

18. ENTRANCE BARRIERS TO GENERAL PARKS AND ACCESSWAYS

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Corporate Plan Output: 9.5 text 57	

The purpose of this report is to advise the City Services Committee of the intention to open up general park and accessway entrances to improve access for cyclists, wheelchair and push chair users.

BACKGROUND

Many of the parks and accessways throughout Christchurch have barriers across them. Most of these barriers were constructed to prevent motorcyclists and other vehicles from entering. Today they represent over design and over effectiveness to what is now a reduced threat. Essentially they are a legacy of the past that needs to be brought into line with a modern environment.

The philosophy of installing the barriers was one where the intention was to exclude undesirable users, and accept that some desirable users might be excluded as a result. The result of having these barriers has meant that many intended users have had restricted or no access to these pathways.

This proposal essentially suggests changing to a philosophy that admits all desirable users, and accepts that some undesirables may also be allowed access. The reduction or removal of many of the barriers will improve access for cyclists, wheelchair and pushchair users and other members of the community.

A number of recent parks entrances and accessways have already been developed and 'opened up' with little or no evidence of undesirable usage. One beneficial influence is that motorcycling rates have dropped – with half as many motorbikes on the road as compared to ten years ago.

In the past another primary concern against removing barriers was the assumption that it would be an unsafe practice for the users. Again there are currently many park entrances and accessways around Christchurch that don't have such barriers. These have proved successful in allowing for the 'free flow' of cyclists through entrances without demanding that they dismount. Both adult and child cyclists are proving able to safely exit onto roads without the need for barriers. They have also proven that cyclists and other pathway users can share accessways safely without the need for strict controlling barriers.

The proposed removal of many of the entrance barriers – particularly the overlapping "staples" will significantly improve cycling in Christchurch and give effect towards meeting the Christchurch City Council's vision – "To be the most cycle friendly city".

The proposal will also work to the benefit of others as it is working toward bringing the paths up to the New Zealand minimum standard for access for disabled people. Currently many of the barriers particularly the double "staple" treatments don't meet these standards.

THE PROPOSAL

The Council's City Streets Unit is identifying the location of barriers at park and accessways (with sealed paths) throughout Christchurch. Once identified each barrier treatment will be assessed for potential improvements. This assessment will take into account safety factors, current minimum standards of access, available resources and local knowledge. It is estimated that approximately 300 sites throughout Christchurch will be assessed within this proposal.

Entrances that can be improved through simple removal of barriers will make up the majority of this proposal's implementation. It is intended to progress these works by commitment within this financial year.

Entrances that may require more detailed design and development work will be noted towards prioritising for future resourcing.



Figure 1 – Overlapping Staples

Clearance between staples is 0.6 m. Initial observations of this typical scenario suggests a treatment of removing the right staple creating a 'squeeze' opening of approximately 1.4 m.

CONSULTATION

Due to the large number of entrances being assessed for improvements it is proposed that the overall intentions of the project be publicised through community newspapers.

The City Streets Unit is working in conjunction with the Parks Unit to ensure all decisions on park based entrances meet appropriate standards and future planned developments.

Detailed consultation with area Parks Officers, Area Engineers and other staff with local site knowledge will be undertaken to ensure that local issues and concerns that have been raised in the past be considered and taken into account when making decisions on specific entrances.

All Community Boards have been informed of this project in their May round of meetings, and will have had the opportunity to identify particular areas where they may have concerns about this project's intentions or actions. This report will also be submitted to the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Chairman's

Recommendation: That the information be received.