

RESPONSE BY MESSRS MCCrackEN AND PORTER TO ISSUES RAISED

1. Background

The area is currently used for recreation and forestry.

- The Incline Walkway has been developed as a walkway and bike lane.
 - The proposal would return the Incline to its previous state – i.e. a railway.
 - It would be appropriate to develop a heritage railway on the site whereas construction of a walkway or cycle path can be developed wherever topography or scenery is suitable.
- Important area for families – provides low incline off-road biking opportunities (Hutt River and Pencarrow Road other comparable options).
 - Will give family entertainment that will not require same level of fitness or ability.
 - Enhanced heritage interpretation experience for families.
 - Train travel is all weather, whereas walking/biking is weather dependent.
 - Current users who choose not to ride the train, might take to forest roads or use parallel path (where provided), and have other options for low-incline walking and biking, e.g. Hutt River, Pencarrow Road.
- 30 – 40 000 visitors per year, roughly 50/50 walkers and cyclists.
 - 30,000 passengers per year on the proposed railway – this number will be drawn from new users plus a proportion of existing walkers and bikers.
 - New users are expected to include regional, national and international visitors.
 - It is anticipated that some of the existing visitors will choose to walk or bike in alternative regional facilities.
- Area also used for commercial forestry activities.
 - The proposed railway will present opportunities for forestry activities to have less impact on other activities in the park, through use of the railway for some of the forestry activities.
- Area held for future water collection purposes.
 - It is not anticipated that operation of a railway would detract from future water collection.

2. Areas that Require Further Discussion

The issues focus on information requirements, land use and infrastructure, viability of the proposed scheme, impacts on current uses, health and safety and broader implications for the Regional Council.

3. Information Requirements

- A comprehensive business plan is required for the proposal, including proposed infrastructure.
 - The business plan will follow on from the feasibility study.
 - The infrastructure required to provide a railway and alternatives for existing users will consist of:
 - Railway
 - Route
 - Precincts
 - Depots
 - Mainline connection
 - Public access to stations
 - Car
 - Bus
 - Train
 - Alternative walkway to existing railway formation
 - Parallel walkway
 - Forest roads
- More information is required to assess impacts on signature values – length of rail route, potential visitor numbers etc.
 - To be established in the feasibility study.
- Would the scheme be beyond the scope of volunteers and be required to run as a commercial enterprise.
 - Management by full time staff with support of volunteers is anticipated.

4. Land Use and Infrastructure

- Ability of current infrastructure to sustain the enterprise – bridges, drainage, tunnels.
 - Work required to restore railway structures and civil works to appropriate operational condition will be determined in the feasibility study.
- Difficulties associated with private land at Kaitoke end (*Maymorn and Kaitoke precinct should both be considered in this context*).

Maymorn:

- Requirement for a connection between the old route and the Tranz Metro station.
- Lease or purchase of land currently in the custody of Tranz Rail will be required for the depot.

Kaitoke:

- To enable the railway to remain on the heritage corridor up to six properties will need to be traversed. In some cases easements may be negotiable, others may require outright purchase or lease.
 - Existing users of the formation for access to their leasehold land are the speedway, glider club and rifle range. Propose that access to these users be provided via existing forest road that runs from south of Kaitoke through to the Pakuratahi valley.
- Parking and marshalling areas, depots etc.
 - Parking required at Parks Line Road, Maymorn.
 - Parking required in the vicinity of Kaitoke railway station. Fare structures could be designed to discourage Kaitoke passengers.
 - Station precincts will be designed to cater for expected passenger numbers.
 - Depots will be established at Maymorn, and at a later date, Cross Creek.

5. Viability of the Proposed Scheme

- Possible operational challenges in linking the proposed line with Tranz Rail line.
 - Anticipated that establishing a link at Maymorn will not pose a problem.
 - Operation on mainline would require running rights on the Wellington to Masterton main line.

- The Fell Museum is doing a lot of work interpreting the heritage values of the Incline for the public, and are developing an audio-visual set-up which will provide a “virtual” ride on the Fell Locomotive (complete with sound and movement).
 - The proposed railway, the audio-visual set-up and the enhanced interpretation would complimentary enterprises.
- Weather in the mountains can be changeable.
 - The proposed railway by its nature will provide an all weather activity within the park.
 - The proposed railway could be used to assist other park users to exit the park quickly and safely in the event of serious weather change or emergency.
 - Summit station precinct could provide a safe haven for other park users.

6. Impacts on Current Uses

- The change in use would have implications for the current use of the area, what are the alternatives for the displaced recreational users?
 - Current users who choose not to either ride the train, take to forest roads or use parallel path (where provided) have other options for low-incline walking and biking, e.g. Hutt River, Pencarrow Road.
- Options for alternative walkways/cycleways
 - Walkers and cyclists should be able to use forest roads most of the time, many of which parallel the route.
- Building an alternative walking track parallel to the formation
 - In the few locations where there is no parallel route a pathway suitable for walkers and cyclists would need to be provided.

7. Health and Safety

- Potential safety problems with having co-existent railway and recreation
 - To ensure the safety of walkers and cyclists areas their access must be clear of the railway.
- Train tracks may not be available for walkers
 - Absolute separation of walkers and railway must be maintained.
 - Level crossings should be provided with suitable signage.

8. Plantation Forestry Related Issues

- Potential fire risk.
 - Anticipate that the existing fire hazard management plan could be extended to include the potential risks implied by a railway.

- Insurance implications
 - The proposed railway organisation will become a member group of the Federation of Rail Organisations of New Zealand (FRONZ). Insurance policies are available to member groups for third party risk, fire, accident and other risks.

- Lesser issues of access to Lower Pakuratahi Block – currently use formation to access the area.
 - Alternative arrangements would be arranged as below.

- To what extent would forestry roads be required?
 - Forestry roads required to feed loading points along the railway.
 - Benefits of moving logs by rail include:
 - Reduced impact on park users and forestry roads.
 - Log shipment out of the park possible at night.
 - Elimination of log movements on State Highway.
 - Planting, thinning, pruning access via hi-rail vehicles, trains or existing forest roads.

9. Water Collection Issues

- Potential issues with contamination of the water intake at Te Marua
 - Provision of a railway falls into three distinct phases: planning, construction and operation.
 - At the planning stage hazards to water collection will be identified and mitigated, in conjunction with the existing forestry management plan.
 - Potential impact to the environment will be managed during the construction and operation phases.

10. Broader Implications for the Regional Council

- How is this activity to be classified, i.e. commercial? Would Council establish a lease arrangement and charge?
 - Anticipate that the commercial activity would be non-profit, any surplus being used to enhance and extend the heritage railway, to ensure that it continues and improves.

- Motorised tours up the formation.
 - Existing use would be replaced by rail tours on the railway.

- What would happen if the volunteer group disappeared or pulled out?
 - A not-for-profit organisation is being established to cater for the operational needs of the railway.
 - In the event that the Trust is unable to continue it is anticipated that a winding-up clause in the deed would ensure that the asset reverted to a suitable organisation e.g. the Wellington Regional Council.