

WELLINGTON PARK VISITATION AND RECREATION STRATEGY

Project Scope

20 March 2019



1 INTRODUCTION

The Wellington Park Management Trust has prepared a Strategic Plan for the next 5 years. The Plan contains a number of initiatives to implement the recommendations of the Wellington Park Management Plan 2013 (amended 2015). The highest priority initiative in the Strategic Plan is development of a Visitation and Recreation Strategy for Wellington Park. This document sets out the scope of the Strategy.

1.1 Increasing Park visitation and usage

The Trust's Annual Report for 2017-18 states that: "Wellington Park is the third most visited attraction in the State after Salamanca Market and MONA according to the Tasmania Visitor Survey. The Survey recorded 331,139 interstate and overseas visitors aged 14yrs or older visiting kunanyi / Mount Wellington between July 2017 and June 2018. This is a 1.3% increase on the corresponding period in the previous year." Analysis of existing vehicle and track counter data estimated that at least 445,220 people visited the Hobart City Council management area of the Park in 2015-16, however this data is not comprehensive and actual usage was likely to be much higher. The very limited data available conservatively estimates that overall visitation to the Park is increasing by around 4.5% each year.

Visitor facilities and infrastructure in the Park have been kept low key with facilities focussed at a few sites (pinnacle, The Springs, Myrtle Forest, Fern Tree Park). Some of these are no longer fit for purpose or able to meet even current visitor demands. Some work is being undertaken to improve visitor facilities, but in the absence of a Park-wide strategy the works are largely reactive and driven by site specific issues. Even the completed masterplan for the Fern Tree Park Visitor Node and the revision of the Springs Specific Area Masterplan, currently underway, only focus on the issues in these particular areas of the Park.

1.2 Wellington Park Management Plan requirements

The Wellington Park Management Plan 2013, particularly Chapter 7, emphasises the need for a visitation strategy to manage the ever increasing number of visitors and the activities they undertake in the Park.

Section 7.1 of the Wellington Park Management Plan explains that: "Visitation includes (but is not limited to) the two key areas of tourism and recreation. Tourism tends to relate to activities involving visitors from interstate and overseas, and is often primarily focused on sightseeing and short visits, while recreation tends to involve local visitors and is often for longer periods. However, while it can be convenient for descriptive purposes to separate the two, tourism and recreation overlap significantly, and many visitors may not perceive themselves as part of either group. Modern 'tourists' are

increasingly looking for more than just a sight-seeing experience and seek to be more actively involved in the area they are visiting, through themed tours, bushwalks, bike rides etc. Many visitors come to not just 'see' the view but to experience the variety of physical, cultural and social elements of the broader landscape. In the context of Wellington Park, this could include the view, but also include the: unusual geology e.g. the Organ Pipes; unusual or specific flora and fauna; historic access and use of the Park e.g. the historic huts; and the variety of recreation tracks and trails. Equally, local visitors engaged in recreation activities may also utilise visitor facilities (lookouts, interpretation panels, toilets etc.) that may primarily have been designed as tourist facilities.”

Section 7.2.2 of the Management Plan notes that: “Preparation of a Park-wide Visitation Strategy will provide a solid basis for long-term visitation planning and will greatly assist the development of future management plans and policies for the Park.”

The Management Plan lists the following activities as being undertaken in the Park:

- scenic tourism;
- bushwalking and running;
- picnicking;
- snow play (including limited skiing);
- rock climbing;
- mountain bike riding and cycling;
- hang gliding and paragliding (free flying);
- horse-riding;
- four wheel driving;
- orienteering and rogaining;
- camping;
- nature and historical study; and
- dog walking.

Section 2.6 of the Management Plan notes that: “A successful management plan achieves management outcomes that provide benefits for both the Park itself and for its visitors. In essence, this means achieving a balance between promoting and encouraging visitation to a level that the Park can sustain, while also protecting the integrity of the Park.” The Management Plan goes on to list the Key Desired Outcomes as:

- “The enhancement of the visitor experiences in the Park;
- The protection, maintenance and, where appropriate, restoration of the ecological and cultural integrity of the Park; and
- The enhancement of an ethic of care for the Park within the community consciousness.”

Chapter 8 of the Management Plan gives general planning guidance on the location and type of recreation activities allowed in the Park, based upon current knowledge and research. However the Management plan notes that: “preparation of a Park-wide Visitation Strategy will provide a solid basis for long-term visitation planning and will greatly assist the development of future management plans and policies for the Park.” The Management Plan limits commercial developments to the Pinnacle

Specific Area and the Springs Specific Area, though commercial tour operators use other parts of the Park under licence from the Trust.

2 PROJECT SCOPE

2.1 Project objectives

The purpose of this project is to develop a Visitation and Recreation Strategy for Wellington Park to guide future planning and development to cater for the existing and future needs of Park users and visitors. The Strategy will set out a management approach to providing a high quality and satisfying visitor experience that is environmentally and socially sustainable and ensures the protection of Park values, including Aboriginal cultural values into the future.

The strategy will be consistent with the Management Plan and Specific Area Plans, and acknowledge and promote the values of the Park and its accessibility to both local and inter-state visitors.

The strategy will include gathering of good quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide reliable information on visitor numbers, where they go in the Park, what their expectations are and how they rate their actual experiences. The strategy will assess the likely impacts of existing usage levels and types on Park facilities and values as well as projected future usage levels and impacts. Based on this the Strategy will identify the tourism and recreation needs and opportunities that can be sustainably provided in the Park, and provide recommendations and actions to realise these opportunities for the next 10 years.

The strategy will be a strategic document intended to establish a clear understanding of how to monitor and manage growth in visitor numbers; the Park's capacity to deliver what users want; resources required to implement the Strategy; infrastructure and facility requirements (particularly car parking and toilets); visitor safety, and communications. The Strategy will ensure that the interests of all stakeholders are taken into account and establish an agreed strategic direction for visitation and recreation in the Park.

Recommendations will be environmentally sustainable, financially viable, culturally sensitive and socially acceptable. In particular, future visitor infrastructure in Wellington Park will be consistent with the heritage, Aboriginal cultural and natural values of the Park and the scenic and other values that visitors value so highly. The Strategy will be used to assist the Trust and Park management agencies in decision making about the type of facilities that are desired and appropriate in the Park, and where they are best located. The Strategy will also provide direction for other stakeholders involved in the management of visitors and recreation in Wellington Park.

2.2 Strategy content

The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will include:

1. A summary of the policy context of the Strategy including both internal and external policies that affect management of the Park.

2. Detailed data on existing and projected Park usage that answers the questions:
 - What activities do people currently undertake in the Park?
 - Where do they carry out these activities?
 - How many people participate?
 - What facilities do they use?
 - Any new/emerging activities that visitors may engage in the short – mid-term?
 - What activities and/or opportunities are there specifically for engaging with Aboriginal culture, and should those activities be only available for Tasmanian Aboriginal people?
 - What are the visitor journey maps for the major user groups to the Park?
3. Assessment of the suitability and capacity of existing facilities to meet current usage levels and any urgent improvements required, including approximate costings.
4. Assessment of the impacts on Park values of current usage levels noting any activities that are unsustainable at current levels.
5. Emergence of new uses, their impacts and how they will be catered for.
6. Projected changes in Park usage, both numbers of users and type of usage as well as location.
7. New or upgraded infrastructure and facilities needed to meet projected future needs and where they should be located to minimise impacts on Park values.
8. Likely impacts on Park values of increased usage levels and new uses noting any measures required to ensure that they are sustainable.
9. Impact on the Park of broader regional trends and Government policy.
10. The conservation of cultural, heritage and natural values and interpretation of these for visitors.
11. Wayfinding needs and solutions.
12. The role of private businesses operating in the Park and incorporation of them into the Strategy.
13. Ideal staffing levels to manage and control increased visitation and the range of existing and likely new activities undertaken by visitors in the Park, particularly the number of authorised officers required to ensure the Wellington Park Regulations are complied with.
14. An action plan detailing and prioritising recommendations with recommended implementation time-lines.
15. Planning and environmental requirements for recommended actions.
16. Establishment of clear roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders in strategic decision making and ongoing management of visitation and recreation in the Park.
17. Costing of any major visitation and recreation infrastructure recommendations.

18. Results of community and stakeholder consultation carried out during the project.
19. A program for monitoring and reporting changes in Park visitation and usage and the impacts of this on Park values.
20. Procedures for the review and revision of the Visitation and Recreation Strategy that incorporates an 'adaptive management' approach.
21. A summary of the major issues and opportunities of future visitation and recreation in Wellington Park and the policy framework and key planning principles for addressing them.

2.2.1 Interim recommendations

After completion of 1 to 4 above interim recommendations will be produced that will include:

1. Temporary facilities and other measures required to meet projected peak usage demands.
2. Interim measures to protect Park values that are being, or likely to be, impacted by current and projected short-term visitation.

A framework for the long-term strategy will be provided for Trust endorsement after completion of 1 to 5 above.

2.3 Key considerations

The Strategy will consider and provide guidance on the following issues:

2.3.1 Policy context

The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will take into account, and be compatible with, the current Wellington Park Management Plan and any other relevant Park plans, strategies and policies. The Strategy will consider, and be aligned with, current government tourism and recreation initiatives that are compatible with the Wellington Park Management Plan and the sustainable use of the Park. The policies of Park management agencies that apply to the Park will be taken into account.

2.3.2 Visitor Data

The Management Plan notes that: "There is a lack of comprehensive data on visitation and a corresponding lack of a good understanding of how well current facilities meet current and future visitation demands". The Management Plan notes that, before preparation of a Visitation and Recreation Strategy, research is required to answer questions relating to: "visitation levels and patterns of use; visitor assessment of current facilities; types of transport used; and visitor expectations in terms of the experience and facilities". As such this scope of works includes the following research tasks:

- Collate existing data on Park usage and usage numbers including differing usage in different parts of the Park.
- Identify gaps in the data where further information is required to develop the Visitation and Recreation Strategy.

- Design and implement a program for gathering the data necessary to make informed decisions on current levels of visitation and participation in various recreational activities and likely future increases.

2.3.3 Uses and activities

The uses and activities allowed in the various zones in the Park are set out in table 2 in Chapter 8 of the Management Plan. The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will:

- Consider the functioning of the whole of the Park as well as the roles of the individual sites within it and the restrictions on uses and activities in the Management Plan.
- Assess the capacity of existing Park infrastructure to cater for current and projected future demand.
- Provide guidance regarding the appropriate level of infrastructure, visitor facilities and services provision at various sites in the Park to cater for estimated future demand, particularly access to the Park and parking, and the needs of specific recreation groups, particularly, walkers, runners, mountain bikers and horse riders as well as all abilities access for current and potential user groups including older people and young children.
- Ensure that the needs of all user groups and likely potential users are considered and balanced.
- Consider the importance of maintaining adequate access for operational, maintenance and emergency access by Park management agencies, Tasmanian Fire Service and other emergency services.
- Assess the impacts of increased visitation on drinking water catchments and how water quality can be protected.
- Consider any activities that conflict with the aims of the Management Plan or are likely to have adverse impacts on Park values and the enjoyment of other Park users and how these can be controlled.
- Consider the safety of visitors in line with the Trust's Visitor Risk Management Policy and Framework.
- Consider whether a hierarchy of users needs to be established to manage use in high use areas, particularly where conflict between users is likely, or where particular activities are likely to have a greater impact on Park values.
- Consider the opportunities for Tasmanian Aboriginal people to practice their culture in the Park, including for economic benefit through provision of tourism services.

2.3.4 Services and facilities for Park users

The Management Plan notes that the Visitation Strategy needs to: "review the adequacy of Park facilities, and provide a basis for the development and location of visitor activities and facilities." The Management Plan also encourages the integration of visitor services and facilities at concentrated development sites and avoidance of dispersed, stand-alone facilities except where this is fundamental to the type of facility and consistent with the Management Plan.

The Management Plan designates The Springs Specific Area and the Pinnacle Specific Area as the two principal areas for visitor facilities, services and activities. The Springs is the favoured area for a visitor centre and for services facilitating longer visits, while the Pinnacle is favoured for facilities supporting sightseeing and shorter visits.

The Management Plan notes that:

- New services and facilities should be preferentially sited in previously disturbed areas with an emphasis on minimum impact and maximum restoration.
- New services and facilities should adopt environmentally 'best practice' methods.
- Dispersed infrastructure, such as tracks, should be sited in areas that are resistant to disturbance.
- New facilities should be designed to harmonise with their surroundings and utilise landforms, landscape elements, orientation and views. External materials on new facilities should be allowed to weather naturally where possible.
- Facility design should take account of the bushfire risk without unduly affecting visual character and with the least possible clearing.
- External lighting should assist orientation only and not be used to provide visibility; lighting should be focused towards the ground to avoid spill light and as far as possible, lights on the Wellington Range should not be visible from the City.
- As far as practicable take account of disabled access in the design and maintenance of facilities.
- Take account of vandalism risks and impacts in the design and maintenance of facilities.

Development of recommendations for services and facilities will include:

- Determination of any upgrades of existing facilities and new facilities required to meet current and short-term demand and temporary facilities as an interim measure while upgrades and new facilities are being planned and constructed.
- Determination of the services and facilities needed to cater for the needs of various Park user groups in the next 10 years and their appropriate location in the zones that permit such use, and avoiding or (where required) minimising conflict with environmental and cultural values of the Park.
- Guidelines to ensure that new facilities appropriately respond to the landscape character of the Park and are designed and constructed to minimise any impacts on Park values.
- Identification of facilities and infrastructure in the Park that have heritage values that need to be considered and can limit the extent of changes that can be made to accommodate increased use or different uses.
- Measures to protect the layers of historic and cultural heritage significance of the Park, in particular use of facilities and infrastructure with heritage values, such as huts and walking tracks.

- Changes to the Wellington Park Design and Infrastructure Manual required to ensure that the design and materiality of new facilities is harmonious with the qualities of the place and sympathetic to its heritage and natural values.
- Ensuring that the location, function and design of new facilities takes into account the bushfire-prone nature of the Park and the need to protect assets and minimise the risk to visitors.

The Management Plan notes that; “incremental devaluing of the Park through inappropriate design and location of facilities can have implications as great as those of a larger, one-off development, and emphasises the importance of siting and types of material utilised, and the need for structures to ‘harmonise’ with the surrounding environment.”

Construction of a cable car in the Park will only to be considered as a possible contributor to a long-term solution to visitation issues.

2.3.5 Track development

The Management Plan notes that any new tracks must be routed and constructed to avoid, or where avoidance is not possible minimise, impacts on Park values. Tracks and routes may be established in all management zones, however tracks in the Drinking Water Catchment Zone must not have a detrimental effect on water quality.

Development of recommendations for track development will include:

- Assessment of whether the existing track and fire trail network is meeting current visitor access and recreational needs and what is required to meet future needs.
- Measures to minimize the risks associated with different user activities, including their interaction, for example, walkers and bike riders on shared use tracks.
- Development of an integrated network of single use (walkers or riders) and shared use tracks taking into account the current and projected needs, protection of Park values, user safety, and user enjoyment.
- Development of standards for single and shared use track maintenance, and location and design of new tracks to meet future demand, both numbers and users desired experience.

2.3.6 Access, circulation and way-finding

The Management Plan notes that visitor information should be provided at all main access points. This information should be stylistically coordinated with other Park information and furniture and should also consider digital solutions if/where appropriate.

Development of recommendations for visitor access, circulation and way-finding will include:

- Relevant manuals, design guidelines and strategies relating to signage and way-finding across the Park and any changes required to cater for increasing usage and changes in usage. Note that different signage and way-finding strategies could be applied to different areas, for example: recreational zone, natural zone and remote zone and to specific features such as the Mountain Water Supply System.

- Recommendations on how fixed signage (interpretation and way-finding) can complement and work with a smart phone and tablet application for the Park.
- Guidance on car parking in the Park and at key entry points including location and quantity, and options for safe overflow parking for peak times.

2.3.7 Visitor safety

The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will be compatible with the Wellington Park Visitor Risk Management Policy and Framework.

Consideration of visitor safety will include:

- Setting appropriate safety and access standards and requirements for existing and new facilities and infrastructure.
- The safety and suitability of access to and within the Park; including vehicular, pedestrian, and cycling access and movement.

2.3.8 Communications

The Trust is currently developing a smart phone/tablet application for the Park that will provide way-finding, interpretation and other Park information. The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will:

- Determine appropriate visitor information, education and interpretation services to help visitors (including foreign visitors) understand and appreciate the Parks values.
- Consider the co-ordinated packaging of the Park experience to special interest markets alongside visitor journey mapping to provide a collective means for marketing and distribution of information.

2.3.9 Commercial operators

The Trust has licensed more than a hundred businesses to operate tours and other tourism services in the Park.

The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will:

- Ensure appropriate standards are incorporated in the licences for all tourism operators, in association with the Commercial Visitor System facilitated by the Parks and Wildlife Service, in order to ensure services are consistent with the management objectives of the Management Plan and will complement the recommendation of the Visitation and Recreation Strategy.
- Provide guidance on improving communication between tourism operators and land managers to identify management problems, issues and options.
- Take into account the services provided by, and that could be provided by, tourism operators and the subsequent infrastructure required.

2.4 Resources required to implement the Strategy

The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will identify the financial and other resources needed to implement its recommendations and where these could be sourced. This may include contribution

programs by tourism operators for the development of visitor experiences and facilities to assist meeting the costs of researching, protecting and managing the Park. Contributions may be financial or in-kind, and directed to: information and interpretation programs; scientific research programs; provision of visitor facilities; maintenance or rehabilitation of the Park; or to other matters identified by the Trust.

2.5 Alignment with the Management Plan

The Wellington Park Management Plan is revised approximately every 5 years with the next revision due to start in late 2019. The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will need to recommend any changes to the Wellington Park Management Plan required to accommodate increasing visitor numbers and changes in visitor activities.

2.6 Monitoring, review and revision

The Wellington Park Management Plan uses an Adaptive Management approach to Park management. The Visitation and Recreation Strategy will include a program for monitoring the impacts of existing and recommended new visitor services, facilities and activities in order to minimise any adverse impacts on safety and Park values. A review and revision schedule and procedures will be included to ensure that the results of the monitoring program are incorporated into the Visitation and Recreation Strategy in accordance with the adaptive management cycle.

2 ENGAGEMENT

The Wellington Park Management Trust is committed to open, constructive, and fair community engagement, and values it as integral to good decision-making and governance.

There will be strong community interest in this project and consultation with the general community, and with key user groups in particular, is an important part of developing a Strategy that will guide future development of infrastructure and facilities in the Park to cater for increasing usage.

Consultation with public and private sectors, recreational user groups and the general community will be undertaken to ensure the development of clear stakeholder-agreed strategic directions and vision for Strategy.

Community engagement will include groups representing recreational users of the Park and scenic tourists, including foreign visitors. The following stakeholder groups are considered to be essential to the process:

- Park management agencies (Hobart City Council, Parks and Wildlife Service, Glenorchy City Council, TasWater)
- local Aboriginal community groups
- bushwalking clubs
- mountain bike rider clubs
- trail running groups

- horse riding associations
- 4WD clubs
- tourism operators licenced to operate in the Park
- tourism industry groups including Destination Southern Tasmania, Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (in particular representative in the Experiences & Attraction Operators and Specialist Services college), and any other relevant local and state-wide tourism bodies and associations
- community groups including the Fern Tree Bushcare Group, the Friends of Wellington Park, Tasmanian National Parks Association and the Wellington Park Heritage Volunteer Network
- Hobart City Council Access Advisory Committee
- Department of State Growth – Cultural and Tourism Development division
- Department of Premier and Cabinet – Communities, Sport and Recreation
- Tourism Tasmania.

Consultation will include face-to-face meetings at an early stage of the development of the strategy.

There will be a month long public exhibition period to allow the broader community to comment on the draft Strategy.

PROJECT STRUCTURE

