

# Tabled Information - Reference 190/13P(a)

## Submission to the Strategy and Policy Committee on Open Spaces

1 August, 9.15 - 9.25 am

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### Background:

This submission is in response to an invitation from the Manager of Parks, Sport and Recreation (Paul Andrews) for public feedback on the Wellington City Council's Our Capital Spaces, published in the DomPost, page A7, 28 May, 2013.

I represent a volunteer group of around 20 track builders who are building a dual purpose track in the Crofton Downs region, to eventually connect the end of Silverstream Rd to the ridge leading up to the Skyline track. The volunteers are locally based, and represent a wide cross-section of the community, from individual mountain-bikers, runners, walkers, dog owners, environmentalists, individuals and community groups.

We have essentially completed the first part of this track (shown as the black line in Figure 1), comprising the 450m from the end of Downing Street to the ridge connecting the Crofton Downs transformer to the Skyline track. This track has had very good council support, especially from David Halliday and Matt Robertson, and we are very grateful for their support. At David Halliday's insistence, we have an onsite safety officer (Magnus Bengtsson), and an MOU is being developed between the Council and the Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents Association (Chairperson: Viv Chapple).

The next stage of track building is to complete the approximately 780m section from the end of Silverstream Rd up to the Downing Street section of the track (shown in red in Figure 1). This lower section of track will have an average gradient of about 6.7%. When completed, this will result in a single track up from the end of Silverstream Rd, which will have a compacted gravel surface. This is believed by Simon Kennett to be potentially a dual purpose sustainable surface, provided due care is taken in track construction and maintenance.

The proposed lower section of track has its contorted shape to maintain its gentle gradient, and to lie within council land, and not to run into private land boundaries (thin white lines on Figure 1). This will provide both off-road cycling, walking and even buggy-pushing, between Crofton Downs and the Skyline track.

Once track building has finished, tree planting will begin, under the guidance of Simon Kennett, and we expect others from the local community to be attracted to these tasks. After most of the tree planting has ended, our group is expected to essentially disband, and the long term maintenance of the track to lie with the NCDRA. We expect good local support to continue for maintenance and tree planting issues associated with the track.

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Recommendations:

I want to make two points:

1. Can the council please ensure that the budget for maintaining and forming new tracks specifically in the Crofton Down/Ngaio region, and more generally in the wider Wellington region, be maintained. We are concerned that there was the possibility that this year's budget may have been halved.
2. We seek continuing council support for completing the track down from Downing Street to the end of Silverstream Road. Most of the work will be completed by local volunteer labour, but we do hope that we can access council resources for gravel, boardwalks, trees, etc.

The two points above have strong local support, as assessed from recent email exchanges within our group.

These suggestions are also compatible with the concepts published in the WCC article "Our Living City", since this low gradient sustainable track will:

- Improve the quality of life of people particularly in Ngaio and Crofton Downs, and in general elsewhere in Wellington, by providing easy access from Crofton Downs to the Skyline track;
- Strengthen the urban-nature connection, by encouraging people to walk this track;
- Reduce the impact on the environment by encouraging people in the upper Crofton Downs area to bike up and down to Silverstream Rd under a native canopy, and then to catch the train from Crofton Downs;
- Assist the economy by generating a useful public facility, through volunteer labour, at about one tenth of the full cost, thereby allowing a public facility which would not otherwise be constructed;
- Assisting the Two Million Trees project by extensive tree planting along the sides of the track, the eventual aim of which is to provide a full canopy of local trees over the track, which will remove the presence of gorse;
- Facilitate multiple uses, such as walking, running, biking, buggy-pushing;
- Demonstrate leadership through providing a vision as to how the local Ngaio and Crofton Downs communities can improve their environment, connectedness and local facilities, through direct participation in track construction, tree planting and subsequence track maintenance, assisted by local associations.

Thank you for the opportunity to present these ideas,

Graham Weir  
1 August, 2013.



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Figure 1. Completed section of track (in black) between the end of Downing Street and the ridge leading to the Skyline Track. Proposed section of track (in red) connecting the end of Silverstream Rd with the completed section of track. Image courtesy Simon Kennett.



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Figure 2. Upper section of track (before the application of gravel) connecting to the ridge leading to the Skyline track. Cattlestop constructed by Kennett Brothers, using WCC resources. Note: the grey lean-to in the foreground was destroyed by storm on 20/6/2013. Image courtesy Simon Kennett.

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**DRAFT ONLY -- THIS FILE WAS NOT SUBMITTED AS A FUNDING APPLICATION TO WCC. HOWEVER, SOME OF ITS CONTENT MAY BE RELEVANT WHEN CONSIDERING THE CASE FOR FUNDING FOR THIS TRACK.**

Attn: 'Our Living City'.

Re: Track up from Silverstream Rd, Crofton Downs, Wellington, to the Wellington Skyline Walkway.

26 July, 2013

**Application for funding for materials to construct the sustainable, dual-purpose track up from the end of Silverstream Road in Crofton Downs, to join with the track just completed from Downing Street to the ridge leading to the Skyline Walkway, Wellington.**

Graham Weir, [graham.weir@callaghaninnovation.govt.nz](mailto:graham.weir@callaghaninnovation.govt.nz) 029 200 9600 04 4797800(home)

Dear Sir and Madam,

I am applying on behalf of about 40 volunteers for funding from WCC to meet some of the capital costs needed to complete the sustainable, dual purpose track up from the end of Silverstream Rd. This approximately 700m long track (the name has still to be decided) is shown in red in the attached Figures. It will run from the end of Silverstream Road in Crofton Downs, Wellington and join up with the just completed track from the end of Downing Street (shown in black below in the Figure). The contorted shapes of the proposed track is needed for it to have an average gradient of around 6.7degrees, and to lie wholly within Wellington City Council land. Completion of this track has been shown to be feasible in a report by Simon Kennett to David Halliday of the Wellington City Council.

This track will provide the only off-road access to walkers, runners and mountain bikers between the Skyline Walkway and the Crofton Downs/Ngaio suburbs.

This new section of track is much longer, and because of the steep terrain, has more capital requirements, such as boardwalks and retaining structures, than for the recently completed Downing Street section of track. For these reasons, we are applying for funding to facilitate completion of this track. We would certainly appreciate a grant which will catalyse early approval and completion of this project.

The materials needed to complete this track include:

- At least three boardwalks. Each boardwalk will cost around \$1000 (+ GST).
- Possibly two additional boardwalks in the gullies between the switchbacks.
- Retaining walls at the upper part of the track, where it joins to the recently constructed track; retaining at the bottom of the track; and probably retaining at the two switchbacks.
- Signs at the top and bottom of the Downing St section of track, and at the 3-way intersection by the current boardwalk (where the red and black lines meet in the Figure below). These four signs will probably cost about \$100 each for design, construction and installation.

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In addition, we will need about 100 seedlings for tree planting, each costing around \$6.45 + GST (eg from Leacroft). These are trees not available from the WCC, and include: Kamahi, Kohekohe, Miro, Rimu, Hinau, Tawa and Titoki.

The total cost for materials and labour for the retaining and boardwalks, and trees, overburden and signage is then around \$8,000, which is a very small fraction of the WCC Parks and Reserves budget of over \$150,000. However, the major cost is track construction, which will be completed freely by local volunteer labour. To reduce the cost to WCC, we will approach a number of groups to support our project. We will apply to Trail Fund NZ for \$500 in their next funding round, and to the Wadestown St Lukes Anglican Church for a similar amount of funding, to facilitate early construction of this track.

Hopefully, WCC will make a contingency in 2013/14 for \$8000 to be paid into David Halliday's budget, to ensure this track is completed.

This track building project meets all of the criteria for Our Living City funding:

- Urban-nature connection. The proposed sustainable, dual purpose track up from Silverstream Road to the Skyline Walkway will connect Crofton Downs to the Skyline Walkway. This will allow local residents in particular, but all Wellingtonians in general, greater access to nature from a suburban environment.
- Natural capital. This track will enhance the natural capital of Wellington. Likely benefits include much easier access to the regenerating bush from the track, which will facilitate access to the local catchment at the end of Silverstream Road, and encourage future trapping, and hence the reestablishment of native birds and trees.
- Reducing impact on the environment. The track will allow residents from the Downing Street and surrounding areas walking and biking access under natural canopy to the end of Silverstream Rd, and hence encourage use of local bus and train services.
- Leadership. The vision of connecting the Crofton Downs area, through native bush, to the local hills, demonstrates leadership.
- Biodiversity. Replacing the current gorse and open landscape in the Crofton Downs area will transform local biodiversity. Completion of this track will provide easy access to large parts of the catchment above the end of Silverstream Rd, and encourage regeneration of many native tree species. It is hoped that native birds in Zealandia will then be able to fly and occupy the trees in the local catchment.
- Urban design. This will be the only bike-accessible track in the southern end of the Skyline Walkway which connects with the low lying suburbs of Ngaio and Crofton Downs.
- Green infrastructure. This track is an infrastructural element which encourages environmental and ecological responsibility.
- Bringing the forest to the city. Extensive tree planting will occur about the track. This will contribute to the WCC Two Million Trees project.
- Quality of life. This track will encourage access to the outdoors, and improve the quality of life of all who use this track, either by running, walking, biking, etc. . The track's gradient is typically less than 7 degrees, making it accessible to a large fraction of the Wellington population. The recently completed section of track at the end of Downing St, for example, is already popular with some pre-schoolers and their care-givers.

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Some other aspects of the track to consider are:

- **Timing.** Before the track can be started, its alignment must be determined. It will need about 20 hours work to identify the specific points on the ground which correspond to the route identified on a map. Serious work can then begin on the track (after several weeks of alignment), probably around the end of August. The urgent need will then arise for retaining materials, and materials for boardwalks. Because these structures will be used by the public, it will be important that they are constructed professionally. These costs will arise in the next few months. To meet these costs is the primary reason for making this grant application. We are hoping to complete the whole track up from Silverstream Rd within a year, but hopefully much less than this.
- **Experience.** The local volunteer workforce now has experience in track building, having just completed the section of track from the end of Downing Street to the ridge leading to the Skyline Walkway. There is an even greater group of volunteers who are keen to start the Silverstream section of track. The key track builders bring very extensive experience from the Makara Peak region.
- **Non-profit.** The volunteer track builders, and the Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents Association, are non-profit groupings and organisations, respectively.
- **Volunteer-led.** The physical work is volunteer-led. There are around 40 people on the email list informing interested local residents of the work needed each weekend on track construction. For example, last weekend (20 July), we had close to 20 volunteers working to lay overburden on the Downing Street section of the track. This was a high turnout, but even in the worst of weather conditions, we typically have a minimum of 8 volunteers for our Saturday midday working bees.
- **Safety.** At Wellington City Council insistence, we have an on-site safety manager (= Community Group Coordinator = Magnus Bengtsson). All of the work done by volunteers to date has been non-mechanical, having been done by hand.
- **MOU.** An MOU is being written between the Ngaio Crofton Downs Residents Association and the Wellington City Council, to cover issues such as tree planting and continuing maintenance of the track. This MOU will replace the previous MOU between WCC and the Ngaio Progressive Association.
- **Sustainable.** The alignments have been designed by Simon Kennett, who considers them mountain bike accessible. In addition, the Wellington City Council believes the track's proposed gradient is sufficiently mild to be easily accessible to most walkers, which should make this track sustainable in the long term.
- **Housing development.** Approval for the track should proceed independent of any proposals for housing development at the end of Silverstream Road, because approvals for such housing developments could be very lengthy. For example, the Downing Street development took around 6 years. If a housing development at the bottom of Silverstream Road runs its water and sewer lines from the end of Downing St through the track alignment, then repairing the track afterwards will be a straightforward and not too expensive process.
- **Future closed circuit.** Once this track up from Silverstream Rd is completed, some thought should be given to a possible low gradient track from the end of Silverstream Rd, around the Crows Nest to the east, joining up with the top of Bells track near the Skyline Walkway. This would provide a very valuable, sustainable, low gradient closed circuit, taking about 2 hours

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to walk, or one hour to ride. This closed circuit is clearly some time away, but to have a strategy towards its completion seems ideal.

- Unique. This will be the only low gradient, dual purpose track connecting suburban areas directly with the Skyline Walkway. This makes the other possible track around the Crows Nest just as important.

Finally, can I say that the local community is very keen to provide volunteer labour to complete the track up from Silverstream Rd. I believe it is important that we retain the current momentum we have on this track construction, and I am keen that we can now push on as rapidly as possible to complete the whole project. Your financial assistance would benefit this aim.

If I can clarify any aspect of this funding application, please contact me,

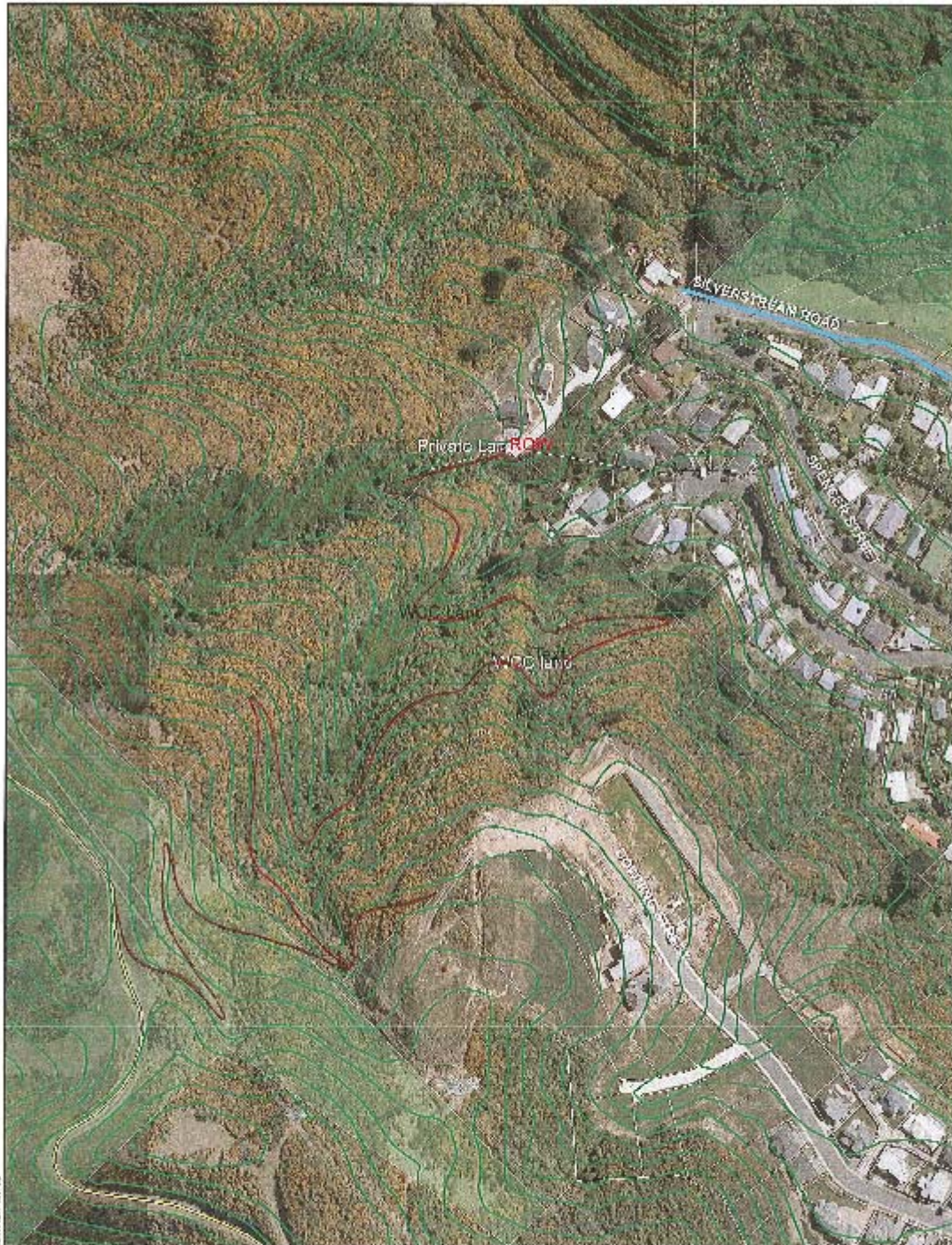
Yours sincerely,

Graham Weir.

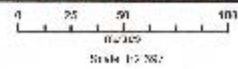


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Approximate two-switchback proposed alignment (red line) up from Silverstream Road . Completed track (black line) up from Downing Street.



**Silver stream Rd 5m contours**



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Figure: Possible dual purpose track from the end of Silverstream Rd, Crofton Down, Wellington. The wholly red line is a proposed track alignment. The black alignment has just been completed.





# Track up from Silverstream Road, Crofton Downs

Completed track = black

Proposed track = red



## Proposals

1. Maintain budgets for new tracks, especially in the Crofton Down - Ngaio region
2. Seek continuing council support for completing the track down from Downing Street to the end of Silverstream Road (8k).



# Comments

- MOU between WCC and NCDRA re track
- Safety officer Magnus Bengtsson
- Up to 20 local volunteers on Saturdays
- Around 40 on email list
- Seeking external funding to supplement council funding for track completion
- Track will take 6 - 12 months to complete

# Contributing to “Our Living City”

- Improve the quality of life of people particularly in Ngaio and Crofton Downs, and in general elsewhere in Wellington, by providing easy access from Crofton Downs to the Skyline track;
- Strengthen the urban-nature connection, by encouraging people to walk this track;
- Reduce the impact on the environment by encouraging people in the upper Crofton Downs area to bike up and down to Silverstream Rd under a native canopy, and then to catch the train from Crofton Downs;
- Assist the economy by generating a useful public facility, through volunteer labour, at about one tenth of the full cost, thereby allowing a public facility which would not otherwise be constructed;
- Assisting the Two Million Trees project by extensive tree planting along the sides of the track, the eventual aim of which is to provide a full canopy of local trees over the track, which will remove the presence of gorse;
- Facilitate multiple uses, such as walking, running, biking, buggy-pushing;
- Demonstrate leadership through providing a vision as to how the local Ngaio and Crofton Downs communities can improve their environment, connectedness and local facilities, through direct participation in track construction, tree planting and subsequent track maintenance, assisted by local associations.

# Capital items

- At least three boardwalks - each around \$1000 (+ GST).
- Possibly two additional boardwalks in gullies between switchbacks.
- Retaining walls at the upper part of the track, where it joins to the recently constructed track; retaining at the bottom of the track; and probably retaining at the two switchbacks.
- Signs at the top and bottom of the Downing St section of track, and at the 3-way intersection by the current boardwalk (where the red and black lines meet in the Figure above). These four signs will probably cost about \$100 each for design, construction and installation.
- About 100 seedlings, \$6.45 + GST each - Kamahi, Kohekohe, Miro, Rimu, Hinau, Tawa and Titoki. NA from WCC.
- Overburden along 700m of new track (5 truckloads).
- Hundreds of trees sourced from WCC nurseries.