

5 Recreation and access

5.1 Background

Even though Point Dorset was a defence area, it has been used by the public for informal recreation for many years. There are, however, only a few visitor facilities provided (see Map F). This is because it has been open to the public (ie guaranteed public access) for only a decade. There is a seating area on the boardwalk entrance from Ludlam Street, Seatoun (this is not maintained by Council).

There are no signs and some tracks are of poor quality, especially near the Pass of Branda and behind Seatoun Primary School. A popular coastal walk passing through the reserve can be turned into a loop track via the shoreline. This loop provides an extension to the Eastern Walkway, which goes from Tarakena Bay to the Pass of Branda. The nearest toilets are at Churchill Park.

The area is used by a number of local dog-walkers – who exercise their dogs on a daily basis. Oruaiti Reserve is not an approved off-lead dog exercise area in Council’s Dog Policy 2009.

The coastal environment is a popular location for gathering kaimoana. People have to access the coast through Oruaiti Reserve.

5.2 Issues

5.2.1 Access and track conditions

Many people may be unaware of Oruaiti Reserve. The entrances are not signposted and there is no information on the walking and recreation opportunities at the site. There is also no on-site information about its historic and ecological features.

Some of the tracks follow the old roads built to maintain the guns at Fort Dorset. These roads were maintained by the defence force. The tracks are difficult to negotiate in places due to:

- the steepness of the hills
- slippery surface materials
- overgrown vegetation
- poor drainage
- the narrowness of some sections of track
- eroding sections (access across some sections of reserve may be lost if erosion continues).



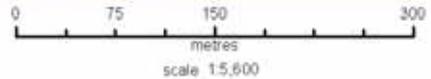
Pass of Branda track

These conditions are making it difficult for some people, including young families and the elderly, to visit Oruaiti Reserve. The challenge will be to develop and maintain a standard of track to provide better access without affecting the ‘naturalness’ or ruggedness of the area.

There are a few walking and no mountain-biking opportunities in Seatoun. A footpath runs alongside Marine Parade. There are places where people can drive and park to view the coast.



Map F - Oruaiti Reserve Track Network



Property boundaries, 20m Contours, road names, cell no, address & site points sourced from Land Information NZ. Crown Copyright reserved. Property boundaries accuracy: ±1m in urban areas, ±1-30m in rural areas. Census data sourced from Statistics NZ. Postcodes sourced from NZ Post. Assets, contours, water and drainage information shown is approximate and must not be used for detailed engineering design. Other data has been compiled from a variety of sources and its accuracy may vary, but is generally ±1m.

MAP PRODUCED BY
Wellington City Council
101 Wakefield Street
WELLINGTON, NZ

ORIGINAL MAP SIZE: A4
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Oruaiti Reserve had been identified as a potential part of the proposed Great Harbour Way/Te Ara o Pōneke, which involves the development of an off-road shared path around the harbour from Pariwhero/Red Rocks to Pencarrow Head.

Submitters had concerns about the suitability of the steep terrain at Point Dorset for shared-use (walkers and cyclists) and user safety, and the fragile coastal dune environment could be damaged from inappropriate use of bikes. An assessment of the suitability of this track for shared use has been carried out (as required by the Open Space Access Plan). The assessment found the access up the hill behind Seatoun School and Breaker Bay Road (Pass of Branda) is not practical for uphill bike use and would be unsafe for downhill use. There are a number of other points on the current track network where this is also the case. Given the unsafe nature of these areas, bike use would also lead to user group conflict. Based on this finding, Oruaiti Reserve will be closed to biking except for the flat coastal track between Hector Street (near Churchill Park) and the boardwalk off Ludlam Street.

The reserve will provide for people walking the Great Harbour Way/Te Aranui o Pōneke. This will attract new users to the reserve. Cyclists on the Great Harbour Way will use local roads.

5.2.2 Modifications to the ruggedness of the area

There are steep coastal cliffs, including some that are eroding along parts of the walkway and the lookout area. Some users are concerned about man-made structures at the viewpoint, as this will interrupt the natural character of the area. Any additional structures or visitor facilities, such as signs or seating, should have minimal impact on the landscape, ecological and historic features. Many users like the naturalness of this site and want little or no change made.

Any new track development needs to avoid damaging the ecological, archaeological and historic features. The Council should refer to the archaeological assessment (OPUS 2011) and seek advice from heritage experts if required. The Council will require an authority from the Historic Places Trust if there is to be an impact on any pre-1900 features, such as Oruaiti Pā.

5.2.3 Dogs

Oruaiti Reserve is managed as an area where dogs can go on a lead, in line with the Dog Policy and Animal Bylaw. A review of the Dog Policy will be undertaken in 2012/13.

Some local dog-owners want this area to become an off-lead dog area. This is an accessible location for walking dogs, which provides some challenge and good exercise. But there are some concerns about off-lead dogs creating problems for other users and wildlife at Oruaiti Reserve.

South of Point Dorset and Breaker Bay, dogs are prohibited from the coastal side of the road, including Wahine Memorial Park, Tarakena Bay and Moa Point, because penguins nest in the area. Little blue penguins or korora and other seabirds also nest at this reserve, especially at Breaker Bay. The proposal in this plan is to restore and enhance more habitats that would be suitable for penguins and other seabirds near the northern end of the reserve (see 4.4.1 and 4.4.4). Dogs will remain on lead on the beach and dune areas, however consideration will be given during the review of the Dog Policy to providing for an off-lead dog area on the ridgeline tracks.

5.3 Objectives

- To provide outdoor recreational opportunities and experiences that are environmentally and socially sustainable and accessible to communities.
- To provide a track network that does not damage the coastal environment and historic features.

5.4 Policies

5.4.1 Access and track conditions

- All tracks will be physically sustainable and have minimal environmental impact, as far as possible.
- Close informal or short-cut tracks that go through areas of high ecological value.
- Tracks will be signposted and maintained to defined standards.
- Signs and interpretation will be used to tell visitors about recreation opportunities, potential hazards, and the environmental, cultural and historic features of Oruaiti Reserve. Signs will also help to manage the interface between public and private land.
- Consideration will be given to planting areas beside the track above the cliffs to define the track and improve public safety.
- Work with Great Harbour Way/Te Aranui o Pōneke to promote walking opportunities through the reserve.
- The following activities are permitted at this reserve:
 - Walking and running
 - Exercising dogs on-lead (see the Council's Dog Policy)*
 - Studying plants and bird-watching
 - Sightseeing
 - Waka landing
 - Mountain biking – only on the track between Hector Street and the boardwalk off Ludlam Street ♦
- The reserve is closed to the following activities:
 - Motorised vehicles – except for management and emergency services
 - Open fires
 - Camping
 - Hunting
 - Exercising dogs off-lead*
 - Mountain biking (except the track between Hector Street and the boardwalk off Ludlam Street) ♦
 - Collection and removal of natural and built material – without Council approval

Note

- * The Council's Dog Policy and Animal Bylaws control dog access to Oruaiti Reserve. If a change to dog access is proposed at the next review of the Council's Dog Policy and Animal Bylaws (next review is planned 2012/13), this will override the policy on dog access listed above.
- ♦ The Council's Open Space Access Plan Schedule A will require updating to reflect the tracks at Oruaiti Reserve that are closed to mountain biking.

5.4.2 Modifications to the ruggedness of the area

- Seek to limit new structures on the coast to only those that are necessary.

The above policy recognises that certain structures are necessary:

 - for the enjoyment of the coast (such as seating)
 - to manage coastal activities (such as signs, litter bins and fences)
 - for the effective functioning of the city's infrastructure.
- The design of any structures within the reserve should take into account the natural character of the environment. The location, design and materials should be appropriate in the context of the reserve and its environment.
- Ensure that the design of facilities and access ways promotes safe use of the coast while at the same time maintaining or enhancing the coastal environment and scenic experience.
- The landscape plan will identify suitable sites for seating to minimise impacts on the environment. These seats will be installed through implementation of the plan, as part of the Plimmer Bequest funding.