

1. PARKS AND WATERWAYS ACCESS POLICY

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The purpose of this report is to present the proposed Parks and Waterways Access Policy to the Council for adoption.

CONTEXT OF REPORT

The Parks and Waterways Access Policy reflects how the Parks and Waterways Unit intends to implement the Council Policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities. In May/June 2001, the Draft Parks and Waterways Access Policy was presented to Community Boards and the Parks and Recreation Committee and approved as a draft policy for full public consultation.

The Draft Parks and Waterways Access Policy was distributed to disabilities organisations, other interested parties, staff, and was placed on the Council website. The Policy was updated in accordance with the comments received.

In July 2002 the updated version of the Policy was again presented to Community Boards and to the Community and Leisure Committee. All Boards and the Committee supported adoption of the Policy. A few minor changes were recommended and these are outlined in clause 5 of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Parks and Waterways Access Policy illustrates how the Parks and Waterways Unit intends to apply the Council Policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities. The Policy is the result of extensive consultation with the disabilities community, staff and the wider public. It is intended that new facilities in parks and open space will be made fully accessible where feasible and existing facilities will be upgraded upon renewal. Facilities designated as fully accessible will need to comply with the specifications contained in the Policy.

1. Relevant Current Policy

The Parks and Waterways Access Policy is supported by and reflective of the following policies:

- Policy on Equity and Access for People with Disabilities
- Recreation and Sport Policy
- Social Wellbeing Policy
- Safer Parks Policy

2. Description of the Proposal

The Parks and Waterways Unit aims to overcome barriers to access to ensure that everyone is able to enjoy Christchurch's parks and open spaces. A copy of the Policy has been circulated via Community Boards.

The Parks and Waterways Access Policy incorporates the following six policies.

- (a) All new parks and waterways facilities, and existing facilities when they are upgraded, they will be designed, where feasible, to meet the national standard access design criteria.
- (b) An audit will be undertaken of all parks to identify accessible facilities and to prioritise opportunities for improvement. Questions will be included in park surveys, which are currently undertaken every two to three months by contractors, to monitor the maintenance of continued accessibility in parks.
- (c) The Parks and Waterways Unit shall ensure that staff members involved with providing park facilities are educated about the requirements of people with disabilities, allowing effective service provision.
- (d) The Parks and Waterways Unit shall develop and use a standardised classification system for paths and tracks that allows users to readily identify the degree of ability required.
- (e) The Parks and Waterways Unit shall provide public information about accessible facilities using a variety of media.

- (f) The Parks and Waterways Access Policy will be reviewed every two years in consultation with the KiwiAble Network, Disabled Persons Assembly, other relevant community groups and relevant Council staff.

It is intended to retain diversity and character within the City's park network and to provide a range of challenges to meet a range of abilities. However, where it is feasible, facilities shall be designed to be as accessible as possible. For a facility to be designated as fully accessible it must comply with the detailed criteria specified in the Policy. Most of these specifications are based on national and international standard access design criteria, with additional detail provided on areas where the standards are wanting.

3. **Issues for Consideration**

One in five New Zealanders is affected by a disability and it is important to consider their needs when planning and managing our parks and waterways. Disabilities occur at all life stages and may be major or minor. There is a wide range of sensory, psychiatric, physical and intellectual disabilities that result in differing needs of park users. The Parks and Waterways Access Policy provides for inclusive use of parks by people with disabilities and also takes account of older people and caregivers with young children. Improved access has the potential to increase use of our open spaces by enhancing comfort and convenience for all users and improving safety.

The Parks and Waterways Access Policy is already being adhered to in the design of new facilities and an audit of all Council parks is currently underway to ascertain their level of accessibility. The information collected will be used to provide information to the public about accessible facilities and to prioritise the upgrading of facilities that do not comply with the accessibility standards.

4. **Results of Consultation**

The Draft Parks and Waterways Access Policy was developed in consultation with the disabilities community and Council staff. As a result of the wide ranging input at an early stage, few changes were requested to the final policy. The Parks and Waterways Access Policy is well supported within the disabilities community and a number of compliments have been received for this Council initiative. The six policies within the document have not been changed from the draft policy. Based on comments from elected members, staff and the public, minor alterations have been made to the wording of the introduction and some specifications.

The picture on the cover of the Policy has been changed from a person using a wheelchair to better reflect the inclusive intentions of the Policy. The format of the document has also been changed to an A5 booklet to make it a more user friendly document that people can carry and use in the field.

Some of the specifications have been altered to reflect updated standards.

One further alteration is required to the Policy on page 8 in section 1.5 Ramps, to make it more practical. A path is deemed to be a ramp when the slope is greater than 1:20 and all ramps require handrails. This is not always appropriate when a section of path through a reserve has a slope greater than 1:20. A handrail would not be necessary in such cases where it would be of little or no benefit because the path is simply undulating with the natural contours of the land. Generally a handrail would not blend with the landscape in these situations. A sentence needs to be added as in Recommendation (d) below.

5. **Response to the Policy from Community Boards and Community and Leisure Committee:**

(a) **Burwood/Pegasus Community Board**

The Burwood Pegasus Community Board decided that adoption of the Parks and Waterways Access Policy be supported. A comment was made relating to the material used for handrails to ensure they did not become too hot to hold on to.

(b) **Fendalton/Waimairi Community Board**

The Policy was presented to the Works, Traffic and Environment Committee. With the addition of the following comments, the Board adopted the Policy.

General support was given to a comment made that the new policy should not be seen as providing some wider justification to increase costs through the Council's budget processes.

The Policy also needed to encourage greater use being made of existing paths etc. in parks and reserves for use by cyclists as a safer option to using the busier roads network.

Mitigating the extent of dense plantings especially along waterway corridors in acknowledgement of the stranger danger issue was referred to as needing to be covered alongside the Council's Safer Parks Policy.

- (c) **Spreydon/Heathcote Community Board**
The Board supports adoption of the Policy but asked for the inclusion in the Policy of provision for lock-up facilities for bicycles at all parks.
- (d) **Hagley/Ferrymead Community Board**
The Board decided to support adoption of the Parks and Waterways Access Policy and recommend to the Council that other units look at creating and adopting similar policies.
- (e) **Shirley/Papanui Community Board**
The Board supports adoption of the Policy.
- (f) **Riccarton/Wigram Community Board**
The Board supports adoption of the Policy.
- (g) **Community and Leisure Committee**
The Committee supports adoption of the Policy.

CONCLUSIONS

The Council has committed to improving services for people with disabilities. The Parks and Waterways Access Policy is widely supported and is a practical way of meeting the needs of the whole community.

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

#	CONDITION:	Meets condition ✓✓-x	HOW IT HELPS MEET CONDITION:
The Natural Step			
N1	Reduce non-renewable resource use		
N2	Eliminate emission of harmful substances		
N3	Protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems	✓	The policy will encourage more people into our parks and open spaces thereby increasing awareness and appreciation of our natural environment. Design will be environmentally sensitive.
N4	People needs met fairly and efficiently	NA	NA - See People Step+Economic Step

The People Step			
P1	Basic needs met	✓✓	People with disabilities often have low incomes. The policy will enhance recreation opportunities for everyone, and have significant health and safety benefits.
P2	Full potential developed	✓✓	Increased access to open space has the potential to enhance people's physical and mental health and enhance opportunities for physical activity. It will significantly reduce barriers to equality of opportunity.
P3	Social capital enhanced	✓✓	The policy plays an active role in creating inclusive communities where diversity is encouraged and supported.
P4	Culture and identity protected		
P5	Governance and participatory democracy strengthened	✓	The policy respects human rights and caters for people of all abilities
The Economic Step			
E1	Effective and efficient use of all resources	✓	Specified criteria will encourage appropriate design from the start, rather than having to revisit a site and "fix" it. The additional cost of making facilities accessible will be very little if it is incorporated into design plans right from the start.
E2	Job rich local economy		
E3	Financial sustainability	✓	The policy can be adhered to within existing budgets.

Recommendation: That the Parks and Waterways Access Policy as amended below, be adopted:

- (a) Page 5, 1. Policies
Depending on the nature of the new parks and waterways facilities, and existing facilities when they are upgraded, they will be designed, where feasible, to meet the national standard access design criteria.
- (b) Page 6, 1. Pedestrian or Shared Use Paths and Tracks
Where possible, paths and tracks shall be accessible, convenient and safe (in accordance with the Christchurch City Council's "The Garden City, a Safe City" policy). This takes into account the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design which includes safe routes through a park.
- (c) Page 8, Section 1.5 Ramps
A handrail shall accompany each ramp. Handrails are not necessary where a section of path through a reserve has a slope greater than 1:20 when this path is following the natural contours of the land and a handrail would be of little or no benefit. In such situations, the slope of the path should be minimised.
- (d) Page 9, 1.9 Handrails
Non-splintering materials that do not get too hot shall be used for handrails.
- (e) Page 21, 11. Car Parks
After the first paragraph add,
Accessible areas to lock up bicycles should be provided close to entrances or facilities as required.