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Committee Landcare
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Visitor monitoring framework – update 2

1. Purpose

To update the Committee on progress with the implementation of the Visitor Monitoring Framework. This year the project was aimed at:

- Recalibrating counter data to more accurately reflect the number of visits to Queen Elizabeth Park, Kaitoke Regional Park and Battle Hill Farm Forest Park
- Assessing visitor satisfaction through conducting a number of on-park intercept surveys.

2. Significance of the decision

The matters for decision in this report **do not** trigger the significance policy of the Council or otherwise trigger section 76(3)(b) of the Local Government Act 2002.

3. Background

Last year was the first instance of our implementing the Visitor Monitoring Framework in Belmont Regional Park. That exercise enabled us to identify the park entrances accounting for 75% of the park visits. Through extrapolating these figures we obtained a more robust picture of total park usage than was previously available.

At this time we also piloted the Visitor Satisfaction Survey, interviewing 100 visitors on the park. This gave us useful insights into what people value about the park, the benefits they get from visiting, what they do there, their satisfaction with what the park provides and ideas for improvements.

This information complements that which we receive via the annual community telephone survey, management plan submissions, ranger reports and other feedback.

This year we ran a similar exercise in the three parks mentioned above, again with the aim of building a clearer picture of park visitation levels and the people who use them.

3.1 What happened?

Temporary staff manned all entrances to the three parks over selected weekends and weekdays from 27 January to 18 March. They counted vehicles, cyclists, horseback riders and pedestrians entering the park.

We surveyed a total of 7 entrances to QEP, three to Kaitoke Regional Park and one to Battle Hill. Three days were spent on what we believed to be the three main entrances to QEP and on all entrances to the other two parks. Two days were allocated to the four minor QEP entrances.

The information gathered included:

- Number of visitors at each entrance
- Visitor activity
- Visitor characteristics (how they reached the park, who they visited with, how long they spent there)
- Visitor satisfaction with various aspects of the park e.g. facilities, space, behaviour of others; and those most valued by the visitor
- Benefits of visiting the park to the visitor
- Demographic profile

3.2 Findings

According to the visitor counts the three most visited entrances in Queen Elizabeth Park were those contributing 80% of the park's visitation. They were (in order) Paekakariki, MacKay's Crossing and Raumati South. Both MacKay's Crossing and Paekakariki have had vehicle counters installed for a number of years. The survey work confirms our view that a vehicle counter should be installed at Raumati South.

As expected the entrances to Battle Hill and Kaitoke draw many people by private vehicle, but these numbers fluctuate markedly, with significant increases during the weekends, events and fine weather. There will be no changes to the counter locations at these parks.

3.3 Calibrations

Visitor figures have been compared to the vehicle (road) counters installed at each entrance or to the total vehicle counts if no counter is in place. Using this we have derived a multiplication factor for each counter to give an overall estimate for that entrance. These factors are shown in the chart below:

Park	Entrance	Multiplication factor (after halving the counter figure to allow for entry & exit)	Comments
Queen Elizabeth Park	Paekakariki	1.63	With the Paekakariki Holiday Park located inside this entrance many people pass through often, either by car or bicycle
	MacKays Crossing	1.51	
	Raumati South	3.24	Allows for significant numbers of people entering here on foot and by cycle
Kaitoke Regional Park	Pakuratahi	2.6	Allows for significant incidents of multiple passengers per vehicle
	Keith Spry	1.6	Cars only cross the counter once so the base figure is applied
	Te Marua	2.1	
Battle Hill Farm Forest Park	Paekakariki Hill Rd	2.15	

The total of these calculations for Queen Elizabeth Park will be then be divided by 0.8 to allow for people entering via the four minor entrances and thus estimate visitation for the park as a whole.

No such extrapolation is required for Kaitoke Regional Park and Battle Hill given that the entrances surveyed there comprise those where all visitors arrive.

3.4 Visitor survey satisfaction results

	Queen Elizabeth Park	Kaitoke Regional Park	Battle Hill FFP
Main activity	Walking; walking with dogs	Walking	Walking
Secondary activity	Using beach, mountain biking	Camping, picnicking, swimming	Horse riding, camping
Main reason for visiting	Location/ proximity; dog friendly; walkability	Tour/ visit with purpose; walk; camp	Walking, camping, picnicking opportunities
Level of "very satisfied" with park as place for their activity	97%	98%	97%
Who do you visit with?	Majority either alone or with family/ partner	75% with family/ partner/ friends; 13% as part of a group (which can be quite large)	72% with family/ partner/ friends;
How often do you visit?	74% visit at least once per week	41% visiting for first time; 47% around twice a year	28% visiting for the first time; 31 visit around twice a year
Which other parks have you visited?	Most tend to stay with QEP; the next most visited areas were the Hutt River Trail and Battle Hill	The next most visited park was QEP followed by the Pakuratahi Forest	Most were locals but the next most popular parks were Belmont and Kaitoke RP.
What are the most important facilities?	Walking tracks, toilets, rubbish bins (mainly for dog droppings), drinking water	Toilets, walking tracks, signs & information, roads and car parks	Toilets, walking tracks, signs & information
What are you most satisfied with?	Space and place (settings and views)	Flora, fauna, natural setting	Space and place (settings and views); Flora, fauna, natural setting
What do you value most	Easy access, natural setting/ landscape,	Natural setting	Natural setting, open space, good place for

about the park?	peace and quiet		exercising, access
What benefits do you get from visiting?	Exercise & fitness, stress relief, contact with nature	Being outdoors in contact with nature, exercise, relaxation, escape	Exercise & fitness, relaxation, being outdoors
What would you change about the park?	17% say "nothing"; 13% would plant more trees; more rubbish bins/ less dog poo (10%); more walking tracks (6%). Could improve publicity of the area.	47% say "nothing"; 6% say bigger carparks. Positive comments on standard of care, tracks, signs, ranger. Could improve re clarity of directions to Waterworks Rd, toilet (soap & drying hands) & changing facilities, more BBQs, picnic tables, wheel chair access; reducing loud music; promoting parks network	18% say "nothing". Others would have more tracks, bush, showers and information. Positive comments re park's quality of experience, role in education & history. Could improve re info on history, toilets (soap & drying hands); promoting parks network; on-site vendors around events
"Very satisfied" overall with park? With network?	95% 29%	97% 13%	100% 6%
How can we describe you?	75% from Kapiti Coast; 14% Wellington City; 6% overseas visitors. 59% have h/hold income 50K+; 56% aged 30-49 yrs. 65% Pakeha. 52/48 male/female	27% Upper Hutt; 23% Wellington; 19% overseas visitors. 34% have h/hold income 50K+ (14% refused to answer); 49% aged 30-49 yrs. 54/46 male/female	32% Porirua; 52% income 70k+; 59% aged 30-49 yrs; 78% Pakeha; 47/53 male/female

4. Comment

For the sake of consistency we should apply the new calibration factors at the start of the 07/08 financial year. A new counter needs to be installed at Raumati South and the counter at Kaitoke's Te Marua entrance was not recording all vehicle traffic.

The visitor satisfaction surveys clearly show many similarities in experiences, values and benefits sought and gained by visitors across the regional parks. Exercise, contact with nature and general wellbeing remain common themes with most valuing the natural settings, flora and fauna. Given the predominance of “passive” recreation, the well maintained tracks, good toilets, signage and information and picnic tables continue to be appreciated. This information helps confirm the direction and priorities for our park management.

There are differences too, due to the unique locations, histories, settings and visitor profiles. Again, many of these issues are already accommodated. However there are several improvements recommended that would not require great expense and would substantially add to people’s experiences. Others can be kept in mind for future planning periods when there is more scope to increase services.

The desire for more promotion of the regional park network and the experiences available is reassuring in that we continue to invest in this area and look for opportunities to bring more people to the parks.

5. **Communications**

Our parks Friends groups have expressed interest in the survey work we conduct in the park, and we will update them with the findings in the course of our ongoing meetings and via the May issue of “*Green Shoots*” newsletter.

6. **Recommendations**

That the Committee:

1. ***Receives the report.***
2. ***Notes the content of the report.***

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