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**Committee** Council  
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## **Application in principle to reinstate the Rimutaka Railway**

### **1. Purpose**

To consider an application from the Rimutaka Incline Railway Heritage Trust (RIRHT or the Trust) for a 25 year concession with a right of renewal. This concession will enable the Trust to rebuild the original Rimutaka Railway on Greater Wellington land as part of a larger development.

### **2. The decision-making process and significance**

The matter requiring decision in this report has been considered by officers against the requirements of Part 6 of the Local Government Act 2002 (the Act).

#### **2.1 Significance of the decision**

Officers have considered the significance of the matter, taking into account the Council's significance policy and decision-making guidelines. Officers recommend that the matter be considered to have medium significance.

The proposal is of high interest to the public. By the nature and scale of the proposal it may have an impact on rate payers and particularly given that this land is set aside as a future water catchment for the Region. Water Catchment land is a strategic asset of the Council.

#### **2.2 The decision-making process**

Officers have taken into account the principles set out in section 14 of the Act and the need to manage the Council's resources prudently.

Officers advise that there is no process for making this decision explicitly set out in the Local Government Act 2002 or any other enactment. The decision making criteria is prescribed in Section 7.4 of the Parks Network Plan and described in Section 6 of this report.

## 2.3 Options

There are three options in making a decision on this matter:

1. Approve the application, as submitted
2. Approve the application in part, or subject to various conditions which in effect modify the application
3. Decline the application (maintain the status quo)

Officers consider that as the application to use this historic railway alignment is unique, and that there are no other options available on Greater Wellington land.

## 2.4 Community views and preferences

Officers have also considered the need to take account of the community's views and preferences in relation to this matter. The submission period was from Saturday 3 December 2011 and closed on Tuesday 31 January 2012. Greater Wellington received 235 submissions on the proposal for the reinstatement of the Rimutaka Railway. The views expressed in these submissions are detailed in Section 8 of the report.

## 3. Application

The Trust in its application stated:

*This application is seeking approval in principle to rebuild the railway from Maymorn to Summit, subject to completion of an agreed timetabled programme of investigation, analysis, consultation and fundraising. The Trust seeks to work in partnership with Greater Wellington Regional Council to carry out this programme of work to meet GWRC requirements.*

In a letter of clarification dated 15 November 2011, the Trust stated:

*A licence period of 25 years with right of renewal is requested, reflecting significant investment and infrastructure associated with the railway.*

Because GW does not have an 'in principle' category for applications of this type, it is being processed as a normal application. If it is approved, it would be subject to a number of conditions.

## 4. Background

A letter was sent to The Trust in May 2011 as a result of information received about the Trust's aspirations of operating trains from Maymorn to Kaitoke within five years. Greater Wellington (GW) had not heard formally from The Trust for several years. In the letter to the Trust it was suggested that if they were considering using part of the old railway formation currently owned by GW, then it would be prudent to make an application to GW for the use of the land.

The Trust's involvement with GW goes back several years. A presentation was made by The Trust's representatives to the Council's Landcare Committee in August 2002. As a result, a report (**Report 02.688** – Attachment 1.) was considered by the Committee on 19 November 2002. The Committee resolved:

- (1) *That while the Committee appreciates the ongoing efforts of Messrs McCracken and Porter to re-establish the Rimutaka Railway, it also notes that a feasibility study and business plans are yet to be completed.*
- (2) *That the Committee confirms that while it is unable to make a financial contribution to the proposal at this time the Council is prepared to assist where practicable in providing information and assistance that will help the proposal to be progressed.*
- (3) *That the implications of access for the Railway's proposal will be considered during the development of the Forest Lands Management Plan.*

This put the issue on hold until the review of the Forest Lands Management Plan.

In 2004 the draft "Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection Areas" was released for public comment. The Trust made a submission seeking effectively that the railway proposal should be classified as a permitted activity. Officers' comments in the Submissions summary were:

*Report 02.688 and Council resolution is attached to this paper on original proposal. Requires assessment per plan's policies in section 5 and independent engineering / financial assessment. Key issues likely to be environmental effects of construction and operation of steam engine, impacts on plantation forestry in short term, including risk of fire, and in long-term impact on water supply. Loss of walking and mountain biking at very easy grade. Loss / damage to heritage structures and formation. Under the draft plan's provisions the proposal is a 'restricted' activity.*

The Committee of the time heard from submitters on 18 March 2005. Parts of the Committee's report relevant to the railway are:

***Hugh McCracken – Rimutaka Railway Heritage Trust***

*Mr McCracken provided further information to add to his detailed written submission and requested that the Council specifically allow for The Trust's proposal in the Plan. In discussing Mr McCracken's submission, Councillors noted that the policies as outlined in the draft plan did not preclude the restoration of a heritage railway.*

On 17 May 2005 the Council's Policy, Finance & Strategy Committee considered Report 05.197 to adopt the Regional Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection Areas Management Plan. In this report, Section 4.2 stated (in part):

***4.2 Other matters raised in submissions***

*Matters were raised that, after consideration by the Hearing Committee, did*

*not result in changes to the draft plan. Matters included allowing the reinstatement of the Rimutaka Rail line and service as a permitted activity. The Hearing Committee considered that the activity should remain a 'restricted' activity.*

This approach was endorsed by the Department of Conservation as an appropriate source of action.

The Council adopted the Plan. This meant the Trust's railway reinstatement proposal was a restricted activity under the new Forest Lands Plan: Future Water Collection areas.

GW has had plans for each individual park, and the forest areas, with an overarching network plan. In October 2009 Council agreed to a process to combine all these plans into one document. The intention to prepare a draft plan was advertised and 57 submissions were received. The Trust did not submit. In May 2010 Council approved the release of the draft plan and advertising for submissions. 98 submissions were received, again the Trust did not submit. Following a hearings process, Council approved the Parks Network Plan on 14 December 2010, with the exception of one issue, not connected to the Pakuratahi Forest area.

As a result of adopting a new Parks Network Plan, the railway reinstatement proposal remains as a restricted activity.

Normally concession applications are processed by staff using the various policy documents approved by Council. Most concessions are for temporary use or periods less than five years and are designed to be of low impact. This particular concession application is for at least 25 years and will impact on recreational, water supply and forestry activities. For these reasons managers believe it is appropriate for Council to make a decision on the application.

## **5. Proposal**

The Trust's mission statement as outlined in their Business Plan 2011-2012 is:

- To reinstate and operate a heritage railway as a self-sustaining not-for-profit business. The railway will operate between Wellington, Upper Hutt & Featherston, including the Fell-worked Rimutaka Incline
- By planning and constructing a heritage railway between Maymorn and Featherston the Trust will be: "Building a Sanctuary for Steam"

The Trust is proposing to reinstate the railway between Maymorn and near Featherston on or near the alignment of the railway that operated until 1955. Construction would be in four stages:

- Stage 1 – Phase A - Maymorn to Kaitoke
- Stage 1 – Phase B - Kaitoke to Summit
- Stage 2 – Extend operations by mainline operator to Wellington

- Stage 3 – Summit to Cross Creek
- Stage 4 – Cross Creek to (near) Featherston

Only stages 1 (Phase A and B) and 3 involve the use of GW land.

Because Stage 1 would utilise the existing Rail Trail and other parts of the old railway formation, that are currently used for recreational and forestry purposes, the Trust proposes to construct an alternative cycleway/walkway.

The Trust has also applied to use the forestry road between State Highway 2 on the Rimutaka hill and a point near Summit for emergency purposes.

The Trust has estimated the cost at \$28.6M to complete all four stages. Stage 1, from Maymorn to Summit, is estimated at \$12.1M for the 18 kilometre length. This cost includes a new walkway, railway track reinstatement and associated costs.

The total length of railway once Stage 4 is completed is 35 kilometres.

## 5.1 Maymorn Structure Plan

The proposal to reinstate the railway has also been noted in the Draft Maymorn Structure Plan prepared by Upper Hutt City Council and consulted on in late 2011. Greater Wellington in its submission noted that the proposed railway that starts at Maymorn Station and extends into the park, had been included on maps but that there had been no formal approach to Greater Wellington or approvals given by this Council.

Upper Hutt City Council considered the Maymorn Structure Plan on 2 February 2012. The Upper Hutt City Council adopted the plan and agreed to commence a plan change to the Upper Hutt District Plan to give effect to the decision. This structure plan identifies the Trust's preferred option for their railway that runs though private land before entering the park. It does not reserve the corridor or give any approvals and would still require agreement from the private landowner.

## 6. Parks Network Plan: assessing applications

Proposed activities that are not 'allowed' for or 'managed' through the permit system are considered 'restricted' activities. These tend to be situations where a concession is required and where there is occupation of land or a need for ongoing access a licence, lease or easement would be considered. Some of activities that fall within the 'restricted' category include the Tramways museum and horse riding venture at Queen Elizabeth or the gliding club at Pakuratahi.

A further category in the plan is 'prohibited', these are activities that "*would have a permanent adverse impact on the park values or would significantly detract from the enjoyment and safety of other park users. Section 7.5.1 of the Parks Network Plan.*" The essential question is whether this proposal amounts to an activity which is prohibited or can it be managed as a 'restricted'

activity.

The guidelines under Section 7.4.7 of the Parks Network Plan provide a way to assess the impact of a proposal. In summary, these guidelines require the Council to assess the proposal against the following questions:

- Does the proposal adversely affect the key park characteristics?
- Does the proposal fit within the management focus for the park and any future intentions?
- Is it consistent with the underlying legislation for the land, in this case it is the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972 and Wellington Regional Council (Water Board Functions) Act 2005?
- Is it consistent with any other relevant plans such as the Biodiversity Strategy?
- How will it change current/future public access to the area? Is this positive or negative?
- What are the benefits to the parks and forests, the visitors as well as the wider community?
- What is the perception of tangata whenua on the benefits of the proposal and how it may enhance their long-term well-being?
- Is this the only option for the proposal or could it be pursued somewhere else?
- Does the activity promote environmental stewardship and appropriate behaviour in the park?
- What are the risks of this proposal (e.g. biosecurity, sustainability etc)?

Section 12 comments on how this application compares against these questions.

## **7. Tangata whenua perspective**

The Trust's business plan states that the RIRHT "is committed to the Principles of the Treaty of Waitangi" and that they will consult with Māori (p 11). However, there is no record of discussion/consultation.

Greater Wellington informed iwi from the Hutt and Wairarapa regarding the proposal and sought comment. Rangitāne o Wairarapa responded that they were keen to ensure that any proposed development retains sensitivity to cultural historic issues and kaitiakitanga. This iwi along with Kahungunu and Ti Ati Awa have been involved with the cycle initiative to link Petone to Lake Ferry and note that this will be impacted if the rail venture was successful. They suggest that further consultation is necessary as the application progresses.

## **8. Community comment**

Given the community interest and potential of this proposal within the Pakuratahi Forest, the public were given an opportunity to submit their views. The executive summary prepared by the applicant was available on Greater Wellington's website and the opportunity to submit advertised from Saturday 3 December 2011. The submission period closed on Tuesday 31 January 2012.

Greater Wellington received 235 submissions. Of those, around 35 percent were generally in favour of the proposal and the remainder were opposed. Councillors were sent a copy of the full submissions on 3 February 2012.

### **8.1 Comments in support**

The majority of submissions in support of the proposal were pro-forma submissions (64 percent). This pro-forma submission made the following points:

- Benefits of heritage rail projects are proven elsewhere, such as the Welsh Highland Railway and the West Coast railway in Tasmania
- The proposal will create jobs in the construction of the route as well as operation and maintenance of the trains and related infrastructure
- That a wider range of people could use the route regardless of age or physical ability
- That the heritage train would be a tourism asset that could be experienced of heritage whether riding or doing other activities in the park
- The gradient of the proposed replacement walkway has been altered to a more appropriate 0-5% incline and the proposed width has been expanded to 4 metres
- The train would provide improved access to Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke Park
- The railway / walkway will complement each other.

Other submissions in support of the proposal made similar comments. In addition, submitters noted that the steam trains would be a world-class heritage railway attraction for Upper Hutt and the wider region. Submitters noted that the trains would provide improved access to the Summit by providing a service for people who find the current trail too difficult, particularly people over 65 years of age and others with limited mobility.

Submitters also felt that the concerns of cyclists have largely been taken into account with the proposed alternative cycleway/walkway. Since submitting its original proposal the Trust updated its intentions for the alternative cycleway/walkway, widening it to 4 metres and making the gradient gentler. Some submitters supported the new cycling/walking track being completed before the existing Rail Trail is closed in order to ensure access for these users is maintained throughout the construction and operation of the proposed railway.

Other submitters gave only conditional support for the proposal out of concern for the current recreation experience. One condition suggested was to limit the number of trips to just twice daily in order to preserve the peaceful atmosphere of the area throughout the majority of the day. Others supported the train running to the Summit, but not beyond as it would block cyclists' and walkers' access to the long Summit tunnel and force these users to climb an extra 90 metres in order to bypass the tunnel.

## **8.2 Comments in opposition**

Of the submissions that opposed the proposal, the vast majority of the opposition was on the grounds that walking and cycling activities would be adversely affected. A number of submitters represent recreational and advocacy groups including harrier clubs and cycling groups. Among these were Aurora and Rimutaka Harrier Clubs, Cycling Advocates and Hutt Cycling Networks, Hutt Valley Mountain Bike Club, Port Nicholson Ponake Cycling Club, Rotary Club of Hutt City, Hutt Valley and Wanganui Tramping Clubs and Trentham United Harriers and Walkers Club. Individuals, families and those who took organised groups on the Rail Trail also voiced their opposition through submissions.

Submitters placed particular emphasis on the current Rail Trail's appeal to families with children as well as amateur cyclists as these user groups prefer gentler gradients and well maintained riding surfaces. Added appeal is that the route enables walking and cycling through the former rail tunnels and over historic bridges. Interpretative signage and picnic areas are attractive features of the current route.

Another major objection stated that the alternative track was not an adequate replacement. The alternate route would prevent access to the sites mentioned above and the heritage and recreational experience they offer. These submissions noted that the proposed alternative cycleway/walkway was narrower than the current trail, of reduced quality (surface and drainage), will have a steeper gradient, sharper bends, is longer, traverses higher elevations and inhibits access for horse riders. There is concern that the alternative route would jeopardise plans to have the Rimutaka Rail Trail included as a future New Zealand Cycle Trail. It is claimed this would inhibit the currently growing cycle tourism activities by deterring walkers and cyclists, restricting the possible benefit to the region.

Several submissions also pointed out that the proposal will wipe out significant restoration and interpretative investment along the current route. The proposal would adversely affect the heritage value of existing rail structures because in order to take the weight of the trains and meet modern safety standards the heritage bridges would need to be refurbished and significantly altered.

Another point of objection was that the operation of diesel and steam trains is not an appropriate activity for a regional park, citing the prohibited activities section Parks Network Plan. There was concern about pollution from the trains (carbon, other emissions and vehicle runoff) and noise disturbances to the existing peaceful atmosphere of the area, including along the alternative



cycleway/walkway – further reducing its use. It was also mentioned in several submissions that the steam trains for use on the Fell Incline were a fire hazard to the surrounding regenerating bush.

There was considerable scepticism about the financial viability of the proposal as a business and of the Trust itself. Some submitters argued that the examples of successful heritage railways provided were not comparable to the Trust's proposal because those examples had corresponding accommodation and other tourism-related business along those routes that the Rimutaka Heritage Railway trail lacks. Submitters noted:

- the BERL report produced in 2003 on the economic viability of the proposal is outdated because its conclusion predate the global economic downturn and current economic uncertainty
- belief that the passenger fares would need ratepayer subsidies in order to attract customers (Zealandia's current financial troubles were frequently cited when making this point)
- the Trust is not consistently funded is dependent on periodic grants and investors
- their doubts that the railway will attract more customers than currently use the existing Rail Trail
- their belief the trains will discourage a wider segment of the regional community from using the alternative cycleway/walkway than would be willing to ride the heritage trains.

Several submissions also noted that the capital costs to open the heritage rail service seemed too low, given that the proposal requires significant earthworks over difficult terrain. Some submitters cited the Kingston Flyer as an example of potential cost overruns. Several submitters worried that the grant money will run out before construction is complete.

There are also objections to the possibility that the resulting liability would be placed on the ratepayer to either bailout the Trust or decommission the railway. Some submissions suggested that the Trust be required to maintain a bond or some other type of fund as a contingency if the business goes under or if the rail infrastructure is left partially completed.

There was also uneasiness that the proposal puts public lands into private hands for exclusive use and commercial gain.

Other points made in opposition made include:

- Running the trains from Upper Hutt to Maymorn or between Featherston and Cross Creek was more appropriate because these routes did not impact as much on other users and the peaceful atmosphere of the Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke Regional Park
- Already a similar heritage service at Silverstream and heritage trains at Paekakariki making another heritage rail tourist attraction unnecessary

- The proposal cuts through the Tane's Track and adversely affects access to Tunnel Gully
- Concern over the developer's long term goals which include downgrading of the track on the Wairarapa side of the Summit (DOC land) to a tramping track
- The lack of a comprehensive assessment of the heritage, recreation and biodiversity affects of the proposal to satisfy the RMA
- Walking and cycling are activities that should be actively promoted by Greater Wellington for their better health outcomes. The proposal does not promote this.

## **9. Issues**

### **9.1 Recreation and tourism**

The proposal would significantly alter the recreation opportunities which occur on or alongside the rail formation. For those who submitted in opposition to the application, this was their prime area of concern.

The formation passes through a number of distinct areas within the Pakuratahi Forest which are used differently for recreation. This report therefore considers how the proposal affects each area as well as for recreation and tourism generally.

As part of the concession application The Trust indicated the new recreational track minimum width would be 2.0m and the maximum grade 1 in 8 (12.5%). As a result of the Trust representatives listening to submitters at a Council Committee meeting on 23 November 2011, it has amended the proposal so the minimum width will be 4.0m and the gradient will not exceed 1 in 20 (5%).

#### **Comment on gradient and width**

The steepest section of the Rail Trail does not exceed 1 in 25% and the majority of the ride is gentler with a gradient of 1 in 35. This near flat grade is one of its attractions. To determine the criteria for a replacement track, GW staff have been guided by the design criteria for the New Zealand Cycle Trail, Grade 1 (easiest): where the gradient is 0 – 2 degrees (i.e. flat to 1 in 29) for 98% of a trail on any one day and a maximum of 4 degrees (1 in 14). Although the increased width proposed by the Trust exceeds the New Zealand Cycle Trail criteria, to meet the maximum gradient requirements the grade will need to be reduced from 1 in 20 (5%) to a 1 in 29.

For sections of the track used by forestry vehicles (see Section 9.6) the minimum horizontal radius of 6 metres stated in the New Zealand Cycle Trail design is insufficient for trucks that currently have access to the Rail Trail for maintenance purposes. A minimum radius of 9 metres is required. For the sections where forestry trucks will operate a minimum inside radius of 16 metres is required to enable the trucks to travel at 20 km/hr. A minimum formation width is 4.5 metres for forestry use.

The effect of these changes to provide an alternative track/roadway that is acceptable to GW is to increase the construction cost to the Trust. Extensive earthworks, together with culverts and probably bridging, are needed. It is noted that there is no provision in the Trust's budget for obtaining resource and building consents, or engineering design and supervision. The Trust has allowed a sum of \$3.4 million for the Stage 1 cycleway/walkway earthworks. The actual expenditure is likely to be much greater.

#### 9.1.1 Maymorn

Maymorn is a secondary entrance to Pakuratahi Forest. The gravelled path winds up a steady gradient to the historic Maymorn Tunnel. This path is used regularly by cyclists, walkers and horse riders. Cyclists using the train to connect to the Rimutaka Rail Trail would begin at this point (walkers, novice cyclists and families would choose to begin at the Kaitoke entrance off State Highway 2). The Maymorn and Mangaroa forests are well used by local horse riders, and on obtaining a permit, they may lead their horses through the Mangaroa Tunnel and ride along Station Drive to reach Kaitoke Regional Park (via the SH2 underpass) or traverse the Goat Rock area of the forest.

##### **Effect of the proposal**

Walkers and cyclists could no longer use, or experience the 221 metres long Mangaroa tunnel or the rail formation and must follow a new track over the contour of the hill, rising an additional 51 metres in altitude. The applicant's route adds approximately 930 metres to the track length and an average gradient estimated 6.5% on the uphill and around 4% on the downhill towards Tunnel Gully (gum tree reserve). To meet Grade 1 New Zealand Cycle Trail standards (i.e. a track no steeper than 1 in 29) the track would require further lengthening to a minimum new route length of 2.96km.

The new track will take walkers and cyclists through mainly plantation forestry and some native bush. All cyclists and walkers would share the path with horse riders. The plantation forest would need modification so future logging did not interfere with the track. The mapped route indicates that a number of small streams would need to be bridged or culverted.

#### 9.1.2 Tunnel Gully

The rail formation runs directly through the middle of this recreation area. Tunnel Gully is predominately used for picnicking and easy walking on Tane's Track (which crosses the rail formation in two places). It is a popular place for those walking dogs. Visitors usually base themselves at one of the car parks and complete walks in the area including through to the Mangaroa Tunnel.

It is similar to forested city reserves and is family friendly with quiet, sheltered spots, picnic tables and toilets. Paths in the area cater for buggies which indicate their gradient and standard. This area is sometimes used to host events (buggy walks, weddings etc). There is a clear separation between where motor vehicles are parked and the walking areas. This adds to the attractiveness for families with children. In 2010/11 there were approximately 47,800 visits to this area.

### **Effect of the proposal**

Railway tracks and occasional trains would entirely change the recreational experience of Tunnel Gully. It would lose the sense of peacefulness valued by visitors and acquire an industrial feel with the rail tracks and barriers. It introduces a number of health and safety risk for users in the park, particularly parents looking after young children. A railway would necessitate security fencing alongside the railway and two pedestrian underpasses where Tane's Track currently crosses the old railway formation. The appeal of the quiet, forested area would be significantly degraded.

The proposal indicates that the current road into the reserve and to Mount Climie would run parallel to the railway in some parts. To incorporate both rail and road would destroy the cutting through this area and the adjacent bush. A level road crossing with safety protection is also required for vehicles to access Tunnel Gully and the Mount Climie access road.

#### **9.1.3 Old Railway line to the Rail Trail carpark (Kaitoke)**

This section is the least developed of the rail formation. The track surface is not as well-maintained as the Rimutaka Rail Trail proper but it is easily ridden on a mountain bike and for the most part follows the gentle gradient of the old railway line. It currently connects with the old section of State Highway providing cyclists, walkers and horse riders with the option of either continuing on the Rail Trail or using the purpose built underpass connecting to Kaitoke Regional Park.

### **Effect of the proposal**

The new cycleway/walkway proposed will run along the uphill side of the railway at a distance of between 5 and 60 metres away. A number of small streams would need to be culverted. Cyclists/walkers would no longer experience the rail formation, but be on a separate track above, mainly through plantation forest.

Where the old rail formation enters private land the "Kaitoke deviation" proposes to take the railway and cycleway/walkway along a new route behind the go-kart track. This will require significant cuts and fill. The applicant suggests that the rail and cycleway/walkway can be located immediately adjacent but there is no description of what safety measures will be included to keep use separate. There are two level crossings required before the Kaitoke deviation (to enable cyclists to still access Kaitoke Regional Park) and a further crossing around the location of the proposed Kaitoke Railway station.

This new route does provide a more direct, gentle gradient for walkers and cyclists (on the assumption that the track sits alongside the rail track) than what exists currently. However riders/walkers will have to negotiate level crossings which is an increased in risk to the current experience.

#### 9.1.4 Rimutaka Rail Trail

This is the most popular section for cycling, walking and running with a distance of around 11 kilometres to Summit. Cycle Aware Wellington note that “the ‘bible’ of NZ mountain bikers -Classic New Zealand Mountain bike rides - gives the Rail Trail the maximum four star rating – only given to 20 of the 300 rides.”

In 2010/11 around 36,000 people used the trail and figures indicate increasing popularity over the years (in 2006/07 22,500 used the trail). The trail can be ridden all year round, but is used predominantly in the summer months. It is very popular for family cycling. A number of individuals with limited mobility can complete the majority of this track (depending on their level of endurance) beginning from the Rail Trail carpark. The submission from the Wanganui Tramping Club illustrates:

“One of the great things about the current trail is its gradient allows a walking/cycling experience for all ages. This is important for our club members, many of whom are retired and elderly.”

The current track is about 4 metres wide, finely gravelled with all water courses bridged. The steepest section of the Rail Trail does not exceed 1 in 25 (4%) gradient and for the majority of the ride is gentler (1 in 35). It can easily accommodate two cyclists riding abreast, or walkers with cyclists passing and the width means that there is little conflict between users. It is possible to bring a vehicle up the incline however vehicles are only permitted for maintenance purposes (as well as forestry in some sections). Good visibility lines and an absence of vehicles makes this a safe place to recreate – where you can easily hear and see other users.



Figure 1: Family adventure on the Rail Trail (Photo courtesy of Cycle Aware Wellington)

The unique appeal of the Rail Trail is obviously the rail features. Historic bridges and tunnels have been restored and there is interpretation throughout the trail. Users are able to learn about the historic railway by both being on the formation, and also reading information along the way. The formation is well maintained and more technical design features such as cuttings, drainage and embankments add to the interest.



Figure 2: Interpretation along the Rail Trail, and points of interest (Photos: Sharon Lee)

Greater Wellington has invested significantly in conservation of the formation and railway features. This included the restoration of the Pakuratahi Bridge and Ladle Bend Creek Bridge in 2001 as well as a number of short span bridges after this time. Greater Wellington Parks Network Plan has a policy of replanting forestry 40 metres away from either side of the formation and setting aside buffer zones of permanent indigenous vegetation on either side of the Rail Trail. This is in recognition that minimal disturbance to the land either side will protect the formation and provide a more positive experience for users.

While the Rail Trail itself is the main attraction, it does runs alongside the river and provides the sole access to picnic and swimming areas. There are two good campsites at Ladle Bend and Summit with basic facilities. Again, significant investment has been made to make this site a user-friendly area, including capping the contaminated site at Summit which is a result of the previous railway.

Recreational hunting is not permitted on the Rimutaka Rail Trail or near Tunnel Gully. Permitted hunters may walk or cycle the Rail Trail or the Mt Climie Road to access the hunting areas.



Figure 3: Alongside the Rail Trail are swimming and camping areas

### **Effect of the proposal**

This section of the proposed cycleway/walkway runs on contours either above or below the rail formation, crossing the railway three times before reaching the summit. Obstacles that a train can either go through via tunnels, or over via bridges, must be navigated. According to mapped data this extends the length of the trail (as measured from the current Rimutaka Rail Trail carpark) a minimum of an additional 1.9 kilometres. This does not account for any switchbacks needed to lessen the gradient where steep terrain occurs. The new route meanders more, ducking in and out of gullies and cuts as it weaves up the valley. While the new cycleway/walkway may be able to provide a similar overall gradient, it cannot replicate the unique features of the current trail. The gentle sweeping curves of the current Trail could not be replicated on the alternative cycleway/walkway which must ‘hug’ the hill, shortening visibility on corners. It likely to have ‘ups’ and ‘downs’ due to the terrain on the route proposed.



Figure 4: Illustrates the steep terrain about the Rail Trail, photo taken downstream from Pakuratahi Truss bridge (Photo: Owen Spearpoint)

If the route which bypasses the Pakuratahi Truss bridge was adopted, a significant climb would be needed. This would require switchbacks (zig zags) on very steep land to lessen the 'mapped route' gradient which would be too steep to meet even Grade 2 New Zealand Cycle Trail guidelines. The alternative proposed by the Trust is to allow rail and cycles to share the use of the Pakuratahi Truss bridge either in road/rail configuration or with a cantilevered walkway. While this alternative route would provide a more acceptable grade, there would be significant destruction of the adjacent cuttings to enable cycleway and railway to run parallel. Where the cycleway/walkway would run along beside the railway, barriers would be required to ensure safety of users.

Submitters refer to the thrill of going through the tunnels, and over bridges as being a key part of the experience. Essentially, the ability to experience for recreational users (bikers and cyclists) of being on the historic route, exploring the structures would be all but lost. The only way to experience the railway this way would be by paying to travel on the train itself.

As public access would be restricted to the railway this effectively cuts off any opportunities to access the river for swimming and picnicking. It also means that the tunnel and bridges would no longer be accessible and only viewable at some distance. The exception to this is the Pakuratahi Truss Bridge, if the alternative route is adopted.

A general note with regard to construction of the cycleway/walkway. In the lower reaches of the Pakuratahi Valley, it may be relatively easy to construct a parallel cycleway/walkway because of the gentle terrain. However, from about one kilometre from the Kaitoke car park (for the Rail Trail) the proposed route is expected to traverse the steep hillside above the railway. To construct the proposed four metre cycleway/walkway requires cutting into the hill above the railway, stabilising through retaining structures above or below, installing drainage and culverts that are connected with the railway drainage. The cleanfill from the cuts would need to be relocated as would the large amount of vegetation removed. This would be a significant engineering project.

#### 9.1.5 Summit and beyond

The track on the east side of the Summit tunnel is maintained by the Department of Conservation. This is considerably steeper – 1 in 15 (being the section where the Fell engines were used) and is not yet developed to the standard of track from Kaitoke to Summit. While not as well used as the western side, many visitors continue through Summit tunnel which points down the Incline towards Cross Creek. Other people starting their visit at Cross Creek come through the Summit tunnel and into the Pakuratahi Forest. Many walking and running events use the whole of the Rail Trail e.g. Rimutaka Fun Run, Marathons and Ultra-marathons.

Perhaps the biggest issue of the proposal is the future of the trail from Summit through to Cross Creek. While the current proposal is only to the Summit, the ultimate goal of The Trust is to continue through to Featherston. This would require use of Summit Tunnel and the cycleway/walkway to be diverted to



climb over the saddle. This means traversing 90 metre altitude gain over steep terrain.



Figure 5: Summit and the saddle (Photo: Murray Kennedy)

If it is assumed that the track follows similar gradients to the Rail Trail on the western side (1 in 35) and the incline gradient where the Fell engine operated on the eastern side (1 in 15), the cycleway/walkway would need to be at least 4 kilometres long to traverse this saddle. The new route would require benching, extensive earthworks and switchbacks. This diversion over the saddle would be through sub alpine conditions and walkers and riders would be at much greater risk of exposure.

Compare this distance with the current route of 560 metres through Summit tunnel, which provides a safe sheltered access through the Rimutaka Ranges.

#### 9.1.6 Licences (both at Kaitoke and access to Mt Climie)

There are three significant licences in the vicinity of the formation around the Kaitoke entrance. Namely, the Wellington Kart Club, the NZ Deerstalkers Association rifle range and the Upper Valley Glider Club airstrip.

Mount Climie is the location of a number of communication and broadcasting masts and access is through the Tunnel Gully reserve. Retaining access to these is essential for maintenance.

#### **Effect on current licences to occupy**

The proposal has sought to ensure access to the go-kart operation and gliding club. The proponent states that the proposal seeks to minimise any displacement of existing lease holders. Access to the go-kart club may not be affected, but the access for the glider club lies partially along the route of the proposed railway as does the rifle range access. The glider club support the

proposal and believe the proposal adequately addresses any issues they have, even providing better access for some of their members (with the option of coming by train).

Access to the rifle range appears to have been overlooked by The Trust. Officers are uncertain whether the rifle range could continue to operate alongside a railway. Even if access can be maintained, it is likely to be significantly disrupted during construction of the railway.

At Tunnel Gully a relocation of the road and formation of a level crossing is noted on the proposal plans to ensure continued access to Mount Climie. This road will also be used for forestry purposes. All of these issues require further consideration.

#### 9.1.7 New Zealand Cycle Trail

The Parks Network Plan notes in the Project Changes section for Pakuratahi Forest (Section 6.6.6) that Greater Wellington will “investigate better links with the Wairarapa and Lake Wairarapa through the Rimutaka Rail Trail and Rimutaka Forest Park”. With the current focus by Central Government on developing cycleways through Nga Haerenga - New Zealand Cycle Trail project, there is increasing realisation of the value of Wellington Region’s recreational assets, including the Rimutaka Rail Trail.

Greater Wellington has been part of a multi-agency team to create a ‘Great Ride’ as part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail Network Expansion project. The agencies and stakeholders involved are: GWRC, DOC, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Positively Wellington Tourism, regional Iwi and other groups from the Wairarapa. The eventual route would include the Hutt River Trail, the Rimutaka Rail Trail and Western Lake Road south to Ocean Beach and around Turakirae, Baring and Pencarrow Heads to Eastbourne; a 134km trail that would fit the Grade 1-2 category as set out in the New Zealand Cycle Trail Design Guide (2011).

It would attract both domestic and international visitors. Wellington is one of the four largest markets for cycle tourism so there is immediate local appeal; however the majority of expenditure comes from international cycle tourists. By the nature of cycle touring, visitors tend to spend over a number of days as cyclists explore the trail, stay and eat nearby. In the case of the Otago Rail Trail the average domestic visitor spends \$472, generally over a four night period. The expenditure is over a wide range of service industries and experience has shown that cycle trails have stimulated new business with complementary products and services (Positively Wellington Tourism, presentation to GWRC, Nov 2011).

As a significant proportion of the recreational asset is already in place and most of the remaining route is on country roads, the agencies involved expect that through a joint effort, this cycle trail project is a relatively low risk venture and can realistically be brought to fruition. While there is no further central government development funding available, the Ministry of Economic Development has expressed interest in including this route as a Great Ride.

This project would build on a national initiative and can key into the marketing and promotion already being undertaken.

A key attraction of this proposed Great Ride, as on others around New Zealand, is the historical interest in riding along an original rail formation, over bridges and through original cuttings and tunnels. Great Rides are intended to “showcase the best of New Zealand, including our environment, iconic natural landscapes and our heritage and culture”. The proposed alternative cycleway removes visitors from the experience of being “in history”, and in being near a railway will detract from the scenic appeal of the area. Destination Wairarapa noted in their submission:

“The stories which accompany the physical elements which remain of the Rimutaka Rail Trail are critical to the experience... The new trail would not enable riders to follow the exact path of the railway pioneers and empathise with the mammoth task they undertook to build the railway”.

### **Summary of recreation impact**

To its credit, the proposal does provide a new form of leisure into the park – of being able to travel on, and sightsee from, the train. Stations would provide refreshments and sell souvenirs to both train travellers and cyclists. An interpretation centre at the summit would provide shelter and interactive displays for visitors. Train travel would allow for those less physically able to travel to the summit, at an estimated ticket cost (in the 2003 BERL report) of \$46 per person. However, this comes at a significant cost both to the developer and the community.

Whilst the proposal seeks to provide an equivalent alternative for the cycleway/walkway, this paper illustrates that there are many aspects that are either lost in the process of creating and running a railway from Maymorn to Summit (and beyond) or that can not be replicated in a new cycleway/walkway.

The wide sweeping curves, safe gentle riding will be replaced with a longer route with less visibility. The current access to the river will be cut off as well the ability to experience up close the tunnels, cuttings and bridges. The proposed cycleway/walkway may still attract the more adventurous mountain biker but is likely to mean an overall reduction in the number of users.

On sections where the railway runs alongside the cycleway/walkway a number of new hazards are introduced to recreational users, and would especially deter families. Unlike commuter trains where frequent services reinforce the need to stay a safe distance from tracks, this proposal would run only a couple of trains each day with additional services for peak times. This increases the risk that the public will not treat the railway (or tunnels) with caution.

The popularity of Tunnel Gully picnic area is likely to be reduced with the introduction of a major piece of infrastructure running through the entire Tunnel Gully area. The quiet, secluded nature of this area would be eroded

significantly. Again, safety issues arise for those coming here to walk dogs, or take picnics with families. In this regard, the benefits of this free to enter facility to the local and regional community would be degraded to provide for paying customers on the train. This observation raises a wider philosophical argument about the use of public land in an exclusive way for a commercial activity versus the public benefit being already gained from the current facility. This issue was raised by a number of submitters.

The proposed railway would mean that visitors would be removed from this historic space, which would detract from the overall experience. A cycle trip on the proposed alternative pathway is therefore, less likely to be regarded as travelling through an “iconic landscape”, reducing the potential appeal to potential New Zealand Cycle Trail visitors.

Overall, this report concludes that proposal would have a detrimental affect on the current recreation experience and puts at risk the option for developing this Rail Trail as part of a Great Ride through the New Zealand Cycle Trail project.

## **9.2 Maintenance of the proposed cycleway/walkway**

While this section has focused on the impact of recreation, there is also the question about the maintenance of a new cycleway/walkway. Greater Wellington’s Forestry and Parks Departments maintain the current Rail Trail to the Summit Tunnel.

This cost is determined by the ability to access the asset, the number of structures, the standard to which these are maintained and the size of the asset. Because the Rail Trail was built to facilitate rail, the structures are built to withstand a significantly greater impact than what cyclist/walkers cause.

The proposed cycleway/walkway would require bridges, culverts and retaining structures. It is difficult to estimate the overall maintenance cost of the new route, but certainly high quality engineering solutions and construction using low maintenance materials would be required to ensure the overall maintenance cost is similar to the existing Rail Trail.

## **9.3 Environmental impact**

Pakuratahi Forest is a combination of production forestry, native forest and regenerating scrub. The catchment for the Pakuratahi River is very steep and rugged. Water quality is monitored in the Pakuratahi River in Kaitoke Regional Park and remains high despite flowing through developed farmland between Pakuratahi Forest and Kaitoke. Much of the vegetation around the Rimutaka Incline was burned off by large fires possibly ignited by sparks from passing steam trains between 1878 and 1955. What was not burned was selectively logged. Much of this area is now in plantation forest. However there are a few sections of the original railway line that remain in broadleaf indigenous forest – notably at Tunnel Gully and the section between Pakuratahi Tunnel and Ladle Bend. Tunnel Gully contains native podocarp-rata-hinau-kamahahi broadleaf forest. Ladle Bend has been assessed by Greater Wellington as the 14<sup>th</sup> most important wetland in the Wellington Region.



Figure 6: Tunnel Gully, Forest adjacent to the rail formation (Photo: Owen Spearpoint)

The birds recorded in this area are relatively common although also present is the New Zealand Falcon (nationally vulnerable) and yellow crown kakariki. Pakuratahi Forest is the ecological corridor that connects the Rimutaka Ranges with the Taranaki Ranges. Key corridor and as such is a key asset for migratory birds.

Owen Spearpoint (Biodiversity Monitoring Advisor) conducted a field visit on 20 January 2012 to consider the general impacts of the proposal based on the information provided by the applicant.

The rail formation and proposed new cycleway/walkway pass over many first and second order streams which have flows all year round. There is considerable potential for sediment impacts on the stream life along the valley floor. Site surveys show heavy siltation in streams where disturbance (e.g. logging) has occurred. Silt traps are necessary for construction works and runoff drains designed to trap heavy metals and oils. A number of threatened fish species are known to be in the catchments of Tunnel Gully and the Pakuratahi River. Fish passages would need to be installed to continue to allow fish species to use the watercourse above the cycleway/walkway.

The local climate, soil and steepness of the terrain affect the amount of sediment and the potential for rehabilitation. The soils of upper section of the Pakuratahi Valley are prone to sheet erosion. Talus screes and slopes up to 40 degrees in places above and below the existing Rail Trail can be seen. There is evidence of vegetation slipping off the batters of the cuttings taking rock and soil with it. At one point, large trees have fallen.



Figure 7: Above Ladle Bend, tree fall on batters on the Rail Trail cutting (Photo: Owen Spearpoint)

The proposal indicates major earthworks would need to be undertaken in creating both the cycleway/walkway and the new sections of railway. Aside from the questions of what happens to the cut and fill is the basic issue that land disturbance in this area can take a long time to heal. Where vegetation is removed wind effects can cause further vegetation dieback and treefall. Wind scarring is evident along the route and particularly around the Pakuratahi Truss Bridge. Seventy years of healing has not resulted in much change in the vegetation.

Of particular concern is the proposed route of the cycleway/walkway at the Ladle Bend manuka wetland (see Figure 9). The proposed route would require draining and building into the wetland causing further wetland loss. This impact on an important wetland is a serious concern. To reduce the impact, an alternative route should be adopted, either running the cycleway/walkway on the other side of the railway (requiring two more level crossings) or following a parallel river valley between Ladle Bend and Summit (which would be a significantly longer route, with no views or connection to the railway).

To achieve a parallel cycleway/walkway route necessitates the trimming of trees as well as the removal of sections of exotic forest, scrub and mature native forest. This is of particular concern in Tunnel Gully where you can currently see mature rata-podocarp-broadleaf forest.

There are somewhat conflicting statements in the proposal with regard to vegetation clearance, yet still needing damp vegetation adjacent to the line as part of fire prevention. A full assessment of fire risk and prevention is needed. Fire is a major threat to the native bird habitat as evidenced by previous fires possibly caused by the trains.

Not considered in this assessment, but also relevant in the later stages of the proposal, is the relocation of the cycleway/walkway which would climb over the saddle where the Summit Tunnel is located.



Figure 8: Ladle Bend bridge and manuka wetland (bottom of photo) (Photo: Murray Kennedy)

### 9.3.1 Summary of the proposal's consideration of environmental values, and mitigation

In general, the proposal pays little attention to the effect on the natural environment. It states that affected vegetation is mainly regrowth along the railway and there are “no known potential for major effects on native fauna in the construction or operation of the line”. It omits all of the matters outlined above.

The proposal would require a significant amount of work to mitigate its effect on flora and fauna. It threatens sites where restoration work has been carried out and puts at risk the future of the Ladle Bend wetland.

## 9.4 Historical

The rail formation which extends from Maymorn to Cross Creek was part of the old line that provided rail from the Hutt Valley to the Wairarapa. The most well known aspect of this is actually on the eastern side of the Rimutaka Range where the Fell system was employed to assist the locomotives to grip the rails as it was twice as steep as the steepest mainline railway in New Zealand.

In 2002, in recognition of its historical importance to New Zealand, 16 kilometres of the rail formation (from the Kaitoke station carpark, near State Highway 2 to Cross Creek) was made a registered site under the Historic Places Act. This is shown in Figure 9. The formation, which includes cuttings,

embankments, tunnels, culverts and associated structures and occupation sites (Summit yard, Cross Creek and campsites) are archaeological sites as defined in Section 2 of the Historic Places Act 1993. The main features of the Rimutaka Incline are listed in the registration report.

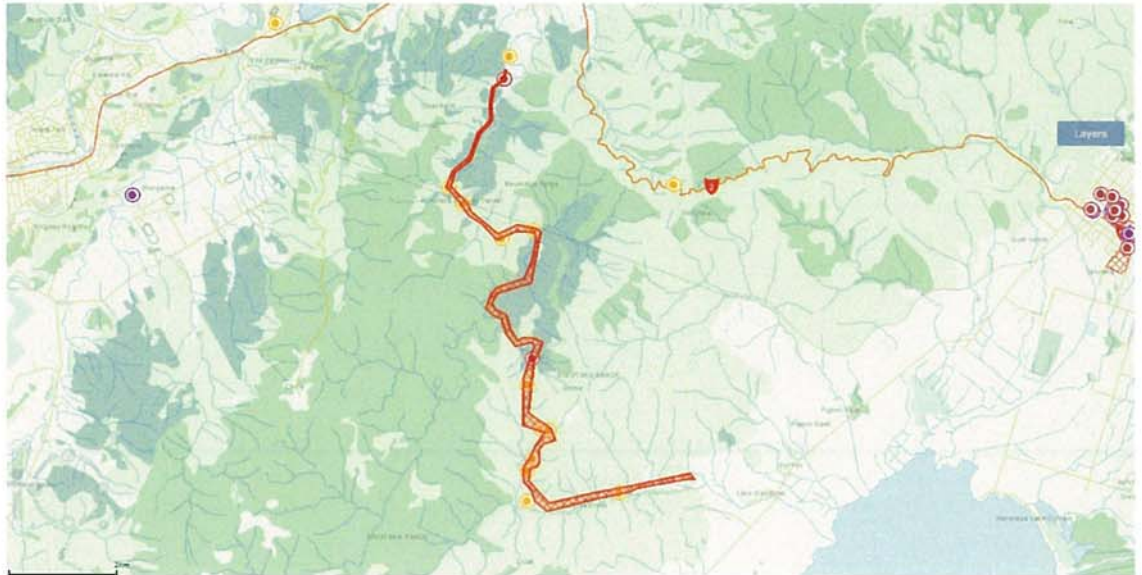


Figure 9: Extent of Registration for Rimutaka Rail Trail. Courtesy of Historic Places Trust

The information provided in the proposal indicates that no heritage management plan has yet been completed, though the Railway Heritage Trust acknowledges in its Business Plan that such a document “is required to set principles and guidelines for planning, constructing and maintaining the railway” (p 74).

The proposal is to install a railway on the existing formation that will take modern engines and be suitable for transporting passengers. The proposal also indicates that there are sections of the railway where the cycleway/walkway will run parallel. To achieve both of these aims, the existing archaeological sites would be altered and in some situations destroyed (e.g. needing to widen embankments and cuttings, replacing bridges that do not meet modern rail engineering standards). Historic Places Trust authorisation would be required for any works that might modify or damage these sites.

Within the Parks Network Plan there is clear policy guidance that any destruction of existing archaeological remains should be avoided (refer to Section 4.3 Cultural Heritage). It would appear that while there is an intention by the developer to reflect heritage aspects throughout the railway, the process of construction will cause irreparable damage.

In evaluating this proposal Greater Wellington sought comment from Historic Places Trust (HPT). This section of the paper now summarises the views of HPT Trust which are pertinent to understanding the effect on heritage of this site.



#### 9.4.1 Historic Places Trust views

The submission by HPT is laid out as a Heritage Impact Assessment written by Alison Dangerfield (Heritage Architect) and includes input from a number of other experts. By way of background it lays out the history of the Rimutaka Railway and of more recent developments after the railway was decommissioned in 1955. The following points are then made:

- **Conservation plan not completed:** The proposal does not contain a conservation plan, and has been prepared without the framework of heritage in mind.
- **Archaeological disturbance would be widespread:** Changes to the route to 'reinstat' the railway would cause change to an archaeological and historic place that cannot be mitigated or repaired. For example current bridges and tunnels would need alteration to allow for current earthquake strengths required. The effect is irreversible change.
- **Reconstruction is not conservation:** HPT note that the ICOMOS New Zealand Charter states that "Reconstructed elements should not usually constitute the majority of a place or structure" and "any intervention which would reduce or compromise cultural heritage value is undesirable and should not occur". HPT concludes that the proposal is a reconstruction and does not add heritage value to an historic place. Further, it is likely to make it difficult to appreciate the heritage that remains as the original trail could only be viewed through the material of replicas (p12).
- **Consultation is required to fully understand cultural heritage value:** HPT notes that iwi have not been consulted, nor the recreational users of the trail. Lack of consultation may correspond to a lack of recognition by the developer of recreation as a legitimate current use of the trail and public esteem<sup>1</sup> as a genuine value.
- **Concern at the alternative recreation opportunity offered:** Walkers and cyclists can appreciate the original line – gradient, curves, tunnels, at a quiet pace – an experience that is uncommon in New Zealand. HPT maintains that the Rail Trail is a rewarding place to experience the authenticity and integrity of the route. Further, the proposed alternative cycleway/walkway cannot provide this and has additional issues (safety, noise, smoke, slippage).

To achieve the Rimutaka Incline Railway Heritage Trust's vision of creating a 'sanctuary for steam' HPT suggests that the development "could be created elsewhere to avoid adverse effects on the Rail Trail's high demand recreation use. Another site would give the experience of train travel in the area while avoiding the destruction of the Rail Trail's historic heritage" (p13).

HPT concludes that the Rimutaka Rail Trail is a rewarding place to experience the authenticity and integrity of the route and believe the conservation of the

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<sup>1</sup> Public esteem is one of the values which a place may hold. The value of a place is increased where a place is found to be held in high public esteem for its heritage or aesthetic values or as a focus of spiritual, political, national or other cultural sentiment (p11, Historic Places Trust submission).

Rimutaka Rail Trail is a priority. HPT believes that the enthusiasm of the Rimutaka Incline Railway Heritage Trust and the engagement by a selection of community based groups and organisations is worthy of direction into a project that causes less damage (p15). On the basis of current information, HPT would not support the use of the Rimutaka Rail Trail for a replica restoration of the historic railway and settlements.

## **9.5 Water supply**

The Pakuratahi River catchment was acquired for water supply purposes over a period of many years. Some land was acquired as early as 1904 and the bulk was vested in the Wellington City Council (WCC) under the provisions of the Wellington City and Suburban Water Supply Act 1927. In 1964, the abandoned railway formation was vested in the Wellington City Council for water supply purposes.

To date, the land has not been required for water supply purposes and no water infrastructure has been installed as other catchments have provided sufficient water (Hutt and Wainuiomata water catchments supplemented by the aquifer feed Waterloo). As an interim measure parts of the catchment have been planted with exotic forest (as have parts of the Akatarawa).

However, development of the area for future water supply has been investigated, and there are at least three possible ways in which this could happen as outlined below.

### **9.5.1 Storage Dam Ladle Bend**

Detailed studies have been undertaken for a large storage dam located at Ladle Bend. The cheapest, most convenient route for the pipeline to the Te Marua Water Treatment Plant is along the railway formation, which it would follow for a distance of approximately eight kilometres. Such a dam is quite feasible but it is not the currently preferred site for a new water source for the following reasons:

- It is more expensive than other comparable sites, partly due to the long length of pipeline required to reach the Te Marua plant.
- Supply from the Pakuratahi Dam would be disrupted in a Wellington Fault earthquake event as the pipeline to the treatment plant would cross the Wellington Fault.
- The dam would seriously impact heritage features such as the historic railway formation and the Ladle Bend Bridge.
- The dam would seriously impact popular recreational activity such as walking and cycling along the Rimutaka Rail Trail.

### **9.5.2 Low level weir**

A second possibility is to construct a low level weir just downstream of Ladle Bend and pipe water under gravity flow to a storage lake at Kaitoke. This proposal would also utilise the railway formation as the pipeline route, but would not inundate the railway formation and not affect recreational activity,

except during construction.

### 9.5.3 Intake and pump station on the river

The third possibility is to build an intake and pump station on the Pakuratahi River at the south end of Gilbert Road, about 800 metres from SH2, and supply water to a storage lake at Kaitoke or direct to the water treatment plant. The pipeline would run along Gilbert Road and then along SH2. This development would not affect heritage assets or recreational activity.

### 9.5.4 Effect of the proposal on current options for future water supply

Reconstruction of the heritage railway would preclude the future construction of a storage dam on the Pakuratahi River. It would also have a significant effect on the option of constructing a low level intake, since an alternative route would have to be found for the pipeline to Kaitoke. Unless pumping was resorted to, this would be difficult and costly. A route low enough to allow transfer of water under gravity may be difficult to find and would probably involve significant earthworks.. Providing electricity for a pumping station at or near Ladle Bend would involve significant extra cost.

The use of diesel locomotives or oil fired steam locomotives would introduce the risk of contamination of the river which could impact on water supply in the event that an intake had been constructed on the Pakuratahi River. While the likelihood of a spill is small, should a derailment or major mishap cause significant contamination in the Pakuratahi River, then any intake downstream of the site would have to be shut down as the treatment plant would be unable to remove this contamination. Closing an intake on the Pakuratahi River for a few days while contamination cleared would not have a significant effect on the bulk water supply, since other sources of raw water are available.

To minimise risk, fuel or engines should not be stored within the catchment, and immediate notice provided should any mishap occur.

## 9.6 Forestry

Plantation forest has been developed in several areas within the Pakuratahi land owned by Greater Wellington. Internally, Greater Wellington refers to these as Pakuratahi East (237 hectares) and Pakuratahi West (482 hectares). Use is made of parts of the old railway formation between Maymorn and Summit in order to harvest the areas and carry out associated forestry activities. Six distinct parts of the old railway formation are used, totalling 6.43 kilometres out of the total of 18 kilometres between Maymorn and Summit. Because tree harvesting only takes place about every 30 years, is normally a weekday activity and only one or two small blocks are being harvested at any one time, there is minimal conflict between recreational users of the Rail Trail and forestry activities. Whenever needed, the Historic Places Trust is consulted about the use of the railway formation for forestry activities.

The Pakuratahi Forest area was harvested from 1992 through to 2012. It is expected that the second rotation will commence harvest from 2022. During the first harvest, approximately 6.43km of the rail alignment between Maymorn and Summit was used as an access for logging trucks. At present,

there is access to forestry blocks on the left and right sides of the rail formation.

#### 9.6.1 Effect of the proposal on Forestry

Under the proposal the railway formation could not be used as part of the access to forestry areas. If no other alternative is found, the following areas would be “landlocked” by the railway:

Maymorn – Tunnel Gully	45 ha
Tunnel Gully – Kaitoke Loop Road access	55 ha
Kaitoke Loop Road – Incline gate	15 ha
Along Incline	50 ha
<b>Total</b>	<b>165 ha</b>

There is an option to construct the walkway in such a way that it doubles as a forestry road. This would mean creating a road that can service, not just cyclists, but logging trucks that weigh in at around 50 tonnes loaded. If this was achieved it allows far more plantation area to remain in trees as access is retained.

To provide for logging trucks the minimum running width of the cycleway/walkway would have to be 4.5 metres on straight sections and a slightly greater width on curved sections. Side drains and batters are additional to the 4.5 metres. The radius of the curved sections of roadway though is likely to be much greater than what would be required for a walking/cycling track. It would need to be constructed some distance from the railway in order to minimise any damage to the railway or its embankments.

Even with new roading being built for forestry purposes, a number of level crossings would be needed. Where sight lines are inadequate, flashing lights and bells would need to be installed on these crossings for safety reasons, or other safety measures adopted. All of these aspects would substantially increase the cost of the proposal to the Trust.

Although Greater Wellington will incur additional cost of access should this proposal eventuate, it is not possible to meaningfully identify these. Many of these will be absorbed as a cost of business and others will appear as higher tendered costs. The costs of doing business in Pakuratahi could increase by around 20% as a consequence of this proposal.

#### **Fire risk**

This issue has been raised by a number of submitters. Greater Wellington insures its forests against various perils including fire. Where rail services are operated in a forest area, any insurance company will request further details before quoting insurance packages. If the Trust operated steam trains, then an increase in insurance costs would be likely. At this stage the amount is

unknown, but estimated to be a 20% increase in premiums. This increase would need to be included as part of any lease arrangement to the Trust as an additional operating expense.

### **Access from State Highway 2**

The Trust has also applied to use, for emergency access purposes, a forestry road between State Highway 2 and near the Ladle Bend Bridge. This road is 4.5 kilometres long single lane with limited visibility over some sections. It is completely satisfactory for forestry use as all logging trucks and light vehicles using the forest roads work under a radio system to ensure vehicles can pass at appropriate locations.

For the Trust to use this road, even for emergency purposes, it would need to fit all its vehicles with radios and adhere to the logging protocols for use of this type of road. It also raises the question of the standard of maintenance on the route. Presently, it is used as a 4WD utility route to be upgraded as the blocks fall due for harvesting. The Council does not think it would be suitable for a coach in its present condition.

## **10. Legal**

Oakley Moran, Barristers and Solicitors, were asked to advise Council on the legal implications of reinstating the railway with regard to Council land.

They have thoroughly researched this issue. To some extent, it has been complicated by the land previously being held in various titles, most of which are now amalgamated and the land being owned in the past by the Wellington City Council and the Wellington Regional Water Board. The land is currently owned by the Wellington Regional Council.

The research has gone as far as reviewing speeches and debates in the House of Representatives when the Wellington Regional Water Board Act was introduced in order to get a better understanding of some of the issues related to that Act.

Oakley Moran has come to the conclusion that the Pakuratahi land has been set aside as a water collection area under the Wellington Regional Water Board Act and that Greater Wellington does not have the power to grant a concession for the 25 plus years required by the Trust. If the Council wished to grant the concession, then before doing so there would need to be a legislative change and for reasons outlined in their legal opinion (**Attachment 3**) Oakley Moran caution against this.

## **11. Comments on risk**

The size and nature of this proposal is unlike anything previously undertaken within the Parks Network, with the exception of Transmission Gully which is being led by a central government agency.

In the analysis of the proposal a number of questions have arisen which cast some concern about the ability for such a venture to 'get off the ground'. These

questions are outlined below with comment about how risks to Greater Wellington could be mitigated. The questions reflect concerns also raised by many submitters.

### **11.1 Can approval for use of private and public land be achieved?**

To fully achieve the Trust vision, acquisition of land is required. To even achieve Stage 1 of the proposal, the Trust must purchase or negotiate the right to use private land at Maymorn (adjacent to Pakuratahi Forest). In order to complete Stage 3, approval to use Department of Conservation land must be obtained. Likewise, the private landowners in the Wairarapa may, or may not, allow The Trust to purchase or operate over the old railway formation (Stage 4).

Greater Wellington could mitigate against the risk of an unfinished project by requiring evidence that the additional land required is secured before given final approval.

### **11.2 Is the business case presented viable?**

The business case presented relies on the projections of visitors numbers to be met; construction costs of \$12.13 million for the walkway; and railway investors and loans to be secured.

This report has outlined some of the likely increases in the cost of construction to the Trust in order to accommodate the requirements of Greater Wellington. These costs as well as others (e.g. heritage assessments, planning approvals, purchase or lease of land costs, insurance for Greater Wellington Forests) have not been factored into the business case.

The BERL Feasibility Assessment (2002) commissioned by the Rimutaka Incline Railway Heritage Trust indicated that establishment of a viable Heritage Tourist railway attraction would require attracting and retaining 40,000 passengers per year, past the ‘novelty’ phase of a new attraction in the region. There are examples where other heritage railways have sustained passenger numbers required for a viable business, but also those that have failed. Certainly in the current economic climate there is high competition for the tourist dollar.

#### **Comment**

Any lender to the business will no doubt carry out a thorough analysis of the proposal. However, lenders do sometimes get it wrong. For example, the Kingston Flyer (operating near Queenstown) failed in 2009 with the company owing at least \$4.7 million. It has since been sold and started operating again. Failure of a business that was under-capitalised could lead to pressure on Greater Wellington to bail it out. Submitters often likened this to the recent expansion to Zealandia.

The capital structure proposed by the Trust is essentially 50% debt and 50% equity with the bulk of the equity coming from a yet to be identified “angel” investor. By contrast, the Tasmanian Wilderness train infrastructure was all

equity funded. The Taieri Gorge railway has a low level of debt advanced by its major shareholder (Dunedin City Council). Greater Wellington could mitigate some of this risk by requiring that the business has a very high percentage of equity investment (for example, at least 90%). Also proof the equity was available before construction started.

### **11.3 Dealing with possible failure of the proposal. What if...?**

This is probably the largest recreational development in the Wellington region since the Westpac Stadium was completed. The proposal states that capital costs are at least \$12.13 million for Stage 1 and in excess of \$28 million for completion to Featherston (Stage 3 & 4). This is a major undertaking. In the event the Trust could not complete construction, or that the business failed and the assets were abandoned, Greater Wellington would be left with a permanently altered landscape and significant salvage work

#### **Comment**

Major recreational/tourism developments in New Zealand are usually undertaken by central government (e.g. Te Papa), local government (e.g. Westpac Stadium) or companies (or persons) of substance (e.g. Tourism Holdings Ltd – stock exchange listed – sales in 2011 of \$195.7 million).

Greater Wellington should require evidential proof of financial security of the Trust. While the Trust has prepared a business structure to operate the railway, there is a gap between the present situation and the “opening day”. In 2010/11 the organisation collected \$1,883 in members’ subscriptions and \$1,160 in the previous year. Annual membership fees are \$46.

Concerns about the Trust’s capacity to complete this project could be overcome by the Trust obtaining an experienced tourism partner of substance. Further, any salvage costs can be met by the Trust depositing a cash bond with Greater Wellington before construction starts and held for the life of the project. This of course would not cover the permanent change to the landscape and loss of the current recreation assets.

## **12. Conclusions (Parks Network Plan)**

As stated earlier the Parks Network Plan provides a basis for evaluating the proposal to determine its suitability for being located in our Park Network. This paper now turns to evaluate the proposal in light of the previous discussion.

- Does proposal adversely affect the key park characteristics?

The key park characteristics (refer 6.6.3 of the Parks Network Plan) most at risk in this proposal are: the future water supply area; the historic railway formation and associated structures (tunnel and bridges); productive landscape (commercial forestry); and recreational opportunities for walkers and mountain bikers in Tunnel Gully and along the Rimutaka Rail Trail from Maymorn to Summit Tunnel.

### **Future water supply**

The possibility of a dam at Ladle Bend on the Pakuratahi River was considered a few years ago but another site outside the Pakuratahi Forest was found to be more favourable. It is not expected that there would be a dam within the catchment in the foreseeable future. However, Water Supply assets tend to be very long life, for example the Wainuiomata water catchment has been supplying water for nearly 120 years. Hence, the possibility of a dam cannot be completely discounted at some future date. A possible scenario is that within the life of the proposed railway, there may be a need for a low level intake on the Pakuratahi River and a pipeline buried within the rail formation. Reinstatement of the railway would preclude this option.

### **Historic rail formation**

The proposal requires the permanent alteration (and in parts destruction) of the rail formation which has a Historic Places Trust Registration. The Historic Places Trust (HPT) has advised that on the basis of current information, HPT would not support the use of the Rimutaka Rail Trail for a replica restoration of the historic railway and settlements.

### **Productive landscape (commercial forestry)**

There are a number of forestry blocks that it may not be practical to harvest if the railway is built and with some other blocks, there will be operational difficulties. Greater Wellington runs its forestry operation as a commercial venture and therefore a value can be placed on the trees that will not be harvested and an allowance made for other operating difficulties. These costs would need to be met by the Trust. From a landscape perspective, for any area not to be harvested consideration will have to be given as to whether or not the forestry should remain, with the consequential risk of possible future wind damage. Alternatively the trees could be removed before the railway was constructed and the area replanted in native species. Again, this would be a cost to the Trust. An increased fire risk as a result of running trains in the area will lead to an increase in insurance premiums and there will also be increased operating costs as a result of the constraints imposed by the railway.

### **Recreational opportunities for walking/cycling in Tunnel Gully and on the Rail Trail**

The Parks Network Plan recognises this is one of the significant recreation assets that are offered in the Regional Parks Network. It is recognised as one of the best rides in national cycling books. While the proposal does provide for an alternative walkway/cycleway, this report illustrates it would provide an inferior experience to what is currently offered.

- Does the proposal fit within the management focus for the park and any future intentions?



The management focus of Pakuratahi Forest is outlined in Section 6.4.4 of the Parks Network Plan:

*The primary focus for Pakuratahi Forest is to:*

*1. Ensure the water resource within the future water collection area is healthy and that its potential as a sustainable source of secure, fresh and clean water for the region in the future is protected*

*2. Provide for water supply infrastructure as required.*

*Secondary focus for Pakuratahi Forest is to:*

*3. Protect the native forest for biodiversity purposes*

*4. Preserve its heritage features*

*5. Manage Pakuratahi for production forestry on a rotational basis*

*6. Provide a range of recreational opportunities*

*7. Undertake no significant new developments other than for water supply purposes.*

### **Primary focus (1-2)**

This report notes that measures could be employed to ensure that the rail operations did not affect water quality for water supply. Resource consents would need to be obtained for the construction works (e.g. removal of vegetation, alteration to water courses, earthworks and so on).

Unlike forestry, which has a 20-30 year time rotation with options for changing the use of land to provide for water supply, a railway is a more permanent fixture that cannot be easily removed or altered. As regards the ability to provide for water supply infrastructure, the proposal will preclude the option of a dam been built, but may not limit an in-stream water take.

### **Secondary focus (3-7)**

The proposal will need to remove sections of native forest along the route of the cycleway/walkway. Of particular concern is the proposed current route through Tunnel Gully and the Land Bend manuka wetland (noted as one of the wetlands of regional significance in Greater Wellington's Biodiversity Strategy).

The proposal seeks to preserve heritage through reconstruction (reinstatement). According to the Historic Places Trust it is not recommended practice to reconstruct over the entire length of a heritage feature. It states that the reconstructions and replica replacements will damage the material, significance and use of the Rail Trail without adding heritage value or increased recreational value.

The plan makes it clear that the management focus for this park is to undertake no significant new developments (other than for water supply purposes). This proposal would mean a major piece of infrastructure installed in the park.

- Is it consistent with the underlying legislation for the land, in this case it is the Wellington Regional Water Board Act 1972 and Wellington Regional Council (Water Board Functions) Act 2005?

Refer to Section 10. Without legislative change, Greater Wellington is unable to offer a lease arrangement that would fit this type of development.

- Is it consistent with any other relevant plans such as the Biodiversity Strategy?

This proposal is not consistent with the Biodiversity Strategy (particularly with regard to the impact on Ladle Bend wetland) or the Regional Policy Statement (with regard to the impact on heritage).

The proposal has not been assessed against the Upper Hutt District Council Plan. However, Upper Hutt City Council (UHCC) recently included elements of the proposal in their Draft Maymorn Structure Plan. It is noted that this area is currently designated for proposed water catchment under Schedule 36 of the District Plan.

- How will it change current/future public access to the area? Is this positive or negative?

The proposal will open up the Rail Trail to visitors who otherwise would not have had the ability to cycle/ride along the Trail. It aims to retain access through the creation of an alternative cycleway/walkway but is unable to provide the same recreational experience. For current users of the Rail Trail it will adversely affect their ability to visit the sites they currently have access to (including the river).

Construction will cause disruption to Tunnel Gully for a period of time but should still allow users to access the area (with the exception of the Mangaroa Tunnel).

- What are the benefits to the Parks and Forests, the visitors as well as the wider community?

The proposal will provide a new leisure experience that cannot be found in any of the other Regional Parks. If successful, it will increase the profile of the Park and attract a wider profile of visitors. It is unclear if overall visitor numbers would increase given that there would be some drop off from current users.

It should provide spin-offs to the local community where visitors are attracted to spend more time in the area. This is likely to be greater where visitors travel by car rather than by train to Maymorn station. Tours may build on this rail attraction as part of their itinerary.

It does, however, come at the potential loss of opportunity to promote the Rail Trail (as it exists now) part of a New Zealand Cycle Trail. This opportunity is one currently being pursued by Greater Wellington, Department of Conservation, Hutt City Council, Upper Hutt City Council, South Wairarapa District Council, Positively Wellington Tourism, and iwi.

- What is the perception of tangata whenua on the benefits of the proposal and how it may enhance their long-term well-being?

As noted above only initial contact has been made with the various iwi over the area and with only one response. This response cautioned further consultation to ensure the development is sensitive to cultural history, issues and kaitiakitanga. To date iwi have focused on the development of cycle initiatives in the area.

- Is this the only option for the proposal or could it be pursued somewhere else?

This question is normally posed for activities that are proposed for the park which may be located elsewhere such as a radio club or a horse-riding facility. Restoration of the Rimutaka Railway however is a site specific project. Given that the vision of The Trust is to “reinstate and operate the Fell-worked Rimutaka Incline Railway as a world-class heritage-tourist railway between Wellington and the Wairarapa” it would be difficult for the Trust to consider an alternative.

Historic Places Trust recommends that reconstructed elements should not cover the whole length of the rail. As an alternative, reconstruction or replica could be developed in a nearby location which would give the experience of train travel in the area while avoiding destruction of the Rail Trail’s historic heritage.

- Does the activity promote environmental stewardship and appropriate behaviour in the park?

The proposal does not outline any specific measure that would be undertaken by the Trust to promote environmental stewardship. This project is focused on celebrating rail history. There may be opportunities for the Trust to promote environmental stewardship through minimising the carbon footprint of the development through sustainable practices or promoting restoration planting in the park.

- What are the risks of this proposal (e.g. biosecurity, sustainability etc)?

These have been outlined in Section 11 of this report and are primarily around the potential failure of the railway as a tourism venture.

### **13. Summary**

The Rimutaka Incline Heritage Railway Trust is requesting approval from Greater Wellington to undertake a major development of a heritage railway in Pakuratahi Forest. The aim is to reconstruct the previous railway over the Rimutaka Ranges through a staged process which will culminate in a railway between Maymorn and Featherston. In recognition of the recreation asset that the current Rail Trail provides, the Trust includes in its plans the development of an alternative cycleway/walkway route to enable cyclists and walkers to continue to access the area.

The proposal has been analysed using the criteria contained within the Parks Network Plan which is used to consider applications for use and development

in the regional parks and forests. The proposed railway does not satisfy the criteria for an appropriate development for the park in that:

- It adversely affects the key park characteristics and does not fit within the management focus for the park
- Whilst providing a new form of recreation into the park, it will adversely affect the recreation experience of current users. The alternative route for cyclists/walkers (and in some sections, forestry) has a number of difficulties for its construction and will provide a less than equivalent replacement for the current Rail Trail.
- The railway and cycleway will require the destruction of sections of native forest and potentially compromise a regionally important wetland. It also requires construction over land that is erosion prone and slow to heal.
- Reconstruction of the railway will not preserve the heritage features and will cause the permanent alteration and destruction of a historic site.
- Without alternations to the proposal, there will be significant losses to the Council for forestry operations. While the Trust would have to compensate the Council, there are economic losses to the region.
- Options for water supply will be limited by the proposal.

It also brings substantial risk to the Council by allowing the development to take place. There is a potential opportunity cost of not being able to progress the New Zealand Cycle Trail application of which the current Rail Trail would form a part. If the project were to fail, Council would be left with a defunct railway and a permanently altered landscape.

Finally, legal advice is that Council is unable to grant a lease, easement or licence for the land required for the proposed railway. Selling the land is not an option in the legislation under which this land is governed. This leaves no mechanism for the Trust to secure the land if the Council was not willing to seek a legislative change, for which it would rely on Parliament to enact.

Overall it is considered that the proposal falls into the category of a 'prohibited' activity status under the Parks Network Plan. The Plan states that these activities would have a permanent adverse impact on the park values or would significantly detract from the enjoyment and safety of other park users.

### **13.1 Recommended option**

Section 2.3 outlined the options available to Council for making a decision on this matter. Based on the body of evidence, it is recommended that Council decline the application (maintaining the status quo).

In recommending this decision, consideration has also been given to the impact of the proposal on the four well-beings specified under the Local Government

Act 2002, and to the Council's role in promoting the wellbeing of the community:

**Economic well-being:** While the application has potential spin-offs for creating economic growth in the Wellington Region (and specifically Upper Hutt), it is an untested development which ultimately displaces an established and increasingly popular recreation trail. In turning down the application it is not considered that this will significantly disadvantage the economy of the Wellington Region. The Central Otago Rail Trail and other NZ Cycle Trails coming online show the economic possibilities. Various organisations have been working towards the development of a cycle trail, which can significantly benefit both the Wellington and Wairarapa communities. Some interest has already been expressed for running guided tours in the area. There would be considerable financial risk from the implementation of the proposal given the funding and organisation structure proposed.

**Social well-being:** The benefits of walking and cycling for healthy living have been well documented and are promoted by Greater Wellington through sustainable transport initiatives and also through Parks activities and programmes. The proposal is not in keeping with these values. The proposal limits how water can be collected in the future for public water supply purposes.

**Cultural well-being:** Further consultation is required to determine the significance of the project for Māori cultural values. This report clearly states that while the proposal seeks to celebrate rail heritage, the way the reconstruction is proposed to occur would be detrimental to existing cultural heritage.

**Environmental well-being:** There are no clear environmental benefits to the proposal. There are some risks to water quality and biodiversity, particularly as the proposal requires significant amounts of vegetation removed and earthworks completed.

## 14. Communication

A media statement announcing the Council's decision is suggested. A letter will be sent to each submitter advising them of the outcome. The Trust will be advised of the Council's decision.

## 15. Recommendations

*That the Council:*

1. *Receives the report.*
2. *Notes the content of the report.*
3. *Agrees that the matters for decision in the report have a medium degree of significance.*

*applies to the matters for decision in this report.*

5. *Having regard to both the significance of the matters for decision in this report and the matters in section 79(2) of the Local Government Act 2002:*
  - a. **Agrees** that the extent to which different options have been identified and assessed is appropriate
  - b. **Agrees** that the degree to which benefits and costs have been quantified is appropriate
  - c. **Agrees** that the extent and detail of the information before the Council is appropriate.
6. **Agrees** that the Council has sufficient knowledge of the views and preferences of persons likely to be affected by, or have an interest in, the matters for decision in this report.
7. **Notes** that the proposal has been assessed under the Parks Network Plan to determine if it is an appropriate activity for granting a concession in Pakuratahi Forest.
8. **Agrees** that the proposal falls into the category of a 'prohibited' activity under the Parks Network Plan.
9. **Declines** the application for a concession by the Rimutaka Incline Railway Heritage Trust to rebuild the Rimutaka Railway on Greater Wellington land and construct an alternative cycleway/walkway.

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**Attachment 1:** Report 02.688 to the Landcare Committee

**Attachment 2:** Comments on the Trust's Business Plan

**Attachment 3:** Legal Opinion