

Living Streets Aotearoa



Submission from Living Streets Aotearoa on Open Spaces Access Plan

Contact person: **Ellen Blake**
Email: **wellington@livingstreets.org.nz**
Phone: **021 106 7139**
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Submission

Living Streets Aotearoa thanks the committee for this opportunity to comment on the proposals for how we use our open space.

This proposes some significant changes and is not a minor review of the Open Space Access Plan. We would prefer this plan is withdrawn and proper consultation is undertaken of a wider range of open space users (reflective of how people prefer to be in open space) so that what appears to be a cycling bias is balanced by a wider perspective. We understand that consultation with a number of biking enthusiasts and businesses, and people interested in using and hiring e-bikes within the open space network, and discussions with other regulators were the only views sought prior to these proposals being publicly notified.

We also note that some of the proposals being consulted on have already been implemented. Is this a real consultation?

The term 'trail' is used interchangeably in this plan. We recommend the New Zealand expression 'track' is used consistently.

Electric motorbikes

While we appreciate that it is important to have good controls on the use of vehicles in our parks we have concerns about allowing or encouraging motorbikes into our parks - however they are powered - as this is detrimental to the majority of open space users who enjoy the space on foot.

The proposal to allow motorbikes (however powered) into our Open Spaces is of concern. Many of the electric motorbikes now being used on the roads should not be used in our parks. They are too fast and too intrusive. This detracts from the experience of all users who move under their own steam, as a healthy recreation. The 25km hour speed limit is excessive. We are not aware of any bikes of this nature, or human powered, having speedometers so a better measure that can be easily assessed is needed, i.e walking speed. We are particularly concerned to see that these motorbikes are not used in the most intensively used central parks (Te Ahumairangi, Mt Victoria, etc).

Electric motorbikes are poorly regulated nationally and it is very difficult to ascertain if the 300 watt rating has been exceeded, or if a bike is electric-assisted (ie the cyclist must pedal at all times) or not. Other countries define electric-assisted bikes as those that must be continuously pedalled with the motor cutting out at speeds over 20km hour. Other types of electric propulsion are the same as other motorbikes. We understand that there are newer electric motorbikes with up to 1000 watt ratings.

We recommend the Council advocates to central government that the rules around electric motorbikes are strengthened as a matter of urgency. Advocacy should include ease of enforcement, and the use of our public roads by other users as a key consideration in electric motorbike regulation.

Our Open Spaces, particularly the Town Belt, are for recreation. Encouraging active means to use parks should be adopted and not motorised forms of travel.

Bike only paths

We have concerns about changing the presumption that all paths are shared in our parks (once it was all were walking) to bike-only recommended paths.

We are concerned that a list of bike only tracks has been developed without wider consultation with the public. In particular we do not support electric motorbikes on these busy paths: *Hataitai to City Walkway*, *Newtown to Hataitai walkway*, and *Te Ahumairangi Hill*. Bike users always have the option of using the extensive roading network to get to where they want.

We recommend that all tracks in reserves, and on the Town Belt, are closed to any form of bicycle, unless specifically declared to be open to their use, and should be signposted as such. A list of bicycle accessible paths should be included as an annex to the plan.

For example, we note that until recently the track now called 'Solitary' from near the old Wellington prison in Centennial Reserve had been a pleasant walk track through some fabulous Wellington bush, and has now been severely damaged by cyclist use to the point it is difficult to walk along. This is a conflict between users and trying to make it bike only because it has been poorly managed is disadvantaging walkers.

Walk only paths

We recommend at least an equal number of paths are created as 'walk only' paths to be added to the small number of paths already listed in the plan. Most open space users are on foot and this proposal is in line with the vision to be more equitable and cater for the range of user interests.

We would like to see park maps and signage clearly set out walk only tracks - many people prefer them and should be able to enjoy walk only sections in our parks. The wayfinding should follow the hierarchy of tracks so that only major tracks are marked to avoid confusion to new visitors.

We would far prefer the WCC parks team to be looking at improving accessibility for older people and those with visual disabilities, in wheelchairs or with reduced mobility to our parks - the fit and healthy have many options already. We would also like to see some rapid progress on making more child-friendly places in our parks.

Use of bells by cyclists

We note the online form asks about use of bells by cyclists. We are not sure why this is included only in the online form and what relevance it has to Open Access planning. Use of bells is governed by the New Zealand Road Rules and is not a matter for this plan to decide on.

This is one more reason to reject these proposals until a wider view is obtained [we note that councillors will not include new proposals in a plan only reject what is already proposed – therefore the need to ask first before putting plans out for public consultation].

Paper roads

Living Streets strongly supports the inclusion of paper roads into an integrated and managed open space network. There are many paper roads that would make excellent pedestrian accessways, and the option to do this should be preserved until future conditions allow this to occur. It is not clear in this plan whether all paper roads would be included or only the few identified.

Accessibility

Accessibility has many aspects one of which is that open space should have several good options for use by those in wheelchairs and visually impaired, in particular, to enjoy our parks. These options must be provided where there is good public transport access so that everyone can enjoy them.

Mobility scooter use of open space will only work if it is near to where mobility scooter users live. Mobility scooters do not fit on public transport or in most private vehicles. Part of the Getting Everyone Active and Healthy, a key outcome of Our

Capital Spaces – An Open Spaces and Recreation Framework For Wellington: 2013–23 supports healthy activity not motorised leisure. There should be opportunity for people who need mobility aids (other than wheelchairs) to get out without motorised support into our parks. This is a critical issue for the future as our population over 65 increase significantly.

Accessibility also includes proper way-finding with an easy to understand track hierarchy and legible signposting. We support maintaining tracks so it is easy to identify the main route and where it goes. Physical signs in the open spaces are the prime way of providing this information to a wide audience, with limited need for further internet based applications.

We would like to be heard in support of our submission.

About Living Streets

Living Streets Aotearoa is New Zealand's national walking and pedestrian organisation, providing a positive voice for people on foot and working to promote walking friendly planning and development around the country. Our vision is "More people choosing to walk more often and enjoying public places".

The objectives of Living Streets Aotearoa are:

- to promote walking as a healthy, environmentally-friendly and universal means of transport and recreation
- to promote the social and economic benefits of pedestrian-friendly communities
- to work for improved access and conditions for walkers, pedestrians and runners including walking surfaces, traffic flows, speed and safety
- to advocate for greater representation of pedestrian concerns in national, regional and urban land use and transport planning.

For more information, please see: www.livingstreets.org.nz