

1. DRAFT PORT HILLS RECREATION STRATEGY

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The purpose of this report is to present the draft Port Hills Recreation Strategy for approval by the Council.

BACKGROUND

The draft Port Hills Recreation Strategy (circulated separately) is the outcome of an integrated planning process for recreation management on the Port Hills. This draft strategy is the result of over two years work, and has included a recreation survey of Port Hills reserve users, a comprehensive process of community engagement, and a final report which provides a long-term vision, values, guiding principles and actions, as well as the basis of an asset management plan for the Port Hills.

The draft strategy was developed in response to the need for more integrated planning across publicly accessible land for the entire Port Hills from Gebbies Pass to Godley Head, and to guide managers in a long-term programme (10-40 years) for the delivery of a diverse range of recreation experiences.

The draft strategy provides a series of vision statements, seven core values (recreation, icon status, guardianship, biodiversity, education, economic and social wellbeing) and seven guiding principles and actions for these same values. The list of actions is comprehensive and will guide the revision and improvement of the Greenspace Unit's capital works programme for the provision of recreational facilities in this area.

RELEVANT CURRENT POLICY

The draft Port Hills Recreation Strategy sits alongside (and complements) the Council's Port Hills Acquisition Strategy, draft Biodiversity Strategy, draft Planting Strategy, Recreation and Sport Strategy, Waterways and Wetlands Strategy and Proposed Open Space Strategy. It contributes directly to the Long Term Council Community Plan outcomes, particularly a sustainable natural environment, a city of healthy and active people, and a liveable city.

PROCESS

The process included:

- a review of previously published information on the history and use of the Port Hills
- a survey of 400 recreational visitors to the Port Hills reserves in April 2002
- ten focus groups involving 140 people (two primary schools, Christchurch residents, Lyttelton residents, Governors Bay residents, ecologists, Selwyn District Council, Rapaki Marae, recreation groups and selected individuals)
- consultation meetings with a project reference group of keenly interested individuals, including managers of other publicly accessible land on the Port Hills
- distribution of a draft strategy to all people who attended focus groups and other interested parties
- reporting to the Hagley/Ferrymead, Spreydon/Heathcote and Riccarton/Wigram Community Boards
- review of submissions on the draft strategy
- meeting with project reference group to make final amendments based on the submissions.

KEY OUTCOMES

The key outcomes from the 2002 recreation survey included the following:

- Visitors to the Port Hills are predominantly from Christchurch and Lyttelton Harbour, although proximity of residence is not a determining factor in the level of use, with residents of St Albans as likely to visit the hills as those living in Cashmere.
- The primary recreation activities carried out on the Port Hills are walking, mountain biking, sight-seeing and running. Dog walking, exercising, rock climbing, picnicking, road cycling and driving were other significant activities.

- The most important 'features' of the Port Hills named by respondents were 'exercise' and 'views' (first equal) followed by 'accessibility' and 'peacefulness'.
- There was strong support for revegetation of the gullies on the Port Hills, and a desire to maintain tussock grasslands on ridges.

There is a high level of satisfaction with service delivery on the Port Hills reserves, and a low level of conflict between recreation activities.

The key outcomes from the 2004 recreation strategy included the following:

IDENTIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT ZONES

A key outcome is the adoption of management zones (see management zones map and description in the draft strategy document) with five sites identified as premiere nodes requiring a very high level of management. These sites are the Sign of the Bellbird, Sign of the Kiwi, Victoria Park Visitor Centre and Playground, Gondola and Godley Head main carpark area. Other zones are assigned as high, medium or low management. These zones were developed in response to a clear demand for a variety of experiences on the Port Hills from rough and remote areas to easy accessible play areas, and to direct public requests for facility development to agreed sites

INTEGRATE PROVISION OF RECREATIONAL ASSETS

There was a clear indication from the consultation process that recreation provision and standards of recreation assets should be integrated with other providers (particularly with the Department of Conservation, Banks Peninsula and Selwyn District Councils). Focus group participants expected the publicly accessible land on the Port Hills to be managed as one cohesive unit, and were often surprised that it was not. The project reference group, while acknowledging the numerous management agencies, also desired a cohesive management approach.

The draft strategy therefore recommends the development of an inter-party forum to gain accord regarding the development and management of recreation resources on the Port Hills. This is, at a first stage, to include representatives from the Department of Conservation, Christchurch City Council, Environment Canterbury, Summit Road Society, Selwyn District Council, Banks Peninsula District Council, Gama Foundation, Port Hills Park Trust and Te Hapu O Ngati Wheke. Te Hapu O Ngati Wheke stated their manawhenua over the Port Hills during the process and submitted this statement in parallel with a confirming statement from Ngai Tahu. It is likely that the forum will consider wider issues over time.

CONCLUSION

Throughout the process of consultation the following became clear:

- that there was strong endorsement of the Christchurch City Council rangers and managers for their current management of the Port Hills - recreation, biodiversity, and heritage values are managed in an integrated manner
- that the strategy provides a clear vision, core values, guiding principles and actions that will guide the Council's future management and provision of recreation services
- that the adoption of management zones is a useful tool for managing a diversity of recreation experiences within one overall Port Hills parks system
- that there is a need to proceed with integrated management across the Port Hills, and an expectation that the Christchurch City Council will provide leadership for an inter-party forum with private landowners, communities and other territorial authorities to progress this expectation
- that the Council will also be expected to provide further detail for an asset management plan for the Port Hills.

Committee

Recommendation: That the draft Port Hills Recreation Strategy be adopted by the Council.