

Manager – Marketing & Design

Report for period ending Friday 2 February 2007

1. Manager's comments

We are very pleased with the enthusiastic public response to the Regional Outdoors Programme, with the "bookable" events filling up fast and several others pulling in more than a hundred participants each. It's clear that with the combined resources of ourselves and our partner organisations we can attract many more new visitors who are not necessarily familiar with the regional parks.

These events and other discussions have highlighted the appeal of more easy grade sub-1 hour loop tracks than we find in many of the parks. While this owes a lot to the region's topography it presents challenges to getting more sedentary people to get active outside their immediate environment.

The question of a "Friends" group at East Harbour Regional Park was partially answered at our recent meeting with members of the East Harbour Environmental Association (EHEA). They are interested in setting up a group of community volunteers to focus on specific projects in the park, rather than a Friends group per se. Shortly we will return with a proposal outlining how this could happen. Similar groups have formed a nucleus for a Friends group in other parks but in the meantime this is an opportunity to build relationships and increase community involvement in the East Harbour Regional Park.

1.1 Signs

1.1.1 Kaitoke Regional Park

A series of interpretation panels was installed along the Loop Track in Kaitoke Regional Park before Christmas. The panels tell the story of the rainforest and its inhabitants including epiphytes, 'forest bandits' and ferns. The panels have been routed into large macrocarpa beams which will weather over time to a light grey colour. They have elicited positive feedback from the public with the children in particular enjoying the style of design and easily understood language.

We are planning to move the large entrance sign at the Te Marua entrance to a more visible location. The sign is at present hidden behind a low bund built as part of the Kaitoke Hill road redevelopment. It is also now partially obscured by



healthy native vegetation and is inside the newly relocated Te Marua Bush fence.

Two existing brown Transit signs at present indicate Kaitoke Regional Park from the State Highway. The Greater Wellington sign to be moved will be better seen from its new site once visitors have turned off the State Highway into the park.

1.2 Events

1.2.1 Greater Wellington Buggy Walk

The second of the six guided buggy walks took place at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park on 7 December with over 70 mums, dads, grandparents and children coming along. With wind shields up, the buggy walkers followed ranger John Bissell along tracks, through gates, along board-walks and past cows, all enjoying the farm atmosphere of Battle Hill. To add in a more strenuous Push Play, John took participants to the top of the Gas Line Ridge to view the valley below and part of the proposed “Transmission Gully” motorway route.



On 11 January, we teamed up with Sport Wellington Region, Upper Hutt and Hutt City Councils to run the first joint Buggy Walk and Kev the Wandering Kiwi event at Tunnel Gully. Attracting both buggy walkers and families with slightly older children this event saw over 330 adults and children of varying ages tackling the picturesque Tane’s Track.

We expect a similarly high turnout at the next joint Kev the Kiwi/ Buggy Walk in the Wainuiomata Recreation Area on 1 February. With no toilets on site we will be supplying portaloos.

1.2.2 Regional Outdoors Programme

The programme of events was distributed as part of *Elements* and as a separate mailout in early December. Event awareness was further boosted with related advertising, press articles and the relevant City and District Councils promoting those in their own areas. As in the past the Heli-tramping, 4WD trips, Haveago Horseriding and Lighthouse & Lakes trip booked out very quickly. Since then most other “bookable” events have filled up, highlighting the appeal of the programme.

Leading the charge into a reluctant summer, the new “Anything Vintage Festival” was held over 4 days at New Year with an estimated 5,000 people attending over that time. The event organising committee – including the Tramways museum and ranger Nikki La Monica – were delighted with the turnout. They are planning for it to be an annual event to be run over a maximum three days.

The Cancer Society funding helped purchase two new Ezy up tents which have been used at several events. Dwights Outdoors provided numerous Karrimor day packs to use as spot prizes and “20% off” vouchers for all participants in the relevant events. The packs and vouchers have proven to be very popular.

Since early January the weather has become more agreeable, participants are ever-enthusiastic and enjoying the range of experiences on offer. Informal surveys indicate that around half the attendees on average are new to the respective parks, a very relevant success indicator.

1.3 Parks visitor research

Over late January and February five temporary staff will be implementing the Visitor Monitoring Framework at Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill Farm Forest Park and Kaitoke Regional Park. Once again the objective is to count vehicle, pedestrian, cyclist and horse traffic into the parks to work out which entrances account for 75% of the visitation. We will also be conducting visitor intercept surveys to extend our understanding of visitor behaviour and attitudes towards each park.

1.4 Wellington Region Recreation Initiatives Group (WRRIG)

A first draft of the physical activity strategy “At the Heart – Activating People in the Wellington Region” has been prepared for feedback from the group at the end of January. Further consultation with City Council senior management and other stakeholders is planned for February.

1.5 MacKay’s Crossing/SH 1 Upgrade

Fulton Hogan has commenced hard landscaping work near the Park entrance, as part of the compensation for impacts on the QE Park frontage.

1.6 Community Liaison

1.6.1 Friends of Queen Elizabeth Park

We supplied display boards and material for the Anything Vintage Festival from 30 December until 2 January. The Festival raised \$10,000 for the Tramways Museum. The Guardians of Whareroa had a display stand there for the four days, staffing it for the entire time.

The main focus at the December meeting was the Friends involvement in the Regional Outdoors Programme. Much of this was centred on the Anything Vintage Festival.

Details for the restoration of the barn are being finalised to have the work carried out by a local Kapiti builder who specialises in old buildings. Some work such as the relaying of brick paving inside the barn will be carried out by the Friends.

1.6.2 Hutt River Trail

The three monthly Operations meeting was held in December. Ongoing maintenance and developments continue with work being carried out by GW, Hutt City Council and Upper Hutt City Council in their respective areas of responsibility. Graham Laws has updated all the signage and Rotary have let a contract for some new signs as some of the existing ones are looking tired. Ross Jackson and Robin Maud carried out a site survey near Manor Park Golf course looking at possible trail alignments here in the future.

1.6.3 Akatarawa Recreation Access Committee (ARAC)

At the 4 monthly meeting between the GW staff and ARAC, details for the reconstruction of the Orange Hut were finalised. This project is scheduled to commence in March.

1.6.4 Friends of Belmont Regional Park

The Friends are involved with three events in the Regional Outdoors Programme, including the Over the Tops Open Day to raise funds for upgrading the old shearers quarters in Hill Road. Much of the meeting focused on preparations for these events.

Murray Kennedy is due to attend the Friends meeting on 12 February to clarify GW's position in relation to wind farms.

1.6.5 Restoration Day

Planning is progressing for this annual event to celebrate ecological restoration in the Wellington region. A joint effort between DOC, GW and the NZ Ecological Network, it will be held at the Tauherenikau Racecourse on Saturday 12 May with the focus on forest remnants.

1.7 Lake Wairarapa

Parks staff are working with Department of Conservation to do some initial scoping work in preparation for the future management of Lake Wairarapa as a Regional Wetland Park. An initial report will look at the area's recreation opportunities as well as the ecology of the lake. The latter will include vegetation mapping and a strategy for restoration.

1.8 Whareroa Farm

Staff attended a meeting of the Guardians on 4 December. This enthusiastic group has developed a programme for what they would like to achieve by the end of 2007. This includes some smaller functional tasks through to planting many thousands of riparian plants and a comprehensive farm plan for the property.

At present the group feels they are in a state of limbo, awaiting GW's decision as to whether we will manage the site or not. Several thousand plants are being stored in the QEP nursery until the winter planting season. Staff are also attending and contributing to the preliminary discussions on the farm plan. The latter is being coordinated by the Guardians using the services of AgResearch.



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