



ONE MOUNTAIN

ONE DESTINATION

**THREE NEW VISITOR
EXPERIENCES**



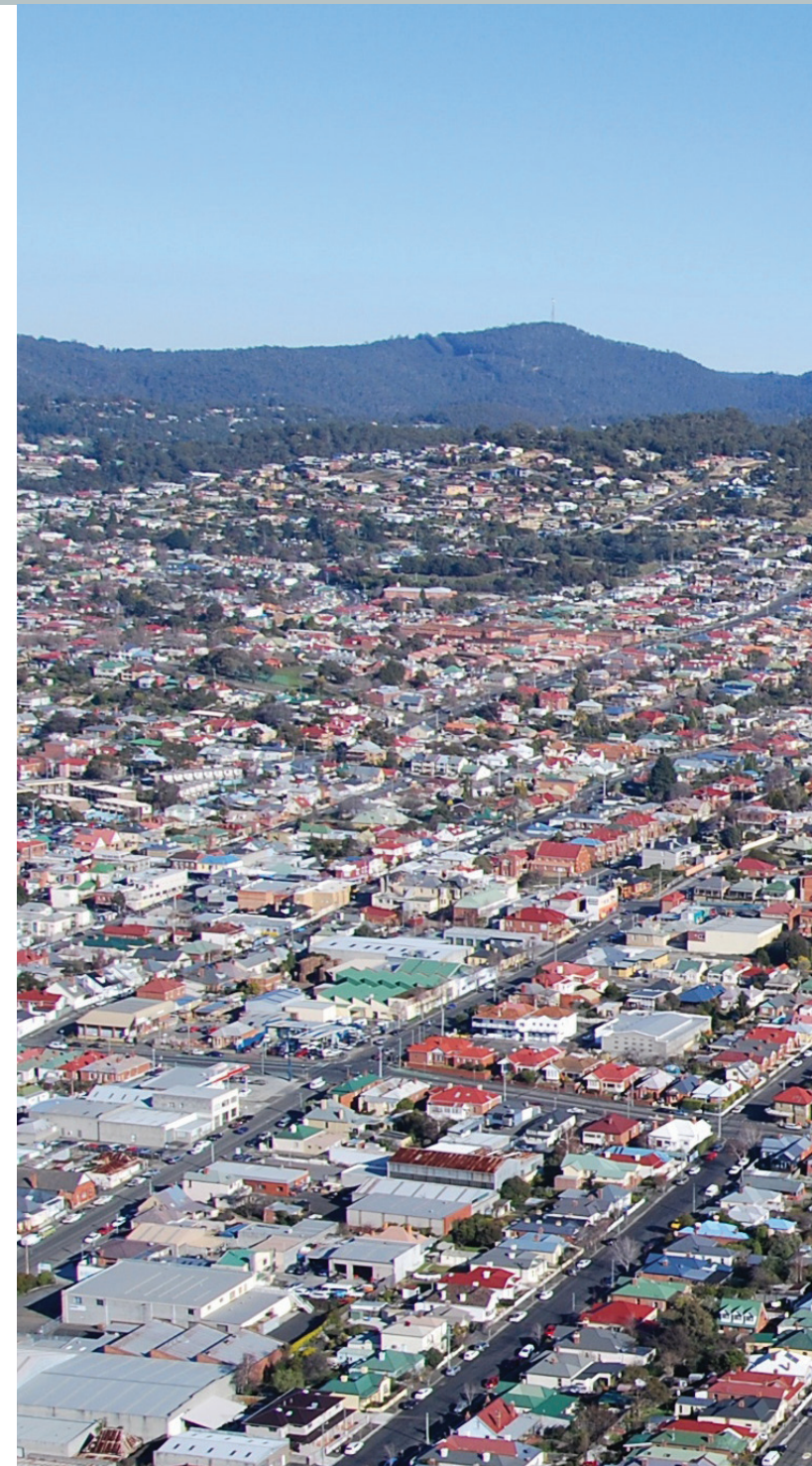
City of **HOBART**

“Hobart belongs to Mt Wellington”

Peter Conrad 1988 *Down Home: Revisiting Tasmania*, Chattus and Windus, London

“.....A JOURNEY INTO THE INTIMACY AND UNIQUE PERSONALITY OF THE PLACE WE SIMPLY CALL THE MOUNTAIN – 18,250 HECTARES OF WILD LANDSCAPE AROUND WHICH THE TASMANIAN CAPITAL OF HOBART HAS BUILT ITS EXISTENCE. IT IS THE PEOPLE’S PARK, ITS BACKDROP, AND ITS CARDINAL IDENTIFYING FEATURE. IT IS NOT A REMOTE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS, MANY HOURS’ DRIVE AWAY, BUT A WILD PLACE THAT IS VERY CLOSE TO HOME INDEED.”

Taken from the Notes on the Photographs by Mark Clemens in the book, *The Mountain*, 2014, published by Peregrine Publishing, Tasmania





Introduction

City of Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, is one of the most beautiful cities in the world, with a vibrant waterfront and ready access to bushland and beaches. As Australia's second oldest city, it offers an appealing blend of built and cultural heritage, natural environment, a thriving arts scene and dynamic sporting culture, all combined with a low stress lifestyle.

The City's natural resources contribute greatly to the character and appeal of Hobart and are important for recreation and cultural connectedness. kunanyi / Mount Wellington is Hobart's distinctive landmark and locals have strong connections to it, with hundreds of thousands enjoying time on the mountain each year.

Its strength as a natural attraction has made it one of the State's leading tourism destinations. It ranks in the top four for international and domestic visitors and its visitation is growing, with 268,000 tourists travelling to kunanyi / Mount Wellington in 2014 – a jump of 15% on the previous year.

City of Hobart owns the summit and eastern slopes of kunanyi / Mount Wellington which is part of Wellington Park. The Park is managed by the Wellington Park Management Trust guided by the *Wellington Park Management Plan 2013*.

The City of Hobart recognises the significance of kunanyi / Mount Wellington as part of its vision to create a strong, vibrant and sustainable city. The *Capital City Strategic Plan 2015-2025* outlines a 2025 vision for the city including two goals that are very pertinent to kunanyi / Mount Wellington :

- City planning promotes our city's uniqueness, is people-focussed and provides connectedness and accessibility
- An ecologically sustainable city maintains its unique character and values our natural resources

At present, kunanyi / Mount Wellington offers a range of activities that include bushwalking, mountain biking, rock climbing and snow fun in winter. For tourists, the most popular experience is the stunning viewing opportunity at the summit, which is a must-see experience for first-time visitors to Hobart. Some visitors also undertake guided walks and biking.

However, City of Hobart recognises the need to provide powerful nature-based experiences on the mountain, targeted to the discerning local, national and international visitor market.

As a result, it has identified three major visitor infrastructure projects for kunanyi / Mount Wellington. The three projects, consistent with the *Wellington Park Management Plan 2013*, will help take the overall visitor experience to a new level, building on kunanyi / Mount Wellington's appeal as a visitor destination and providing substantial benefits for Hobart and the State. The three projects collectively cater for differing needs across a wide range of social demographics in the community.

PROJECT 1: THE BIG BEND DOWNHILL/GRAVITY TRACK

The construction of a single use downhill/gravity trail for mountain biking from Big Bend to Junction Cabin. Estimated infrastructure development costs are \$2.1m.

PROJECT 2: REJUVENATING THE GREAT SHORT WALK

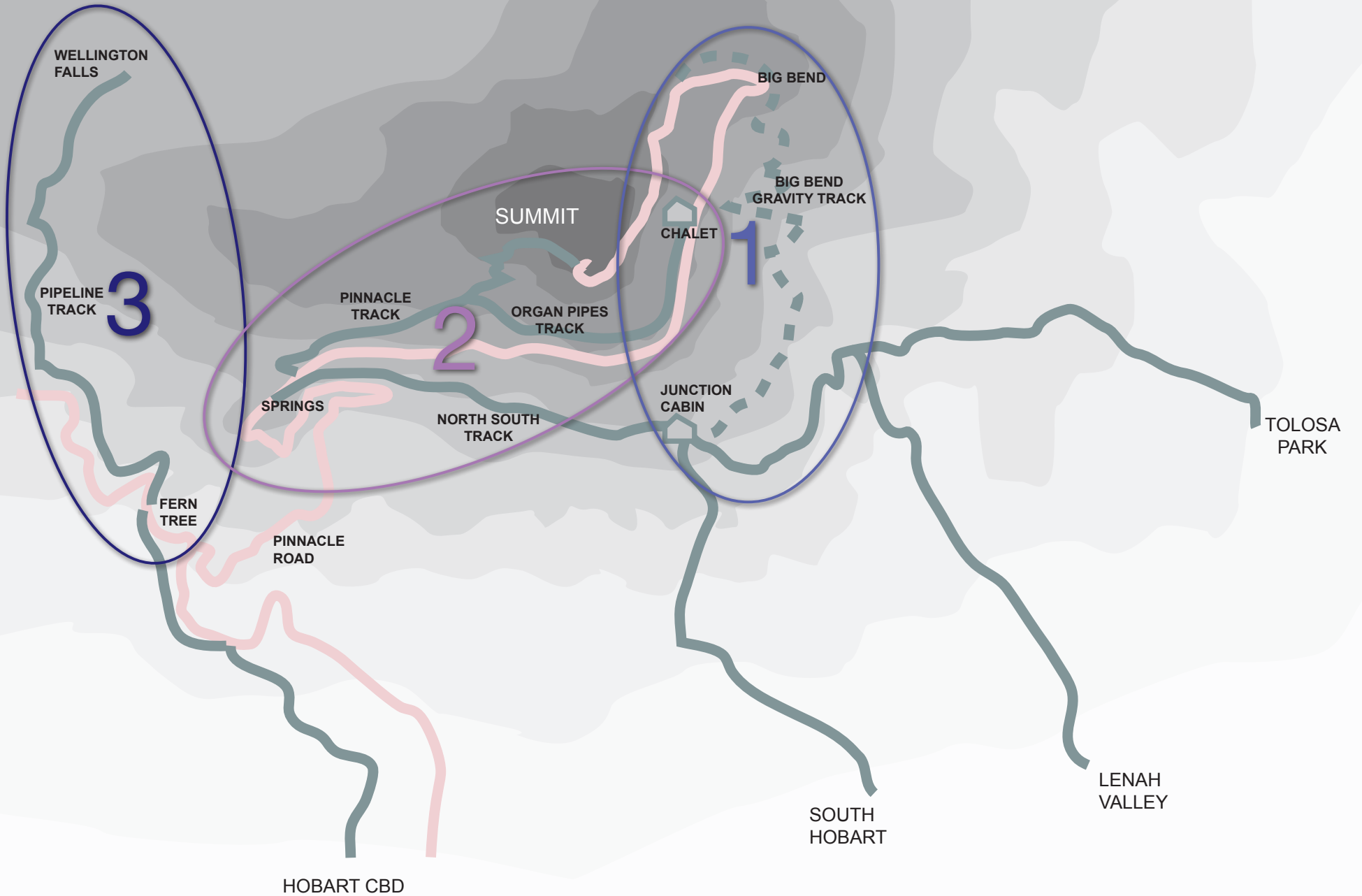
Upgrading of the Organ Pipes and Pinnacle Tracks linking The Springs to the Chalet will build upon its listing as one of the Great Short Walks in Tasmania. Estimated infrastructure development costs are \$2.3m.

PROJECT 3: REVEALING THE MOUNTAIN'S HERITAGE

Upgrading and enhancement of the Pipeline Track will showcase the significant cultural heritage that encompasses the Hobart Mountain Water Supply System and the social history of bushwalking and mountain huts. The upgrade will include Fern Tree Park, as one of the key entry points into Wellington Park. Estimated infrastructure development costs are \$2.9m.

An economic assessment has been undertaken for the Big Bend downhill/gravity track with a summary provided in the Appendix.

The City of Hobart is seeking partners and funding support to accelerate the implementation of these three important projects. This document presents the three projects and outlines their economic, social and environmental benefits to the community.





1

Big Bend Downhill/

THE PROJECT

The popularity of mountain bike riding has increased rapidly in recent decades, developing from a fringe extreme sport to Olympic Games' competition. Mountain bike riding has proven to be a strong economic driver with places such as Whistler (Canada), 7Stanes (Scotland) and Rotorua (New Zealand) becoming iconic riding destinations. In Australia, Mt Buller (Victoria), Thredbo (NSW), Stromlo Forest Park (ACT) and the You Yangs (Victoria) have become popular riding destinations.

Tasmania is an emerging mountain biking destination, offering a range of trails and events that attract local, domestic and international visitors. This includes places such as Blue Tier, Hollybank, Meehan Range and Wellington Park.

The City of Hobart is a prominent player and builder of mountain bike riding trails. The North South Track straddling the eastern slopes of Wellington Park is widely recognised as providing a world class riding experience.

One of the big gaps for the State in developing the mountain biking market is the lack of a single use, downhill/gravity trail. It is estimated that in the Greater Hobart area there are 2,000-3,000 mountain bike riders who participate in downhill bike riding and from 5,700-9,600 in cross country riding¹.

During 2014-15, a total 11,100 visitors to Tasmania participated in mountain bike riding and this now represents 40% of the total cycling tourism market within Tasmania². Long-term market predictions

¹ City of Hobart, 2015 *kunanyi / Mount Wellington Gravity Track Concept Plan*

² Tourism Tasmania, *Tasmania Visitor Survey 2014/15*

³ These reports include *Mt Wellington Multi-Use Trails Feasibility Study 2013, Wellington Park Walking Track Strategy 2003, Greater Hobart Mountain Bike Master Plan 2011, kunanyi / Mount Wellington Gravity Track Concept Plan 2015* and *'Epic' Mountain Bike Track Route Assessment 2015*.

are for continued growth in the number of local, domestic and international visitors seeking mountain bike riding experiences.

There is a strong strategic basis for the proposal based on reports that have identified the potential for a track from Big Bend to Junction Cabin in Wellington Park to cater for both downhill and cross country riders³.

The upper section of the gravity track will provide outstanding adventure riding experiences as it traverses sub-alpine woodland and boulder fields. There is simply no other purpose built track in Tasmania that traverses a sub-alpine environment. The lower part will provide faster flowing riding sections in open sandstone country. After reaching Junction Cabin, riders will be able to access tracks that lead to South Hobart, Lenah Valley and Glenorchy.

The proposed downhill/gravity track is an integral part of the bigger vision for a 50 km cross country/ all mountain day ride linking many of the natural features within Wellington Park. This loop ride has the potential to meet International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) criteria for recognition as an Epic Ride similar to Mount Buller Epic Ride, the only other Australian track to achieve this status.

THE COSTS

The Big Bend downhill/gravity track will be 6.7km, with initial route assessments resulting in an estimated cost for construction of \$2.1m.

THE BENEFITS

ECONOMIC

- Results in a total additional direct and indirect expenditure of \$4.6m per annum by Year 3 within the Greater Hobart urban region and the creation of up to 55 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Attracts new interstate and international visitors and generate extended stays that will lead to a total additional direct and indirect expenditure of \$4.86m per annum by Year 3 within Tasmania and create up to 58 full-time equivalent jobs.
- Delivers positive net benefits of \$14.4m to the State over the first 10 years and will generate up to 32 new full-time equivalent employment positions when considering direct expenditure only and allowing for regional market leakages (i.e. some potential loss of expenditure to other mountain bike riding areas within the State).
- Returns a Net Present Value of \$17.2m and an Internal rate of return of 91% for an initial capital cost of \$2.1m in the Greater Hobart urban region.
- Provides Tasmania and the region with the potential to be part of the vision for a 50 km ride in Wellington Park that could possibly be listed as Australia's second IMBA Epic Ride – a major marketing edge for the State's niche adventure and nature based tourism markets.
- Supports the continuation of existing and potential new mountain bike tourism businesses, including guided operations, bike hire/repair, transport services and bike-friendly accommodation and services.

- Provides the capacity for staging high quality mountain bike events on national and international interest.

SOCIAL

- Meets local demand for downhill/gravity track.
- Adds key links into the local network of riding tracks.
- Provides new adventure and challenging riding experiences.
- Allows riders to experience the diverse and natural landscapes.
- Creates a new entry node at Big Bend for both riders and walkers.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Helps alleviate unauthorised track construction, site impacts and remediation costs resulting from the limited availability of downhill/gravity tracks.
- Provides sustainable management commitments, with ongoing monitoring, management and maintenance.
- Makes use of the existing car park at Big Bend without the need for new, major roadworks.
- Connects to other existing tracks, helping minimise duplication and overall site impacts.



Photography by Chris Hampton

2

Rejuvenating the Great Short Walk

THE PROJECT

Work on constructing the Organ Pipes Track was completed in 1931, utilising around 400 unemployed men during the depression years. At the time, the Mercury Newspaper reported that :

‘The beauty of the walk cannot be adequately described. It is simply wonderful.’⁴

Since that time, almost 100 years ago, this track has lived up to its potential as a great walk for both locals and visitors wishing to engage all their senses.

The Organ Pipes Track is the only walk within Wellington Park that is currently listed in the 60 Great Short Walks of Tasmania.

However, the opportunity exists to create a new and exciting short walk linking The Springs to the Chalet, integrating an upgraded Organ Pipes Track and the Pinnacle Track to form a 3.6km trail. The walk can be started from either The Springs or the Chalet to suit the varying abilities of walkers with return walk loops available. Starting at The Chalet, the Organ Pipes Track is virtually flat as it contours around the face of Mt Wellington.

The route passes through mountain forest with spectacular views of the fluted columns of the Organ Pipes, across the city and beyond. The walk is also shielded from the prevailing westerly winds making the track user friendly all year round.

Walkers will encounter stone cabins built by pioneering walkers, boulder fields, soaring dolerite columns, wet sclerophyll forest, snow gums and sub-alpine woodland habitats. During Spring, walkers can observe a colourful display of the distinctive white flower of the *Richea dracophylla* and in early Summer the impressive bright red flowers of the Waratah bush start to emerge.

Both the Organ Pipes Track and the Pinnacle Track require substantial resurfacing to provide for safer, more enjoyable walking.

The upgrading and extension of the walk would enhance its status as one of Tasmania’s Great Short Walks and create the opportunity for a shuttle bus service between the walk, the summit, The Springs or back to Hobart.

The number of interstate and international visitors undertaking short walks continues to grow. The Tasmanian Visitor Survey found that 287,640 interstate and international visitors undertook a walk of less than two hours while visiting the State in 2014-15, up 11.3% from the previous year.

The local community would benefit as a result of visitors spending locally on food, transport and to a lesser degree, accommodation. It would also support commercial businesses, providing opportunities for tour operators, hire companies and transport businesses to expand services and employ staff, with economic flow-on effects.

⁴ The Mercury 9 January 1931 page 8

THE COSTS

Cost estimates have been prepared for upgrading of public picnic facilities at the The Springs, upgrading the Organ Pipes Track and Pinnacle Track and installing a public toilet at the Chalet. The estimated infrastructure development costs are \$2.3m.



Photography by Matthew Newton

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS

ECONOMIC

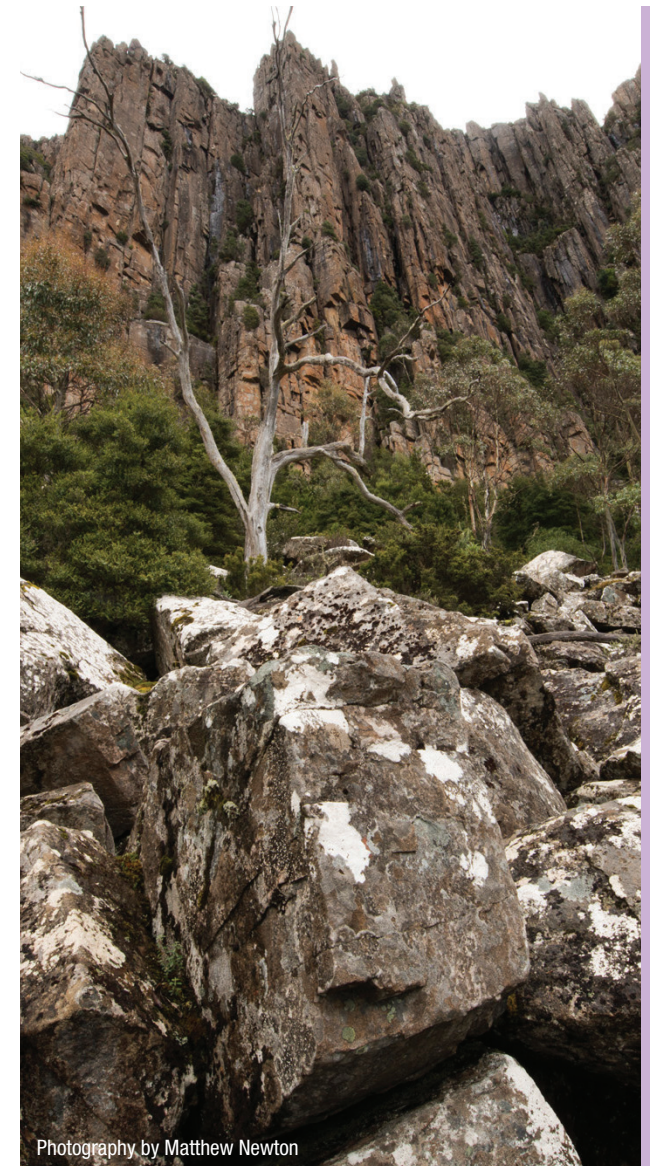
- Strengthens the marketing of the destination and the role of The Springs as the visitor hub on the Mountain.
- Aligns with future plans for The Springs as the major hub of visitor facilities and services.
- Offers potential for transport services and guided walks associated with the upgraded tracks.

SOCIAL

- Improves accessibility and maintains public access to two traditionally popular walks.
- Improves health and wellbeing by encouraging recreational walking.
- Reduces visitor safety risks arising from existing track conditions.
- Conservation of historic walking track values

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Allows for more sustainable management of the tracks.
- Removes unsightly pipes and other infrastructure on the existing tracks.
- Environmental impact is minimal as the project makes use of existing tracks in upgrading current track surfaces.



Photography by Matthew Newton



3

Revealing the Heritage

THE PROJECT

This project provides the opportunity to upgrade existing visitor infrastructure and provide interpretation that reveals the mountain's heritage stories, strengthening the position of Fern Tree as a key entry node for Wellington Park.

The Pipeline Track is one of Hobart's greatest walking, running and bike riding tracks. The 20km family friendly track leads people from Fern Tree to the wild and scenic Wellington Falls. The track is along a gentle slope, wide enough to allow shared use and encompasses many of the natural and cultural values of kunanyi / Mount Wellington. It is also an important connector to other trails in Wellington Park whilst providing a valuable walking link to the city via Waterworks Reserve.

Fern Tree is the only major entrance to Wellington Park that is accessible by public transport and is a primary access point for visitors and locals.

Fern Tree was identified in the 19th century as the site through which Hobart's water supply would pass. The Mountain Water Supply System (MWSS) is a significant, largely intact water supply complex that was instrumental to the success of Hobart as a settlement. It is listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register and continues to supply water to the city today⁵. Its historic infrastructure is visible along the Pipeline Track and can be seen at locations that include the Fern Tree Bower and Silver Falls. Fern

Tree Bower is a place of high social significance given its popularity throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries as a place for picnics and social gatherings.

The opening of Huon Road meant that Fern Tree became a new entry point to kunanyi / Mount Wellington in the mid-18th century, leading to the construction of new walking tracks to scenic attractions such as Fern Tree Bower. The role of Fern Tree as a major access point continued to grow in line with a marked increase in recreational activity on the mountain from the 1890s-1920s.

Trails link Fern Tree to nearby features that include the adjacent St Raphael's Church as well as Fern Tree Bower, Silver Falls, the heritage-listed Pipeline Track, and Fern Glade.

Considerable research has been undertaken to identify heritage values associated with Fern Tree, MWSS and access to Wellington Park.

During 2015 the City of Hobart began preparing a master plan for Fern Tree Park. The draft plan has identified a range of steps to enhance the safety, amenity and functionality of the park.

⁵ Futurepast 2012. Hobart Mountain Water Supply System Conservation Management Plan (2012) unpublished report to the Hobart City Council.



Photography by Matthew Newton

THE COSTS

Cost estimates have been prepared for:

- upgrading the Pipeline Track including conserving the historic bridges and other infrastructure;
- upgrading Fern Tree Park as the principal entry node, including improvements to the car park, walking and bike trails, road safety, accessibility, toilets, play and picnic facilities and wayfinding signs;
- implementation of cultural heritage interpretation outlined in the Mountain Water Supply System Design Guidelines (2013) to create a strong heritage-based visitor experience along the Pipeline Track; and
- construction of a public toilet at St Crispins Well, at the far end of the Pipeline Track, to reduce pollution risks in the water supply catchment.

The total cost for implementing these visitor infrastructure improvements is \$2.9m.

THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS

ECONOMIC

- Strengthens Fern Tree role as a major entry node to Wellington Park.
- Creates an appealing visitor experience with a point of difference, presenting the heritage of the mountain and community as an alternative to the mountain's nature-based experiences.
- Supports local tavern, public transport services and community facilities with potential for higher visitor spend.

SOCIAL

- Enhances the place values and respects their natural and cultural significance.
- Upgrades the facilities in Fern Tree Park, which will attract increased local and visitor use.
- Addresses key safety issues with car parking and people crossing Huon Road, as well as trail improvements.
- Improves disabled access to park facilities.

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Enables more sustainable management of visitor facilities.

Boosting tourism returns

kunanyi / Mount Wellington is renowned nationally for its outstanding beauty and remarkable views. It is an important cornerstone of nature-based experiences that give Tasmania its competitive advantage in tourism.

It is one of the State's top tourism attractions and the City of Hobart seeks to drive economic growth by improving the range of quality, sustainable visitor experiences it offers. New experiences will also help to refresh marketing opportunities for kunanyi / Mount Wellington and support continuing development of appropriate commercial tourism activities.

City of Hobart is seeking partners and funding support for undertaking further feasibility assessments and implementation of three priority projects, selected for their capacity to strengthen the mountain's tourism appeal and depth of offerings, while generating community benefits for the local area and Tasmania.

The priority projects have been identified following a rigorous review of relevant reports and recent strategies and associated recommendations for improving visitor infrastructure. Studies have included considerable background research, community engagement and analysis of feasibility.

The total cost for implementing the three projects is \$7.3-\$8m. Once completed, the projects will ensure that kunanyi / Mount Wellington continues to play its vital role as a Tasmanian tourism icon and significant contributor to Hobart – and the State's – economic future.



Photography by Chris Hampton



Photography by Matthew Newton



Photography by Matthew Newton

Appendix **Summary of Economic Assessment Findings**

The City of Hobart commissioned Montemare Consulting to undertake a high level economic assessment of priority kunanyi / Mount Wellington visitor infrastructure projects. The purpose was to determine the net community benefits by examining likely marginal costs and benefits, as well as economic impacts on the local economy.

The assessment was primarily confined to the Big Bend Downhill/Gravity Track project as it is recognised as the leading opportunity to create a strong, differentiated tourism experience. The other two projects will contribute to the overall development of kunanyi / Mount Wellington as a world class nature-based tourism destination and will help to generate new visitation and longer visitor stays in the future.

The economic assessment involved the following key steps:

- literature review and case studies of similar mountain bike destinations;
- review of previous reports and information;
- estimation of the existing Tasmanian and Hobart cycle tourism market and tourism yield;
- estimation of potential for generating additional visitation and new visitation as a result of the new mountain bike riding product and potential tourism yield;
- assessment of operational impacts and costs resulting from new infrastructure development; and
- calculation of net operating results and financial and employment benefits on investment.

The two case studies investigated were Mount Stromlo Bike Park in the Australian Capital Territory and Mount Buller Alpine Resort in Victoria, which recently received IMBA accreditation as Australia's first Epic Ride. The key findings indicate continued growth in mountain bike riding, a substantial 20-26% jump in visitation with the Epic Ride, and an increasing number of events. In addition, ongoing operational costs were 10-15% of the cost of capital per annum.

Analysis of the *Tasmanian Visitor Survey 2014/15* indicated that the number of visitors undertaking mountain bike riding was growing, contributing an estimated

\$34.86m to the economy and resulting in the creation of 420 full-time jobs. It was estimated that 47,595 intrastate visitors and 9,760 international visitors undertook mountain bike riding within the Greater Hobart urban area.

A number of assumptions were applied in the economic modeling for key visitation targets, operational estimates and expected tourism yields. The key assumptions were that:

- the development of the downhill/gravity track would lead to a 10% increase in the number of current mountain bike riders to Tasmania; and
- an additional night would be generated for interstate and international visitors to the Greater Hobart urban area.

Based on the assumptions, the results indicate the downhill/gravity track is likely to result in positive net benefits of \$14.4m to the State over the first 10 years of operation and generate up to 32 new jobs based on direct tourism expenditure.

The net benefits to Tasmania will be significantly higher when full development plans for kunanyi / Mount Wellington as a world-class mountain bike destination are realised, with the long-term plans for a 50km cross country/all mountain track connecting The Springs to Fern Tree, Wellington Falls, Thark Ridge, Big Bend, Junction Cabin and Tolosa Park.

It is estimated that for every \$1 invested in sport and recreation, Tasmania receives more than \$4 in social and economic benefit.

Overall, the project is likely to deliver significant net benefits to the State and stimulate regional growth via increased visitation, making it worthy of investment, subject to more detailed business planning and analysis.







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