



The wild side of Karori Park

Dog exercise and trail plan

For Consultation

Introduction

Background

Karori Park is a large multi-use space for organised and informal sports and recreation. It provides a playground, and has ecological values associated with the stream and direct links to the Outer Green Belt. It is highly used for informal recreation with the flat perimeter track extremely popular for walking and jogging. The back of the park is steeper and more natural containing a series of walking and cycling tracks and a dog exercise area.

A new Grade 2 easy walk and mountain biking trail for children and beginner mountain bike riders is proposed to complement the more advanced trails at Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park. The trail would be a progression from the flat perimeter track around Karori Park sportsfields.

The proposed trail replaces the existing children's mountain bike circuit accessed from the park's Sunshine Avenue carpark. This circuit is not well used. The downhill part of the track is difficult for beginner riders, its quality is poor and suffers from water damage. The pump track part of the circuit is poorly located and does not offer enough interest for return visits.

The proposed new mountain bike trail for children and beginners.

The proposed easy Grade 2 trail¹ is located in the more natural setting of the back part of Karori Park. It would be accessed from Sunshine Avenue carpark and from the sportsfield perimeter track.

It is proposed to be a short but interesting loop trail with a gentle gradient. It would be wide enough for shared use by walkers and mountain bikers. To manage this shared use, mountain bikers would ride the trail in one direction only (see Figure 2 for existing and proposed tracks).

Features of a Grade 2 trail:

- Gentle climbs with no surprises for beginners and children
- Firm and compacted surface
- Gentle gradient of 1-4 degrees for 96% of the trail
- Obstacles such as rocks, roots and ruts kept low
- Predominantly ridden in one direction, which means that parts of downhills may be steeper followed by a straight, flatter section
- A single trail rather than riders being able to ride side by side
- Width of up to 1.5 metres wide.

The proposed trail offers an opportunity to extend links to the Skyline Walkway and would be an easier route compared to the current steep Wahine Track. It would also future proof the link to the Skyline Walkway from Karori Park as an alternate route to the Wahine Track, which is regularly blocked by large tree fall.

The issues

The proposed trail passes through an official dog exercise area where people walk, cycle and exercise their dogs off lead, where the kindergarten and local schools bring children for nature and adventure play and where the 98 Downhill mountain bike trail exits.

Although this type of multi-use is to be encouraged, as numbers of people using the area increase there is potential for conflict between different users. There are also a number of other issues to resolve to improve this part of the park and attract people to explore this wilder side of Karori Park.

Reducing conflict where tracks and different users converge is important. These are where the path from the upper area of Karori Park converge with the sportsfield perimeter path, the Sunshine Avenue parking area and kindergarten entrance, and where mountain bike trails intersect with paths used by others.

Clear wayfinding is also important. First time visitors to this area are often confused when deciding which track to take, so it is important to give track information and visual clues.

It is also important to keep the area natural and 'wild' but also to have signs of care. This gives people confidence to explore further and they are likely to feel safer. At the moment this is lacking with fallen trees, other debris, uneven and muddy tracks and slippery surfaces.

Falling pine trees often block tracks and can be a hazard to the public. Longer term, we plan to remove the pine tree plantation as trees fail and replace them with native vegetation.

Solutions

- New signs and information panels
- Clearer sight lines for a sense of safety and where trails converge
- Welcoming visitors with signs of care: tidying up debris, attractive signage and well-maintained tracks give a sense of safety while keeping logs and stumps for children's play
- One way mountain biking access uphill from the sportsfield perimeter path and exit via Sunshine Avenue carparking area
- Drier track surfaces - clearing the stream channel of blockages (track crossings and debris), planting riparian native species, relocating tracks to avoid water running down them (the fall line) and directing users to relocated tracks
- A new dog exercise loop trail separate from mountain biking
- Reducing the 98 downhill mountain bike trail to one exit where it crosses the gully floor
- Retaining views over sportsfields from the lookout above Sunshine Avenue carpark



Figure 1: View of the part of Karori Park considered in this plan

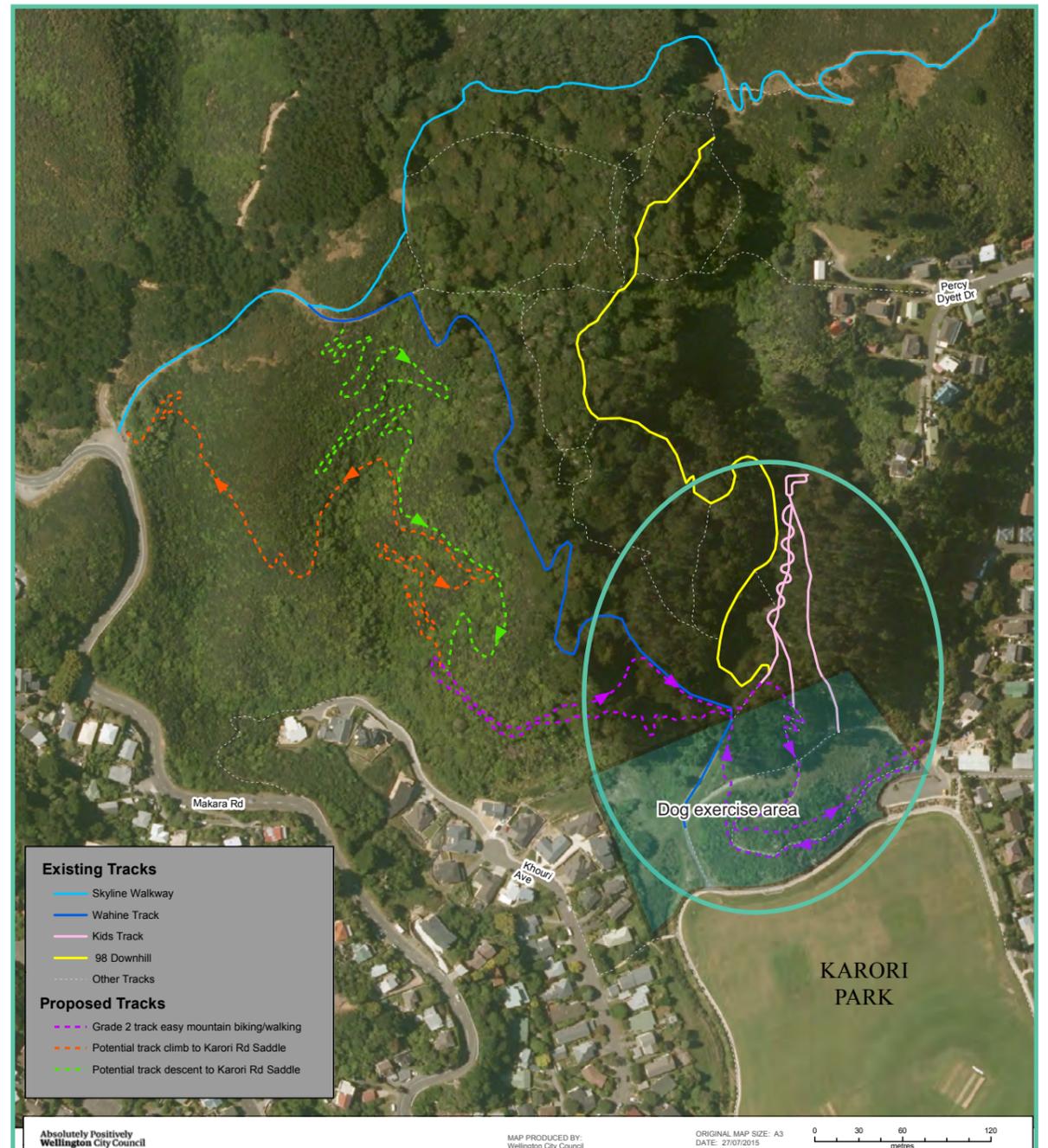


Figure 2: Aerial view of Karori Park with existing tracks and their use, and new easy shared track with connections to Karori Rd summit and the Skyline Walkway. This 'Dog Exercise Area and Trail Plan' proposes changes within the area ringed in green.

¹ Based on the 'New Zealand Cycle Trail Design Guide'.

Issues and Opportunities

Area 1 (see Figure 3 for location)

This is a busy area with kindergarten drop off, parking, start of the children's bike skills trail and the dog exercise area.

Issues:

- The entrance to the proposed Grade 2 shared trail is not easily seen, especially for people new to the park
- The area is used by a wide range of people with some real and perceived conflicts between users at the kindergarten drop off, the beginning and end of the new Grade 2 trail and the beginning of the dog exercise area
- Soil washes into the kindergarten entry from the steep slope.

Opportunities:

- Widening the existing children's bike trail
- Reducing the risk of collisions between mountain bikers and carpark users by the new trail exiting at an oblique angle to slow riders down before crossing the kindergarten entry and entering the carpark
- Planting the steep clay slope to reduce runoff
- Run off directed into an existing stormwater channel.



View of Area 1



Narrow entrance to the children's bike skills trail



Run off into the kindergarten entrance



Steep, slippery slope where planting would improve runoff

Area 2

A number of tracks lead off this area. There used to be an expansive view over the sportsfields from this 'lookout'.

Issues

- Wayfinding is unclear with a number of tracks to choose from
- An unofficial but prominent track leads to a dead end at private property at the eastern edge of the park. First time visitors have been seen to choose this track mistakingly thinking it leads to the Skyline Walkway
- Views from picnic tables over the sportsfields are obscured by vegetation.



Area 2 with picnic tables and tracks. The unofficial track that confuses visitors is marked with the red cross. Planting the entrance would remove confusion

Opportunities

- Information at entrances in Sunshine Avenue carpark will inform visitors of track locations
- Planting to reduce run off and obscure entrances to unofficial tracks.
- A viewshaft from the lookout area can be retained by selective trimming of vegetation.

Area 3

Access to the dog exercise area, the Wahine Track to the Skyline Walkway and the central gully.

Issues

- Wayfinding to the Wahine track from the sportsfield perimeter path is unclear especially for first-time visitors
- Some conflict between users with mountain bikers entering the perimeter path at speed
- It is important to keep this area undeveloped and a sense of adventure, but once you pass the grassed open dog exercise area the area could do with a tidy up to make it more legible and welcoming..



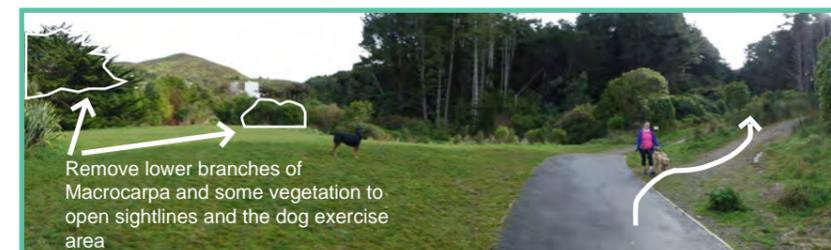
Need for more prominent signage to the Wahine Track and information on trails at the sportsfield perimeter track



An example of effective signage at Wakefield Park



Logs used for adventure play



Dog exercise area and relocated shared path to Wahine Track. Uphill biking only.



Track surface difficult to maintain due to water running down the fall line. Relocating the trail off the gully floor will improve experience of the trail

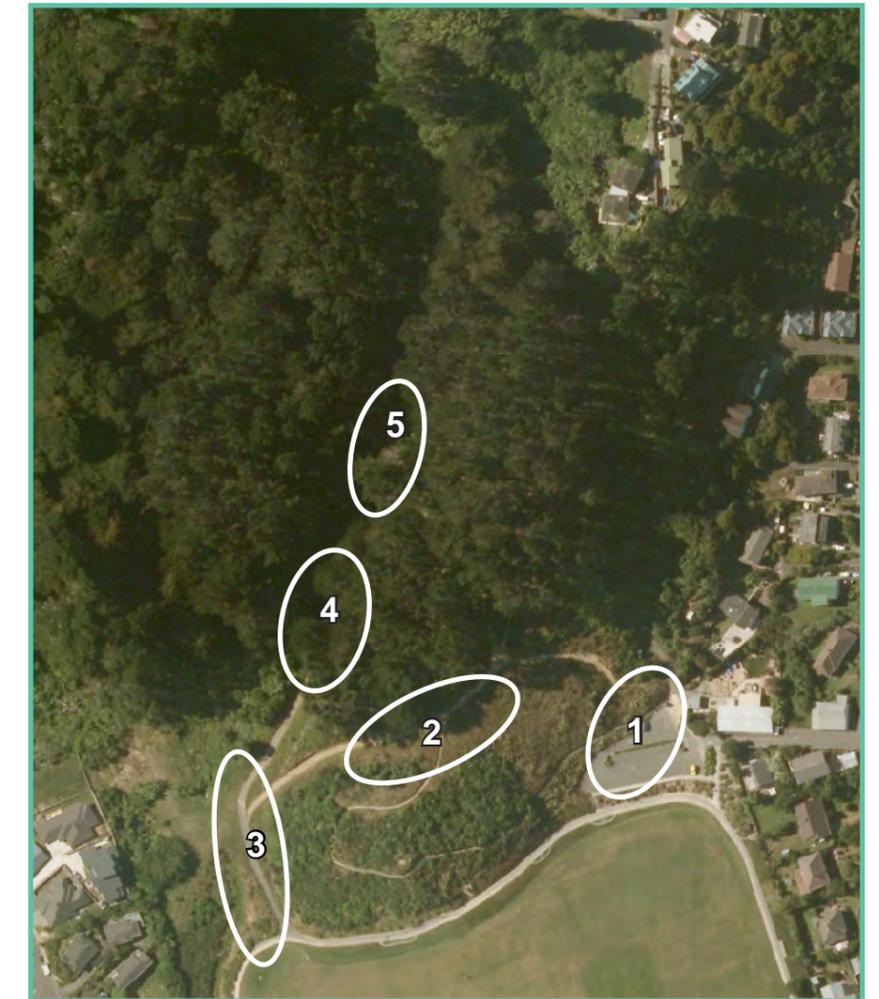


Figure 3: Locations of areas

Remove lower branches of Macrocarpa and some vegetation to open sightlines and the dog exercise area

Relocate the trail slightly above the gully floor and plant the trail's current location to absorb runoff

Area 4

This area is sheltered and is the start of the Wahine Track and where the 98 downhill mountain bike trail exits. The existing children's bike skills circuit leads up the gully (purple line). Downhill mountain bike tracks exit steeply onto the main pedestrian track. A stream channel is likely to have flowed down the gully from the many springs and run off from higher slopes.

Issues:

- The entry to the Wahine Track is low key and easily overlooked
- Potential conflict with the 98 Downhill mountain bike trail (yellow lines) entering the gully floor and crossing the main gully access track
- The stream channel (blue line) is overgrown and blocked by tracks, logs, vegetation, debris and 98 Downhill mountain bike trail exits. Poor drainage means the main track in the gully becomes muddy and rutted.

Opportunities:

- Development of the new grade 2 loop trail includes upgrading the Wahine Track where it is part of that trail. Keeping only one exit from the 98 downhill trail and redesigning where it exits onto the gully floor to reduce conflict between different track users
- Clearing the stream channel and planting in native riparian species.



Area 4 Looking west



Area 4 Looking east

Area 5

The end of the gully floor track is a pleasant, peaceful, sheltered forest clearing defined by two small streams which meet to form a small wetland. A low bund at the back of the clearing directs water away from the track. A concrete trough next to the wetland was likely used for cattle when the area was farmed (information from Karori Historical Association)

Issues:

- Two tracks block the stream bed creating the small wetland. Water from the streams, seepage from slopes above and springs is forced to run onto the central path or to seep underground. The wider track is misleading for walkers as it narrows to become part of the 98 downhill mountain bike trail. A large fallen tree blocks the second trail approximately 10 metres uphill
- The wetland and trough are difficult to see due to vegetation and a large fallen tree.

Opportunities:

- Reforming the stream channel and removing tracks where they block the stream channel to improve drainage
- Clearing some vegetation and a large tree where it has fallen over the wetland to expose the stream and trough as an interesting reminder of earlier farming.



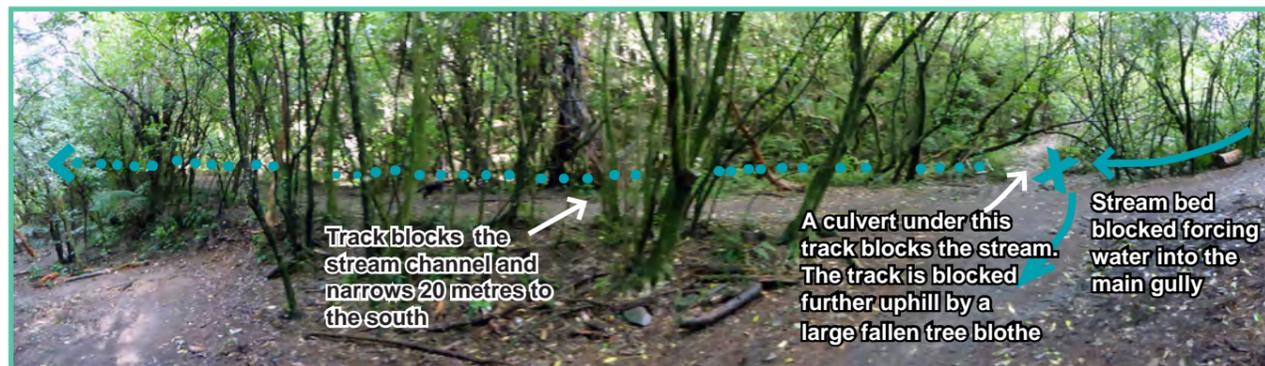
Area 5 Sheltered clearing at the end of the gully floor track



Wetland with trough is difficult to see because of a large fallen tree (out of photo) and vegetation



Water trough - Interesting remnant of earlier farming



View looking east - stream channel needs reforming and two tracks removed to restore flow and catch runoff

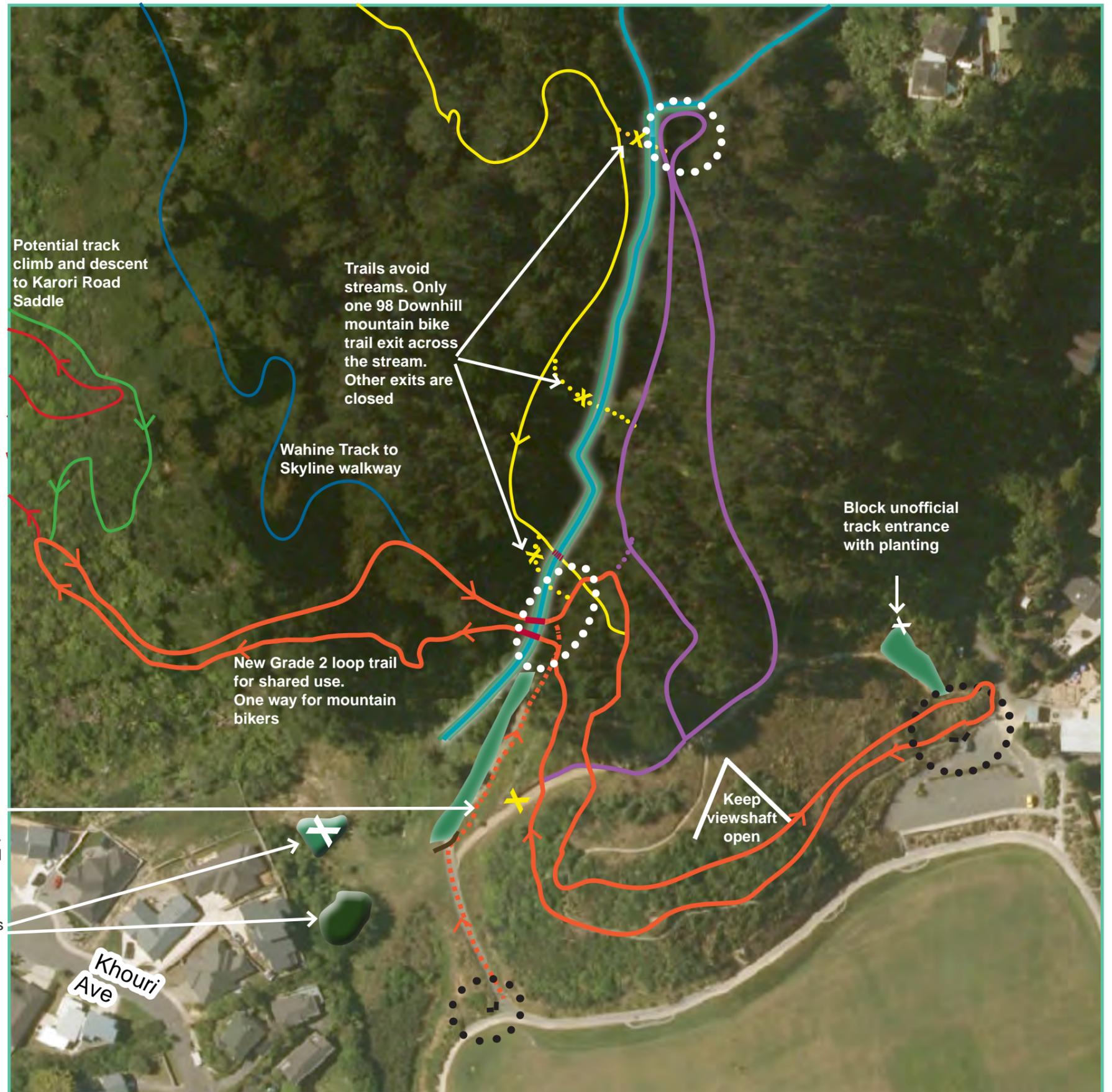


Water is forced down the central gully path

Concept for Improvements

KEY

-  Shared trails
-  Shared trail with mountain biking in one direction
-  New dog exercise loop trail
-  98 Downhill mountain biking
-  Links to sportsfield perimeter path
-  Stream and stream crossings
-  Riparian planting along restored stream channel
-  Entrances with signs and information
-  Planting small shrubs, ground covers or grasses at entrances of redundant tracks to redirect track users, reduce runoff and improve wayfinding
-  Lower branches of existing Macrocarpa removed to open up grassed dog exercise area
-  Remove existing vegetation to open up dog exercise area
-  Keep relatively open with a sense of a clearing in the forest with clearer sight lines for a sense of safety
-  Reduce path width and prominence to aid way finding (used for occasional downhill mountain bike events)
-  Keep views open by trimming vegetation
-  Potential Link to Karori Saddle (one way climb and descent trail for mountain bikers)



Realign track (existing track is on the fall line and water scours the track surface). Plant existing track. Timber post and rail barrier redirects users. Uphill mountain biking only

Remove vegetation that restricts sightlines to improve a sense of safety and create more open space for dog exercise

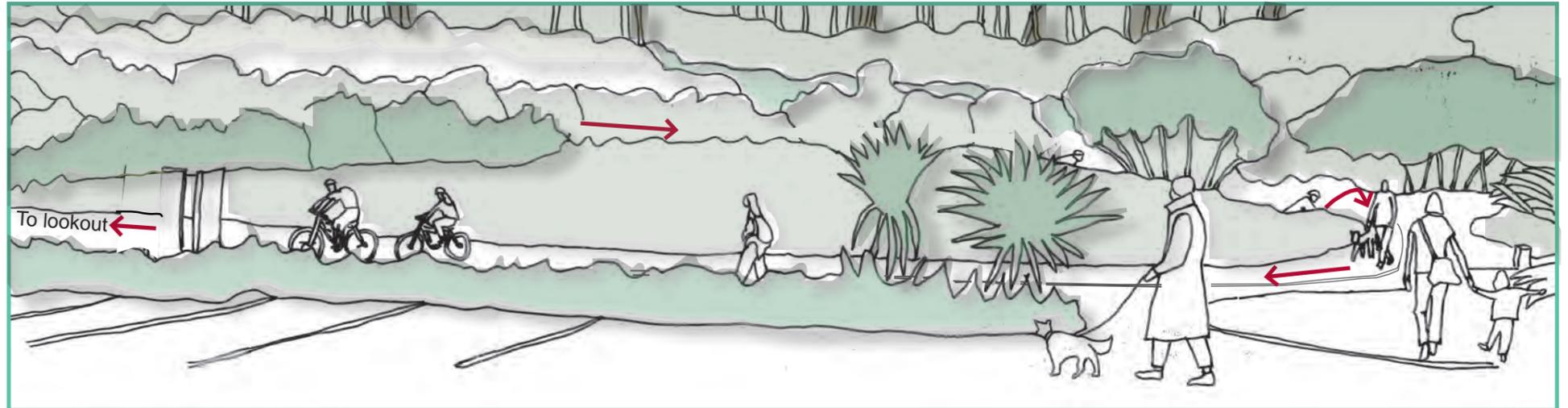
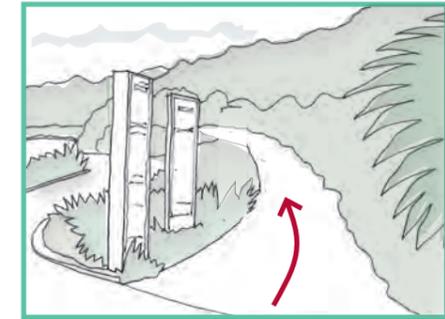
Figure 4 Overall concept for improvements

Sunshine Avenue carpark to the lookout (Areas 1 and 2)

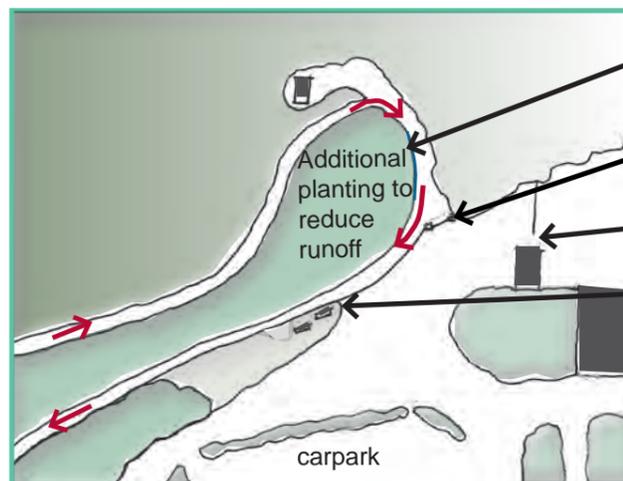
- Children's bike skills trail widened to a shared Grade 2 trail (mountain biking, walking, dog walking), with uphill mountain biking and a new return shared trail (mountain biking downhill only).
- Information panels on trails, trail use, links to the Skyline Walkway, activities and dog exercise area
- The shared trail exits above the kindergarten entry at an uphill angle to slow mountain bikers and run off is directed away from the kindergarten entry and into the existing stormwater channel
- Planting the steep, slippery clay slope and the track from the lookout area leading to private property to reduce runoff and remove these unofficial and misleading tracks. In this way, wayfinding will improve, especially for visitors new to this part of the park
- Identifying entries to the dog exercise loop trail with markers that are different from the usual track markers
- A viewshaft from the lookout area over the sportsfields can be retained by selective trimming of vegetation.



Area 1 Existing



Entrance/exit of proposed Grade 2 shared trail (one way mountain biking)



- Slot drain directed into existing stormwater drains to reduce run off into kindergarten entrance
- Existing bollards and chain at driveway to control access to pump station retained
- Kindergarten access
- Trail information at entrance to new Grade 2 shared trail

Plan view of sunshine Avenue carpark and the new Grade 2 shared trail



Area 2 New dog exercise loop trail marked with distinctive markers (former children's bike circuit)

Entrance from sportsfield perimeter path (Area 3)

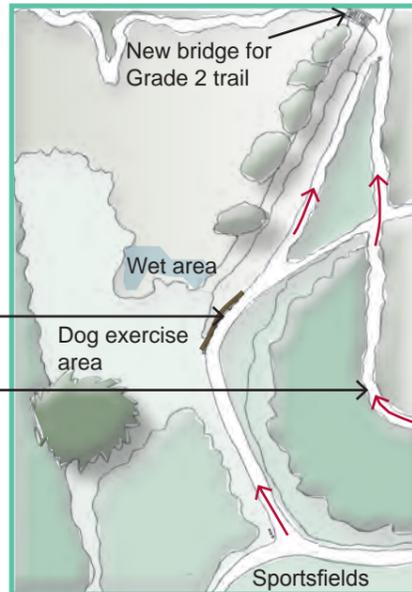
- New trail information at the edge of the sportsfield perimeter path is likely to attract more people to explore the hilly forested area of Karori Park
- Shared track from the dog exercise area to the Wahine Track and new Grade 2 trail bridge is realigned to avoid the gully floor. Users are directed by a post and rail fence. This replaces the existing gully floor track which is difficult to maintain because water runs down it causing a very rough, uneven and scoured surface
- Improving path surfaces and cambering to direct run off to path edges, managing vegetation and a general tidy up would make this entrance more welcoming and attract more people to explore this part of the park
- Managing vegetation at path edges to open up sightlines to the beginning of the Wahine Track and the new Grade 2 trail by thinning and removing trees and other vegetation blocking the view ahead. Logs can be kept for adventure/nature play
- Removing lower branches of the large Macrocarpa in the open grassed dog exercise area and removing some other trees that block views will open up the area and provide more space while still retaining privacy for neighbouring properties.



Area 3 Location of trail information signs (the same as signs in the Sunshine Ave carpark)



View of the dog exercise area and track along the fall line up the gully floor to the Wahine Track (red arrow)



Shared track with posts and rails to direct users
Grade 2 trail from Sunshine carpark



View of existing asphalt path from the sportsfield perimeter path, dog exercise area and realigned shared trail to the Wahine Track. Uphill biking only. Post and rail fence directs users to the realigned track

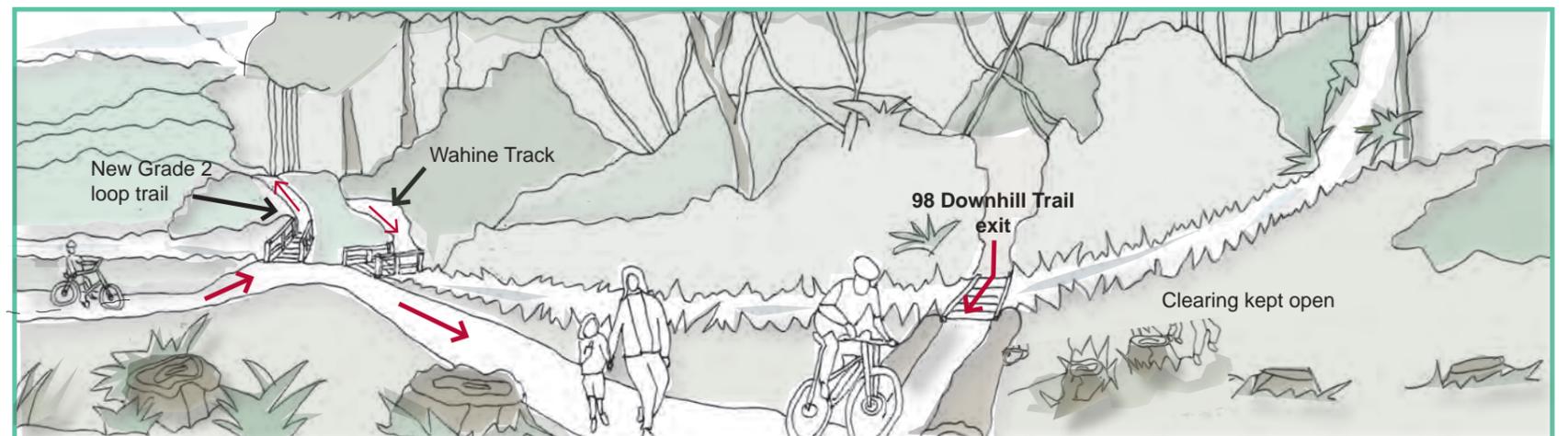
Central clearing with entrance to Wahine Track (Area 4)

- Keep open with a sense of a clearing in the forest with clearer sight lines for a sense of safety. It is important to keep the area natural and 'wild' but also have signs that this area is cared for and maintained
- A bridge for the new Grade 2 loop trail (one way for mountain bikers) crossing the stream below the Wahine Track bridge, with the option of eventually linking to the Skyline Walkway as an alternative to the Wahine Track. The Wahine Track is upgraded where it is part of the new Grade 2 loop trail
- Only one mountain bike downhill trail exit retained. At the foot of the slope the downhill trail is controlled using strategically placing logs
- The stream channel is cleared of vegetation, logs and other debris and edges planted in riparian native species
- The forest clearings are tidied up and kept open with some logs and stumps for children's adventure/nature play
- The path up the gully (for walkers and dog walkers) is redirected and away from exiting downhill mountain bikers (see Area 4 Proposed - Looking east)

Plan view of existing path from the sportsfield perimeter path, dog exercise area and realigned shared path to the Wahine track. Uphill biking only.



Area 4 Existing - Looking west

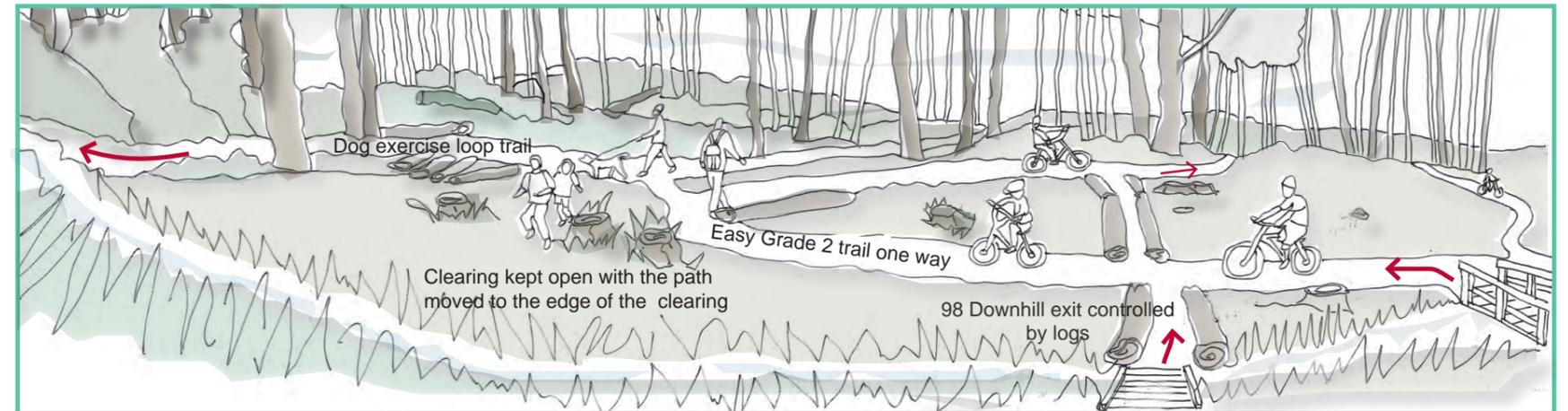


Area 4 Proposed - Looking west

Area 4 continued



Area 4 Existing - Looking east



Area 4 Proposed - Looking east

Forest clearing (Area 5)

- The clearing at the end of the gully floor track is a natural area with logs left for adventure play and informal seating, but debris is tidied up
- The forest clearing is part of the loop dog exercise trail (along the existing children's bike skills circuit). This trail complements the existing dog exercise area
- The small bund at the end of the clearing is reformed to direct the small stream and runoff from the slope above away from the clearing
- The tree fallen over the stream and some vegetation is removed to expose the stream and trough as an interesting reminder of earlier farming
- Tracks that cross the stream are removed by planting and the stream channel is reformed for approximately 20 metres to the south. This should restore water flow and catch water seepage from the slopes above. In this way the main track is likely to be drier and easier to use and maintain. Ambiguity about which track to take will no longer be an issue. In this way wayfinding is improved.



Area 5 Part of the dog exercise trail with small streams on two sides

- Clear vegetation to open up views to the stream and trough
- Remove part of tree fallen over the stream and the trough
- Reform bund to direct runoff away from the clearing
- Tidy up the area by removing debris
- Keep some logs for adventure play and informal seats but rearrange and remove damaged logs



Area 5 View looking east - stream channel reformed and two tracks removed to restore flow and catch runoff

- Remove culvert and the track (which is blocked by a large fallen tree further up the track)
- Remove track. It narrows and becomes part of the 98 Downhill track which is too steep and slippery for walkers