ‘green’ landmarks for the region.

Regional parks and forests are used for a variety of purposes including recreation, water supply, forestry, preservation of scenic values and farming. They are places with important natural ecosystems and rich mana whenua cultural heritage. Many of our parks contain the headwaters of water catchments with forests and streams that provide important habitat for fish, birds and other species. Like other conservation areas throughout New Zealand, the forests and native birds, animals and aquatic species in our parks face the same challenges from threatening and invasive non-native animal and plant species.

## 1.1 Parks Network Plan

The Parks Network Plan (PNP) is the management plan for eight regional parks and forests managed by Greater Wellington Regional Council (Greater Wellington).

Several of the regional parks are reserves or contain areas of reserve, gazetted (legalised) under the Reserves Act 1977. Greater Wellington is required, in consultation with the community, to develop management plans for those parks containing reserves and to keep these plans current. Greater Wellington has agreed that management of all the regional parks, including those that are not official “reserves” will be guided by one plan, the PNP.

### Plan purpose

The PNP provides a vision for parks and outlines policies, rules and the overarching outcomes that are sought for parks via long term management. The plan highlights unique features in each park, and provides management directions relevant to them. It is a framework for addressing issues common to these areas and managing them in a comprehensive and consistent way.

Developed with input from mana whenua partners, stakeholders and the community between 2009 and 2011, the PNP represents a common understanding for managing regional parks. Since 2011 three amendments to the PNP have been undertaken to maintain its currency.



The PNP is a composite plan for managing eight regional parks. This helps ensure that policies and management directions for parks are consistent, but there is a dedicated section for each park in the PNP.

The PNP has generally guided park management well, which is evidenced by the need for only minor amendments to date. However, many of the key actions of the plan have now been delivered and there are other new Greater Wellington strategies, policies and work programmes which should now be reflected in the PNP. In addition, recreational activities change over time and external influences such as increased tourism demand, a changing climate and urban growth are also influencing Greater Wellington’s day to day management of parks. Mana whenua and community needs and aspirations for parks can also change over time and are influenced by the settlement of Treaty of Waitangi historical claims with the Crown, population demographic changes and broader societal trends.

Greater Wellington needs to identify how and what changes we should make to our PNP so that it continues to provide relevant policies and directions for management of parks and their facilities and services over the coming ten years.

It should be noted that the PNP is a high level management plan. It sets out the policies and more significant proposals for facilities to guide management, but it is not intended to deliver funding. This is addressed in Greater Wellington's Long Term Plan, annual budgets and an operational plan. The plan does not remove the need for consents or authorisations required by other plans or regulatory frameworks, in particular, the Resource Management Act 1991 and the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014.

## 1.2 Why regional parks are valuable

Regional parks and forests protect natural, scenic and cultural values that contribute significantly to the identity of the Wellington region, its history and people. The PNP identifies core values of regional parks. These values are assumed 'common ground' for the purposes of consultation and a starting point for development of a new parks network plan. The PNP identifies the following values:

### **Parks conserve nature, cultural and scenic values**

Parks conserve important natural areas of biodiversity and a variety of ecosystems such as lowland forests, wetlands and dunes, streams and rivers which are home to a rich variety of plants and animals. They provide important green links between parks such as the Tararua and Remutaka Forest Parks and urban areas.

Cultural features and historic sites in parks have special significance for mana whenua and represent the living history of our relationships with the land, or sense of place for residents of the Wellington region and have special significance for mana whenua. Park landscapes form part of the scenic backdrops to Wellington city, the Hutt Valley, Porirua and the Kāpiti Coast. For park visitors they offer a diversity of landscape types from lush bush to open farm land and views of stunning coastal scenery.

### **Parks provide social and economic benefits and recreational opportunities**

Regional parks provide opportunities for adventures and day to day recreational enjoyment. With approximately



Greater Wellington's summer events programme encourages people to try new activities and go and have fun in parks across the region.

480 kilometres of roads and tracks for walking, running, cycling and riding there is a rich choice of places to visit. Recreation clubs using or based in parks provide for activities ranging from horse riding to four wheel drive and trail bike riding to flying model aeroplanes.

Parks also provide opportunities for local business to flourish and employ local people. Commercial activities in parks include market and music events, films and tours which attract visitors both locally and internationally. Parks are also destinations for tourism day visits and overnight stays in campgrounds. Forestry and farming are not just ways of managing large areas of land; they provide an income stream that goes back into park development.

### **Parks contribute to healthy lifestyles and cultural wellbeing**

Parks provide opportunities to be involved in activities with others and make meaningful social and cultural connections. This can be through participation in mana whenua heritage walks, rongoa cultivation, cultural events or kaitiaki activities, friends group activities, planting and weeding days, heritage restoration projects, recreation club activities and other social meet up opportunities.

Regional parks are increasingly important as places of respite and refuge from the pressures of busy day to day lives where you can have a ‘green, nature bathing’ break from screen time and technology and be active or simply enjoy being still and amongst nature. The benefits of parks for supporting and enhancing physical and mental health and wellbeing are well documented, but apart from places for fun, health and fitness, parks support social connections and learning opportunities.

### 1.3 Purpose of discussion document

The purpose of this document is to **explore issues and opportunities** facing regional parks and forests, share research findings and possible proposals and new policy directions for inclusion in a new parks network plan – and to **seek feedback** on all of these. Initial feedback will help Greater Wellington to develop a new draft PNP which will be made available for public review later in 2018.

There are eight parks in this overarching management plan:

- Akatarawa Forest
- Battle Hill Farm Forest Park
- Belmont Regional Park
- Kaitoke Regional Park
- Pakuratahi Forest
- East Harbour Regional Park
- Queen Elizabeth Park
- Wainuiomata Recreation Area.

These parks are referred to as ‘parks’, the ‘park network’ or ‘regional parks’ in this document.

The PNP does not include:

- Whitireia Park
- Hutt and Wainuiomata/ Orongorongo Water Collection areas
- Hutt River Trail
- Wairarapa Moana.

These parks and areas have separate management plans or guiding documents.

## 1.4 Greater Wellington Long Term Plan Directions

Greater Wellington’s Ten Year Plan outlines ‘community outcomes *‘that Greater Wellington aims to achieve to ‘meet the current and future needs of mana whenua and communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions’ and ‘improve residents’ quality of life by contributing to the achievement of these outcomes’* which are:

**Strong Economy** - a thriving and diverse economy supported by high quality infrastructure that retains and grows businesses and employment.

**Connected Community** - people are able to move around the region efficiently and communications networks are effective and accessible.

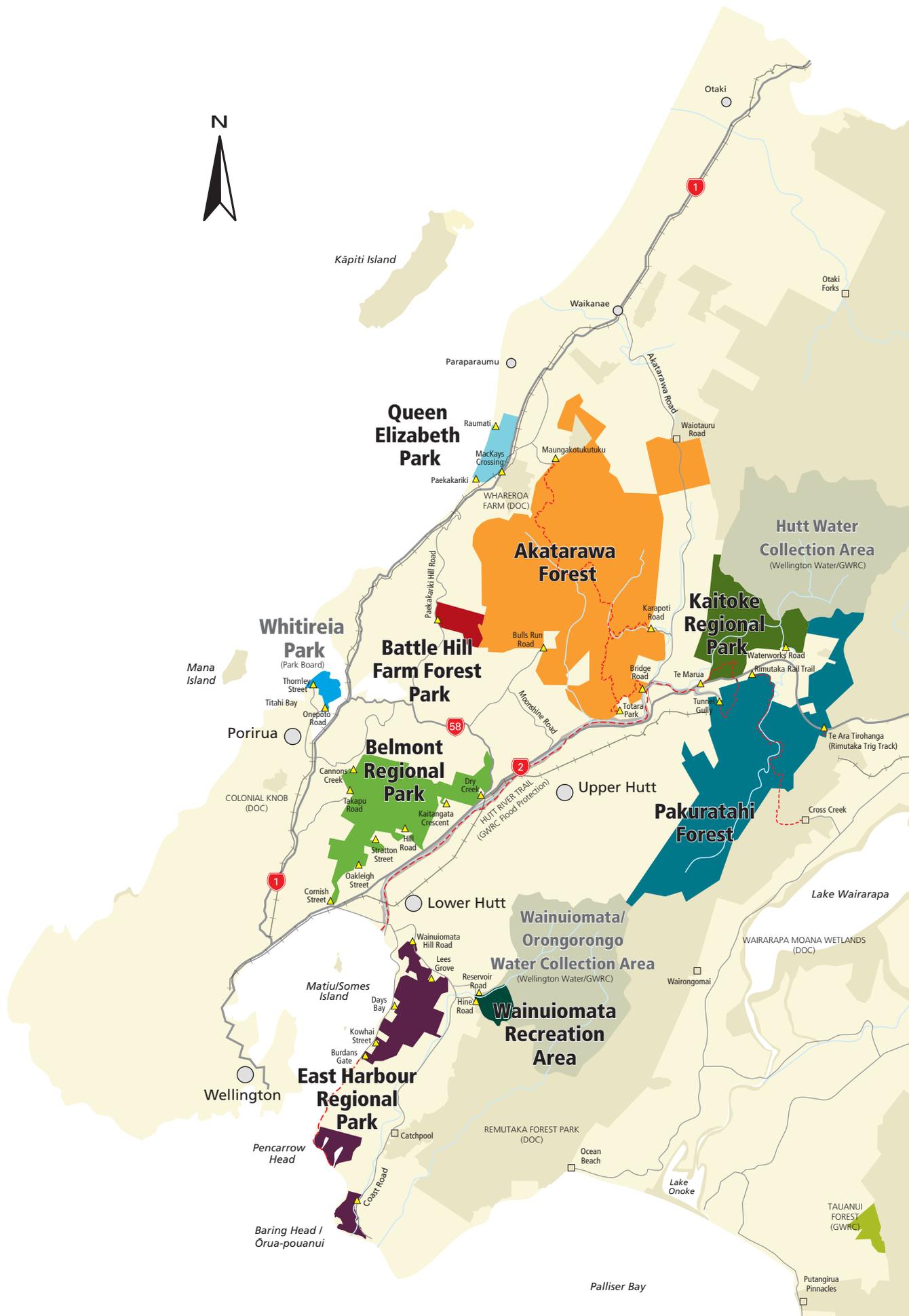
**Resilient Community** - a regional community that plans for the future, adapts to climate change and is prepared for emergencies.

**Healthy Environment** - an environment with clean air, fresh water, healthy soils and diverse ecosystems that supports community needs.

**Engaged Community**- people participate in shaping the region’s future, take pride in the region, value the region’s urban and rural landscapes, and enjoy the region’s amenities.

Greater Wellington’s Long Term Plan sets out funding available for all of Greater Wellingtons operations including parks. In the 2015-2022 Ten Year Plan, parks represent 4% of the total annual Greater Wellington budget. A lot is achieved with this budget. The regional park network is managed to provide services and facilities for visitors including:

- Maintaining a network of essential park infrastructure such as roading, tracks, structures, toilets, water-supplies, fencing and signs
- Support for volunteer works, and many other conservation and recreation activities.
- Parks planning services
- Park ranger services
- Annual events programme



Map 1. The eight regional parks managed under this plan total 33,000 hectares. Whitireia Park has its own management plan and is managed by a Park Board with representatives from Ngāti Toa Rangatira and Greater Wellington. The water collection areas and Wairarapa Moana also have their own plans. All other regional parks are included in the PNP.

Parks activities are funded 90% from general rates and 10% user charges from organised events, leases, licenses and other fees such as camping. Parks are also supported by funding allocated to biodiversity, biosecurity and environmental science activities.

The Long Term Plan provides the funding that enables implementation of PNP policy directions and day management of parks. To ensure they remain relevant to the changing needs of our regional community, the parks are being made *“more accessible to people of varying age, ability and experience”*.

Apart from the Long Term Plan, parks are supported by revenue from a number of external sources. This includes fees received from concessions, licence and lease agreements for commercial and non-commercial activities that take place in parks. Private investment and ‘community raised capital’ funds are also received for works such as habitat restoration activities, and restoration of historic features such as the Baring Head lighthouse complex buildings. Other significant funds for specific infrastructure works in parks have been associated with Transmission Gully and other land development projects to compensate for the impact of these projects on the management of these Parks.

In **2018 a new Ten Year Plan is being developed** and a draft was available for public review and comment in April. Whilst overall based funding is not proposed to increase in this Ten Year Plan there are number of significant proposals for parks. These are:

1. Upgraded swing bridge at Kaitoke RP near the camping area to increase capacity and accessibility
2. New top Terrace camping facilities (BBQ/ toilet) Kaitoke RP
3. A new toilet at Tunnel Gully, Pakuratahi Forest
4. A new loop track connection from Wainuiomata Recreation Area’s historic lower dam to the pa harakeke and Sledge track
5. Conservation work on historic bridges in Pakuratahi Forest
6. Conservation management plan for the Belmont RP WW2 munitions bunkers

See [www.gw.govt.nz](http://www.gw.govt.nz) for more information about the Ten Year Plan.

Section 5 of this discussion document identifies a range of park specific proposals. If you have feedback about these proposals please let us know.



This bridge over the Hutt River at Kaitoke Regional Park is heavily used by campers and other park visitors but it is not easily accessible or has sufficient capacity to comfortably accommodate the number of park visitors the park receives. A new bridge is proposed in Greater Wellington’s Long Term Plan capital work proposals.



Dry Creek campground in Belmont RP is the closest campground to Wellington and particularly popular with overseas visitors

## 1.5 Mana whenua, Māori residents and parks

The dynamic history and changing population of Māori residents of the region still influences relationships today and has an important bearing on land and park management issues.

Greater Wellington is home to:

- Mana whenua who have specific recognised kaitiaki responsibilities over their ancestral lands and shared responsibilities in overlapping areas with their mana whenua neighbours.
- Taura here/mātāwaka (non-mana whenua) Māori residents who settled in Wellington. [teara.govt.nz/en/apprenticeships-and-trade-training](http://teara.govt.nz/en/apprenticeships-and-trade-training).

Greater Wellington is committed to working with Māori to build resilient, connected and prosperous whānau, hapū and iwi and enhance our natural assets.

To achieve this, we have partnership arrangements with six mana whenua iwi authorities. These relationships were formalised through a Charter of Understanding 1993 and a Memorandum of Partnership in 2000 which was revised in 2013. Three of the six partners

have settled their Treaty of Waitangi historical claims with the Crown and are advancing their post settlement development aspirations which includes working closely with Greater Wellington on park management responsibilities. In park management Treaty Settlements have defined particular management relationships, but not all of the iwi of the region have completed the Treaty Settlement process.

Greater Wellington works alongside mana whenua in day to day park management and regularly consults in relation to:

- Decisions about significant new facilities or services in parks
- Maintaining an accidental discovery protocol for earth works
- Proposals that require consent
- Native vegetation restoration works
- Deciding names for new facilities or services
- Environmental monitoring and protection works
- Ceremonial occasions and many other ways
- Māori business concessionaires

**Greater Wellington's iwi partners in the region are:**

Mana whenua	Represented by	Primary interests	Regional Park interests
Ngāti Toa Rangatira	Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangātira Incorporated	Porirua, Wellington, Hutt Valley	Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, Belmont RP, Akatarawa Forest, Queen Elizabeth Park, Kaitoke RP, Pakuratahi FP
Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui	Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST)	Wellington and Hutt Valley	Belmont RP, Kaitoke RP, Pakuratahi Forest, East Harbour RP, Akatarawa Forest, Wainuiomata Recreation Area
Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai	Ati Awa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust	Waikanae	Queen Elizabeth Park
Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga	Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki	Ōtaki	Interest in region wide kaitiaki matters
Rangitāne o Wairarapa	Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated	Wairarapa	General interest in Kaitoke RP, Pakuratahi Forest
Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa	Ngāti Kahungunu ki, Wairarapa Trust	Wairarapa	General interest in Kaitoke RP, Pakuratahi Forest

We are also committed to consulting with taura here/ mātāwaka groups as part of the review of the PNP.

### Co-management of Parangarahu Lakes

Greater Wellington and Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) jointly manage the Parangarahu Lakes Area through a 'Roopu Tiaki' or guardianship group set up in 2012. The Roopu Tiaki developed a long-term vision and co-management plan for the Parangarahu Lakes area of East Harbour Regional Park. The Co-Management Plan and PNP amendment were adopted by Greater Wellington and PNBST in February 2015.

The co-management plan outlines the approach to be taken by PNBST and Greater Wellington to fulfil their kaitiaki and legal responsibilities. It is a guiding document setting the vision, guiding principles, historical context, management objectives and priority actions for management of the Parangarahu Lakes Area.

Key activities in the plan are:

- Restoration of native fish habitat and fish migration passages from the lakes to the sea
- Native plantings, predator control and terrestrial and aquatic weed control, and monitoring with the addition of Māori cultural health indicators
- Protection of significant cultural heritage, including recording oral histories and other story telling
- Enabling Taranaki Whānui iwi members to exercise their kaitiaki responsibilities
- Advocating for closing the current gap in the Remutaka Cycle Trail

Collaborative management works include:

- Guided iwi history tour of the lakes and presentations on cultural and ecological values of the lakes
- Kaumātua trips to the lakes
- Iwi planting days
- Annual Rahui for nesting dotterels

### Greater Wellington Māori Partnership Framework/ Te Kawenga Rangapu Māori

Greater Wellington's Māori Partnership Framework 2016-2026 proposes new ways of working with Māori to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes that are aligned to the aspirations of mana whenua for community benefit. The Framework aims to deliver prosperous Māori with effective collaborative networks connected to an environment in optimum health. One of the Strategic Pou (strategic drivers) of the Framework is *Active Māori participation in decision making*. Three of the ways that Greater Wellington aims to give expression to this commitment are particularly relevant to regional parks. These are:

1. Review and strengthen existing Māori participation processes to enable effective strategic decision making (eg Ara Tahi and mana whenua authorities have received presentations on the PNP)
2. Explore ongoing co-governance opportunities with Māori to enable improved social, cultural and environmental outcomes (eg, Parangarahu Lakes co-management)
3. Partner proactively with Māori to develop new partnership and co-management arrangements of natural and physical resources.

### PNP directions

Over the period since the PNP was developed Greater Wellington has worked more closely with mana whenua as significant partners in the management of land across the region including parks. The PNP needs to be updated to better reflect this work in partnership approach or mahitahi approach we now have with mana whenua. Greater Wellington is working with mana whenua throughout the PNP review process to develop new directions for the management of parks and areas of interest. This is a commitment to active engagement, good faith and commonality of purpose in sustainable land management.

The current PNP identifies two key outcomes relating to cultural heritage:

- *Significant heritage features and associated histories, stories and knowledge are identified and protected*
- *Cultural heritage in Greater Wellington parks is enhanced through cultural awareness and appreciation.*

Policies in the PNP relating to mana whenua and cultural heritage remain relevant but may be updated and enhanced. These are:

- **Identifying and protecting historic and cultural features**, taking their significance into account and adhering to established protocols and the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014
- **Managing sites of significance** to tangata whenua through engaging with and taking into account protocols relating to cultural artefacts or human remains and disclosure and non-disclosure of sites and information
- Encouraging greater **awareness** of the range and significance of the **cultural heritage values and features** of regional parks and interpreting them to park visitors in liaison with mana whenua and others where it is agreed interpretation is appropriate.

- Supporting the **preservation** of ‘information and knowledge relating to significant heritage sites and values of the parks according to national standards and tangata whenua tikanga while having regard to relevant privacy issues
- Providing for **customary harvest** of natural materials such as harakeke/flax for weaving and mahinga kai
- **Language and naming policies.** This includes promoting awareness of Māori language and place names within parks when naming areas, tracks or features and ‘giving preference to names that reflect mana whenua partners’ values, natural and physical features. It also includes local history and heritage, cultural and community associations or an individual or organisation that significantly contributes to the park or facility through gifting or sponsorship or personal commitment of time and energy’. Current PNP policy requires ‘the approval of Council when naming or renaming parks, forests or significant features, following appropriate consultation with tangata whenua, the public and interest groups’.

## Looking ahead

Discussions with mana whenua to date have identified a range of interests, issues and opportunities for consideration in the review of the PNP. This includes:

- A desire for enhancement for regional corridors or biolinks for wildlife
- The opportunity to work with mana whenua to reveal more of the significant stories of particular parks to park visitors, for example through heritage interpretation activities and mana whenua led heritage walks
- Interests in mahinga kai and customary harvest of native plants and animals
- Ongoing input to significant decision making and cooperative projects or works
- More Te Reo Māori place and park names for parks and park facilities such as trails.

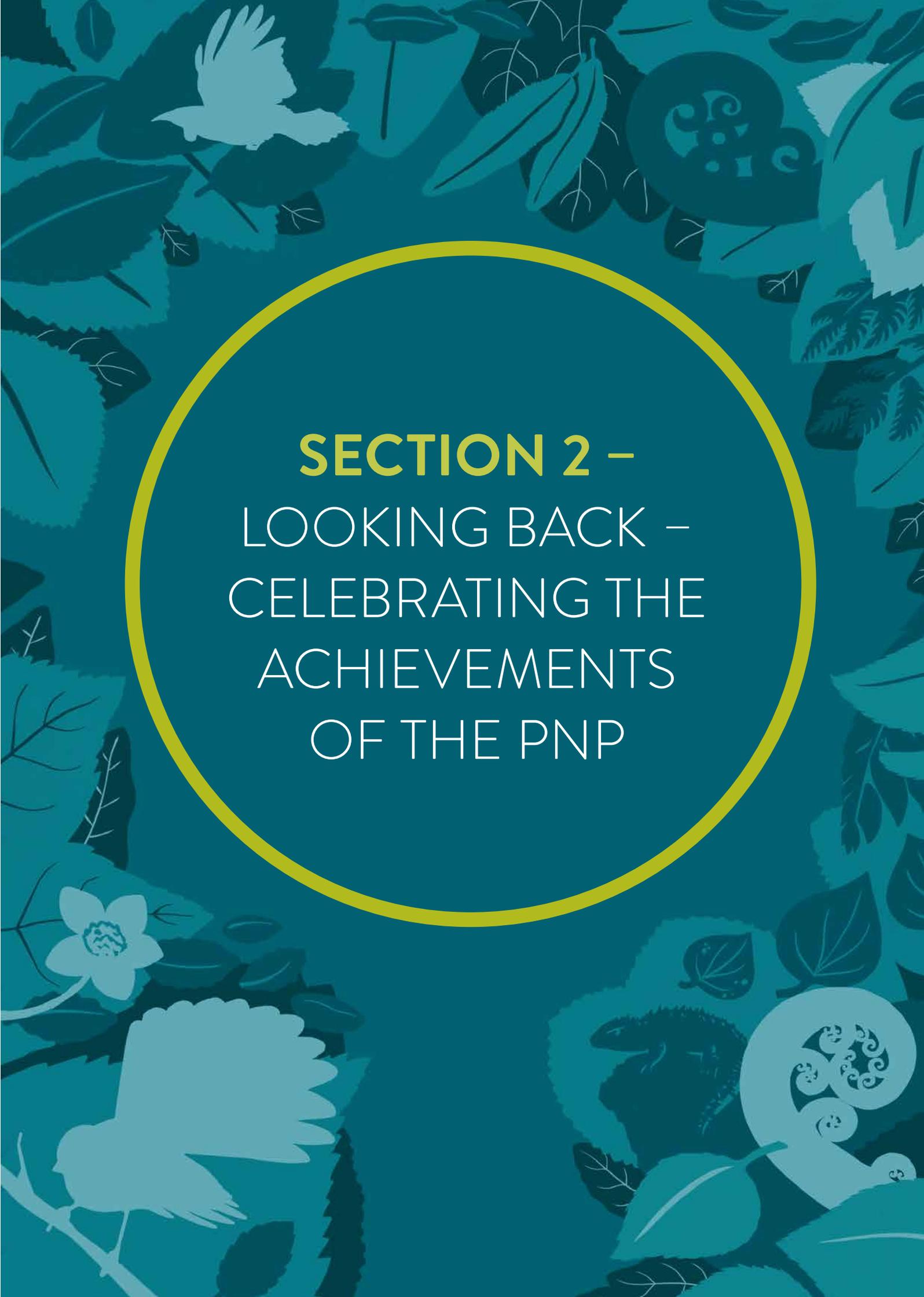
- Should all regional parks have dual English and Māori place names? We would like to hear your views
- Would you like to see more stories about local mana whenua heritage in parks? If so what do you think is the best way to reveal stories? Is it face to face storytelling, interpretation panels, an app on a smart phone or a combination of these?



Lake Kohangapiripiri, East Harbour Regional Park and Baring Head in the distance.



Tours and ranger talks at Rivendell remain popular many years after the Lord of the Rings films were released.

The background is a teal color with various botanical and animal illustrations in white and light teal. There are leaves of different shapes and sizes, some with veins, and several birds in flight. A large, bright yellow circle is centered on the page, containing the text.

**SECTION 2 –**  
LOOKING BACK –  
CELEBRATING THE  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
OF THE PNP

# SECTION 2 – LOOKING BACK – CELEBRATING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PNP

The PNP was adopted by Council in 2011 and since then a lot has been achieved through the people and financial resources committed to parks by Council, and through the efforts of our mana whenua partners and stakeholders. **Before we move forward to the development of a new management plan for our parks we think it's important to reflect and celebrate our successes, of which there have been many.** Below are just a few of the key achievements since the PNP was developed. It is important to note that many of these achievements have taken place with the support of our mana whenua partners and stakeholders who have made significant and valuable contributions to the places the places and causes that they love – be they recreation or conservation.

## Providing for fun, fitness and recreation adventures in parks

### QEP cycleway/ walkway - the new Te Ara o Whareroa trail

In 2016 the Te Ara o Whareroa was completed and officially opened. The shared use trail connects Paekākāriki and Raumati South and has proved very popular with a high level of daily use by commuter cyclists including children going to school. It's also popular with walkers, runners and recreational cyclists. Mostly funded by NZTA, the surface is bitumen which makes it highly accessible for all types of wheeled devices such as mobility or small wheeled scooters.



The Te Ara o Whareroa trail connects Pāekākāriki and Raumati South via QEP and is a hugely popular trail for commuter and recreational cyclists, walkers and runners.

### Better trails in the Korokoro Valley, Belmont Regional Park

Tracks and other structures were extensively damaged in the **Korokoro Valley** in May 2015 floods but the repair work required provided the opportunity to upgrade tracks. The entire length of the Korokoro Stream track from Cornish Street to the Belmont Trig was improved with more gentle gradients and bridges were replaced.

The historic **Woollen Mills Dam** was also damaged by the May 2015 floods. The repair project was complex and required specialist contractors to repair and reinforce it so it can better withstand future flooding. Fish passage in the form of a rope was added over the dam wall for tuna (eels) and bullies. This means that fish can access 15km of waterways upstream.

Elsewhere in the Korokoro Valley Greater Wellington worked with the Belmont Area Mountain Bike Association (BAMBA) to develop a network of shared use and **mountain bike** (MTB) trails in the former plantation forestry area near the Stratton Street park entrance. Trails range from challenging and technical descents (black category) to an easy category uphill route called "Four Degrees".



Flood damage repairs to the Korokoro Dam track provided the opportunity to improve the track and make it more resilient to future flood events.



The scenic and historic Woollen Mills dam has been repaired after damage from flooding in May 2015.



New mountain bike tracks have been developed in the upper Korokoro Valley former forestry plantation areas which are now regenerating native bush.

### Upgraded tracks in East Harbour RP Northern Forest

Across the park network there have been upgrades to trails. In East Harbour Regional Park for example, the Kowhai, Mackenzie and Korohiwa/Bus Barn tracks have been upgraded. This means more gentle gradients for hill climbing, less soil erosion from water runoff and more enjoyable trail experiences for most people. The Kowhai track now offers easier access to the popular Butterfly Creek picnic area and wooden drainage structures to carry off rainfall without significantly damaging the track. Vegetation maintenance ensures that a number of spectacular harbour views are maintained, and seats have been installed for visitors to rest and enjoy the views. All the Northern Forest's trail maps have also been replaced. Counters installed on tracks to monitor visitor numbers have indicated that since these improvements have taken place, trail user numbers have increased significantly; from approximately 32,000 people in 2015 to 68,000 in 2017.

### A new Regional Trails Framework

Greater Wellington with all the region's territorial authorities, WREDA and DOC worked together to develop the Regional Trails Framework, completed in 2017. This framework identifies a hierarchy of trails from 'signature' to 'regional' and 'local', and aims to deliver a fully co-ordinated approach to management and promotion of the region's approximate 2600 kilometres of tracks and trails. Within regional parks the Remutaka Cycle Trail in Pakuratahi Forest is classified as a "Signature" Trail – meaning it is a key trail destination offering high quality visitor experiences. Priority



### The Remutaka Cycle Trail

The overall Cycle Trail is 115km long with the Remutaka Rail Trail a significant part of it connecting to the Hutt River Trail and coastal tracks in the Wairarapa. The cycle trail has grown to become the fifth most popular ride in New Zealand, and is one of New Zealand's "great rides". Greater Wellington has restored heritage features such as culverts and historic tunnels and is planning many more improvements to the visitor experience.

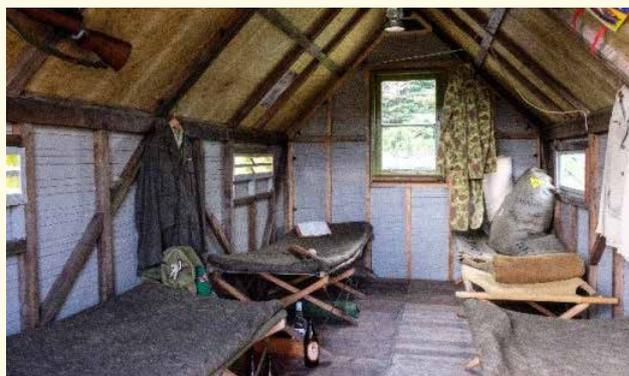


The restored Summit station is a now popular rest stop on the Remutaka Rail Trail.

## Revealing interesting stories to visitors

### A snap shot of the former QEP US Marines camp

Between 1942 and 1944, during WWII, the area that is now QEP was home to over 15,000 U.S. Marines. To bring a part of this history back to life the Kāpiti U.S. Marines Trust, other community members and volunteers restored and installed a former accommodation hut at the location of what was 'Camp Russell' and is now the Marines Memorial area near the Mackays Crossing entry to QEP. You can visit the hut and look through the window to see a glimpse of life in the U.S. Marines camp during WWII.



A former US Marine hut has been restored and installed in QEP providing a hint of how the Marines lived at QEP during WWII.

### Rivendell at Kaitoke RP

A part of Kaitoke RP will forever be known as Rivendell; a significant refuge and rallying place for elves in The Lord of the Rings trilogy films. Lord of the Rings enthusiasts make pilgrimages to significant filming sites throughout New Zealand and Rivendell is one of the top ten sites according to Tourism New Zealand. To support these pilgrimages, in conjunction with Wellington Movie Tours, Greater Wellington officially opened an Elvish Archway replica at Rivendell and a number of interpretation works. Tours and ranger talks at Rivendell remain popular many years after the films were released.



The replica Elvish Archway at Rivendell is a must see attraction for many Lord of the Rings fans in Kaitoke Regional Park.

## Preserving cultural heritage and landscapes

### Redeveloping the Baring Head lighthouse cottages and complex

Baring Head is a stunning landscape and a special place in East Harbour Regional Park. Visible in the distance from much of Wellington, it has a remote feel but is only 50 minutes from downtown Wellington City. With the help of the Friends of Baring Head, the two historic light house keeper's cottages will be restored to their original condition and made available for bach style overnight stays in the park.



Left: The loo with a view faces towards Turakirae Head. The cottages will be will be available for overnight stays in future after restoration activities are completed. Right: Massey University student concept for storytelling.

## A co-management plan for Parangarahu Lakes

The Parangarahu Lakes (Lake Kohangapiripri and Lake Kohangatera) are located between Pencarrow Head and part of East Harbour Regional Park. The area features the culturally significant lakes and their associated wetlands and dendroglyphs (tree carvings). Greater Wellington and Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST) jointly manage the Parangarahu Lakes Area through a 'Roopu Tiaki' or guardianship group established in 2012. To support this relationship a co-management plan was prepared which outlines a shared vision for management, fulfilling kaitiaki and legal responsibilities for the lakes.

## Parks contribute to community health and wellbeing

### Wellington Riding for the Disabled moves to Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

The Wellington Group of Riding for the Disabled (WRDA) were required to move from former hospital land at Kenepuru where they had been located for 30 years. Battle Hill with its focus on farming and equestrian activities was identified to be a good fit for the group, and in October 2016 they moved in and constructed a temporary riding arena. A long term lease has now been signed and the group will build an all-weather covered riding arena at the northern end of Abbotts Field. Riding for Disabled and their clients have settled in well at Battle Hill. Visitors enjoy seeing horses in park paddocks, local residents have become volunteers, and clients and volunteers can enjoy safe riding away from vehicles (they rode beside roads at Kenepuru) in a beautiful park setting.

## Preserving and improving natural heritage

### Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programme work in parks

Key Native Ecosystems are areas within parks identified as having the most significant natural heritage values. These areas are supported by a work programme to manage threats posed to them by introduced species and external factors such as a changing climate. There are KNE areas in all regional parks and forests delivering a range of works such as:

- Culling non-native animals such as deer, goats and pigs. This work reduces the threat of pest animal browsing to 'browse-sensitive' species such as broadleaf/pāpāuma (*Griselinia littoralis*) and māhoe (*Melicactus ramiflorus*). Recreational hunters also assist by culling species such as deer and pigs. Benefits from the work include an increase in the kererū population and other native bird species in parks.

- Restoration of a highly significant coastal broadleaf/podocarp forest at QEP. This site is only one of two remaining examples of this forest type on the Kāpiti Coast.
- In partnership with iwi, adjacent landowners and duck hunters, 'oxygen weed' was sprayed and its negative effects reduced in Lake Kohangatera, within East Harbour RP. Also in East Harbour, at Pencarrow Head local volunteers from the Mainland Island Restoration Operation, the Ornithological Society of New Zealand and iwi worked together to protect nesting banded dotterels from predators by annual 'rahui' in breeding season (September-February) which prohibits motorised vehicles, cyclists and walkers from entering the dotterel's breeding site.

## Aquatic ecosystems – improving fish passage in streams

### Battle Hill best practice fish passage

Obstacles in streams and waterways can unintentionally hinder fish movements up and downstream. This means fish have to grow and survive in much smaller areas of stream habitat. To remedy this problem at Battle Hill, three 'fish passage' structures were installed in a tributary of the Horokiri Stream; a stream which is home to several species of rare and threatened native fish. Battle Hill is a 'working farm' park with all areas open to the public, so the new fish passage structures are intended to be used to model how obstacle adaptation and fish passage can readily be achieved by others such as private land holders who have streams and dams on their rural properties. Park visitors can easily see the new fish passage structures in the stream and dam area not far behind the woolshed at Battle Hill.



The weir at Battle Hill was previously a barrier to fish movement. To make it easier for fish to move upstream a rock 'ramp' was constructed and now eel and other fish can easily move between different areas of stream habitat. This fish passage example is close to the well-used main path towards the eastern forest. Information panels will be installed in future.

## Sustainable land management

### Better land management through long-term grazing licences and implementation of Sustainable Land Use Plans

In the past stock grazing licences have been relatively short term which has provided little incentive for farmers to invest in sustainable land use practices. To change this practice and support a shift to longer term planning, Greater Wellington tendered then issued grazing licences for a ten year term for areas of Queen Elizabeth, Belmont and Battle Hill parks. Grazing licence activities are supported by 'Sustainable Land Use Plans' (SLUPs) which identify key issues for consideration in management and the areas of park for developed or retirement from grazing. The combination of long-term licences and SLUP's has resulted in overall improvements in land management. For example:

- At QEP the entirety of the North Whareroa stream has been fenced to exclude stock and a 10 metre buffer either side of the stream has been planted with native vegetation. Rotational grazing, which maintains ground cover and reduces erosion risk and nutrient loss, is a key stock management principle.
- At Belmont RP lane fencing has been installed to provide year round access along the Old Coach Road, an area previously seasonally closed to park visitors during lambing and calving periods
- At Battle Hill the stream in the 'Airstrip block' has been fenced to exclude stock and is being progressively replanted by volunteers

In all parks, practices around fertiliser inputs have changed:

- Farm planning identifies particular areas of land where soil fertility is low and fertiliser is selectively applied to these areas. This reduces the potential for over use of fertilisers, and run off to streams and waterways as well as reducing costs for grazing licence holders
- The practice of 'zero tillage' has also been introduced. This means that when grazing licence holders renew pastures with new seed, instead of ploughing, they 'direct drill' seeds into the soil. This reduces possible topsoil loss, maintains soil structure and preserves organic matter insitu.

Across parks, other land-care activities have included stabilising erosion-prone slopes with 'pole planting' of species including willows and poplars and revegetation with native species in areas where stock are excluded. Stock grazing has been used as a management method for controlling the spread of woody weeds such as gorse. Stock grazing has also maintained the open



Lane fencing of the Old Coach Road in Belmont Regional Park has removed the need for seasonal closures for lambing and calving along this route.

grassy hill top landscapes of Baring Head and Belmont parks, and reduced the risk of fires as well as the spread of weeds into nearby ecologically significant areas. Fees received from grazing licences are used to improve park infrastructure such as fencing, signs and track upgrades, and to benefit park restoration activities.

### Roads of National Significance and parks

Transmission Gully Motorway and the Mackays to Peka Peka Expressway are Roads of National Significance and have resulted in changes for three parks; QEP, Belmont Regional Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Greater Wellington has worked with the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) and the road builders to minimise the effects on parks from these new road projects.

The Mackays to Peka Peka Expressway (M2PP) adjacent to QEP's eastern boundary is now completed and open. However building the Expressway meant more water runoff flowing into QEP. To minimise the effects of this road runoff, water sensitive design methods have been employed such as roadside swales and within the park, sediment and weed in the Whareroa Stream has been removed to improve stream flow during high water events. These works have improved oxygen levels in the stream and reduced water temperatures which improve the habitat for freshwater invertebrates and native fish. Further works will include planting streamside to provide shade.

The Transmission Gully motorway (TG), currently under construction, passes through Belmont Regional Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park. Some of the land of these parks has been lost to the motorway project but the compensation for land lost has been reinvested into park improvements. Access has been maintained across

the motorway land in Battle Hill, with an underpass now in place, but in Belmont park access, east-west access is limited for the duration of works.

Greater Wellington has worked with the NZTA and the 'Joint Venture' companies constructing the motorway to minimise negative effects for both parks. In Belmont a state-of-art woolshed, fenced laneways and covered yards have been constructed to replace the original woolshed, now cut-off by the motorway on the western side of the park.

Other compensation works include native vegetation restoration works. In the Duck Creek and Cannons Creek catchment's over 200 hectares has also been retired from grazing, fenced to exclude stock and is being progressively replanted with native shrubs and trees. The motorway works (and huge earth moving machinery) can be viewed from lookouts at high point's tracks on the western side of Belmont. East-west access across the park will be restored before the motorway is completed.

## New park facilities and sustainability

### 'Ramaroa', the entrance hub at Queen Elizabeth Park

A new entrance hub building has been constructed at MacKays Crossing in QEP. This work is part of implementing the 2012 Heritage Framework for the park. 'Ramaroa' was officially opened in December 2017 by local mana whenua. The building design is culturally sensitive; reflecting both Māori and European heritage. The architect cleverly designed two separate buildings linked via a gullwing roof and tilted walls which refer both to the traditional Māori whareniui and also the tent structures of the former WWII U.S Marines camp. The entrance hub includes a ranger



The Transmission Gully motorway development through Belmont Regional Park has resulted in many changes including a new woolshed for the eastern side of the park.

office, meeting room and public toilets and will include heritage interpretation in the future.

### Kaitoke is an award winning park!

Kaitoke Regional Park received a Green Flag Awards® in 2017. The Green Flag Award® scheme recognises and rewards well-managed parks and green spaces. This scheme sets the benchmark standard for the management of recreational outdoor spaces around the world. Kaitoke received this award by providing a high standard of open spaces as well as showcasing points of interest such as Rivendell and the great riverside camp ground.

Kaitoke also received an 'Outstanding Park' Award from the New Zealand Recreation Association in 2013. The Association's judges said Kaitoke was a well-established



'Ramaroa', QEP's new entrance facility, reflects both Māori and European heritage with design references to both a Maori whareniui and former US Marines tent.

park, showcasing easily accessible outstanding native bush and river ecosystems. They also noted that visitors can enjoy a safe and secure environment with a resident ranger service and very well-maintained facilities.

## Adapting to climate change

### Forests in parks sequester carbon dioxide

Protected forests in regional parks network are helping to mitigate the overall effects of climate change. It is estimated that every hectare of old growth forest and new forest that is growing from restoration plantings in regional parks sequesters (locks up) roughly two-four tonnes a year of CO<sub>2</sub>. The extensive forests in the regional park network therefore contribute to mitigating the region's carbon footprint.

The CO<sub>2</sub> sequestered by forests naturally established or planted since 1989 can be commercially traded in carbon markets. Greater Wellington has entered this market in 2012, by registering 440ha of regenerating forest within the parks network in the government administered Permanent Forest Sink Initiative. This initiative provides Greater Wellington the option of selling the rights to the 55,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> that these forests have sequestered since 2012.



This recently planted area in the southwest of QEP will sequester carbon dioxide during its development into a kahikatea forest



QEP coastal track after February 2018 storm. More frequent and severe storms as part of climate change means that the coastal track will progressively move inland where its less susceptible to damage.

### Minimising the effects of climate changes on park assets

Climate changes are making extreme weather events more frequent and more severe. Some assets in parks such as bridges, coastal tracks and heritage structures such as weirs are vulnerable to these changes in climate. To improve the resilience of park assets, Greater Wellington is undertaking a range of management works. This includes strengthening structures and moving them away from areas vulnerable to coastal or stream bank erosion.

In 2015 extremely high localised rainfall created flooding in the Korokoro Valley which damaged tracks and undermined the historic Woollen Mills dam. Both have since been repaired and whilst undertaking repairs, Greater Wellington used the opportunity to re-align the track and make the dam much stronger so it can withstand future flood or seismic events without further significant damage. At QEP the popular coastal track is damaged in storms on a regular basis and is progressively being relocated further away from the coast (whilst still affording good coastal views).

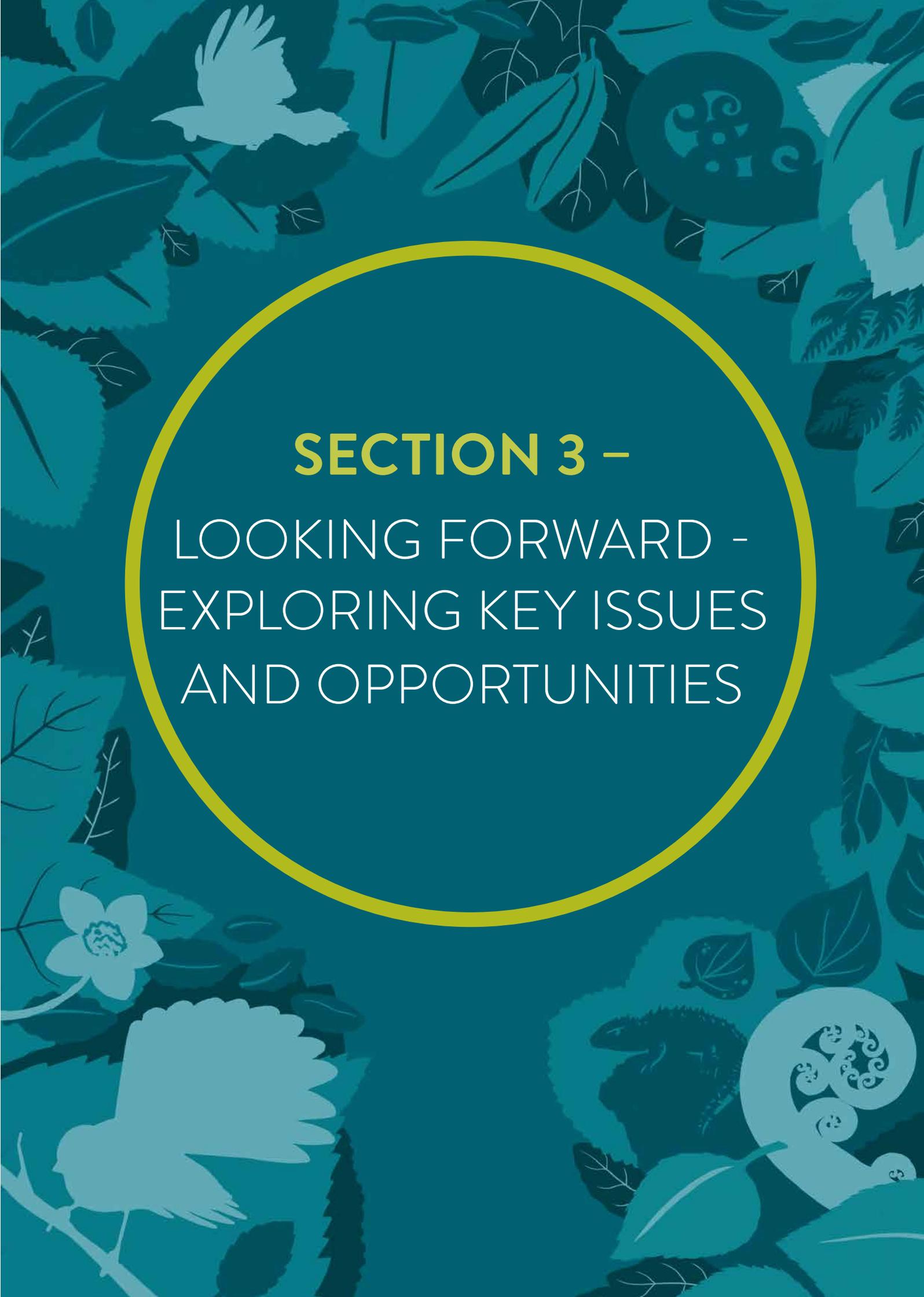
Works to improve asset resilience are ongoing and take place as part of scheduled maintenance activities by the Greater Wellington parks maintenance team.



Have you explored the Wainuiomata Recreation area? This park is a hidden gem. It's an inviting spot for picnics and walks in a lush sheltered valley.



Baring Head is set to become a key destination for Wellington when restoration works are completed in the lighthouse complex. There will be two bach style cottages for booked overnight accommodation, a day visitor centre, new lookout and a children's discovery trail. See the Greater Wellington website for details.

The background is a teal color with various botanical and animal illustrations in lighter shades of teal. There are leaves of different shapes and sizes, some with veins, and several birds in flight. A large, bright yellow circle is centered on the page, containing the text.

**SECTION 3 –**  
LOOKING FORWARD -  
EXPLORING KEY ISSUES  
AND OPPORTUNITIES

# SECTION 3 – LOOKING FORWARD - EXPLORING KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As we move towards a new PNP, we examine the changes that have taken place and key issues, opportunities and challenges for managing parks over the next ten years.

In brief the key issues, challenges and opportunities we see facing parks are:

- Achieving **shared conservation and heritage protection outcomes** with mana whenua, community stakeholders, friends groups and volunteers, concessionaires and other agencies.
- **Protecting significant ecosystems from threats** such as pest plants and animals and supporting native biodiversity and biosecurity through programmes such as 'Key Native Ecosystems. Working on **water quality** and enhancing **habitat links** to and within parks
- Ensuring regional parks are well **connected to communities** via recreation trails and offer appropriate trail opportunities, including highly accessible trails and facilities for people of all abilities. **Fostering** healthy outdoor recreation activity **participation** to support health outcomes
- Planning for **facilities** which adequately provide for an **ageing population** and for changing recreation activities such as increased use of the trail network for cycling, walking and other activities.
- Supporting more regional and international **tourism visits** to parks, for example with improved camping facilities.
- Improving our **story telling** in parks for more in-depth visitor experiences deepen understanding about our local cultural and natural history
- Working to minimise the effects of **climate change** on park assets and continuing to adapt to a changing climate
- Increasing **commercial activities** in parks such as events, commercial dog walkers, bee keeping and mobile food vendors.

We are interested in your feedback about regional parks:

- What do you think are the most significant issues facing regional parks now and over the next ten years?
- What do you value and enjoy most about particular regional parks? For example, particular landscapes, places, trails, recreation activities?
- What should Greater Wellington do to improve our regional parks? For example, are facilities needed in a particular place or accessibility improved?
- Do you have any feedback about issues or opportunities raised in this discussion document or the supporting documents (External Influences on Parks and Farming in Regional Parks)?
- Do you have any feedback about particular aspects of the current Parks Network Plan? [www.gw.govt.nz/greater-wellington-parks-network-plan/](http://www.gw.govt.nz/greater-wellington-parks-network-plan/)

## 3.1 External influences on parks

There are many influences on parks and park management including population demographic changes, changes in recreation activity preferences, a changing climate and economic influences. These external influences are explored in a detailed supporting document for the PNP review available on Greater Wellington's website. A summary of external influences is here.

### Park visitor feedback

We know from our own research and monitoring that more people in the Wellington region are visiting parks, more often and participating in a growing range of activities. Overall visitor satisfaction has remained consistently high (more than 90%) for about a decade. In recent years when we have asked visitors about things that could be improved in parks, they have told us that in some places more toilet facilities are required and throughout the park network, signage and information about parks and recreation activities could be improved. We have been working on improving

these facilities in response and Greater Wellington has a new website in development. The things that parks visitors report that they value most are the sense of freedom and tranquillity and the ability to recharge in the natural environment that parks offer.

### Population health and wellbeing

New Zealanders are living increasingly sedentary lifestyles and eating foods which contribute to rising rates of obesity and associated health issues. Encouraging participation in healthy outdoor recreation activities in parks can help alleviate this problem. The health benefits of parks for people can be maximised by designing facilities and spaces in parks which are easily accessible and inclusive for people with a range of abilities. Making information about recreation opportunities and promoting visits and events is also key to fostering participation.

### Population changes

Overall the region's population is forecast to grow by 15% between 2018 and 2043. Almost all of the suburbs that neighbour our regional parks are projected to experience an increase in "empty nesters and retirees" (aged 60-69), "seniors" (aged 70-84) or both. The growing older population has implications for regional parks in terms of provision of facilities and activities for parks visitors, as well as changing the make-up of park volunteers. We need to plan now for supporting more fit and healthy retirees who are looking for stimulating and meaningful volunteer opportunities, as well as ensuring we undertake ongoing minor upgrades for accessibility to track and other critical park facilities such as toilets.

### Economics and tourism

Though Wellington City is expected to remain the key regional economic centre, the completion of the Transmission Gully motorway and improved public transport connections could result in a more dispersed model of business activity across the region, such as the Kāpiti Coast and Hutt Valley.

Our park visitors are generally comprised of:

- 91% residents of the region
- 6% domestic NZ
- 3% international.

Whilst small in number, domestic and international tourists are a growing segment of park visitors and to support this demand, tourism-related employment numbers are expected to grow. This could mean more tour guide type businesses and concessionaires in parks and more commercial events seeking to capitalise on this growth.

### Technology

For most people, technological devices are an inseparable part of recreation activity planning and enjoyment, providing information about activities, events and volunteering opportunities and sharing park experiences on social media. Use of technology by park visitors and for management purposes can only be expected to grow.

For management purposes various devices and technologies can make data collection easier, more accurate and more in-depth. For example we can readily collect rich data by aerial mapping and receive real time data from monitoring devices in streams to identify habitat conditions, open gates remotely with a phone call, and know who is coming and going via electronically monitored gates. We can also use technology such as drones to inspect structures post-storm events if required.

Electric vehicles (EV) are becoming more common. In future electric vehicle charging stations may be provided in some parks where visitor spend a significant amount of time. Public EV charging points are already available adjacent to QEP and Akatarawa Forest at commercial premises ([www.plugshare.com](http://www.plugshare.com)) and will become more widespread in future. Power points for small device charging are already available for campers at Kaitoke Regional Park and may be provided at other key locations in future if demand supports this service.

## Sustainability

One of Greater Wellington's key sustainability goals is to continually lower the carbon footprint of our activities and operations and improve environmental outcomes. The afforestation and revegetation programs taking place across the parks network contribute significantly to carbon sequestration in the Wellington region. Natural and semi-natural parkland provides global benefits as a store of carbon in soil and trees. The growing urgency to remove more carbon from the atmosphere will increase the importance of tree planting activity and pest control in parks. Other sustainability initiatives such as waste reduction and use of renewable energy powered vehicles will continue to be rolled out across Greater Wellington.

## Climate change

The effects of climate change are already being seen across the Wellington region with increases in average annual temperatures and sea levels. Impacts on parks are already apparent such as coastal erosion which has seen tracks and bridges damaged, and more pest plants and animals. An ongoing adaptive management approach is required in response to climate change.

- What do you think are the key external influences on parks?
- What changes have you noticed in your local community and how relevant do you think these changes are to regional parks?
- Have your recreation activities or equipment changed over time, and in what way?
- Do you have more or less time for recreation and leisure activities?
- What sort of electronic recreation devices do you commonly use or see in parks? Are additional facilities for electric devices required in parks?
- What role do you think Greater Wellington has in demonstrating leadership through initiative such as carbon sinks?

## 3.2 People and parks

In this section of the discussion document we delve a little more deeply and explore how parks and the natural environment benefits people, what our cultural connections are with our parks, and why we make significant investments of time and money in them. Put simply: we love our parks, but why?

### 'Healthy parks, healthy people'

We know from research, managing our parks network and intuitively from our own experiences, that public parks enrich people's lives by simply connecting people

with nature. Parks are also important places for social connections and laying down lasting memories, which vary from interesting and enjoyable short visits to challenging outdoor experiences or long term commitments to conservation work. 'Healthy parks, healthy people' is a worldwide movement that connects the health of people and the health of the environment. The movement places parks at the centre of wellbeing: 'Healthy nature sustains our life, livelihoods and liveability. Conserving parks for present and future generations provides inspirational and therapeutic settings that foster lifelong connections with nature and each other. Parks that are valued and maintained are also fundamental to economic growth and vibrant and healthy communities' (Parks Victoria Guide to Healthy Parks, Healthy People 2017).

Growing scientific evidence and generations of traditional knowledge show that spending time in nature is good for our mind, body and soul. Contact with nature is critical for our physical, mental, social and spiritual health. It has positive effects on our ability to concentrate, learn, solve problems and be creative. It boosts our immune system and helps us relax (HPHP State of the evidence 2015). Through organised or casual recreation activities, volunteering, harvesting, or undertaking social visits to parks we connect with people and causes that are important to us. Our parks are common ground as places for social engagement as well as refuge from busy day to day lives, and our environment provides us with life sustaining resources such as freshwater as long as we look after it well.



Figure 2. People, nature and culture come together in parks (Parks Victoria 2017)

Mana whenua connections with land are often expressed in terms such as 'kaitiakitanga' – connection between land and people for healthy life. Māori traditionally connect with the land through using its resources in a sustainable way such as harvesting kai from the land and water and materials for traditional

and contemporary weaving and other customary uses. Many park visitors enjoy hunting and harvesting meat from species such as deer, goats and pigs in parks and forests, and by doing so support conservation efforts for native vegetation and bird habitat by reducing the numbers of pest animals.



It's easy to get away and have a mental health break from busy everyday urban life in a regional park. They are all close to Wellington, yet can feel far away and remote. Looking east towards Turakirae Head from Baring Head, part of East Harbour Regional Park.

## Parks support physical and mental and wellbeing

We can derive many benefits from engaging in activities in local and regional parks. Benefits identified in the Healthy parks, Healthy People, State of the evidence 2015 include:

- Parks provide the basis for many different recreation activities for physical and mental health benefits
- Exercising outdoors in green space is more beneficial for mental health than going to the gym
- Parks can be places for social connections, alleviating loneliness and providing purpose and meaning.
- Volunteering work in nature or simply bird watching is beneficial for well being
- Nature play and time outdoors is good for children and their development, as is being with animals and learning about nature through experience

Studies in stress recovery have also shown that exposure to nature facilitates faster recovery from health problems and the stresses of daily life. Natural landscapes offer 'green breaks' where psychological benefit can be gained by easing issues such as fatigue and stress.

Parks which meet people's needs well come about by good planning and management. In urban areas this is often referred to as 'placemaking' and there is a lot of research and written guidance about how to create healthy gathering, active recreation or contemplative places. Attributes of places or areas of parks which support health and wellbeing include:

**Accessibility** – enhancing access to and within parks with trail and public transport connections. Working to overcome barriers to visiting parks and participating in healthy outdoor recreation activities with promotions, 'come and try' events and other activities. Designing facilities following universal access principles also reduces barriers.

**Energised shared spaces or 'sweets spots'** – focal points where people come together for events and volunteering activities such as growing plants or undertaking heritage restoration works are important.

**Mix it up and embrace unique character** – providing a variety of places which are different, unusual, or unique can be helpful in promoting physical activity and visits. A variety of land uses, building types, and public spaces can make parks more interesting. Regional parks already have a variety of heritage buildings, features and stories but we can do more by supporting and enhancing unique features through activities such as storytelling or public art works in parks. Interesting nature play spaces can be a primary attraction to parks for families and carers. The new Wellington City Council nature play spaces on Mount Victoria are a good example of this.

**Supporting economic values** - parks can directly and indirectly support local businesses via concessionaire services (such as food and beverages, grazing licences) and recreation club activities and events which require equipment sourced from other businesses in the local economy.

**Empowering champions for health** – supporting volunteer and community group activities in parks has flow on effects for others. A range of people can become champions for health and wellbeing of other people and parks.

- What features of Wellington's regional parks are important for your health and well-being?
- Are there special places in parks which 'nourish your soul'?
- What could be done to improve connections between people and our regional parks?
- What features or places can we enhance in our parks to further develop 'unique character'?

### 3.2.1 Volunteering in parks

Greater Wellington works with many volunteers, friends groups, recreation clubs, conservation groups and others to achieve shared goals and outcomes. The primary areas of volunteer activity are natural and cultural heritage conservation work. This includes:

- Supporting natural habitat restoration through weed removal work and planting of native species
- Pest animal reduction through trap setting and maintenance
- Plant and animal species monitoring work
- Growing plants and gathering local seed for restoration activities
- Track and forest road maintenance and realignments
- Additional fund raising for projects to enable more work to be done
- Heritage building and structure maintenance and preservation work.

The work volunteers do is of immense value to Greater Wellington. As well as contributing to volunteers' own wellbeing through participation in the community, skill sharing, education, exercise and exposure to nature, volunteering supports Greater Wellington's Long Term Plan community outcomes for an **engaged community** and a **healthy environment**.



Heritage building restoration works by the Friends of Baring Head.



The QEP nursery where volunteers raise thousands of native plants for restoration work.

The Greater Wellington Volunteer Strategy outlines a framework for supporting and guiding work with volunteers. Greater Wellington's vision and strategic goals for engaging with volunteers are summarised here as:

#### Our vision

**GW AND VOLUNTEERS WORK IN PARTNERSHIP TO MAKE THE REGION EXTRAORDINARY – THRIVING, CONNECTED AND RESILIENT**

#### Our goals

##### GOAL 1

##### CONTRIBUTION TO THE BIGGER PICTURE

Volunteer effort aligns with and contributes to GW's strategic goals and community outcomes

##### GOAL 2

##### BENEFICIAL TO BOTH PARTIES

GW and volunteers derive mutual benefit from working together to achieve common goals, with clear systems in place and a consistent level of support provided

##### GOAL 3

##### QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF VOLUNTEER EFFORT

GW attracts a high number of willing and able volunteers to contribute to work programmes and events across the region

Figure 3. Volunteer Strategy goals

The types of activities Greater Wellington and its volunteers work together on and some of the benefits of these partnerships are illustrated here:



Figure 4. Volunteering works in parks are diverse and the benefits from volunteer time and effort significant.

The Volunteer Strategy identifies that, in addition to their direct contribution, volunteers provide points of connection between Greater Wellington and different communities across the Wellington region. This enables Greater Wellington to better understand what people want to achieve in their local area. The Strategy notes that volunteer groups are important and effective channels for encouraging and enabling individuals to participate in their community and care for their environment.

The Strategy observes that volunteer numbers are likely to continue to grow in the coming years as the population ages and greater numbers of retirees seek active, meaningful engagement in their communities. At present there are roughly 43,000 people aged 65 plus across Wellington, Porirua, Kāpiti and the Hutt Valley. By 2033 the number is expected to almost double to 85,000 people according to Ministry of Social Development 2017 projections.

Given that much of Greater Wellington's volunteer workforce is currently based in our regional parks, this will likely create a growing pool of volunteers interested in working in parks, alongside corporate and community groups. With increased numbers of volunteers will come more benefits for parks and the environment, but additional resources will also be required to co-ordinate and supported volunteer work contributions.

- Do you have reflections on other volunteering experiences that may be relevant to Greater Wellington's work across the parks network?
- What benefits do you derive from volunteering?
- What more do you think Greater Wellington should do to support volunteer work in parks?
- Do you find it easy to find out about volunteering opportunities to partner with Greater Wellington?

### 3.3 Managing historic and cultural heritage features of parks

Regional parks have an interesting and wide range of built and natural heritage features, assets and stories associated with them. Historic and cultural heritage features reflect the human and landscape history of the Wellington region and form an integral component of a 'sense of place' of parks. In many parks the built heritage structures or natural heritage features are the key attraction for park visits, such as dams and waterfalls, hill tops and other viewpoints with heritage relics such as WWII bunkers or lookouts. Parks also have many registered archaeological sites of significance to mana whenua which are not publicly identified to minimise damage to them.

Greater Wellington's management of heritage assets is guided by the *Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act* 2014, the Resource Management Act 1991, Regional Policy Statement, proposed Natural Resources Plan (which contains a schedule of heritage assets) and the PNP, which is supported by the Parks Forests and Reserves Bylaws 2016. Greater Wellington also has a 'memorandum of partnership' with mana whenua to which supports cultural heritage preservation. An 'Accidental Discovery Protocol' is in place to guide day to day park management if archaeological relics are found.

To manage heritage assets and features, Greater Wellington works with partners and others with appropriate expertise to preserve and protect them. Conservation management plans and studies are undertaken where required to identify significance and provide guidance about preservation and interpretation activities. In parks and places such as QEP and Baring Head where there are complex layers of historic heritage, heritage plans have been developed to guide management and improvement work.

As with all its work, Greater Wellington must prioritise resources for heritage preservation works. To date the focus has been upon heritage assets which are either a potential threat to visitor safety or most under threat of having their heritage values diminished from degradation. Dams, bridges, tunnels and other assets in streams and waterways will be a priority for investment because of increased frequency of severe weather events brought about by climate change. Other heritage assets such as munitions bunkers are considered for work as resources permit or where external assistance becomes available through the support of volunteers and/or external funds.

Improving story telling in parks about the heritage features or stories of people who have lived or worked in parks or of historic events is a key opportunity and is likely to become more of a focus for park related communications in future. We think that revealing more of the stories of our parks will support better understanding about why they are special and unique places, and provide visitors with new understanding of them.

- What do you think are the most significant heritage features or stories of regional parks and why?
- Where do you think we should direct resources to revealing more heritage stories in parks?
- What types of media do you prefer for heritage interpretation when you are in parks? E.g. smart phone, signs, booklets etc

### 3.4 Managing significant landscapes

Wellington's regional parks have a rich diversity of landscape types. Park visitors can enjoy grassy open tops, old growth lush native bush, beech forest gullies, regenerating bush, plantation forest, farmland, rugged escarpments, rolling coastal dunes or sandy beaches. The variety of landscape types on offer is a huge benefit for residents and visitors who can choose a recreation activity based on the landscape type.

Cultural values for about landscapes change over time. For example, in the past lush native forests were valued as resources for timber harvesting and now their primary value is preservation for native bird and animal habitat and recreation enjoyment. While human influences on the landscape are apparent in all our parks, they are also changing from natural processes such as erosion, fire, flooding and the slow natural process of bush regeneration. Major public infrastructure projects are also changing the scenery within parks. The Transmission Gully Motorway is gradually becoming a new landscape feature of Belmont and Battle Hill parks. Utilities services such as power and gas lines are also a feature in some areas of parks such as Belmont, Battle Hill, QEP and Akatarawa Forest.

The PNP provides directions for management of landscapes which are considered to be significant.

Further directions are identified within the Regional Policy Statement and District Plan provisions relevant to landscape or 'significant natural resource' areas. These areas include:

- QEP, the coastal dune system and Whareroa Dune Fields (Whareroa Duneland's, identified as outstanding natural landscape in the partially operative Kāpiti Coast District Council District Plan)
- Akatarawa Forest, an area on the north western boundary and protected ridgelines in the south eastern corner (Akatarawa Corridor, identified as outstanding natural landscape in the partially operative Kāpiti Coast District Council District Plan)
- Pakuratahi Forest, southwestern area (Upper Hutt City Council District Plan)
- Belmont, ridgelines and hilltops in the western part of the park (Wellington City District Plan)
- Baring Head escarpment and the Parangarahu Lakes (Hutt City Council District Plan)

Given that human values about landscapes change over time we are interested in feedback about what aspects and attributes of local landscapes are important to you and why?

- What landscapes in regional parks are important to you and why?
- What types of landscapes do you think are important to maintain?
- Do you value having a variety of landscapes e.g. grasslands, thick forest, wetlands, coastal?
- Are there particular park landscape features that are important and what are they?



Baring Head is a prominent part of Wellington's southern landscape. The escarpment is considered to be regionally significant and maintained as open grassy area with sheep grazing.

## 3.5 Managing the environment and parks

Greater Wellington's environmental management in parks aims to achieve the our Community Outcome of "**Healthy Environment:** *An environment with clean air, fresh water, healthy soils and diverse ecosystems that supports community needs*".

How we meet this outcome is directed by the PNP outcomes. The current PNP biodiversity and ecosystems outcomes are:

Outcome 1- *ecosystems of important ecological value are protected and cared for*

Outcome 2- *significant, degraded ecosystems and indigenous biodiversity are restored to a healthy functioning state*

Outcome 3- *ecological connections between natural areas and within catchments of regional parks and adjoining lands are enhanced.*

Greater Wellington has a range of strategic plans and operational programmes that contribute to the achievement of outcomes set out in the PNP:

- Biodiversity Strategy
- The Regional Pest Management Plan (currently under review)
- Proposed Natural Resources Plan (PNRP), which includes the Whaitua programme
- Key Native Ecosystems (KNE) programme
- Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and catchment Strategy and Action Plan
- Freshwater Fish programme
- Wetland programme
- Land management programme, which includes the development and implementation of Farm Environmental Plans

These plans and programmes support work to enhance parks. Community groups, working in collaboration with Greater Wellington support these programmes and undertake valuable conservation work.

### Proposed Natural Resources Plan

The proposed Natural Resources Plan for the Wellington Region (PNRP) identifies outcomes for the sustainable management of natural and physical resources in the region (across land tenures) to achieve the purpose of the Resource Management Act (1991). The PNRP contains policies, rules and methods for the people and organisations that use or protect the region's resources. Although the plan is in draft form, under section 83B(3) of the RMA all the rules in the plan have immediate legal effect from 1 July 2015. However some changes may be made before the plan is finalised.

The PNRP identifies streams, rivers, wetlands and coastal areas that have particularly high values for indigenous biodiversity, mana whenua relationships and use, recreation, trout fishery, historic heritage, geological features and surf breaks. The following section identifies how methods and rules in the PNRP will direct management of parks.

### Encouraging sustainable land management practices

The PNRP fosters sustainable land management via a number of methods. Methods 28 and 12 support working in partnership with others to achieve ecosystem wide objectives. For example, at QEP the Maclean Trust / Greater Wellington partnership will restore 25ha of mostly peatland on the north-eastern boundary of QEP between State Highway One and Poplar Avenue. The work here will include the removal of invasive weeds, particularly gorse, and extensive re-planting of native species, leading to enhanced biodiversity and improved water quality. In other cases parks are demonstrating best practice for others with works such as plantings for shade along streams which supports aquatic ecosystem health.



Whareroa Stream, QEP. Stock are excluded and habitat restoration works are in progress such as weed removal and planting stream banks with native vegetation to support aquatic habitat.

### Stock access

Reducing the impacts of farmed stock on streams and water quality is important. The PNRP provides directions for minimising impacts such as effluent from stock excrement on water quality and pugging and damage to stream banks and beds from stock directly accessing waterways. For example, Rule 97 identifies that stock must be excluded from all waterways which are classified as Category 1 or 2 as well as wetlands which are identified as significant or outstanding in Schedule F3.

Examples of parks implementation of these rules are:

- Stock exclusion from Swampy Gully at Battle Hill (a significant natural wetland)
- Stock exclusion from Whareroa Stream in QEP (a Category 1 surface waterway)
- Vehicle exclusions from Whakatikei Wetland in the Akatarawa Forest (a significant natural wetland).

### **Aerial spraying of agrichemicals**

The PNRP identifies that consent is required for the aerial spraying of agrichemicals over natural, significant and outstanding natural wetlands (Rule 105(i)). Aerial spraying of agrichemicals over land does not require consent, but is only permitted if a number of conditions are met, such as supervision of the activity by a qualified operator, public notification and avoidance of sensitive areas such as streams and wetlands.

In regional parks this rule was implemented with a resource consent for the aerial spraying of the aquatic weed species *Egeria* (oxygen weed) in the Gollans Wetland (a significant natural wetland), which adjoins Lake Kohangatera in East Harbour Regional Park. Spraying this weed has reduced its spread and contributes to a more healthy aquatic environment for native fish.

### **Providing fish passage through culverts and other in-stream structures**

The PNRP identifies areas which are highly valued for their native fish populations in Schedule F1. It requires that all new structures are to provide for passage up and down stream of native fish (General conditions of activities, Provision 5.5.4). Restoring fish passage where it has been lost (with existing structures or obstacles) is also promoted.

At Battle Hill Farm Forest Park fish passage has been restored in a Horokiri Stream tributary behind the woodshed. These rock structures can be readily seen and for six species of threatened fish. Any instream structures we install will be designed to provide fish passage. Other works to remove substantial fish barriers have taken place in the Pakuratahi Forest and in Belmont Regional Park.

### **Reducing sediment run off to waterways**

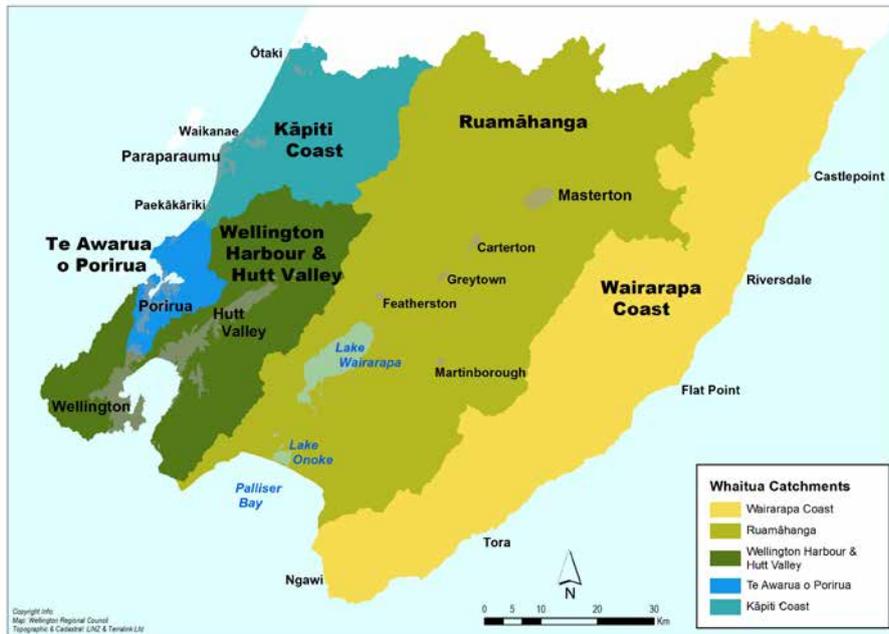
Reducing sediment-laden runoff to waterways minimises downstream effects in estuaries and potential upstream flooding. The PNRP provides directions to support the reduction of sediment runoff. For example, Rule 102 ensures that harvesting exotic plantation forest (eg in Akatarawa or Pakuratahi Forests) is managed so that sediment and slash generated by the activity does not enter adjoining waterways.



Looking north from Belmont Regional Park over the Duck Creek catchment where habitat restoration works are taking place.

## Whaitua programme

As part of work to implement the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM), Greater Wellington has established the Whaitua programme. The Māori word ‘whaitua’ means a designated space or catchment – Greater Wellington has divided the region into five of these whaitua (see Figure 1). The Whaitua programme aims to work closely with mana whenua, territorial authority partners and communities through establishing Whaitua Committees that make recommendations to Greater Wellington on water management into the future.



Map 2. Boundaries of the five whaitua in the Wellington region

The NPS-FM identifies minimum states for freshwater that Councils must seek to achieve, so that the overall water quality in a region is maintained or improved. Whaitua Committees will produce Whaitua Implementation Programmes (WIPs) which describe the ways in which the people from that catchment want to manage their water now and for future generations through a range of integrated tools, policies and strategies. Some parts of the WIP will become regulations through a plan change to the PNRP, while others will driver implementation options through becoming part of strategic planning such as the PNP.

The parks network is spread across three Whaitua catchments. The management of parks within each catchment will likely be influenced in future by the limits defined under each Whaitua implementation programme and will be different for each park. For example the Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua has a significant focus on reducing excessive sediment entering Porirua Harbour so will consider all possible upstream sources of sediment. Sediment management on farmed rural land, such as the Belmont Regional Park may also change through the Whaitua implementation process. However within parks where there are farming activities new Farm Environment Plans will define operational requirements and possible changes, such as further retirement of grazed areas or fencing of streams and tributaries to exclude stock.

Whaitua committee	Parks within Whaitua
Te Awarua-o-Porirua Whaitua – established December 2014	Battle Hill Farm Forest Park Belmont - western catchment
Wellington Harbour and Hutt Valley Whaitua – in process of establishment	Belmont - eastern catchment Kaitoke RP Pakuratahi Forest East Harbour RP Wainuiomata Recreation Area
Kāpiti Coast Whaitua – to be established	QEP

## **Te Awarua-o-Porirua Harbour and Catchment Strategy and Action Plan**

This strategy is relevant to Belmont and Battle Hill parks. The aims of the strategy are to reduce sediment and pollutants entering Porirua Harbour and to restore its ecological health, which is currently considered to be in degraded condition. Greater Wellington is contributing to restoration works by progressively fencing and establishing riparian plantings along streams within these parks such as the Horokiri Stream in Battle Hill Farm Forest Park, and Duck Creek and Cannons Creek in Belmont Regional Park.

### **Key Native Ecosystem programme (KNE)**

Greater Wellington's Biodiversity Strategy is implemented via the Key Native Ecosystems (KNE) programme and other operational programmes. The KNE programme delivers works to reduce pest plant and animal's numbers and supports native plants and animals. The programme focuses on protecting the highest biodiversity value sites within the parks as well as habitat connections.

All parks have KNE sites within them and for some parks the KNE site is most of the park; such as Pakuratahi Forest, Wainuiomata Recreation Area and Kaitoke Regional Park. Some KNE sites are part of ecological corridors or biolinks between larger forests such as the DOC managed Tararua and Remutaka Forest Parks.

### **Wetland restoration programme**

Wetlands provide important native fish habitat and support a variety of wetland plants. However, it is estimated that only 2.3% of the region's freshwater wetlands now remain. In the past wetlands were often viewed as unproductive areas and drained to provide more grassland for stock. Greater Wellington's wetland restoration programme aims to enhance and restore wetlands within parks under the KNE programme. Works include excluding grazing stock, reducing the impacts of pest plants and animals and replanting with local native species. Notable wetlands in parks include the Parangarahu Lakes in East Harbour Regional Park and the QEP wetlands near Mackays Crossing.

## **Freshwater fish programme**

Degraded habitat for native fresh water fish, declining populations and reduced distribution of species are significant aquatic ecosystem health issues across the region. Degradation is attributed to issues such as:

- In-stream structures acting as a barrier to fish movements, such as flood gates, dams, weirs, fords, pipes and culverts
- Vegetation clearance along streams resulting in little shade for aquatic life
- Stock access to streams contributing to sediment and nutrient run off.

The freshwater fish programme is helping to restore the habitat of native fish through works such as removal of stream obstacles, planting stream margins for shade and fencing to exclude stock.

### **Biosecurity**

Greater Wellington's biosecurity work is guided by the Regional Pest Management Plan which is currently under review. The implementation programme includes pest species number monitoring, pest plant and animal control and education and awareness raising work. Pest plants and animals are reduced by methods such as weeding, herbicide spraying, trapping, shooting and aerial applications of 1080 pellets in some areas.

Greater Wellington only uses herbicides and pesticides which have been assessed and approved for use by the Environmental Protection Authority, and application is undertaken in accordance with standards and protocols designed to protect the environment park visitors from potent negative effects. Biosecurity works are undertaken in accordance with the relevant legislation and rules such as the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (1996), Management of Agrichemicals Code of Practice (NZS 8409:2004) and proposed Natural Resource Plan methods and rules.

In parks biosecurity works are implemented via the KNE programme and park operational programmes. For example, at the Battle Hill Bush KNE site pest plant and animal control work is undertaken to reduce browsing by non-native animals (e.g. possums), support native plant regeneration and increase the native bird populations (e.g. rat control). Elsewhere in parks biosecurity works support revegetation projects and particular rare or threatened flora or fauna species.

## Native vegetation restoration planting

A number of parks have large areas which are currently grazed by stock for landscape maintenance purposes. In many parks when these areas are retired from grazing, native vegetation regeneration occurs, often with the assistance of pest plant control work. In some areas where it is not appropriate or effective to allow natural regeneration to occur, for example where this would pose a fire risk, we undertake native vegetation planting. Large scale planting is costly so restoration options such as trials of low cost planting techniques are sometimes undertaken to determine the most effective methods for particular parks. Community partnership works and volunteer assistance such are currently the key ways larger scale restoration activities take place in parks. Community partnerships deliver significant results. For example in 2016, 446 volunteers planted more than 20,000 plants in regional parks.

*So what does this mean for changes to the PNP?*

- Should we change how we undertake our environmental management? If so, how?
- Is Greater Wellington's current approach to biosecurity in the Parks network working well?
- What role could the community be encouraged take to work more with Greater Wellington?

## 3.6 Managing parks with stock grazing activities

Regional parks offer visitors a range of landscape types to recreate in including open grassy areas such as the escarpment of Baring Head and open tops of Belmont Regional Park. Farm animals including sheep and cattle are part of the rural character and open space management regime of Battle Hill, Belmont, Kaitoke, Baring Head and areas of Queen Elizabeth Park.

Whilst farming and grazing activities have largely been accepted and considered a positive attribute of regional parks for many visitors and neighbouring communities of parks, others are concerned about farming activities and what impacts they have on the natural environment. In recent times farming practices have changed a lot and in some parks these changes have been obvious to park visitors. Informed by scientific practice and technological advances farmers are undertaking their day to day activities differently.

**To explore these changes and address concerns about farming in parks we have developed a separate supporting document called 'Farming in regional parks' which is available on the Greater Wellington website.**

A summary of key issues is outlined here.

All our parks are different and Greater Wellington's and grazing licence holder's management approach is influenced by the landscape, soil types, climate, stock carrying capacity of the land and a range of other factors. Sustainable Land Use Plans inform how different parks will be managed with grazing activities.

The reasons for undertaking stock grazing in parks are varied including:

- Education and interpretation – Battle Hill was originally purchased for farming, forestry and recreation purposes.
- Cost effective land management – grazing is an efficient and effective way to maintain grassy open spaces for recreational use and enjoyment.
- Maintaining significant landscapes which are celebrated for their open space such as the wide open hill tops of Belmont and dramatic escarpment of Baring Head.
- Maintaining heritage values - many of the parks have a long history of farming and seeing farm animals in the park is reported as a positive experience by many park visitors.
- Reducing the risk of fires; and as a means of educating the public on sustainable farming practices. This is an important consideration as we experience climate change with more frequent and prolonged dry spells which may make the region increasingly fire prone.

Concerns expressed about farming in parks have included:

- The use of 'recreation reserves' for farming, and the restriction of access to public land as a result
- Pest plant and animal control, and in particular the use of spraying to control pest plants
- Farming's impact on soil and run off of sediment and nutrients to freshwater
- Changes in the way areas of park are farmed and the 'intensification' of these activities and how it may be impacting the environment

### Looking ahead

As well as continually improving the way park land is managed with science, technology and resources, the opportunity exists for Greater Wellington, partners and stakeholders to change land management practices to achieve shared goals. This includes trialling different restoration methods, progressively eradicating weeds in different ways, protecting wetlands and streams areas from all livestock and horses, and adapting to climate change. Community values and viewpoints change over time. We are interested in your feedback about how

Greater Wellington and farm licence holders are managing park land with farming activities whilst providing for public access and enjoyment.



Retired and grazed area in Belmont Regional Park

- Do you have any feedback about native vegetation restoration works or grazing as a means of managing large areas of parks?

### 3.7 Facilities and services in parks

Greater Wellington's regional parks support enjoyable park visits and protect the environment with a wide range of facilities including roads, tracks, bridges, toilets, picnic tables, information panels, camping areas, buildings, and signage. There are also heritage assets such as historic dams, WW2 bunkers, Victorian era rail tunnels, buildings and numerous other archaeological sites.

A wide range of services are also provided such as park rangers, visitor information and interpretation, security, facility cleaning, public events and pest plant and animal management. Recreation information is also a critical service and is provided via the website, signs and via social media.



The new Kāreara Track in East Harbour RP Northern Forest.

Having the right facilities and services in the right places and servicing them to meet visitor needs and expectations contributes to higher quality recreation experiences and enjoyment of parks and takes a significant amount of work.

Park asset management activities are connected to Greater Wellington's higher level outcomes; a resilient community which is safe, prosperous, connected and healthy and a healthy productive and sustainable environment.

#### Levels of service

A detailed parks asset management plan guides management of park facilities and services. It considers the results of visitor feedback from a long term visitor research survey and identifies where changes are required as a result of asset age and condition, demand from visitors, feedback from monitoring and broader changes in the Wellington region population and tourism numbers. For example, we know from our visitor research that more toilets and better signs leading to and within parks are required, and these are things that we are focusing on to improve.

The asset management plan draws on the guidance of the PNP to identify overall levels of service for different facilities and services in parks. More recent changes in demand include growth in cycling, in particular mountain biking, accessible short easy walks and in the numbers of people camping at Greater Wellington's three campgrounds (Kaitoke, Battle Hill and Dry Creek in Belmont).

Another key consideration in park facility and service management is the need to adapt to a rapidly changing climate and manage assets so that they can withstand the effects of higher rainfall or prolonged periods of drought or relocate assets such as tracks if this is appropriate.

#### Accessibility

The population of the Wellington region is ageing and the recreation activities people undertake change as people age. An ageing population, with increased life expectancy, means more people have more time to enjoy outdoor recreation. This has significant implications for provision of facilities, including increased demand for quality facilities enabling higher levels of accessibility. The number of people in the 65 years and over population is expected to more than double within the Wellington Region by 2043. Providing facilities which are accessible to a wide range of people from the young to old and people of all ages in between with limited mobility, means following 'universal access' principles for facilities wherever we can, and providing highly accessible facilities in key locations in parks. Most recently a new barrier free path and toilet have been installed at the Dry Creek campground in Belmont RP

and at QEP 'Ramaroa' the new visitor entrance hub has been designed with accessibility in mind.

Balancing the access needs of cyclists and other users on the popular Remutaka Rail Trail while limiting access for vehicles and motorbikes resulted in several new barriers being installed that now suit 95% of non-motorised users.

- Do you have any feedback for us about particular parks and their facilities or services?
- Are there particular facilities or services that would make parks more accessible for you, and if so what?
- Do you find it easy to find out about recreation activities in parks which suit your needs?

### Sharing park facilities

Many facilities in parks are shared by different activity groups. Rather than duplicate facilities such as trails we ask that visitors 'share with care'. In a practical way this means:

- Sharing facilities and considering the enjoyment of others
- Caring for the environment and leaving no trace of your visit
- Respecting temporary closures of tracks, roads or other facilities
- Being thoughtful and minimising impacts in any way you can.

It is generally not desirable or appropriate to duplicate trails and fragment bushland areas to create numerous single user trails (such as mountain bike or horse rider only, accepting that many single user walking trails are because of terrain). Fragmented trails can lead to more weed infestations and diminished habitat values for native birds and animals.

Do you have any experiences in regional parks relating to sharing facilities that you would like to share with Greater Wellington? We are interested in feedback about shared use of facilities and any issues or 'hot spots' in particular parks for management attention.



For safety and enjoyment park visitors are reminded to share tracks and park roads with care in all regional parks

### 3.7.1 Sustainable management and use of parks

Greater Wellington is committed to working more sustainably wherever it operates, including throughout the park network and encourages others to do the same. Opportunities to work sustainably include procurement for park materials and services and other park operational work. A number of examples of day to day sustainable park management practices are detailed below, but these are just a snapshot.

#### Procurement

Greater Wellington is preparing guidance for its goods and service providers to help us achieve more sustainable outcomes for the region. For example, Greater Wellington could lead by giving preference to businesses that can demonstrate that they can reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce waste in all forms, and enhance the natural environment.

Organisation wide, Greater Wellington now has eight electric and hybrid fleet vehicles for work related travel in the region. In parks, procurement decisions consider sustainability such as trying to source timber that is NZ Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified. This means they are internationally certified as sustainably harvested. Electric vehicle charging stations for the public are not currently provided in parks but may be installed if demand is apparent in future.



Recycling is good for the environment and encouraged at all events in parks.

### Lower carbon options

As a region and nation, we are gradually moving to a lower carbon economy. This means using less non-renewable fossil fuels and more renewable energy such as wind, solar and hydroelectric power. In its management of the Parks network Greater Wellington is adopting measures including electric maintenance equipment (e.g. battery operated scrub bars and leaf blowers) and is investigating other management measures. Drones can provide low energy and safer parks assessments, for example, to review asset conditions after major weather events, to photograph and monitor weeds or pests incursions or the effectiveness of weed/ pest treatments. In biodiversity management cameras have been used for many years to monitor pest animal presence and movements. Use of the right technologies and innovative practices are ways that Greater Wellington can decrease its carbon emissions.

Greater Wellington is also using the parks network to sequester (remove) carbon from the atmosphere. Some small areas of previously exotic forest have been harvested and are being managed to naturally revert to native vegetation; for example, the former pine forest at Stratton Street at Belmont. 440 ha of regenerating vegetation registered in the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative sequesters about four tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> per hectare every year. Greater Wellington is also investigating options for retiring areas of currently grazed land and either allowing slow natural regeneration process to take place, or actively restoring them as resources become available.

### Smarter access to parks and use of technology

We are progressively changing the way we manage our gates to and within parks. Using keyless technology we now have automatic closing gates at most parks and forests and keyless locks for many gates within parks. This change has delivered lots of benefits including:

- Lower operating costs and better use of park ranger time without the need for daily manual opening and closing of gates and less time spent opening and closing multiple gates with parks and forests
- Less ranger or security call outs for people stuck in parks with vehicles after park hours
- Better overall security for parks with keyless entry which is difficult to copy
- Collection of useful data for management purposes about park and forest use and frequency of park visits by different user groups
- Health and safety benefits, particularly when combined with security cameras.

We also have keyless entry for gate access along Te Ara o Whareroa for people in wheelchairs or on bikes with tag-along trailers who can't easily pass through the narrow barriers that block unwanted motor bike and motor vehicle access. All of these improvements have made a significant difference for park managers and the visiting public and will continue to be used as different options using technology become available.

Following the requirements of the Privacy Act, we are also increasingly using cameras for management purposes such as at entry points to parks or where there are particular management issues such as vandalism. Drones equipped with cameras are likely to be increasingly used for management purpose in future such as gathering information about asset condition after storm events and for scientific research purposes.

### Managing camper waste better at Kaitoke Regional Park

At Kaitoke large recycling facilities have been installed in the upper and lower campgrounds so that conscientious campers can send their waste products to recycling. The usual cans, glass, plastics, paper and cardboard can be sent to recycling, and reducing the amount of rubbish going to the land fill. By designing these areas for campers to use it has also reduced park ranger's time sorting recycling.

### Queen Elizabeth Park – Ramaroa entrance hub

'Ramaroa' is the new entrance area hub at QEP housing public toilets, information about the park, the park rangers' office and a meeting room. It is the new focal point for this entrance area of the park at Mackays Crossing. Greater Wellington will add interpretation

panels to reveal key stories of the park. The name Ramaroa can be interpreted as eternal flame or guiding light projecting a radiance that invites and connects the community and visitors into the park.

The building and its services were designed with sustainability and accessibility in mind.

*Culturally integrated design* - the design of 'Ramaroa' tilted roof line and walls and large areas of deck reference both a traditional Māori 'whareniui' and at the same time the style of the tents used by US Marines who once occupied this area. Angled screens are reminiscent of traditional Māori kites (manu tukutuku).

*Energy consumption* – it has ultra-high efficiency lighting and high efficiency heat pump heating, alongside passive energy design (including solid mass concrete walls, double glazing and solar screens) to ensure the buildings maintain a comfortable temperature. Only FSC certified sustainable hardwoods timbers are used in the building. Solar panels may be added in future.

*Recycled materials* – the former rangers office was relocated and the toilets renovated to be part of the Ramaroa hub.

*Water sensitive design* - rain water is harvested from the building roofs, treated and used for drinking. Over flow nourishes the native plants.

*Universal access* - the building and its facilities are fully accessible for people with limited mobility. The site of Ramaroa was chosen so that visitors have good access to rangers, and so that they have active surveillance of this important visitor hub area where there is a lot going on.

*Indigenous plants* – as you would expect in a park, Ramaroa's surrounds are landscaped with native plants sourced from local seed and grown in the park nursery by volunteers.

Ramaroa is a good example of how our parks are demonstrating innovative, effective and efficient implementation of Greater Wellington policies related to sustainability. Our buildings and other assets are developed in accordance with asset management plans, agreed levels of service and our park visitor's and stakeholder's needs. We work with mana whenua from the beginning of projects and celebrate our key milestones and achievements with them.

- What does sustainability mean to you?
- Do you think it important that Greater Wellington practices and exemplifies high quality sustainability practice? Do you have any expectations about sustainability and parks?
- Would you support Greater Wellington using parks to exemplify sustainability practices even if it cost more to implement?
- Do you think Greater Wellington should provide electric vehicle charging stations in parks?
- Do you have any suggestions about other improvements relating to sustainable management of parks?

### 3.7.2 Education and interpretation activities and opportunities

Regional parks and forests provide a wealth of learning opportunities which range from school visits to park interpretation panels revealing stories about significant features, ranger talks and events. Our park partners which include local iwi and friends groups as well as concessionaires also have a key role in revealing park stories and supporting conservation work.

Identifying and revealing interesting aspects of the most significant features of parks supports a more in-depth visitor experience, and supports understanding about why resources are invested in protection and preservation works. This is based on the premise that from understanding comes appreciation, and from appreciation comes motivation for protection of natural and cultural resources.

Formal learning opportunities are also supported in parks with facilities such as the woolshed classrooms in Belmont and Battle Hill parks with ranger talks often part of these education activities. Informal learning opportunities are numerous in parks from summer events, to interpretation panels, information on the website and volunteer and friend's group activities.

Greater Wellington also works with universities to support student learning and provide 'real world' projects in parks with benefits for the students, supporting friends groups and ultimately park visitors if student project ideas are carried through to fruition. Most recently we have worked with Massey University Design School students and Victoria University Landscape Architecture students to develop concepts for revealing heritage stories to visitors at Baring Head in East Harbour Regional Park. Parks also provide opportunities for university researchers to investigate natural ecosystems and we register a number of projects each year.

The delivery mechanisms for park interpretation are changing and whilst park based interpretation panels are likely to remain a core form of delivery, stories are increasingly being told online via our hand held devices where internet connections are good. Providing stories electronically means it is easy to update and change stories for example for seasonal changes or for different audiences.

We are interested in what your preferences are for learning about the interesting stories of parks. Do you prefer traditional park story telling such as face to face via ranger lead walks and talks and static interpretation panels, do you prefer to read up online, or perhaps it's a combination of both or something else?

- What do you think we should be doing more or less of in our regional parks to provide details about interesting features or issues? What aspects of regional parks are you curious about?
- Have you been in a park with one of our concessionaires or joined an events programme where park stories were told?
- How do you prefer to learn about park features when you are visiting? Would you like to see more story telling in parks, or would you prefer to look it up electronically – such as on the website or in apps?

### 3.7.3 Art in parks

Regional park spaces and natural environments already provide a beautiful 'canvases' and opportunities for painting outdoors, photography and inspiration for other art works. Public art work installations in parks can be educational, interpretive and engaging and create a unique feature for a park. Art works can provide character and add to the sense of place of a park.

Art has a significant but subtle place in our regional parks; most often through drawing and painting of landscapes, photography, drama such as plays, student projects, Māori heritage artworks such as symbolic carvings and representations and art works created from park materials such as flax and grass weaving and driftwood sculptures. In future we could see more temporary or permanent sculptures, interpretive art trails or other art works.

- Do you think there should be more art in parks and what could it be?
- Do our regional park landscapes and features inspire your own creative efforts?
- What role do you think regional parks have in the world of creative art?



Top to bottom: Kowhaiwhai panels on the Ramaroa entry hub at QEP illustrate the activities of the park. Massey University design students proposals for orientation signs at Baring Head.

### 3.7.4 Park concessionaires, licence and leases

A range of commercial and non-commercial activities take place in parks under management agreements which range from one off event 'concessions' permits to longer term licences and leases. There are many one off events in parks such as weddings or orienteering, weekly or daily visits by businesses such as Lord of the Rings Tours or commercial dog walkers, recurring events such as annual markets or fairs, and seasonal business activities as ice cream or fish and chip vans visiting campgrounds. A concession is a formal relationship between the concession holder and Greater Wellington, ensuring that both parties are aware of their obligations. Concessionaires pay an application fee and park user fees. Non-commercial events with less than 150 participants will generally require a concession (to manage the activity) but not a fee.

Activities which take place over a longer term are generally authorised under licence or lease agreements. For example stock grazing, bee keeping and recreation clubs based in parks. Each proposal for a licence to operate and utilise a park is assessed on a case by case basis and has specific licence conditions to govern use. In the Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests, commercial forestry agreements are in place for cutting rights and forest maintenance activities, and consider how day to day operational forestry work and recreation activity use are managed. A National Environment Standard for plantation forestry management guides best practice and minimises impacts.

Long term lease arrangements in parks include the Pāekākariki Surf Lifesaving club, heritage tramway in QEP and more recently the Wellington Group of Riding for Disabled at Battle Hill. All deliver benefits for the public good and are considered to be compatible with park values, provided impacts are minimised on an ongoing basis (guided by operating licence conditions).

Compatibility with park purpose, public access, safety and minimising impacts on natural and cultural values are core considerations for all types of commercial and non-commercial activity in parks. Proposals for activities in parks which are not compatible with these values (and the legislation by which the park is governed such as the Reserves Act, Local Government Act or Wellington Region Water Board Act) are usually not permitted in parks.

The revenue gained from these activities directly benefits parks. It helps to offset the cost of managing parks and funds infrastructure improvements such as fencing, track upgrades and new works such as interpretation of significant stories, seats, picnic tables and tracks. Permanent revenue streams such as lease or licence fees from service organisations such as telecommunication towers or pipelines mean that parks operational budgets are less dependent on direct funding from the rate payers of the Wellington region. As the Wellington region urban population grows and spreads and tourism visits increase our regional parks are likely to experience more interest and pressure for commercial activities.



Wellington Riding for Disabled provide therapeutic riding activities with the help of many volunteers. They have a long term lease to build a covered riding arena at Battle Hill so they can ride under-cover year-round. The park trails provide scenic places to ride.



Pāekākāriki Surf Lifesaving club provide an important community service and are based at the southern end of QEP.

- What types of commercial activities do you think are appropriate in parks? For example, would you like to see more mobile coffee vans or food vendors?
- Wind farms are currently identified in the PNP as only being permitted in Akatarawa Forest. Do you think the management plan should be changed in any way in relation to wind farms?
- Do you have any interests or concerns about commercial activities in regional parks?

### Concessionaires in regional parks 2015-2017

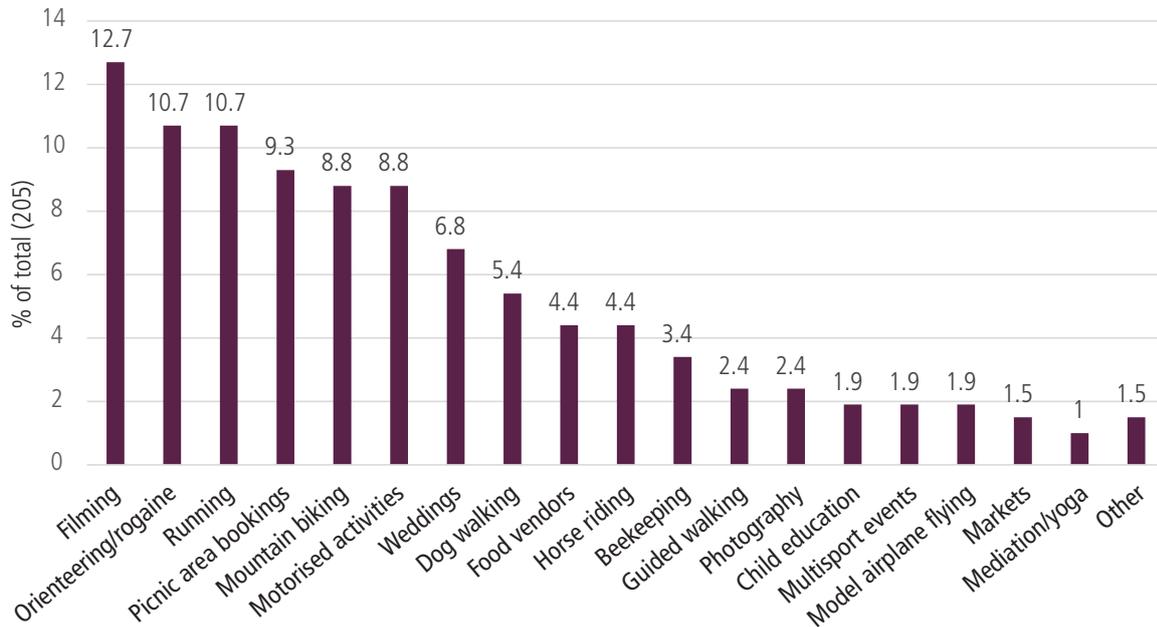
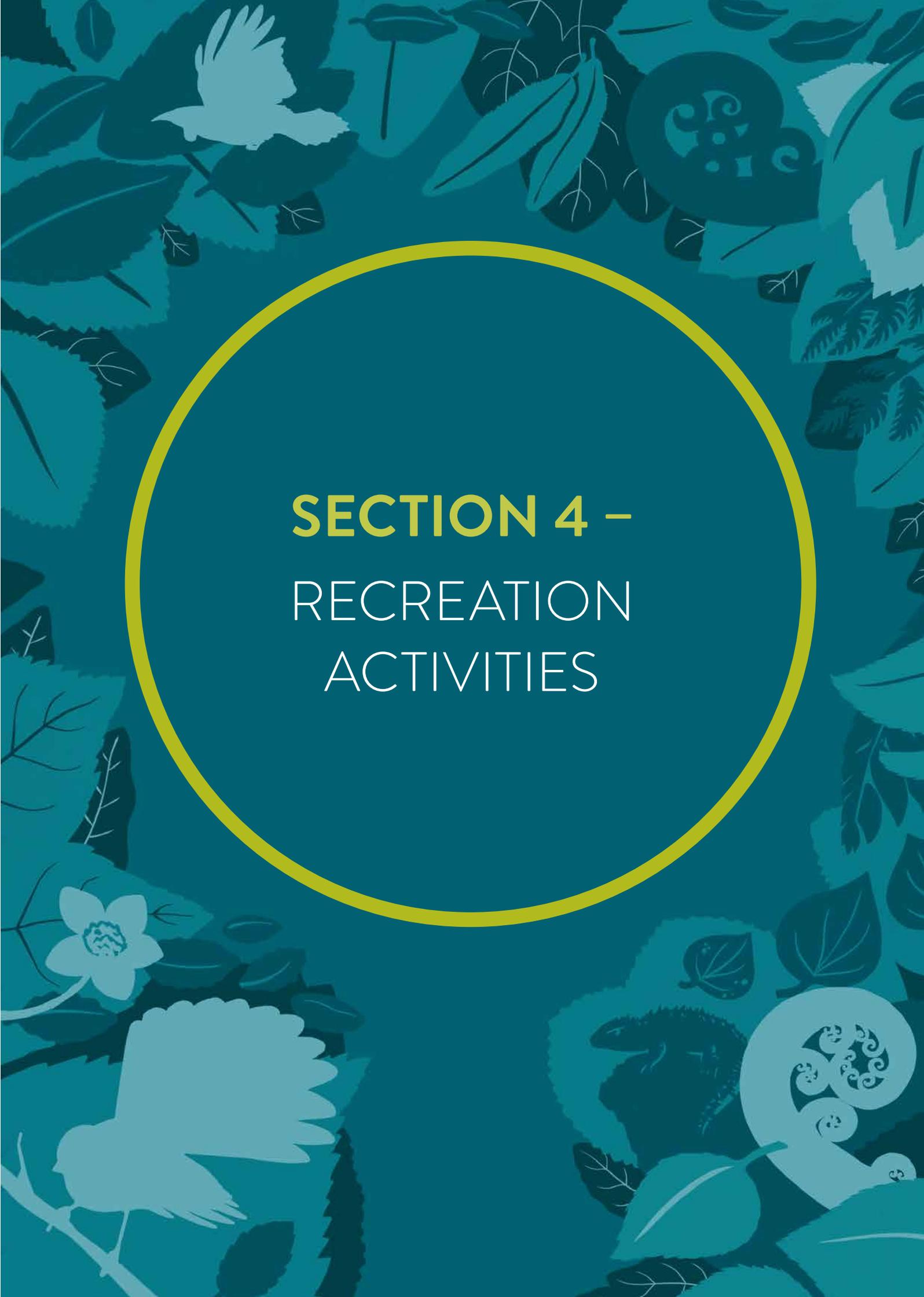


Figure 5. This graph shows the common types of concessionaires in regional parks 2015-2017



There are a huge variety of trails in regional parks for mountain biking including dedicated MTB trails near the the Stratton Street entrance of Belmont RP.

The background is a teal color with various botanical and animal illustrations in lighter shades of teal. There are several birds, some perched on branches and others in flight. There are also various types of leaves, ferns, and flowers. A large, bright yellow circle is centered on the page, containing the text.

**SECTION 4 –**  
RECREATION  
ACTIVITIES

# SECTION 4 – RECREATION ACTIVITIES

Most people visit parks to undertake some sort of a recreation activity. We know from our own research that the primary activities are trail based, but for some parks particular places are the key attraction, such as the Korokoro Dam in Belmont Regional Park or Butterfly Creek in East Harbour Regional Park. Here we explore some of the key recreation activities, and we welcome feedback about any recreation activities relevant to regional parks and feedback about issues or opportunities that we can consider as we work towards developing a new management plan.

## 4.1 Walking, cycling, running, horse riding - tracks and trails

Trail based recreation activities are the most popular thing to do in parks. Greater Wellington’s visitor research, and regional research, identifies that of these activities walking is most popular, followed by cycling/ mountain biking, jogging/ running and tramping. Dog walking is included in walking and horse riding is also popular but with far less overall participation. The trail network in regional parks totals approximately 230 kilometres of tracks and 230 kilometres of roads; in total approximately 460 kilometres of road and trail available for various recreation activities. Trails and park roads available for different types of use include:

35km paths which are more accessible for people with limited mobility

459km walking trails

357km cycling or mountain biking trails (including roads)

160km horse riding trails

180km trail bike riding and four wheel driving roads

Regional park trails and roads are a significant recreation resource for the residents and visitors to the region.



Guided mountain biking in Belmont Regional Park as part of a Great Outdoors summer event programme.

### A regional approach

Trail based activities are generally growing. The new ‘Wellington Regional Trails for the Future’ strategic framework (2017) identifies that the region has an active population with 78% of adults participating in sport and recreation activities which is 4% higher than the national average. Despite the region’s hilly terrain 26.2% of residents cycle regularly, higher than the national average of 24.8%. The framework identifies a vision for development of the region wide network of trails as “Connecting our people with inspiring adventures” and details this as building on existing strength of:

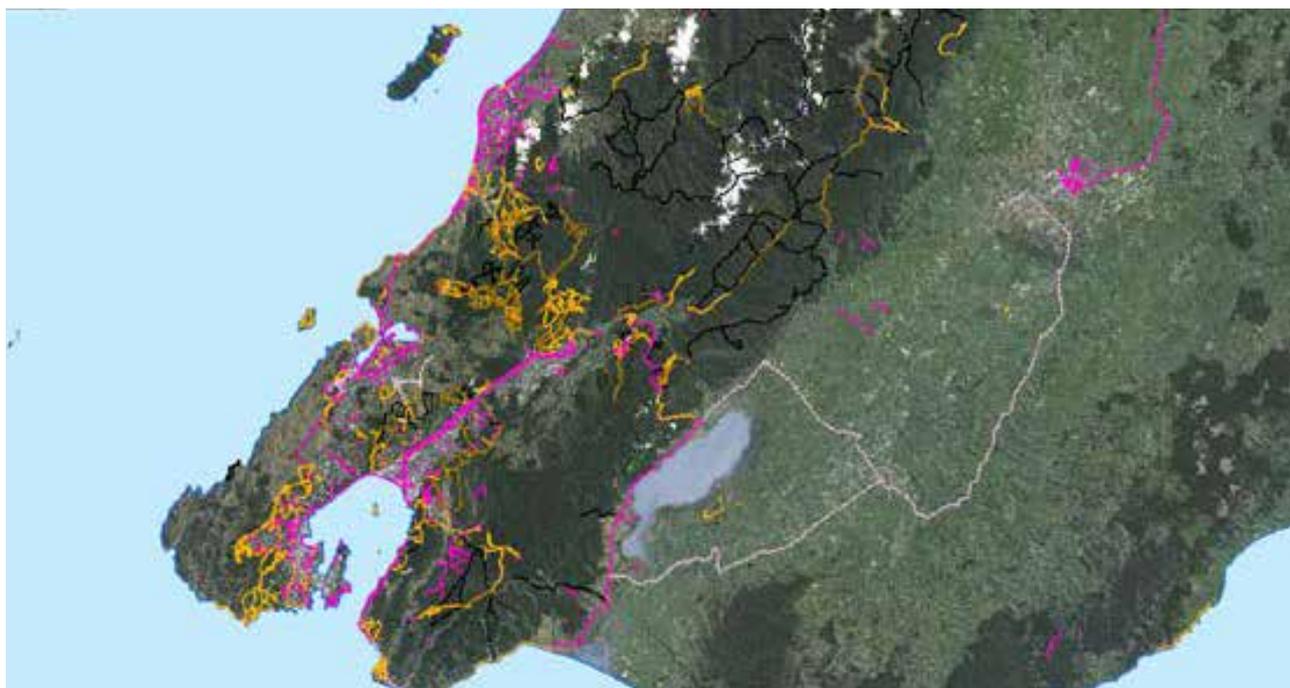
- a strong mix of trails and experiences
- trails that enable residents and visitors to explore the broader region, including outer urban areas and regional destinations
- easy access (by air, sea and car) and options for connecting trail experiences by road, rail and water.

Greater Wellington supports this vision and will work with other land managers to deliver the key actions identified in the plan. This includes development and enhancement of particular trails which have been defined as ‘signature’, ‘regional’ or ‘local’ category trails.

Within regional parks there is currently one signature trail; the Remutaka Cycle Trail (encompassing the Hutt River Trail and Remutaka Rail Trail), a category which acts as an attraction for visitors to the region and is a *'focal point for regional residents'*. The park network has a number of 'regional' category trails, identified as 'significant trails that form the core of the trail network and provide quality experiences for residents and visitors'.

Regional trails in Greater Wellington's parks include the Stratton Street Belmont park cluster of trails for walking, mountain biking and horse riding, the Puke Ariki trail also in Belmont, the Te Ara o Whareroa shared path in QEP, the walking trails of the East Harbour Regional Park, and the Karapoti Classic trail route in Akatarawa forest. As well as newly developed mountain bike trails around Station Drive in the Pakuratahi Forest.

The framework identifies actions such as improving trail hubs with appropriate amenity facilities, working collaboratively to close gaps in the trail network, providing interpretation along trails to reveal interesting stories, providing good information about trails, and supporting trail businesses such as bike hire, walking and cycling tours, bike friendly accommodation providers to build regional trails products which attract trail tourism visitors.



Map 3. The Regional Trails Framework map shows the wealth of 'Signature', 'Regional' and 'Local' category trails in the Wellington region.

### **Satisfaction with trails**

In our visitor research we asked park visitors about their satisfaction with trails. From the 2017 results we know that the majority of park visitors are 'very satisfied' or 'quite' satisfied with tracks and trails. Very few report dissatisfaction (3% or less). The table below illustrates the results. However, from this we can see that there are a number of opportunities for improvement. This includes better trail connections within parks, directional signs and storytelling of key park features or history. In section 5 below we identify a number of proposals to create better trail connections and address signage and interpretation opportunities.

Park Aspects	Very Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Not Satisfied	Could Not Rate
Tracks and trails that are easy to get to	65	25	1	9
Tracks and trails that have good connections within the parks	49	35	1	15
Tracks and trails that offer the right degree of ease or challenge for you	57	29	3	11
Direction signs within the parks	39	45	6	10
Signs that inform users about the parks, their features and/or their history	35	38	7	20



Riding in Belmont Regional Park

### E-bikes and trails

Using an electric assist bike can overcome some of the barriers to participation in cycling, particularly in the hilly terrain of the Wellington region. Their benefits are wide ranging; they can bridge gaps between different strength and fitness levels in a group of friends or family, the extra power lightens the load if a ‘tag-along’ children’s bike is attached at the back or for carrying gear or picnic lunch, and they can be a great way to get fit on local trails which may not have easier gradient options. There are as many different types of e-bike as there are conventional bikes.

E-bikes (electric bikes) can use all shared use trails and dedicated cycling trails in regional parks, but as with conventional bikes, trail users should ‘share with care’ for other trail users and for the environment (including the trail surface), wildlife and farm animals. Sharing public spaces with care is important for recreation enjoyment and environmental protection. Our Parks Bylaws provide authority for rangers to intervene if there are issues with inappropriate visitor behaviour in parks, and they are occasionally required. For use of e-bikes in parks we simply ask that the power output of the bike is in accordance with the Land Transport Act definition of a bicycle. The current definition is a power output of 300 watts, but this may change over time as e-bikes become more main stream. More highly powered e-bikes and petrol powered bikes may be used in the Akatarawa Forest where ‘motorised recreation’ activities such as trail bike riding and four wheel driving are permitted.

### The right ‘mix’ of trails enhanced trail experiences

Regional parks offer a wide variety of trail and park road based recreation experiences. The graph below shows the kilometres of track in each category in total. The steeper terrain in parks such as East Harbour and Belmont has historically meant more challenging trails. We know from research and population changes that people are increasingly time poor, looking for close to home recreation opportunities, and that overall population is ageing. Baby boomer and generation X are retiring fitter and healthier than their predecessors and ‘cycling’ is often cited as the new ‘golf’ for retirees. What does this mean for the demand and supply for trail types?

## Roads and trail-types in Regional Parks

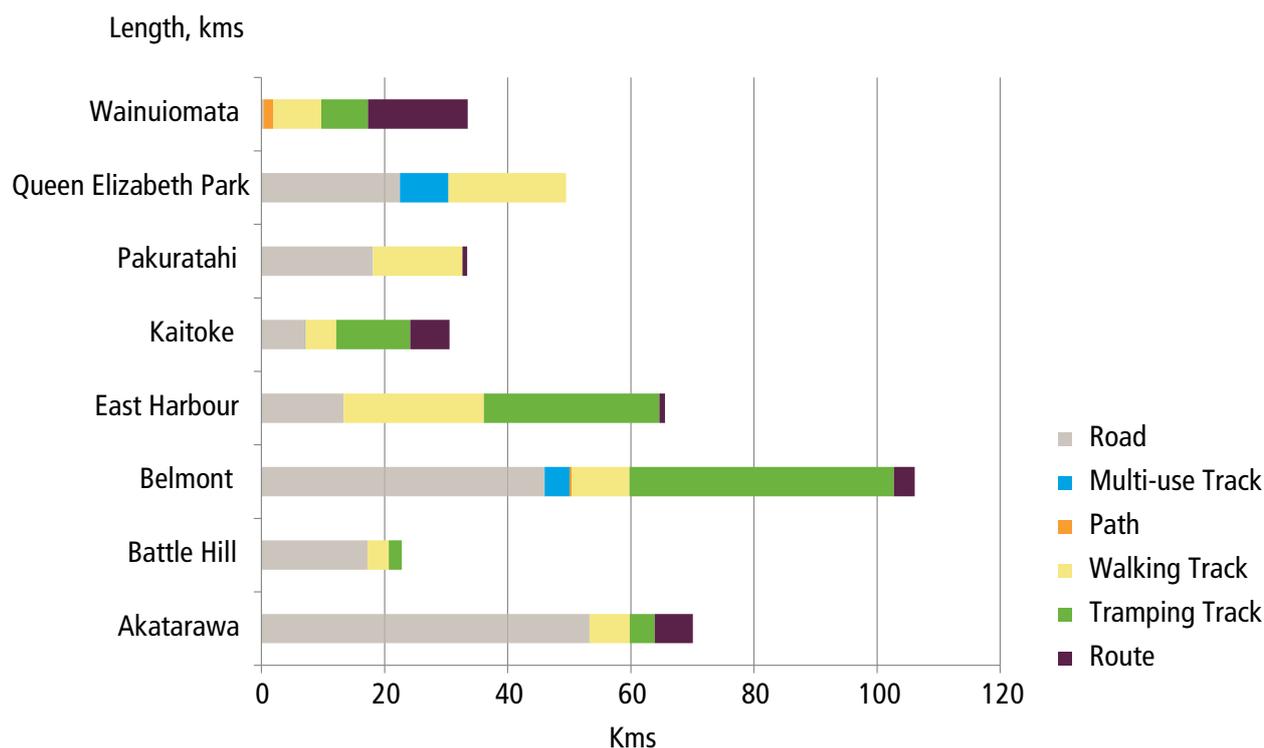


Figure 6. Tracks and roads. Belmont and East Harbour Regional Parks have a higher proportion of challenging tramping tracks due to their steep terrain. Many of the walking tracks in East Harbour are located in Parangarau Lakes and Baring Head. Note most roads are shared by walkers and mountain bikers and some are also shared with horse riders.

The graph above illustrates the distribution of track categories as defined by the NZ standard for walking tracks SNZ 8630 as well as kilometres of road and multi-use trail in each of the regional parks. The geographic terrain of parks has a significant influence on the lengths of different track types. For example the flatter terrain of QEP means many easier grade 'walking tracks' and the steeper terrain of East Harbour Northern Forest and Belmont Regional parks means more 'tramping track' category trails up the hills.

In the graph above 'multi-use' trails are wide shared trails for horse riders, walkers and cyclists, additionally most of the roads identified above are also shared use. 'Walking' and 'Tramping' category tracks can also be shared, but most often only with walkers and cyclists. In Belmont and Pakuratahi Forest the roads are farm/forestry roads such as Old Coach Road, Goat Rock, Back Road and Belmont Road which provide some longer distance cycling, walking and running opportunities. The steep terrain of these parks means that there are many challenging trails but far less easy trails which can limit access opportunities for many people.

To create easier grade walking tracks in the Northern Forest of East Harbour or in much of Belmont Regional Park requires significant effort to realign existing trails or retire steep trails from use and create new ones which climb more gradually. Trail realignment will generally mean more use and enjoyment for more people, and it can also have environmental benefits. A gentler trail gradient usually means less water run-off and erosion of the trail surface and surrounding areas, and less maintenance cost. It may also result in some trail user 'displacement', with people who prefer the greater challenge shifting their use to other trails, but there is a rich supply of challenging trails.

Creating new trails may be also be appropriate in some areas provided possible impacts can be minimised, well managed or mitigated. Belmont and East Harbour regional parks are visible steep and hilly landmarks and the closest large regional parks to the Wellington city so offer the greatest opportunities for greater use and enjoyment as well as trail upgrades. See Section 5 proposals for details



Mountain biking in the Stratton Street area of Belmont Regional Park. This area was previously plantation pine forest and is now gradually regenerating to native bush. The Belmont Mountain Bike Association (BAMBA) have built and are maintaining trails here.

### Possible future directions for trails

The following directions are intended to support trail based recreation over the next ten years (the approximate time frame for the new management plan). We propose them here as overall directions for trail development and management:

- Continue to maintain the tracks to national standards (as set out in the NZS Handbook of Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures). Apply trail difficulty ratings to inform trail users about the types opportunities available.
- Maintain and further develop easy and accessible trails such as short walks, easy category MTB tracks and longer trails which have gentle gradients
- Undertake trail realignments and trail gradient upgrades for environment protection and visitor safety and enjoyment purposes. Some tracks have steep gradients which contribute to erosion and less enjoyable trail experiences.
- Further develop existing trails as shared use where impacts can be minimised and where shared use is appropriate.
- Develop new trails where demand is apparent, key features can be highlighted for educational or tourism purposes, or where other trails are closed, and where impacts can be appropriately managed (or are reduced by formal trail development).

- Further develop trail hub facilities for MTB at locations such as Stratton Street, Belmont, Tunnel Gully, Pakuratahi Forest. Facilities could include bike wash down, skills areas, shelter and picnic facilities, larger parking areas etc.
- Develop mountain bike skills trails where demand is apparent and impacts can be minimised
- Improve directional signage for trails. The need for this is identified through our annual visitor feedback programme.
- Develop more story telling (heritage interpretation) about significant features or stories along trails
- When new trails are developed or significant redevelopments take place they will have both local mana whenua and English language names (current PNP policy) or a single mana whenua name if this is more appropriate.
- As needed, develop agreements for trail development and maintenance work with local clubs such as Memorandum's of understanding (MOU's). For example, an effective MOU and track protocol is in place with the Akatarawa Recreation Access Committee (ARAC)
- Continuing innovations in trail infrastructure such as keyless entry electronic locks and cycle friendly access barriers
- Support e-bike use with charging points in appropriate locations if demand is apparent (for example with users bringing own charger)
- Where practicable, develop better trail and public transport connections to parks and trail connections to nearby parks managed by Territorial Authorities and DOC to create better connected 'local' trail networks.
- Continued gathering of data about trail uses and preferences to inform planning and management of trails. This includes using existing data sources such as devices and applications, which collect and store data about trail use.

A 'trail assessment criteria' is likely to be included in the new management plan which includes an outline of key considerations for new trail proposals or significant changes to existing trails, such as a change to shared use instead of single use. The criteria will also consider the significance of natural and cultural heritage values.

- Do you support the possible future directions outlined above for Greater Wellington’s park trails?
- What other changes or improvements should be made?
- Are particular trail facilities or services required?
- What is your favourite regional park trail and why?
- Do you have any other comments about trails?

## 4.2 Camping in regional parks

The current management focus of camping in regional parks is catering for growth. With increased international and domestic tourism has come increased demand for camping in our three regional park campgrounds; Kaitoke, Battle Hill and Dry Creek in Belmont Regional Park. Camping is now a year-round activity for international visitors. For campers coming from within the region demand intensifies during holidays and periods of fine and warm weather.

**Battle Hill** Farm Forest Park campground is consistently at capacity (80 campers) over the summer period, with international visitors (in particular Europeans) in high numbers and during summer as well as travelling out of their traditional shoulder season months. In 2012/13 there were approximately 2,586 camper nights, which increased to 4,580 in 2015/16 and significant increase is apparent again with the warm summer conditions in 2017/18. Essential supporting infrastructure including water supplies and toilet facilities has required ongoing investment to handle this growing demand.

At **Kaitoke Regional Park** in the 2016 summer camping season there was a new record high number of campers and each year since then numbers have increased further. In this season there were up to 500 campers a night and even with poor summer weather, Kaitoke still had its second highest over camping revenue in the 2016/17 financial year. To illustrate growth, there were approximately 13,000 camper nights in 2012/13 and by 2015/16 the number had grown to 28,026 camper nights. The 2017/18 season is on track to exceed previous record numbers. Camping revenue has been reinvested in to camping facilities in parks such as bbq’s and a kitchen shelter on the Top Terrace and the introduction of powered campsites for campervans.

In **Belmont Regional Park** at the Dry Creek campground, budget campervans hired by Europeans are the dominant camper type, using the campground year round and particularly from November to April. A new toilet block and a “summer” campsite further away from the traffic noise of State Highway two were key

enhancements undertaken here. Camper numbers have also steadily increased at Dry Creek.

More people using campgrounds means increased costs of servicing campgrounds and maintaining them in good condition. To support demand this has meant:

- Increased Park Ranger visits to tidy sites, educate visitors and collect fees
- Greater use of contractors to undertake some of the daily tasks such as cleaning toilet blocks
- More materials used (e.g, toilet paper and cleaning products)
- Development of new facilities on the Top Terrace at Kaitoke and toilets at Dry Creek

The need to increase camping night fees to sustain the higher level of servicing (refer to the fee change proposal in section 5 below).

We know from visitor feedback that many people are using smart phone applications such as **CamperMate** to find Greater Wellington’s campgrounds. We believe they are popular due to their low cost, accessibility, security, the surrounding high quality natural environment and the standard of facilities and service offered. All our campgrounds have streams or rivers associated with them and are within attractive park settings.

In our campgrounds, there is high demand for recharging battery powered devices. At present this facility is only available at the Kaitoke campground but at other campgrounds many campers bring their own power back up batteries and portable solar panels. They also bring solar or mini gas powered portable showers. This makes camping experiences comfortable and keeps our campgrounds as ‘back to nature camping’ and more of an adventure. We propose to maintain these basic levels of service with upgrades for environmental protection and to accommodate increased demand.



Camping at Battle Hill.

## Wilderness camping

The PNP identifies that wilderness camping is permitted in parts of Akatarawa and Pakuratahi Forests, East Harbour and Kaitoke Regional Park and the Wainuiomata Recreation area, no closer than 500m from any road entrances. To lessen possible impacts on the environment and the recreation enjoyment of others, we propose that the current rules be expanded to be 1km from any road, track or amenity area in parks, and for a period of less than seven days.

- Have you visited one of Greater Wellington's campgrounds? If so what did you like best?
- What facilities or services do you think are appropriate within our campgrounds?
- What other changes or improvements should be made?

## Dog walking

Walking dogs in parks is one of the more popular recreation activities in regional parks and is permitted in all parks except Battle Hill and Baring Head, and on the farmed areas of QEP and Belmont. The current PNP identifies that visitors bringing dogs into parks must ensure that dog activities does not conflict with park values, other activities or the visitor experience do not impact the enjoyment of others and that dogs are kept under control at all times. Park visitors bringing dogs into parks are asked to collect their dog's poo and deposit it in bins provided or take it home with them. The current PNP deliberately does not identify which areas of parks are 'on' and 'off-leash' so that park managers can change arrangements as local needs require.

Dogs not kept under control in parks can have negative effects on other people and wildlife. They can:

- Be harmful to birds and bird nesting, penguins in coastal areas. They are a particular hazard to kiwi where they are present in parks
- Interfere with other trail users enjoyment such as walkers, cyclists, runners and horse riders
- Mean that other visitors who are afraid of dogs and have negative experiences no longer visit regional parks or particular areas of parks
- Compromise individual park values and farm management requirements where grazing activities occur.

Responsible dog walker behaviour is critical to ensuring this activity takes place in a harmonious manner for the enjoyment of all park visitors. City and district councils are responsible for managing dangerous dogs and seizing dangerous dogs under the Dog Control Act

1996. Some councils also provide recreation facilities for dog walkers and their dogs such as agility equipment and off-leash areas.

Commercial dog operators also undertake dog walking activities in parks and may be seen with larger groups of dogs. This activity is managed under a concession and has its own unique conditions mainly around the areas where the activity can take place.



For the enjoyment of others dog walkers are encouraged to pick up their dogs poo. Bins are provided in some parks.

- Do you have any concerns about people walking dogs for recreation or commercial purposes in regional parks?
- Can you tell us anything that you think should change about dog walking activities in parks?

## 4.3 Hunting

**Hunting** by permit or annual ballot is permitted in a number of parks including Pakuratahi and Akatarawa Forests, Kaitoke Regional Park, Hutt Water Collection Area, the northern forest of East Harbour Regional Park and Wainuiomata Water Collection Area. These areas currently provide close to home recreational hunting opportunities. In some areas access is restricted to certain times of the year to limit potential conflicts with other recreational activities. Most of our regional parks are also directly or indirectly connected to large areas of DOC managed protected area park such as the Remutaka and Tararua Forest Parks where recreational hunting activities can take place year round.

Recreational hunting is permitted in parks primarily for recreational enjoyment, but also to help reduce the numbers of non-native animals such as deer and goat which heavily browse native vegetation. Greater Wellington also employs professional hunters to reduce non-native animal numbers.

No changes to current recreational hunting access are planned at present but we welcome feedback about this.

- What do you think about hunting in regional parks?
- Should Greater Wellington make any changes to current recreational hunting access?

## 4.4 Fishing

**Sports fishing** is a popular activity in parks containing rivers and streams that support larger fish such as the Wainuiomata River at Baring Head, the Hutt River in Kaitoke Regional Park and the Pakuratahi River in the Pakuratahi Forest. Fish and Game NZ (F&G) manages the trout and other introduced fish species such as perch. A licence from Fish and Game is required to fish for these species.

Our current management plan does not identify rules about whitebait fishing and we are sometimes asked about this. DOC manages the whitebait fishery via the Whitebait Fishing Regulations 1994 and identifies that the activity is only permitted between 15 August and 30 November annually. DOC information about whitebait indicates that four of the five species of whitebait are in decline nationally, and that these species all spawn in streamside vegetation. They suggest that to support fishery health streams should be kept free from pest plants and fish and barriers to fish movement should be avoided or removed. Improving native fish passage in streams is a key focus of the freshwater fish programme in Greater Wellington. Whitebait harvesting generally takes place from sections of waterways subject to tidal influences which are outside park boundaries

Long fin eels and short finned freshwater eels (or 'tuna' in Te Reo Māori) have been recorded in several waterways in regional parks. Ministry of Primary Industries Fishing Regulations identify rules for fishing eels, including a daily limit of 6 eels per person fishing. Eels migrate up streams to find suitable adult habitat and after many years (15-30 years for shortfins, 25 years for longfins, and sometimes up to 80 years) they migrate to the Pacific Ocean to breed and die. They face the same pressures on habitat as whitebait, and for this reason and to support overall population health, fishing for eels in regional parks is not encouraged.

- What do you think about hunting or fishing in regional parks?
- Are facilities supporting fishing activities adequate in regional parks?

## 4.5 Nature play and time in the wild

Nature is a great place for children to grow and learn. In natural environments, children use natural materials and objects for long periods of imaginary play. Imaginary play has been shown to help children develop social and cognitive skills. This is well documented in research relating to the world healthy parks, healthy people global movement.

While formal education teaches children about global threats to the environment such as climate change, many children are less aware of where the food they consume comes from, and as the Department of Conservation publication 'Benefits of connecting children with nature' (2011) indicates, 'their physical contact, their intimacy with nature, is fading'. Spending time in the wild with children and enjoying nature play activities is also known to alleviate 'nature-deficit disorder', a condition identified by Richard Louv in his book *The Last Child in the Woods* (2005, Atlantic books, London), as the result of too much time indoors and in front of electronic devices. Other research indicates that children who don't have many nature based experiences such as camping or exploring and enjoying the bush, are less likely to do these activities or find them more difficult later in life as adults.

According to another natural heritage expert, David Attenborough, "No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced". The benefits of people making connections with nature and spending time outdoors in natural settings are numerous. If children and adults are not experiencing nature, they are less likely to see reasons to protect it.

There are both physical and mental health and well-being benefits from regular contact with nature and informal play opportunities. In recognition of this more recently urban councils have started creating nature 'play spaces' in urban areas as an alternative to factory build play equipment 'playgrounds'.

### Nature play in regional parks

Our greatest nature play spaces are possibly rivers and streams but in all parks there are trees and rocks to climb and other special features such as the red tractor and rope swing at Battle Hill. Greater Wellington recognises the importance of attracting families and children into the outdoors to try new activities. The summer Great Outdoors events programme is a significant incentive for families to visit park with a range of family friendly events on offer such as farm day at Battle Hill, farm tours at QEP, stream side activities such as fish monitoring and other family friendly events.

Play-friendly places don't have to be built structures, they can be big grassy areas where visitors bring their own equipment such as model aeroplanes or battery powered children's cars and bikes. Battle Hill and Kaitoke Regional Parks are long standing attractions in summer for families to camp and explore.

We are interested in feedback about the best nature play opportunities in regional parks which might be particular trees to climb, boulders, swimming holes in streams or rivers or other natural features. This is so that we can preserve and protect these places for many future adventures



Using technology in parks is fun for those participating and can be fun for those watching too. A range of battery powered devices are emerging and being used in parks.

### **Time in the wild or immersed in a recreation activity**

Fishing, flying model aeroplanes and drones, mountain bike and equestrian events are all fun and healthy activities which contribute to similar beneficial health and wellbeing and social connection outcomes.

Adults need enticements to get into the great outdoors too and unsurprisingly the track and trail related activities – walking, running, cycling and dog walking are the most popular active recreation activity for adults according to the Sport NZ, Sport and Active Recreation survey in 2013-14. This is supported by Greater Wellington's own visitor research surveys too (see our 'External Influences on parks' document). Overseas and in urban parks trail activities are sometimes supported by the addition of outdoor fitness equipment next to trails for stretching and strength exercises. In regional parks our longer trails and extensive network of connected tracks are ideal for long distance running, orienteering or regaining. Greater participation in healthy outdoor recreation activities supports adult mental and physical health and reduces public health costs associated with illness from inactivity.



Flying model planes and drones is an increasingly popular activity in some regional parks.

- How do you think we can enhance our nature play opportunities in parks?
- Where should we locate any enhancement, or should we just provide more information about what we have?

## **4.6 Recreation information**

Digital information is the norm for finding out about parks and planning trips and activities and finding our way with GPS. At present most of our story telling in parks is conducted face to face via ranger talks and walks, via traditional interpretation signs and the Greater Wellington promotions such as the summer Great Outdoors events programme.

Signs stand the test of time and weather, are economical to produce, and are low tech which means you can visit and learn whilst having a break from technology and digital screens. But story telling through digital media is an opportunity Greater Wellington wants to explore more. For example, we could use augmented reality to bring the lighthouse keeper back to life in the generator building 'power house' at Baring Head, we could project seasonal farming activities in farm buildings at Battle Hill or play motion sensed audio in key historic places in parks.

Other ways to provide information and reveal stories include:

- You-tube clips and Google mapping trails to create 'virtual hikes' is also a good way to explore a place before you got there
- Wearable fitness related technology such as 'fit bits' and 'Strava' peak and distance challenges help motivate people to get up off the couch and get active in parks, and in some applications, also see which routes others have used and participate in fitness challenges.
- User generated content like Open Street Maps, personal blogs and user reviews on platforms such as Trip Advisor and Camper mate and Wiki Camps are the most commonly used crowd sourced information apps for parks and help our visitors find parks and activities
- Social media such as stunning Instagram snaps highlights the most beautiful aspects of parks and inspires visits.

## No tech

Technology and personal devices are part of our way of life now and many people acknowledge that they spent too much time in front of a screen. To ward off 'nature deficit disorder' visiting a park and only using your device as a camera, torch or for emergencies is the sort of nature break that is most beneficial for health and well-being.

- What technology do you like to use in parks?
- How do you prefer to find out about things to do in parks?
- Do you have any comments about use of technology in parks?
- Do you prefer brochures and maps over electronic information?
- How do you 'connect' to Parks?

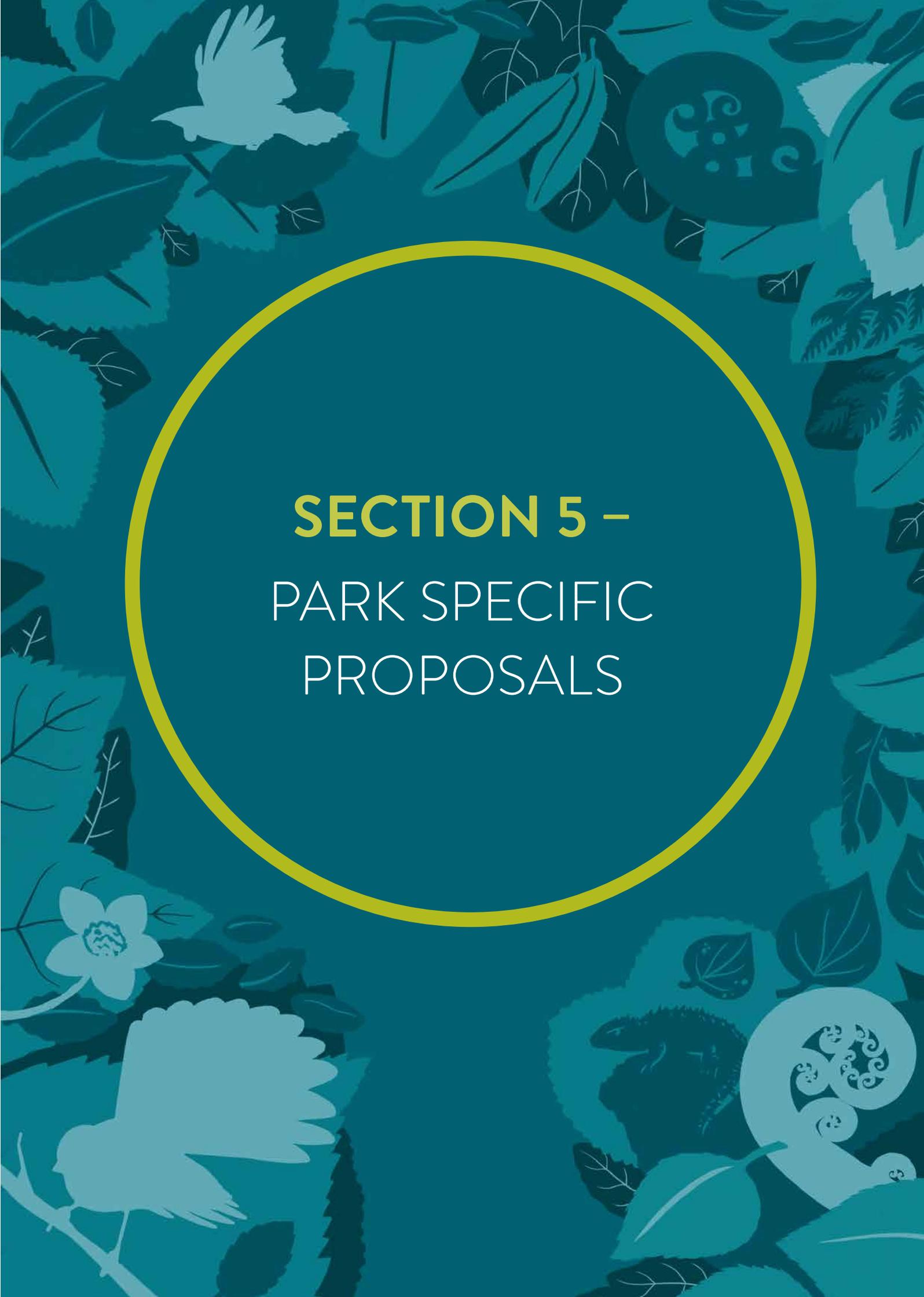


A great place to enjoy panoramic views, Belmont Trig overlooking Wellington Harbour.



TO ALL HORSE AND PONY RIDERS  
The use of any motor vehicle is prohibited  
on the riding paths and trails. It is the  
responsibility of the rider to ensure that  
the horse and rider are safe and sound.  
Please do not drink alcohol while riding.

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park is very popular for horse riding with good float parking and forest and farm trails to ride on.

The background is a teal color with various botanical and animal illustrations in a lighter shade of teal. There are leaves of different shapes and sizes, some with veins, and several birds in flight. A large, light-colored flower is visible in the lower left. The overall style is a flat, illustrative design.

**SECTION 5 –**  
PARK SPECIFIC  
PROPOSALS

# SECTION 5 - PARK SPECIFIC PROPOSALS

The purpose of this section is to identify key proposals or changes. Proposals requiring significant funding are identified in the proposed new 10 Year Plan. Other proposals identified below are expected to be funded via operational funds, fees from concessionaires, friends and volunteer efforts ('community capital') and donations and grant funds. Suggestions for other proposals and feedback on these proposals is welcomed.

## 5.1 PARK-WIDE PROPOSALS

### **Friends and volunteers**

Parks wouldn't be the great places they are without the support of friends groups and volunteers. We will continue to work with and support volunteer groups to deliver conservation and recreation work in parks. With an ageing population and more people retiring and seeking active, meaningful volunteer work in the region, we will work towards improving our systems and support for volunteers so that opportunities are easily accessed and that mutual benefits are optimised.

### **Recreation information**

Work is currently underway to develop a new Greater Wellington website. People seeking recreation information about parks is a key reason for visiting the site and the information presented will be significantly improved with the new website. Services such as obtaining hunting permits will also be made easier via an online tool.

### **Story telling**

A new focus will be a greater emphasis on story telling using a variety of interpretation media including ranger talks and walks, signs, digital media delivered via mobile devices and online options. An overall parks interpretation framework will be developed in liaison with mana whenua to identify key sites and stories in liaison with our mana whenua partners. We propose that story telling will take place in a variety of different ways using different story telling methods including ranger and concessionaire talks, traditional panels, online and digital media, art, sculpture and other installations which may be temporary or permanent, events and in other innovative ways.

### **Protecting and enhancing freshwater**

To implement Greater Wellington's Proposed Natural Resource Plan rules, all category one and two streams will be fenced to exclude stock and other wetlands, streams and stream tributaries in parks will be fenced as resources allow with riparian revegetation activities taking place to improve biodiversity. Barriers to fish passage will be progressively removed or reduced. As regional Whaitua processes are worked through to implementation stage, additional actions relating to improving freshwater quality may arise.

### **Enhancing key sites for tourism day visits**

Our regional parks are special places, often very well known to their local communities but less well known to others. A new focus will be supporting and enhancing key sites for tourism visits such as the Baring Head Lighthouse complex, Kaitoke Regional Park for Lord of the Rings filming pilgrimages, and the Remutaka Rail Trail as part of New Zealand's Great Rides Network. At key sites we will develop interpretation to reveal stories, improve existing facilities and add new supporting services or facilities where demand warrants it.

## Adapting to climate change

Climate change is upon us and this means impacts on our facilities from events such as regular flooding, coastal erosion or extended dry spells and increased risk of fire. Through our parks operational programme, we will work to improve the resilience of our assets, relocate assets and make other changes required to adapt to a highly variable climate. This includes water supplies within parks, pest plant and animal works delivered through the KNE programme, and considering whether to create more extensive fire breaks or planting 'green fire breaks' to better protect parks and neighbouring communities from fire.

## Fees for services and facility use

A lot goes on behind the scenes to support happy camping experiences. Growth in regional tourism means that camping has become a year round activity instead of the summer season activity it has predominantly been in the past, and in many campgrounds visitor numbers have more than doubled over the last five years.

Where we charge fees for facilities and services such as campgrounds, venue hire, event fees and concession fees they are generally low but consider broader market rates. Our campground fees have not increased for several years, but demand has increased as has the cost of servicing our campgrounds for more campers and over a longer camping season. Facilities and services in campgrounds, to make sure they are safe and meet visitor expectations, include grass mowing, ranger presence, treated drinking water, sinks, covered seating, power sockets, rubbish and recycling, cleaning toilets, free of charge electric BBQ's, road and path maintenance, drainage and security. There are also activities and events as part of the summer events programme. New facilities are also being built or are planned to support camping in regional parks.

To better cover campground servicing costs increases to campground fees are proposed. These changes were included in the supporting information for Greater Wellington's ten year plan which was publicly consulted in March-April 2018. Unpowered campsite fees are proposed to increase from \$6 to \$8 per night for adults and from \$3 to \$4 per night for children. Powered campsite fees are proposed to increase from \$12 to \$16 per night for adults and from \$6 to \$12 for children. Camping remains free of charge for children under five years of age. This review will bring fees in line with similar campgrounds managed by DOC. Fee changes are proposed to come into effect from 1 July 2018, after approval of Greater Wellington's long term plan. The current fee schedule is published on the Greater Wellington website: <http://www.gwrc.govt.nz/concessions-and-permits/>

## 5.2 AKATARAWA FOREST

An amendment was made to the PNP in September 2016 to update and replace the motorised recreation trail map for the Akatarawa Forest. In this plan amendment, the revised trail network saw areas that are environmentally sensitive excluded from motorised recreation trail access (Whakatekei and Martin's Creek wetlands) and other trails which are regularly used recognised as permitted trails for use.

Akatarawa Forest is the primary location for activities such as four wheel driving and trail bike riding. Greater Wellington works closely with ARAC (the Akatarawa Recreation Access Committee) to manage the network of tracks and roads to ensure that impacts are minimised. The forest also has plantation trees for commercial harvesting. The forest is held for future water collection purposes, recreation and forestry.

<b>Proposal</b>		<b>Estimated time frame</b> Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
1	A possible radio repeater is proposed for Greater Wellington, 4WD and trail bike club use in the park (unless new transmitter devices negate the need for it). Improved communication coverage in the in the park will assist with incident response and overall public safety	Short
2	Light Utility Vehicles (LUVs) also known as side by sides are now commonly used in the forest. For management purposes these vehicles under a certain width will be classified as a quad bike. Other motorised recreational vehicles such as go karts and larger LUVs will also be classified in the same category as 4WD's for access and management purposes.	Ongoing
3	For environment protection purposes the following changes are proposed to motorised recreation access tracks:  All types of vehicles restricted to the "Causeway" track in the Whakatikei wetland area.  The Whakatikei catchment above Orange Hut and Martins River wetland north of the Rock Garden will be closed to vehicle access due to their ecological importance.	Short

### 5.3 BATTLE HILL FARM FOREST PARK

Battle Hill is popular for events, equestrian activities and camping. The Transmission Gully motorway is under construction through the park. An underpass has been completed and trail access has been retained to the plantation forest trails in the eastern part of the park. When the new motorway opens, motorists will pass through approximately 1km of park, which means that Battle Hill will become a much more highly visible and well-known regional park. This new high visibility will provide Greater Wellington with a number of opportunities such as showcasing best practice in sustainable land management with native and exotic vegetation hill side plantings (undertaken by the Transmission Gully motorway project). Other awareness raising opportunities include signage.

The Wellington Group of Riding for Disabled moved their operations to the park in 2016 and have a long term agreement to construct a covered riding arena. Their activities have become a feature of the park providing opportunities for local volunteering, and they have fitted in well with existing equestrian activities and groups based at the park.

A number of proposals for future park directions are identified below.

<b>Proposal</b>		<b>Estimated time frame</b> Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
4	Transmission Gully Motorway fringes Battle Hill:  Optimise awareness of Battle Hill park with naming signage visible to motorway users e.g. hill side signage or symbolic public art work (if external funds or sponsorships become available)  Demonstration of good land management through well-planned plantings	Short
5	Develop a landscape master plan blue print for the Battle Hill entry precinct encompassing woolshed, homestead, ranger's residence, and extending to campground and ponds area. This aim of this plan is to improve the overall look and feel of this busy area for park visitors, operational farm management, event use and park stakeholder activities	Short -Medium
6	Develop/revise and then implement a Park Environment Plan for the park focussed on short, medium and long term actions and investment to deliver on environmental outcomes. This plan will consider directions of the current Sustainable Land Use Plan, Proposed Natural Resources Plan, Whaitua Implementation Programme, Porirua Harbour Strategy and Action Plan and other relevant documents or directions.	Development : Short Implementation: Medium

## 5.4 BELMONT REGIONAL PARK

The Transmission Gully Motorway also passes through Belmont Regional Park and during the construction period access in an east-west direction across the park has been restricted. As the motorway nears completion access will be restored. The same opportunity exists as at Battle Hill to raise awareness of this park through signage and showcase best practice in sustainable land management. Various other opportunities and proposals are proposed below.

Proposal		Estimated time frame Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
7	<p>Transmission Gully motorway fringes:</p> <p>Land and waterway retirement and large scale plantings</p> <p>Park signage and/ or interpretation such as public art work or sculpture (if external funds or sponsorship available).</p> <p>Track enhancements to support reinstated east-west trails</p>	Short – Medium
8	<p>Trails:</p> <p>Investigate further develop shared use (walking and mountain bike) trails to create more circuit rides, easier and intermediate grade trails</p> <p>Develop other trail entry hubs in the park</p> <p>Upgrade trail gradients and surfaces to an easier standard in selected locations to make them accessible to a wider range of users</p> <p>Enhance the Puke Ariki traverse track and promote to be a more significant trail attraction for Wellington, for example with sections of trail upgrade, signage, trail head facilities or trail shelters and interpretation</p> <p>Promote 'share with care' trail user behaviour on all shared trails</p> <p>Further story telling interpretation at key locations in the park to enhance visitor experiences</p> <p>Further minor enhancement to the Korokoro Stream track to support shared use</p>	Short-Medium
9	Develop a conservation management plan for WW2 munition bunkers considering interpretation opportunities and as well as adaptive re-use possibilities.	Medium
10	Undertake further stream and waterway fencing and retirement of grazed areas throughout the park to support passive and active native vegetation restoration	Ongoing
11	Develop and then implement a new 'Park Environment Plan' for the park focussed on short, medium and long term actions and investments to deliver key environmental outcomes (such as freshwater quality). The new plan will consider directions of the current Sustainable Land Use Plan, Proposed Natural Resources Plan, Whaitua Implementation Programme, Porirua Harbour Strategy and Action Plan, and other relevant documents and directions.	Develop : Short Implement: Medium
12	Develop a landscape master plan for the Stratton Street park entrance to improve access and circulation and overall amenity.	Short
13	Upgrade the Cornish Street park entrance as access to land owned by others becomes available or other opportunities present	Medium
14	Minor upgrades to Old Coach Road to enable the road to facilitate emergency access	Short

## 5.5 EAST HARBOUR REGIONAL PARK

East Harbour Regional Park has three distinct parts, each with unique features:

**Northern Forest** – comprises the hills behind Days Bay through to Eastbourne which form part of the scenic backdrop to Wellington Harbour and city. Many of the tracks in this part of the park have been upgraded to minimise environmental effects from runoff and erosion, and improve accessibility. Further opportunities for track realignments exist as well as heritage interpretation of significant features.

**Parangarahu Lakes** – accessed by walking or cycling along the Pencarrow Coast Road. The Lakes are managed by Greater Wellington in partnership with mana whenua, through the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust. A co-management plan was developed in 2015.

**Baring Head** – most easily accessed from the Wainuiomata Coast Road or for a longer walk or ride, accessed via the Pencarrow Coast Road, Baring Head has an active Friends group undertaking weeding, restoration plantings, monitoring and pest animal reduction works. The Friends are also leading fundraising to redevelop the lighthouse complex which includes two former light keepers cottages and a generator building which will become a day visitor shelter.

Proposal		Estimated time frame Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
<b>Northern Forest</b>		
15	Trails:  Manage shared use of the Rata Ridge track and evaluate a realignment to reduce environmental impacts. A less steep and more useable and enjoyable trail experience is required which is away from the current steep fire break trail (and fragmented) down to Stanley Street. Some hardening of the trail surface may be required.  Minor trail upgrades to improve drainage and accessibility	Short
16	Recreational hunting:  Maintenance of limited ballot hunting permitted annually in the 'roar' between April and May in the eastern hills to support the reduction in pest animal numbers and help to protect important ecological values. This limited hunting ballot period recognises community concerns about public safety. No further extension to this period is proposed because nearby DOC and Greater Wellington managed forests offer large areas for hunting all year.  Continued use of professional hunters to reduce non-native animal numbers in the park as part of the KNE programme delivery.	Ongoing
<b>Baring Head</b>		
17	A new pedestrian bridge over the Wainuiomata River, towards the river mouth to create safer access to the park from coastal car park. The installation of a pedestrian bridge will create an easy circuit walking and riding trail from the current bridge and park entrance area.	Medium
18	Support the Friends of Baring Head and continue works until completion on the lighthouse complex cottages (for booked accommodation) and outbuildings including installation of new services, building repair works, heritage interpretation, a new lookout and children's discovery trail. Details of the overall restoration project are available on the website	Short-Medium
19	Heritage interpretation throughout Baring Head including signage	Short
20	If the Remutaka Cycle Trail extension is developed through Baring Head in future, undertake trail upgrades and provide interpretation experience general enhancements for trail users.	Long
<b>Parangarahu Lakes</b>		
21	For all management activities, continue to work closely with the Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST/ Taranki Whanui) as part of the Parangarahu Lakes co management arrangement.	Ongoing

22	Create a low level track to connect to existing trails and create a circuit	Medium
23	Install a sealed vault toilet at an appropriate location	Medium
24	Develop bird hide lookouts with interpretation	Medium
25	Develop heritage interpretation to reveal interesting aspects of the Lakes including face to face storytelling, events, signage, digital and other media such as art or sculptural works.	Short

## 5.6 PAKURATAHI FOREST

The main focal points for this forest are the Tunnel Gully picnic and entrance area and the historic Remutaka Rail Trail which is one of the most interesting and enjoyable parts of the Remutaka Cycle Trail. Further improvements to enhance trail users experiences are proposed such as heritage interpretation and works to preserve and protect heritage assets along the trail such as culverts and bridges. The forest also has plantation trees for commercial harvesting.

Proposal		Estimated time frame
		Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
26	Toilet upgrade at the Tunnel Gully upper picnic area	Short
27	Maintenance and enhancement of the mountain bike trail network around Station Drive area of the forest. This includes trail upgrades, new trails, signs and trail realignments for environmental protection purposes.	Short
28	Investigate developing a new park entrance at the end of 'Quarry road' in Mangaroa including parking in liaison with Upper Hutt City Council and PF Olsen licence holders.	Short-Medium
29	An area of park is currently licenced for glider club activities but it is possible that glider club activities may not continue in future. If this area becomes available for other uses such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UAV/ drone use such as racing</li> <li>• Mountain bike skills development tracks</li> <li>• Motorbike club track or motorcycle club use</li> <li>• Gun club shooting range activities</li> <li>• Equestrian club use</li> </ul> Feedback is welcomed about these or other possible uses should this area become available.	Short-Medium
30	Remutaka cycle trail upgrades to enhance the visitor experience including interpretation, facilities, heritage asset works.  Manage (some removal) overgrown pine trees near the rail trail which may impact heritage features or pose safety risks. Replant with native species where appropriate.	Short-medium
31	Continue to maintain and preserve significant rail trail heritage assets.	Short

## 5.7 KAITOKE REGIONAL PARK

The main activities at Kaitoke are camping related and bushwalks. More camping by residents and visitors has put pressure on camping facilities so facility upgrades to support demand are required. Rivendell remains a very popular location for Lord of the Rings fans visiting independently and on organised tours. Kaitoke Regional Park is also important to Wellingtons water supply with the treatment plant and water storage lakes located in the park.

Proposal		Estimated time frame
		Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
32	New camping facility building on the top terrace including toilets, BBQs, bench/ sinks, picnic tables and power for charging electronic devices.	Short
33	Upgraded swing-bridge over the Hutt River to provide for two-way pedestrian access, buggies, wheelchairs and bicycles.	Short
34	Develop a landscape plan for the Te Marua area of the park to identify connecting tracks, amenity plantings and other conservation works.	Medium
35	If currently leased AgResearch land becomes available for park related use in future, develop connecting trails to Pakuratahi Forest and the Remutaka Rail Trail.	Medium

## 5.8 QUEEN ELIZABETH PARK

QEP is a large park with many different recreation and conservation related activities taking place. Areas of the park not required for recreation purposes are currently managed with sheep and cattle stock grazing, and these areas are reduced as resources for native plant revegetation and maintenance become available. In 2016 a new trans-park shared path 'Te Ara o Whareroa' was opened connecting the suburbs of Raumati South and Pāekākariki. It was developed with funds from the NZTA Kāpiti Expressway and Transmission Gully Motorway projects. Daily commuter use and general recreation use of this trail is significant.

In 2017 the Maclean Trust made a generous donation which has enabled environmental restoration works to commence in the north east corner of the park. Also in 2017 a new entrance hub building at the main McKay's Crossing was opened as the focal point for this as part of the park. Further landscaping and heritage interpretation works are proposed to complete this development which was identified in the heritage framework for the park. A key challenge in this park is responding to the effects of climate change which include ongoing significant coastal erosion.

Proposal		Estimated time frame
		Short 1-3 years Medium 4-10 years Long 10+ years
36	Develop a <b>climate change response plan</b> for the coastal areas, then implement works to minimise the effects of climate change on effected park assets. Impacts include coastal retreat, storm damage, more frequent flooding and periods of drought and extreme winds. Works will for example include strengthening, removing or relocating inland facilities such as roads, trails, toilets and parking areas. Facilities most under threat from coastal erosion are currently in the Wellington road, Pāekākariki entrance area and the northern Coastal Track between Whareroa Stream and Raumati South. This section of the Coastal track is already closed due to cumulative and ongoing damage from storm events.  Because of the dynamic nature of the coastal environment, damage remediation works in future may also involve the vehicle bridge at the mouth of Whareroa stream.	Immediate and ongoing
37	Develop additional circuit trails to improve access in the northern area of the park beside streams, wetlands or through regenerating bush areas.	Short-medium
38	Continue to implement the QEP Heritage Framework themes to interpret and reveal interesting features and reveal more stories of this park	Short

39	In liaison with mana whenua and park stakeholders, develop an overall park story telling framework and priority action plan for implementation (as resources become available)	Short
41	Develop a <b>Park Environment Plan</b> which includes all the grazed areas of the park focussed on short, medium and long term actions and investment to deliver environmental outcomes (in particular of improved habitat, biodiversity and water quality). The plan will encompass an overall landscape restoration/ master plan to identify areas of park for progressive native vegetation restoration. This component of the plan is intended to support grant funding applications for revegetation, consider recreation facility and activity needs, and have a 30-50 year horizon.  The park environment plan will consider directions of the current Sustainable Land Use Plan, Proposed Natural Resources Plan, Whaitua Implementation Programme, and other relevant documents or directions.	Short
42	Further stream and waterway fencing and retirement of grazed areas throughout the park to support passive and active native vegetation restoration	Ongoing
43	Continue to support mana whenua and park stakeholders particularly with secondary planting to support existing restoration programmes	Ongoing
44	Consider any proposals for establishment of a café/ commercial operation in the park in the vicinity of Whareroa beach. From park visitor feedback, there appears to be demand for this facility in the park.	Medium
45	Work with Kāpiti Coast District Council and NZTA to reinstate historic clusters of poplar trees (removed for road works) along the southern side of Poplar Avenue within the park, in Raumati South.	Short

## 5.9 WAINUIOMATA RECREATION AREA

Most of the facilities in this recreation area are close to the rangers office where there is good passive surveillance. Vandalism has been an issue, particularly in the entrance area but has reduced with installation of new electronic gates to limit vehicle access. A 'history of water' story telling interpretation hub/museum is being developed to support existing interpretation panels in the lower dam/ ranger office area.

		Estimated time frame
		Short 1-3 years
		Medium 4-10 years
		Long 10+ years
Proposal		
46	Complete water heritage interpretation hub/museum at lower dam including the history of water museum and outdoor jigger display	Short
47	Develop new loop track and bridges from Lower Dam area to a new track leading to the pa harakeke and the Sledge track and a circuit east of the lower dam, then crossing the Wainuiomata River. This activity is identified in the proposed new Ten Year Plan programme.	Short
48	To protect significant environmental values, it is proposed that wilderness camping will no longer be permitted in this park.	Short
49	If community interests support it, redevelop the pa harakeke / flax gardens for harvesting and weaving purposes. Support appropriate community restoration plantings	Short-Medium
50	For consistency with other Greater Wellington park names, change the name from 'Wainuiomata Recreation Area' to 'Wainuiomata Regional Park'	Short

## HAVE YOUR SAY

### Feedback form

#### **We are interested in your feedback about regional parks**

The information collected in this consultation will be used to inform the development of a new Parks Network Plan. If you would like to discuss park management issues with a planner please contact Parks Planning on 04 830 4153 or email [parksplanning@gw.govt.nz](mailto:parksplanning@gw.govt.nz)

If you would like to be informed about future park management planning or the draft new management plan when it becomes available for feedback please provide your contact details.

Please send your feedback to: Parks Network Plan Review:

Email [parksplanning@gw.govt.nz](mailto:parksplanning@gw.govt.nz)

Post to Greater Wellington Regional Council, Freepost 3156, PO Box 11-646 Wellington

Or drop your feedback form into a GWRC office.

**The feedback period closes at 5pm on Friday 9 June 2018**



The Akatarawa Forest is managed as future water collection area and for recreation activities. Motorised recreation activities such as trail bike riding and four wheel driving are permitted here by permit.



4. Do you have any feedback about issues or opportunities raised in this **discussion document** or the supporting documents (*External Influences on Parks* and *Farming in Regional Parks*)?

5. Do you have any feedback about particular aspects of the current Parks Network Plan?  
[www.gw.govt.nz/greater-wellington-parks-network-plan/](http://www.gw.govt.nz/greater-wellington-parks-network-plan/)

email to: [parcsplanning@gw.govt.nz](mailto:parcsplanning@gw.govt.nz)

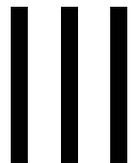
More information: [www.gw.govt.nz](http://www.gw.govt.nz)

Feedback closes 5pm 29<sup>th</sup> June 2018



Belmont Regional Park

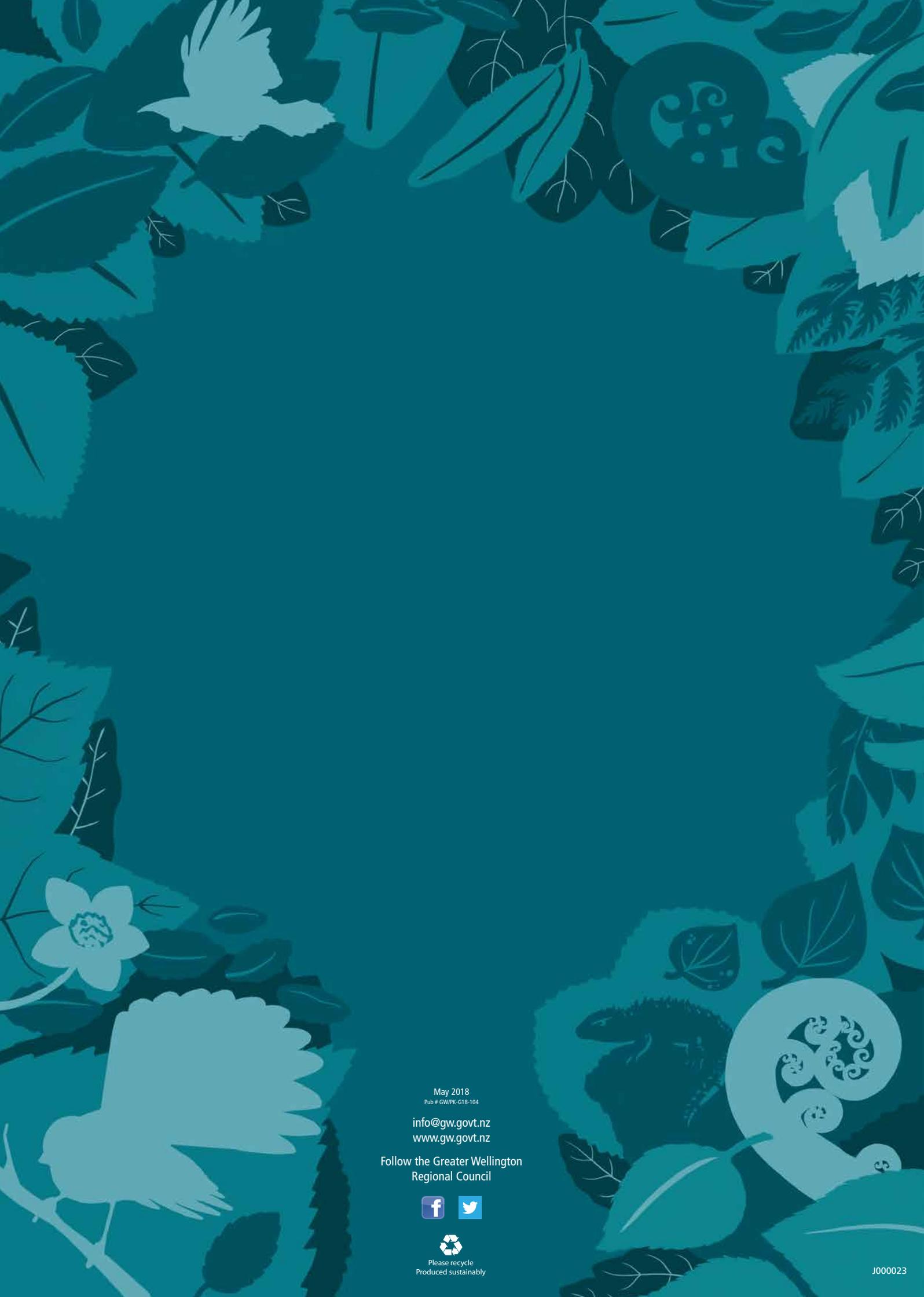
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Parks Network Plan Review  
Greater Wellington Regional Council  
Freepost 3156  
PO Box 11646  
Manners Street  
Wellington 6142



Belmont Regional Park



May 2018  
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[info@gw.govt.nz](mailto:info@gw.govt.nz)  
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