

Should Council adopt the Albany Heritage Park Trails Concept Plan?

Community Engagement Results, November 2016.

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1. Project Overview

In 2015, Council adopted the City of Albany Trails Hub Strategy 2015-2016 with the vision:

- to allow Albany to become one of Australia's primary trails destinations; and
- for Albany to become a World Class Trails Tourism Hub situated around high quality trail systems, supported by a complete package of hospitality and visitor services set within our unique natural landscape.

The strategy identified seven key projects for the City of Albany to work towards developing Albany as a Trails Tourism Hub.

The highest priority of these projects was determined to be the rationalization, consolidation and construction of new trails in the Albany Heritage Park (AHP), located at Mt Clarence and Mt Adelaide, based on the sites proximity to the city centre, good opportunities for multiple user groups, and high deliverability (minimum constraints around land tenure, multiple land managers etc.).

Based on the above vision and priorities consultants, Common Ground Trails, were commissioned in 2015 to develop a draft concept plan for the area to:

- Identify where logical separated trails for different user groups;
- Purpose designed single track and single direction trails to guide users to their appropriate trail;
- Alignments that are based on the ground conditions, not necessarily the current trail alignments;
- Multiple access points to the trail system;
- Trail connections focused on connecting the city centre and Albany Harbour path;
- Mountain bike trails (20-25km) circumnavigating Mt Adelaide and Mt Clarence ensuring they do not conflict with heritage areas and interpretive trails;
- Walking based trails focused on Mt Clarence capitalizing on the unique landform and connection to the city; and
- Interpretive walking trails around the National ANZAC Centre, Royal Princess Fortress and Lower Forts enhancing the heritage theme of the area.

The draft concept plan has now been complete and is presented to Council for consideration.

1.1 Community Engagement & Participation

The Community Engagement Plan sought to ensure broad consultation and seek to increase participation from key stakeholders and community. The objective was to gain local knowledge and input into the concept plan. Engagement was undertaken by meetings with key stakeholder groups, inviting members of the community to attend information workshops, complete an online survey and make submissions.

Community workshops were held as follows:

17 February 2016 - Civic rooms, North Rd. - 6pm – 8pm. 37 Attendees

21 July 2016 - Civic rooms, North Rd. – 5:30pm – 7:30pm. 28 Attendees

22 August 2016 - Civic rooms, North Rd. – 5:30pm – 7:30pm. 38 Attendees

The online survey was conducted during February/March 2016 and was opened for four weeks attracting 230 individual responses of which 93% were Albany residents based on the post code included in the survey.

2. Survey Results

The survey was developed as an online form and was widely distributed throughout the community. It was promoted by the City of Albany (COA) via the website, social media, letters to residents, public notices, city office and library, as well as via user groups social media.

2.1 Key insights

The key insights and communication received through the survey included:

- Many locations around the AHP are appreciated for their recreational, environmental or historical value;
- Many trails are popular with both walkers and mountain bikers, creating potential for and actual conflict between users;
- Walking trails could be improved with some links and better access to desirable locations surrounding the AHP;
- The existing sanctioned mountain bike trail (advanced black diamond downhill) does not currently cater for a wide range of mountain bike users;
- There is a lack of suitable trails to challenge beginner and advanced mountain bike riders;
- There are many popular walking trails that are experiencing degradation through poor design construction and the inappropriate use by mountain bikes
- There is confusion about the purpose of tracks, and signage is lacking; and
- There is poor access to trails and there are no formal trail heads with information or facilities for visitors.

2.2 Community profile

The AHP survey provided some information on trail usage and engagement of the community. Of the 230 respondents:

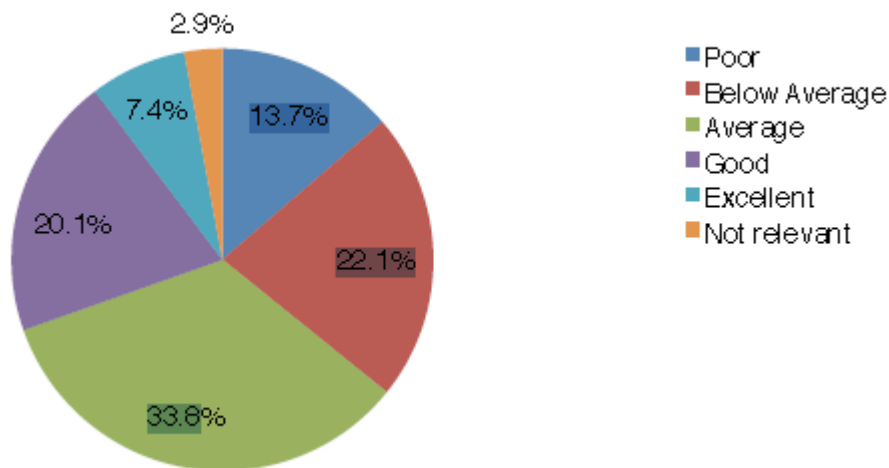
- 96% of respondents lived in or near Albany
- 87% reside in the City of Albany
- 33% live less than 100m from the Albany Heritage Park
- 58% of the respondents had used the AHP within the last week
- 62% were male
- 38% were female
- 29% are from the 40-49 year age group
- 48% use the existing mountain bike trails
- 63% of respondents use the existing walk trails
- 73% of respondents who use the existing walk trails, also use the existing mountain bike trails

- 43% of mountain bike respondents ride the existing black (advanced) downhill trail

2.3 Key feedback on existing facilities

Respondents provided information on the quality of trails they use and how frequently they use them. This gave some information regarding the usage and habits of trail users at the AHP.

69% of respondents think the trails and facilities such as visitor information at the AHP are average or below.



2.4 Frequency of use and access

There were 58% of the respondents who had visited the AHP in the last week. While 28% had visited in the last month, and there were 14% who had visited in the last year.

Of the total number of estimated visits to the AHP each year:

- 30% of those were for walking trails or dog walking;
- 14% of visits were for off road cycling or mountain biking;
- 12% of visits were for the lookouts, 12% for running trails; and a small percentage of visits were for historical, interpretive or culturally significant sites, road cycling routes, rock climbing and bird / wildlife watching.

Most people use trails around both Mount Clarence and Mount Adelaide in a circuit equally.

2.5. Values that need protecting

Specific areas of environmental, cultural, historical or recreational value within the AHP identified in the survey that users say need protecting include:

- ANZAC related features, monuments and history, National ANZAC Centre, Forts, Fort monuments, the Desert Corp Memorial, historical buildings;
- Lookouts and boardwalks – the Padre White Lookout, the Wesfarmers Convoy Lookout;
- Old drains running on south side of Mount Clarence;
- Indigenous cultural history, potential local Noongar artefacts and sites;
- Native fauna and flora species and habitats – particularly internationally recognised flora;
- General protection of the bush through providing quality trails and access to walkers, sightseers and riders, to prevent users from creating new tracks;
- Walking tracks – protection from bike riders eroding track surfaces and steps making them difficult to walk on;
- Existing trails such as the Granite Trail for walking, and used by tourists;
- Mountain bike tracks – the Mount Adelaide Rock Garden Trail and the Mount Clarence Downhill track;
- Recreational value of area close to town to engage kids and adults in nature and physical activity is the most important value of this inner city park;
- Natural bush environment and the ability for people to feel connected to the authentic Albany nature; and
- Sandy areas on north of Mount Adelaide is full of rabbits and being badly degraded by cyclists making too many tracks.

2.6 Walking trail user habits

There were 63% of respondents use the walking or running trails, or visit interpretive and cultural sites.

The primary reason for using the walking trails is for walking.



2.6.1 Popular trails

Again, most respondents reported using trails on both Mt Clarence & Adelaide equally as opposed to favouring one over the other. Particular trails that are used for walking include:

- Padre White Trail;
- Mass Rock Trail;
- Firebreaks;
- Granite Trail; and
- Boardwalk from Middleton Beach.

2.6.2 Walking access points

While over 50% of respondents access the walking trails by private vehicle and parking on site, 50% also access the trails via off-road tracks and access points from home or from Middleton Beach.

Some of the most popular access points are listed below:

- Bottom of the Downhill Track
- Hare Street
- Morley Place
- Burt Street
- Hare Street (near the intersection with Sussex Street)
- Marine Terrace and Apex Drive Car park
- Hare Street (top of)
- Middleton Beach
- Hill Street
- Earl Street
- Ennis Street
- Padre White Trail
- Marine Drive
- Watkins Road
- Behind of Albany High School
- Innes Street
- Grey Street
- Sussex Street
- King Street Boardwalk

2.6.3 Events

There were 28% of respondents who said they'd participated in a walking or running based competitive or social event, including the following listed:

- Adventurethon
- City to Surf
- Albany athletic cross country
- Fun run / walks
- Parkrun
- Port to Point
- Gallipoli run

Respondents suggested the following types of walking or running competitive social events that they would participate in or would like to see in the AHP:

- Adventure racing
- Cultural tours
- Multisport racing with running and bike components
- School excursions
- Ultra-marathon
- Charity events / fun runs/walks
- Cross country running
- Tourist excursions
- Trail running
- Free family events
- Bush walking
- Guided night walks to observe wild life

2.6.4 Conflict

There were 30% of walker respondents said they'd experienced conflict with other trail users, such as mountain bikers, when using the walking trails at the AHP. Specific locations and issues mentioned include:

Locations	General issues and incidents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails above Marine Parade • Padre White Trail • The downhill mountain bike track (walking on the track not realising it was a mountain bike track) • Trails above Marine Parade • Small trail below the top (guns) lookout, and sandy area below reception centre on Mount Adelaide • Steep stepped track above the ASHS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mountain bikers (individuals or groups) riding on walking trails • Near misses with mountain bikers appearing unexpectedly, frightening walkers • Mountain bikers use the walking trails, as there are no designated mountain bike trails available. As such conflicts are common along most trails. • Mountain bikers going too fast on the trails above Marine Parade • Dogs off leash – in the way of others, or jumping on others running or walking • Sometimes not enough visibility for mountain bikers to slow down • Potential for injury to dogs by 'out of control' bikes • General lack of consideration, and abuse • Not clear who has right of way • Sticks placed on tracks endangering all users

2.7 Mountain Bike trail user habits

There were 48% of respondents said they use or have used the AHP for mountain biking.

2.7.1 Mountain bike user styles

Respondents to the survey showed an underrepresentation of advanced ability when compared with the broader W.A mountain biking population. They showed an over representation of beginner and novice riders. This is attributed to the very limited opportunities for progression and general lack of mountain bike trails in or near Albany.

Most riders classify themselves as an enthusiasts – a general mountain biker interested in mountain biking and mountain biking often.

Shown were 60% of mountain bikers as members of the Albany Mountain Bike Club or another formal cycle club.

Results showed 11% said they would join the Albany Mountain Bike Club upon finishing the survey.

Of those surveyed 43% of respondents said they use the existing black (advanced) downhill mountain bike trail, including all of the A lines (difficult features).

2.7.2 Mountain bike Access

The preferred modes of access to the AHP were via off road tracks by bike, from the city centre by bike, and via private vehicle. When accessing the existing downhill track by car, respondents said they generally parked at the Apex Lookout car park.

Similar to for walking (see 2.6.2) the other most popular access points to the AHP by bike included:

- From Middleton Road through ASHS
- Grey Street via fire access track
- Middleton Beach Car Park via boardwalk
- Apex Drive
- Hare Street
- Hay Street
- Burt Street
- Hill Street
- Serpentine Road East (behind school oval)
- Innes Street
- Sussex Street
- Watkins Road
- Middleton Beach via Wylie Crescent and Morley Place

2.7.3 Conflict

Shown were 41% of mountain bikers who said they'd experienced conflicts with other trails users.

Many commented that interactions had usually been friendly when encountering other users on the trails.

Some comments indicate many people see the trails as either 'walk only', 'mountain bike only' or 'shared'. However there is no consistent understanding amongst users.

Specific locations and issues mentioned included:

Locations	General issues and incidents
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adelaide trail• Innes Street• Most single track trails• Mount Clarence• Stairs section• Trail above Hare Street and Innes Street	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Being caught unaware of other users• Branches, logs and sticks placed across some tracks, including trail above Hare Street and Innes Street• Dogs off leash• Issues and conflict with Land manager staff members• People blocking trails• Repeated incidents of piles of sticks placed on the trails, pose a danger to mountain bikers particularly• The limestone track from the car park at the bottom of apex drive to hare street is popular with bikers but fast and blind - near misses between bikes and walkers• Occasionally unfriendly exchanges• Walkers have expressed that they are not happy about bikes being on the trails• Walkers on the downhill track

2.8. Rock climbing users and habits

There were eight individuals who identified themselves as rock climbers, and who use rock climbing or bouldering routes at the AHP. There are few existing tracks to boulders with some anchor points installed on the town side of the Mounts near the Padre White trail.

The locations given included:

- Along Middleton Beach to the Point area;
- Either side of Burt Street; and
- Any boulders available.

It was noted that there are a large number of boulders on the AHP that may be suitable for use.

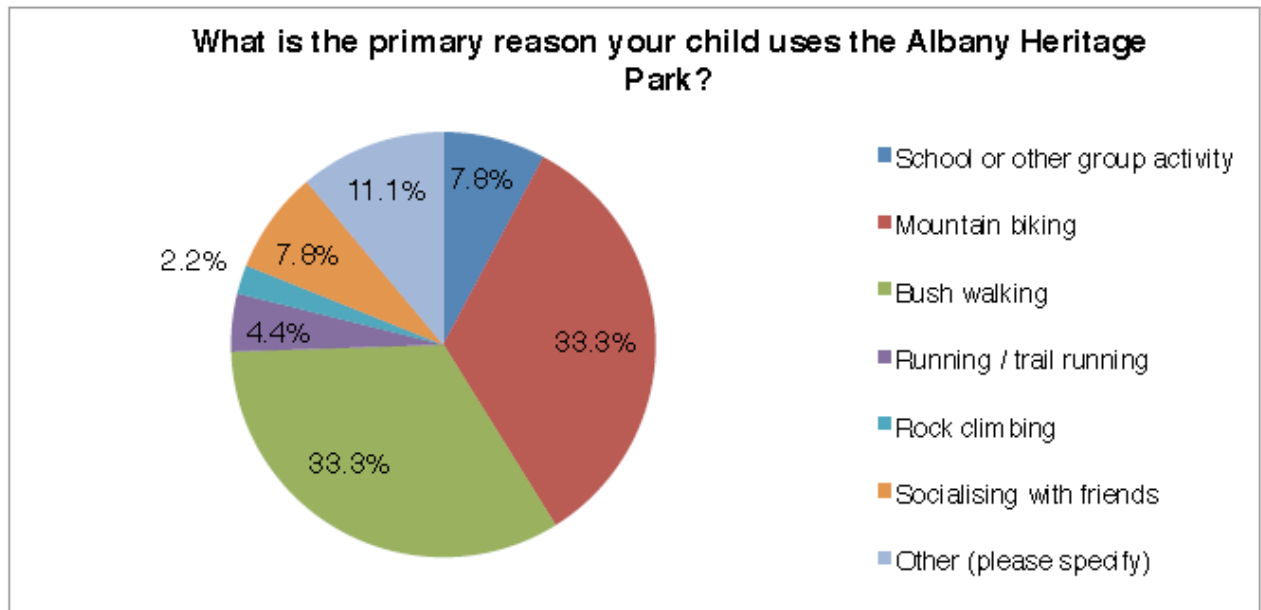
There are many interesting sites of scenic, geological and historical significance.

Most climbers typically access the mounts via private vehicle, and some walk or ride in via off road tracks.

The Padres White Trail and the Granite Track were noted as areas of conflict.

2.9. Parents and children's habits

Results showed that 40% of respondents were parents who have children and use the AHP. This was mostly for mountain biking or bushwalking.



Of the parents responding whose children use the AHP, bushwalking and mountain biking were the most popular activities. There were 11.1% who indicated they do other activities, which included dog walking, exploring granite caves and rocks, making cubbies, taking visitors and grandparents for a walk.

Usually (56%) parents drove their children to the park, or they travelled with friends. There were 32% of children who accessed the park via off road tracks either walking or by bike.

Results indicated that 88% of parents recreate with their children at the park.

2.10. Priorities for trail development

In the survey respondents identified their priorities for future trail development as follows:

2.10.1 Walking trails and interpretive trails

Results showed 74% of respondents said they would use walking trails if they were developed. The main reasons given for using the walking trails if they were to be developed would be ranked in order of importance:

1. Walking or running
2. Sight seeing
3. Dog walking
4. Bird/wildlife watching

There were 43% of respondents who said they would use grade 5 walking trail – the highest grade recommended for very experienced bushwalkers.

Specific features of interest to respondents when walking or running on them were ranked in order of importance:

1. Scenic views
2. Cultural or historic values
3. Connection with nature
4. Geocaching
5. Being away from traffic, noise and other people
6. Being close to home and services, cafes and bars
7. Physical challenge

The preferred method of accessing the walking trails for most people was private vehicle to on site car parking were:

Other methods, in order of popularity, were:

- Walking, via off road tracks;
- Walking, from Middleton Beach;
- Ride bike to on site car park;
- Walking, from City Centre; and
- Walking, via the road and entry on Marine Terrace.

Many respondents also gave walking from home as a preference.

2.10.1.1 Suggested improvements for walkers

Few respondents commented that there were already sufficient walking trails and signage. Many access points, points of interest and additional links and connections were suggested, to improve the AHP, including the following.

Additional access points:

- Alternative walking access to town from Mount Adelaide;
- Hare Street;
- Watkins Road;
- Access down to Middleton Beach; and
- Better access off Hare street and from Middleton Beach area.

Creating circuits and new linkages:

- Better loop trail on the southern side;
- Circuit around both Mounts;
- Signage for circuit style tracks;
- Better link from Middleton Beach to Mount Adelaide and Mount Clarence;
- Connection between The Forts and Middleton Beach possibly via a 'Jacob's Ladder', similar to that near King's Park;
- Link to Emu Point;
- Links between roads;
- Links to more water bodies, e.g. Middleton, Middleton path, ANZAC park or Emu Point;
- Marine Drive lookout;
- Ellen Cove car parking;
- Safe and clear linkages from Mt Clarence to board walk;
- Trail from Middleton Beach/Ellen Cove; and
- More public events.

Improve facilities:

- End point e.g. showers in the city centre to prepare to go to work in the morning after activities;
- Some good trail heads with toilets and maps; and
- Parking on Serpentine road to improve access.

General improvements to the trails:

- Some tree clearing could be done to improve views in certain parts;
- Fix erosion;
- Improve signage;
- Improvement of existing trail surfaces would be better than creating new trails;
- Narrower, purpose built walking trails i.e. less erosion. Designated mountain bike low-moderate skill level trails signposted as bike trails but with pedestrian access;
- More trails, including sign posted circuit around the whole park;
- More wooden board walk style infrastructure;
- Upgrading of existing trails; and
- Better sign posting.

2.10.2 Mountain bike trails

If mountain bike trails were developed to suit a range of abilities and styles, 52% of all survey respondents said they would use them.

There were 46% of respondents who said they would volunteer to assist with authorised trail building and maintenance when mountain bike trails are developed in the AHP.

Of those who would use the trails, their preferences for style of trail were as per below, with 82% of respondents preferring a trail network catering for all skill levels, including some cross country, all mountain and downhill.

Style of trail	% of Respondents prefer
Trail network catering for all skill levels, including some cross country, all mountain and downhill	82.1%
Cross country trail network	46.2%
Children specific skills area / pump track	41.0%
Skills park	36.8%
Descending focussed cross country / all mountain trail	35.9%
Pump track	35.0%
Multiple downhill tracks	25.6%
Jump park	21.4%
Other – including long gentle grade cross country trails that make use of the elevation	6.0%

Results indicated that if a shuttle-able trail system (where cars can transport riders to the top) was developed, most respondents indicated they would continue to push or ride up most of the time, but would also sometimes use a private shuttle vehicle. They said they would occasionally use a commercial shuttle service if this was available.

2.10.3 Suggested improvements to the Mountain Bike Trails

Many access points, points of interest and additional links and connections were suggested, to improve mountain biking in the AHP, including the following:

Additional access points:

- Better access from Middleton Beach; and
- Access to the area below Marine Drive.

Creating circuits and new linkages:

- Connections to existing tourist areas;
- A well-built series of green and blue trails that link the whole area and can be ridden by all abilities;
- Better links to avoid riding on Burt Street;
- Circuit of both Mounts without any road sections;
- New circuit from Middleton Beach to a 'figure 8' around the Mounts, down to Middleton on a flowy fun descent;
- Trail which drops down to the Middleton Beach from the Forts, to finish ride with Descent;
- Trail head at Middleton facilities and cafes;
- Link from Middleton Beach to town via single track through the AHP;
- Incorporate magnificent vistas as lookout points; and
- Trail from top of Mount Clarence that links with Ellen Cove bike/walk trail.

Improved facilities:

- Provide facilities such as toilets, drinking water points, shelter, seating, first aid, trail maps and riding tips at trails heads - suggest at the bottom car park on Apex Drive;
- Clear trail markers showing ability level and maps at multiple locations; and
- Trail maps where tourists enter, e.g. town centre or Middleton Beach.

General improvements to the trails:

- More gravity trails, another downhill track and cross country loops with multiple options, more exposure, longer trails, flowing single track for a range of abilities;
- Dedicated mountain bike trails;
- Improve accessibility for visitors;
- Variety of cross country loops to cater for travelling mountain bikers;
- Trail heads at site of old water tank on Mount Clarence, north of the Garrison behind the Shop where the undercover shed is located;
- Apps to provide trail information and directions; and
- Longer downhill race track to improve competition and capacity for larger events.

Events:

The majority of respondents indicated that they would like to see or participate in mountain biking events at the AHP.

Extension of Downhill Mountain Bike Trail:

Results indicated that 85% of respondents said the existing downhill track should be extended at both the top and bottom of the existing track.

There were 52% of respondents who said the existing black downhill trail is good. With 35% who said it was average, and 13% who said it was excellent.

The following improvements were suggested to the downhill track to improve the trail and its connectivity:

- Area for event parking and event 'village' facilities;
- Another black diamond downhill track;
- Better access to the start point;
- Creating more trails for beginners and families;
- Flow jumps;
- Something to prevent riders riding down the push up track;
- Relocate the DH trail elsewhere if it suits the overall design better;
- Better finish area to run events;
- Better separation between the track and the push up track to stop people crossing; from one to the other;
- 'Give way to cyclist' signage;
- Improve flow;
- Convert push track into a blue flow trail;
- Build new push up track that can be ridden uphill also;
- More exposure;
- Better spectator access;
- Shuttle point at Mount Clarence car parks;
- Move start of trail closer to the top car park at Mount Clarence;
- More regular maintenance days; and
- Create green downhill trail similar to 'Hammies' trail in Queenstown, NZ.

2.11 Broad issues identified

In the survey a number of broad issues were identified by respondents and are summarised as follows:

2.11.1 Environment

Several people submitted comments relating to protection of biodiversity and the fragile environment being incompatible with development of trails.

There was also minimal, (but strongly expressed) opposition to mountain bike trails specifically, on the basis of its threat to the environment.

2.11.2 Conflict management

When asked "***Do you think walking and interpretive trails should be separated from mountain bike trails?***" respondents who use walking trails and respondents who use mountain bike trails had a proportionately similar response.

While there were many comments made by respondents that indicated some misunderstanding between 'walkers' and 'mountain bikers', there are some things that both user types seemed to agree on. Including 45.9% of walkers and 53.3% of mountain bikers who said that trails should be separate but it's okay to have some mutual trailheads or meeting points.

The walkers show a stronger preference for complete separation than mountain bikers do as indicated below:

Level of separation	% of walkers prefer	% of mountain bikers prefer
Yes, completely separated	12.2%	6.7%
Yes, but it's ok to have some mutual trail heads or meeting points	45.9%	53.3%
No, as long as trails are designed to avoid user conflict	24.9%	24.2%
No, there should be a mix of shared use and single use trails	17.1%	15.8%

For the responses given, walkers and mountain bikers gave the following broad reasons:

Safety and environmental concerns:

- General safety concerns, including children, dogs, walkers getting hit by mountain bikers, especially on faster downhill sections where riders may not be able to stop in time;
- Mix of shared use and single use where appropriate will be safer;
- Concerned about impact of mountain bikes with electric motors (emerging user type);
- Concerns about mountain bikers building their own tracks, destroying the ecosystem; and
- To prevent further damage to sensitive vegetation, and as there is a desire of all *users to reach* similar locations, some sharing will be necessary.

Trail design considerations:

- Opens up the quantity of trails that can be used by walkers and riders;
- Preference for trails that are multi-purpose;
- Sharing trails will make better use of the small space available;
- Do not see a need for more trails, just better use of the existing ones;
- There needs to be locations for mountain bikers to ride fast at times, where they can enjoy their riding. This is not compatible with some users on walk trails, e.g. deaf elderly person walking;
- There are some cases where shared use or single track is more appropriate; and
- Separation of trails would provide peace of mind to users.

Respect between users:

- When restrictions are placed, people tend to claim ownership (and don't share);
- User education about inclusivity is important to prevent conflict. It is inevitable that users will end up on the wrong trails from time to time so education and conflict prevention is more important;
- As long as user conflict is managed, having a few specific use trails is good for those that cannot share with other users;
- Separate trails become too difficult to manage and leads to exclusivity amongst users;
- Concern that people will not follow the rules, so there needs to be dedicated separated trails on both Mounts;
- Some people have had only good experiences on all trails, whether walking, running or bike riding;
- Some people have had negative experiences, nearly been hit by bikes going fast on trails;
- If everyone takes care when using the trails, it allows more people to use more trails; and
- More awareness of all users is required.

2.12 Other examples seen elsewhere

Survey respondents also made comment on examples of trail networks they had seen elsewhere as follows:

- Have seen well-planned trails around the world where walkers and riders can coexist successfully;
- Good trail design could incorporate mountain biking and walking in some sections, similar to other trail networks in the country; and
- Belief that shared paths don't work, using the Middleton Beach to Emu Point path as an example where users refuse to share the path.

2.13 Services

There were 60% of respondents who said they would be willing to pay for trail maps.

Other services that walkers indicated they'd be willing to pay for, in order of preference included:

- Shuttle service for transport to the top of Mount Clarence;
- Audio guides;
- Showers; and
- Access to specific areas.

Other services that mountain bikers indicated they'd be willing to pay for, in order of preference included:

- Shuttle service for transport to the top of Mount Clarence;
- Bike wash;
- Showers;
- Access to specific areas; and
- Car parking.

3. Community workshops

Community workshops to gain community input into the draft concept planning were held as follows:

17 February 2016. Civic rooms, North Rd - 6 pm – 8 pm - 37 Attendees

21 July 2016. Civic rooms, North Rd – 5:30 pm – 7:30pm – 28 Attendees

22nd August. Civic rooms, North Rd – 5:30 pm – 7:30pm – 28 Attendees

The participants at the workshops included representatives on all the key stakeholders groups including; the Albany Bushwalking Club, Albany Mountain Bike club, as well as a broad range of Albany local residents, State Government agencies (DPaW & GSDC), and the general Albany community.

Feedback at the workshops were consistent with the results in the on line survey with the key issues being:

- Concern that the environmental and cultural values of the Mounts should be a high priority for protection;
- Concerns about the interaction between mountain bikers and walkers especially where mountain bikers are travelling downhill at speed and trail design doesn't include appropriate sight lines to ensure walkers have adequate warning;
- A perception that Mountain Bikes cause more environmental damage (especially erosion) than walkers;
- Concerns about ongoing funding for maintenance of trails; and
- The impact of increased use on the mounts historic use as a quiet places for those who appreciate walking, contemplation, wildlife and flora.

4. Written Feedback

During the community consultation phase of developing the draft concept plan, and specifically after the first community workshop in February 2016, a small number (5) of written submissions were received.

The key points in the submissions included:

- That protecting the Heritage Park environment should be the highest priority;
- A perception that Mountain Biking is incompatible with the sensitive environment and other users on the Mounts;
- That there should be more use of Noongar names and interpretive material on the trails network;
- The Mounts should be quiet places for those who appreciate walking, contemplation, wildlife and flora;
- Council needs a better maintenance plan in place for current trails before commencing construction of new trails; and
- There appeared to be a lack of awareness of the significant role the Park plays for current and future nearby residents for whom it is essentially their local public open space for walking and exercise amenity.

5. Stakeholder meetings

As part of gathering information to inform the development of the draft concept plan the consultants and city staff had numerous meetings with stakeholder groups including

- Noongar Elders, families and the COA Noongar consultative committee;
- Staff at the National ANZAC Centre and Forts precinct;
- Department of Parks and Wildlife staff;
- Albany Bushwalkers Group;
- Albany Mountain Bike Club; and
- City of Albany reserves management staff.

Input from these groups has been critical to the development of the draft concept plan.

6. Social Media

After the second community workshop a media release published on the City of Albany News and Events Facebook page reached over 2150 people.

On the Facebook page there was a comment from a person who raised their concern about the possible negative impact of mountain bikes interacting with walkers. A further comment related to the benefit of a well-designed trail system for tourism and to protect the environment by addressing current issues around erosion.

7. Summary of Community Comment during development of the Concept Plan

Community feedback provided in the online survey, community workshops, written submissions and meetings with key stakeholder groups has been, where ever possible and practical, incorporated into the draft concept plan.

The plan addresses the main themes from community feedback as follows:

- protecting the environment through appropriately located and designed trails;
- protecting the areas cultural heritage values through working locating trails away from sensitive values while also providing opportunities to interoperate the values were appropriate;
- where necessary separating trail user groups to reduce visitor risk and possible conflict; and
- where appropriate utilising appropriate trail design to allow shared use while maintaining a high level of user safety.

The draft concept plan also meets the majority of the wishes of the community expressed in the consultation including:

- Retention and improvements to multiple entry points, including three major trail heads with signage, information and facilities;
- Trails that provide access to areas of significance and scenic views;
- A trail system that is suitable for a range of community members of varying physical ability, experience or skill level;
- A trail system that includes some single use, single direction trails as well as come shared use duel direction trails;
- Trails that incorporate the historical and cultural values of the area;
- Trails that create strategic links between the city centre, Albany Harbours Path, Middleton Beach and significant sites within the AHP; and
- Retention of areas for quite reflection.

8. Official Community Comment Period on Draft Concept Plan

After the community engagement and input outlined in sections 1-8 of this report the draft Concept Plan was released to the wider community on 29th September 2016 for a period of 3 weeks with the comment period closing on Sunday 23rd October 2016.

9. Advertising and promotion

The opportunity to provide comment on the draft concept plan was advertised and promoted widely including

- Advertisements in the Albany Advertiser (29/9/16, 6/10/16, 13/10/16, 20/10/16)
- Direct emailing of the information to all community members who had previously attended one or more of the community forums/workshops
- Displays at the North Road Offices, Albany Public Library and Albany Leisure and Aquatic Centre.
- Displays at community events such as the Over 50's Have a Go Day
- Briefings of community groups including the Middleton Beach Group, Fredericks Town Progress Association, South Coast NRM and the Albany Bike Users Group
- One on One meetings with a number of interested community members
- Placement of information in information shelters on Mt Clarence and Mt Adelaide.
- Placement of signage at key walk trail entries to the AHP
- Posts on the City of Albany Social Media and website
- Post on the social media platforms of groups such as the Albany Bushwalking Club, Albany Trail Runners and Albany Mountain Bike Club from which the posts were shared by members and
- A radio interview on ABC Great Southern by the COA Project Officer

9.1 Submissions

Community members were offered the opportunity to make submissions via an online survey or by providing a written submission.

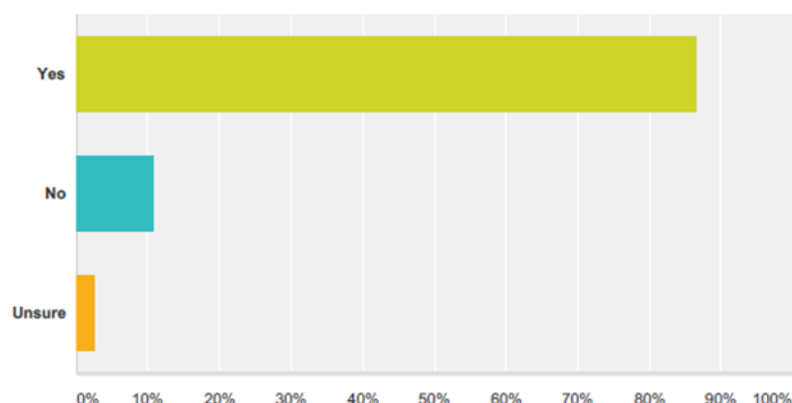
8.1.1 Online Submissions

Online submissions proved the most popular form of community comment on the draft concept plan.

A total of 248 online submissions were received. Of which 215 (86.69%) were supportive of the overall plan, while 27 (10.89%) were not supportive of the plan and 6 (2.42%) were unsure.

Q1 Overall are you supportive of the concept plan

Answered: 248 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	86.69% 215
No	10.89% 27
Unsure	2.42% 6
Total	248

The part of the plan with the highest level of support was Trail # 17 the WW 2 interpretive trail with 91.25% support.

The part of the plan with the least level of support was Trail # 15 with 86.42% support.

A range of written comments were provided during the online survey (see appendix 1 for full detail) with the majority being supportive of the concept plan.

There was a number of submissions that continued to raise the concern regarding dual use trails and the possibility of conflict and/or collision between cyclists and pedestrians. The same respondents often also raised the concern that providing mountain bike trails in the area would change the character of the park from one of quiet reflection and nature study to one of extreme sports.

Concerns regarding the possible environmental impacts or statements relating to the need to ensure high standards of environmental protection during trail construction and ongoing maintenance were also raised in a number of submissions.

9.1.2 Written submissions

A total of twenty four (24) written submissions were also received (see appendix 2 for full submissions). Of these fourteen were unsupportive (58.33%), while eight (33.33%) were supportive and two were classified as inconclusive.

A number of the written submissions received were extremely similar (word for word in several locations) and appear to have been heavily influenced by lobbying from a single community member.

In most cases the need to develop or upgrade trails in the AHP as acknowledged but there were concerns raised about:

- That the construction of mountain bike trails on the Mounts may change the character of the park from one of quiet reflection and nature study to extreme sport.
- The possibility of conflict/collision between walkers and MTB riders.
- The development of recreational trails being inconsistent with the purpose of the Management Orders for the reserves.
- The Concept Plan being endorsed prior to the Natural Reserves Strategic Plan
- Need for good trail network signage to address safety issues and provide more guidance to infrequent visitors
- Possible environmental impacts of trail (especially MTB trail construction), including but not limited to the spread of dieback, impacts on the endangered Western Ring-tail Possum, impacts on rare flora.
- Need for maintenance of current trails as well as development of new trails and if the City would commit to ongoing funding for maintenance.
- The need for more dedicated “walker only trails” and
- Need for a better balance between the amount of walk trail and mountain bike trail.

9.1.3 Response to concerns raised

9.1.3.1 Change to the Character of the Park

The Albany Heritage Park has been and is utilized for a range of recreational activities for a significant period of time including motor sport activities using Apex Drive (motor bike and motor car hill climbs), soap box events, trail running and mountain biking as well as more tranquil activities such as walking and nature study.

The Mounts Management Plan adopted by Council in 2006 stated as an objective in several sections “To ensure trail networks are managed to allow for the continued use by walkers and cyclists”.

Mountain Biking has become and continues to increase as a popular use of the AHP. Failing to adequately provide for this group is likely to result in increased user conflict and result in greater changes to the AHP “character” than a well designed and constructed trail system.

9.1.3.2 Conflict/collision between walkers and MTB riders.

Mountain Biking has become and continues to increase as a popular use of the AHP, while the number of walkers and trail runners also continues to increase.

Although research indicates that the perception of the risk of collision is higher than the actual risk, this has a significant negative impact on the enjoyment and use of trails by all users where the trails have not been built to appropriate standards including sight lines and speed restricting features.

Failing to adequately provide suitable trails built to appropriate standards is likely to result in increased user conflict and the increased likelihood of collision. A well designed and constructed trail network including single use and single direction trails has proven in many other locations worldwide to be an appropriate and successful strategy in reducing user conflict and the likelihood of collision.

A Code of Conduct and Yield Hierarchy have also been developed as part of the concept planning process and will be heavily promoted in signage etc. to promote a “share the trails” culture.

9.1.3.3 Recreational trails being inconsistent with the purpose of the Management Orders for the reserves.

Recreational Trails have been in place in AHP for a significant period of time.

The Mounts Management Plan adopted by Council in 2006 stated as an objective in several sections "To ensure trail networks are managed to allow for the continued use by walkers and cyclists".

The reserves are under Management Orders to the City of Albany with a range of purposes including Public Park, Parks & Recreation and Recreation & Parkland.

Although the Department of Lands was unable to provide a definitive list of activities allowed under the purpose for each Reserve verbal advice provided to COA staff indicated that recreational trails are consistent with the purpose of all the reserves.

9.1.3.4 Concept Plan being endorsed prior to the Natural Reserves Strategic Plan

Internal staff that are working on both the AHP Trails Concept Plan and the Natural Reserves Strategy concurrently and are ensuring the plans align and the two documents. The aim is to ultimately have the two plans compatible and complimentary to each.

The Trails Hub Strategy which formed the basis of the brief for the consultant to develop the AHP Concept Plan has also been utilised as a base document towards the development of the Natural Reserves Strategy.

The current draft of the Natural Reserves Strategy supports a well-designed, constructed and maintained network of trails in the Mounts precinct.

9.1.3.5 Need for good trail network signage to address safety issues and provide more guidance to infrequent visitors

The concept plan identifies a number of trail heads (major and minor) at which it is proposed to have signage including maps of the trails.

Signage is identified in the concept plan as a key component of all the trails and signage plans will be developed in the during the detailed design stage of each trail as per the trail signage designs developed in 2015.

Walk trails in the AHP are already included in the soon to be published 10 great Walks Map and once sufficient Mountain Bike trails have been constructed in Albany it is proposed to develop a 10 Great Mountain Bike Trails Map.

9.1.4 Possible environmental impacts of trail

9.1.4.1 Dieback

As part of the initial planning process for the Trails Concept Plan the City engaged a qualified Dieback Interpreter to undertake an assessment of the AHP.

The report by the consultant indicated that the AHP due to its long history of uncontrolled access during all weather conditions is highly infested with Dieback. The report also indicated that although there may be small areas of unfested native vegetation due to the high level of use and uncontrolled access along with the natural spread of the disease (primarily downhill) that no areas are deemed to be protectable from future disease spread or introduction

This was further confirmed with advice from the Dept. of Parks and Wildlife who noted that a recreation plan such as this presents the opportunity to encourage activity within identified recreation

zones and reduce activities in other areas.

9.1.4.2 Western Ringtail Possum

Based on recommendations from DPaW the City has engaged a qualified consultant who has been running the previous WTP monitoring in the AHP to undertake a WRP monitoring program is for the approved demonstration trail for the purpose of documenting any impact of newly established trails with data to be used in the detailed planning of future trails.

9.1.4.3 Rare Flora

There has been extensive surveying of flora by both professional Botanists and many experienced and enthusiastic community members over many years.

Both the COA and DPaW data sets of previously recorded rare flora were used to guide the proposed trail alignments to ensure they did not impact on known populations of rare flora.

Additionally during the detailed planning stages of each trail as a condition of securing the appropriate environmental approvals from DER detailed and target flora surveys will need to be undertaken for each alignment. This will ensure that prior to construction commencing any rare flora is identified and the alignments modified to avoid the flora where possible or for other appropriate management strategies to be implemented.

9.1.4.4 Trail Maintenance

Current trail are suffering a range of maintenance issues due to their poor design and/or placement along with use for purposes that they were not designed.

Appropriately designed and constructed trails would be less costly to maintain and the COA would look to implement a range of other strategies such as formal agreements with user groups to secure resources (funds, volunteer or other in-kind) to ensure ongoing maintenance.

A range of options relating to the ongoing management are recommended in the documents supporting the Concept Plan.

9.1.4.5 More dedicated “walker only trails” and a better balance of trail types

During development of the Trails Hub Strategy an audit found that the COA currently manages 147km of walk trail and 700m of Mountain Bike trail

The current AHP Trail Concept Plan recommends 5.8km (approximately 1.5hrs of walking) of walk only trails, 20.4km of share use trail and 12.6km (1hr of riding) ride only trails.

The amount of trails proposed are consistent with the recommendations adopted by Council in the Trails Hub Strategy in 2015.

10. Recommendations

The current draft concept plan is closely aligned with the guiding principles for trail development in the Albany Heritage Park endorsed by Council in the Trails Hub Strategy 2015-2025 especially including the mix of trail (dual use, walk only and MTB only).

The Draft Concept Plan has received a high level of community support and the majority of issues raised are in the concept plan or will be addressed in the detailed design stage of the planning and approval processes prior to final trail construction. (see section 8.2.3)

Based on the positive outcomes of the community engagement and community comment processes the following recommendation is made:

That: Council:

1. **ADOPT the Albany Heritage Park Trails Concept Plan subject to**
 - **Acknowledging the community submissions and working closely with the respondents during the detailed design phase.**
 - **Consideration of the recommendations of the Albany Natural Reserves Strategy during the detailed design phase for each trail.**
 - **Consideration of the recommendations of the AHP Aboriginal Heritage Survey during the detailed design phase for each trail.**
2. Instructs the CEO to commence planning for stage one of the project including
 - taking into account the feedback provided by the community in the concept planning process
 - investigating funding opportunities to assist in the plans implementation.

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