

# Toitū Te Whenua Track Assessment Protocol (Track Protocol) for Regional Parks

June 2023

## Assessment process for changes to tracks

The 'Trail Development Protocol' (Track Protocol) is found on page 206 of the management plan for regional parks, [Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-30 \(Toitu Te Whenua\)](#) in Ngā āpitihanga / Appendix One. This is a practical version with the **addition of scoring**.

The Track Protocol is a scoping tool to aid decision-making for new track proposals or track modifications. It provides a consistent approach and a record of decision making at the initial scoping stage. It is not an end in itself; there is further work detailed assessment or design work to be done before proposed work commences.

Recreation clubs and others can use the tool to help determine if a new track proposal in a regional park appears to stack up or not. If the proposal is from an external group, the initial scoring process should be undertaken with the park ranger. After this it then needs to be peer reviewed by other Greater Wellington officers.

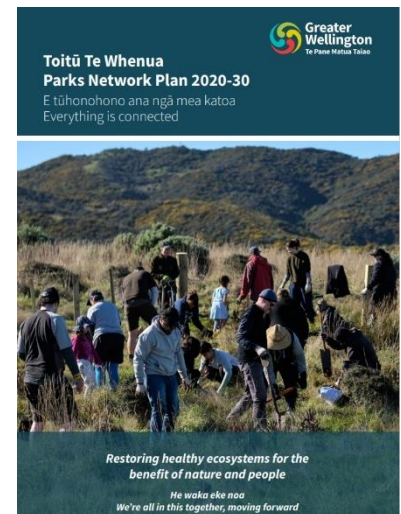
### 1. When to use this procedure

Minimising the impacts of tracks and the detrimental effects of use is important for protection of core park values and experiences for everyone who visits.

This protocol is intended to aid decision making with key criteria and considerations for assessing opportunities related to trails. It provides guidance in the form of Principles for consideration in changing or creating tracks in Greater Wellington's parks. The principles are supported by key criteria to evaluate proposals and aid decision making.

The Assessment Protocol applies to:

- Proposed new trails and re-routing of existing trails, unless its minor
- Trails and tracks formed for other uses that may be appropriate for general recreation use such as farm tracks in grazed areas of park or historic routes which may have become overgrown such as early Māori routes, logging tramway routes or tracks formed by stock.



It does not need to apply to:

- **Minor** (see below examples) re-routing/ realigning of existing tracks provided they are not in a high value area (wetland, cultural value site)
- Medium to high impact activity trail proposals or changes. Follow Toitū Te Whenua Appendix 2, or GW officers will follow the '[AEE Medium impact check list](#)' to identify values and potential impacts.
- Emergency track works when not creating a new track
- Works underway via Resource consenting processes.

What are 'minor' works?

Examples	Follow Track Protocol?
<i>Pakuratahi - Tane's Track, tree fall. Realigning around wash out 15- 20m repair works. No significant environmental values were impacted, no waterway, just tree fall. No trees impacted, no batter issues. Checked in with UHCC and they provided written advice that consent not required.</i>	No
<i>Battle Hill bush remnant. Stream washed out sections of track. Could reinstate in existing position, but there was an opportunity to future proof by realigning higher up bank. KNE Area.</i>	<i>Yes. Consult with Knowledge &amp; Insights, Parks team, specialists (Pest Animals). Check Archsite etc</i>
<i>Korokoro Valley – major flooding event in 2015. Bridges washed out. Opportunity to build asset programme resilience by removing the need for some bridges through track realignment. If this occurred now – revisit full track location for long term resilience and look at options to shift track to higher ground.</i>	Yes



Toitū Te Whenua Plan Action A170h for Belmont Regional Park identifies the opportunity to 'Develop an easy access circuit trail (following existing routes) to the magazines from the top of Hill Road car park suitable for families and others'.

Whilst these are existing tracks/routes, the Track Protocol can be used here to determine if any further detailed assessment of remnant natural values is required e.g. wetlands.

## 2. Principles and core values from Toitū Te Whenua



*Examples - East Harbour – KNE- use track protocol for changes, QEP spring – Natural wetland (full consent for any tracks), Belmont Korokoro Track slip – basic maintenance work, no Track Protocol (material removed from site)*

- a. AEE (Assessment of Environmental Effects)** - process must be followed, and net benefit demonstrated. Refer Toitū Te Whenua Appendix 2
- b. Public safety** - Safety of the public in the park is a primary consideration
- c. Assessment process** - Changes to tracks and new track proposals will be assessed against key criteria and consider risk and impacts. Refer below
- d. Future maintenance** - Maintenance requirements will be based on Greater Wellington's annual asset maintenance plans
- e. Track closure** - Tracks may be closed in part or in whole, temporarily or permanently
- f. Communication** - All significant changes will involve opportunities for mana whenua partner, stakeholder engagement at an early stage.

**Core Park Values** - refer pages 38-39 in Toitū Te Whenua for values in full.

***Ecosystem health, recreation experience, mana whenua partnerships and community are at the forefront of our work in regional parks***

- We protect, improve and nurture the natural environment in our care
- We provide for a diversity of satisfying and memorable recreation experiences and support full and easy public access to parks
- We work alongside mana whenua in the spirit of mahi tahi
- We connect with community and prioritise health and wellbeing
- We are good custodians and enrich Te Ao Tūroa/ the long-standing natural world

### 3. Track assessment criteria and scoring

The following key criteria support initial assessment of both new track developments and changes to tracks or trails. It can be done before or after site visits to determine the overall merit of a proposal.

If significant changes are proposed at locations on tracks, consider the whole track, not just a component of it. New trail proposals and significant changes in trails will require the preparation of an AEE. Refer to the AEE Guide, Appendix 2.

#### 3.1 How to assess and score a proposal

Use this version of the Trails Development Protocol (Track Protocol) and score a proposal on its merits. The Scoring range is 1 to 5 per criteria. The higher the overall score, the more appropriate the proposal is for a park. Save a copy of each assessment and add notes or images as a record of initial decision making.

##### *Who should score proposals?*

In the first instance, Park Rangers should score a proposal in liaison with the community group or others proposing the change

##### *Who should peer review and moderate scores?*

All proposals should be peer reviewed and moderated. Ideally several people should peer review from different perspectives, particularly people who have good knowledge of the proposed site or park.

- Have the proposal and your scoring peer reviewed by other GW officers including and not limited to Team Leaders Eastern and Western Parks, Parks Planning, Environmental Scientists, Biodiversity officers, Maintenance team members and Resource consenting
- Address the considerations
- Look at Toitū Te Whenua directions e.g. there may already be an Action for the proposal which has been consulted on, KNE Plans values, GIS layers, the NZ Archaeological site database etc .
- Take time and be thorough
- Note any key considerations found in this research process in the summary results section below.

### 4. Summary of proposal

Trail/ track proposal & Park
<p>e.g. Akatarawa, 257 track proposed re-routing for environmental protection purposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Add summary details here including pics and a map</li><li>• Identify the <u>Track Category</u> proposed or existing?</li><li>• Consider cycle track standards (<u>NZCT</u>)</li></ul>



## 5. Assessment and scoring

Criteria	Consider	Initial track assessment score	Moderated score (after peer review by others)
		Add notes in the summary section at bottom of table	
<b>Strategic fit</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consistency with <a href="#">Toitū Te Whenua</a> goals, policies and actions and other GW plans, policies and strategies. Proposed changes should not be contrary to the directions of statutory plans.</li> <li>• Fit with park values and purpose</li> <li>• Fit with what is already offered – existing trails</li> <li>• Ability to fill gaps in trail network, types of trail or offer a unique new experience such as a key destination</li> <li>• Synergies or connections with other work programmes or projects</li> <li>• Connections to other trails to form significant links or close gaps in a park trails network</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring:</b> The proposal's fit with Toitū Te Whenua vision, values, policies, Actions and other projects is: <b>Excellent (5), very good (4), good (3), poor (2), very poor (1)</b></p>		
<b>Natural values</b>	<p>Protection of indigenous forest, high priority indigenous areas and significant areas and features. Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key Native Ecosystem outcomes</li> <li>• Significant ecological features identified in District Plans (UHCC and KCDC) e.g. trees</li> <li>• Significance of ecological values and sites along or near a track</li> <li>• Presence of tracks offering a similar experience nearby</li> <li>• Stream crossings and watercourses nearby and any downstream effects</li> <li>• Accumulated effects</li> <li>• Environmental protection benefits (from realignments)</li> <li>• Options for no net loss of native vegetation through mitigation plantings or work nearby</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring:</b> Impacts on the ecological value of the area the track passes through are likely to be: <b>Negligible (5), low (4), moderate (3), high (2), very high (1)</b></p>		
<b>Landscape &amp; geological features</b>	<p>Protection of steep forested valleys and crest of hilltops</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant landscape District Plan overlays</li> <li>• Effects on landscape and geological features</li> <li>• Soil composition and structure and its ability to withstand use and erode</li> <li>• Visible permanent landscape effects</li> <li>• Accumulated effects</li> </ul>		

Criteria	Consider	Initial track assessment score	Moderated score (after peer review by others)
		Add notes in the summary section at bottom of table	
	<p><b>Scoring:</b> Impacts on landscape or ecological features are likely to be: Negligible (5), low (4), moderate (3), high (2), very high (1)</p>		
<b>Cultural values</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sites of importance to mana whenua. Check mana whenua documents and/or consult with mana whenua for more significant proposals?</li> <li>• Significant modified landscape features or structures</li> <li>• Effects on other historic and cultural features /registered archaeological sites</li> <li>• Check the NZ Archaeological database - ARCHsite (go to Principal Ranger, Asset Planner or Parks Planner for log in)</li> </ul> <p>Opportunities to restore or showcase historic features – Accumulated effects</p> <p><b>Scoring:</b> Impacts on cultural heritage features or values of the area the track passes through are likely to be: <b>Negligible (5), low (4), moderate (3), high (2), very high (1)</b></p>		
<b>Recreation experiences</b>	<p>What are the benefits for people’s recreation use and enjoyment? Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If it’s part of Toitū Te Whenua Key Destination development or an individual Action</li> <li>• If it supports concessionaire tourism activities or recreation event use</li> <li>• Local community use benefits</li> <li>• History of use or conflicts and vandalism</li> <li>• Removal or reduction of barriers to access e.g. steps, stiles, steep sections</li> <li>• If it enables access to key features e.g. unique forest, views, heritage relics</li> <li>• Connecting or linking track which provide circuit opportunities</li> <li>• Equity of provision. Does the proposal help address one of the equity of provision gaps identified in Toitū Te Whenua? (See section 2.2.1 and do a word search on ‘equity’. Also look at the Park-specific Actions)</li> <li>• If the proposal supports more recreation use (and enjoyment). Does it help attract visits?</li> <li>• Shared use or single user? Compatibility of different user groups using or likely to use track</li> <li>• Ability to alleviate existing user conflicts or improve safety</li> <li>• What standard is the track aiming for, and to what extent does the proposal support filling gaps in provision of this</li> </ul>		

Criteria	Consider	Initial track assessment score	Moderated score (after peer review by others)
		Add notes in the summary section at bottom of table	
	<p>category or track for walkers, cyclists, horse riders or others in the park or region? E.g. grade 2-3 MTB trails and easy tramping tracks are under represented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refer <a href="#">SNZ8630 Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures Handbook</a> and <a href="#">Mountain biking track grades: Tracks and walks (doc.govt.nz)</a></li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring:</b> The benefits for recreation use and enjoyment are likely to be: Very high (5), high (4), good (3), limited (2), negligible (1)</p>		
<b>Safety and park operations including maintenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Importance of the track for emergency service access (vehicle tracks e.g. track surface upgrade)</li> <li>Use for environmental monitoring sites and biodiversity operations</li> <li>Other agency infrastructure and access such as utilities</li> <li>Existing track upgrade</li> <li>Effects on other users, park neighbours, concessionaires, user groups</li> <li>Does the proposal reduce the need for future maintenance or reduce erosion?</li> <li>Can track service standard requirements be resourced</li> <li>Is there a community group/ other agency prepared to take responsibility for maintenance?</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring:</b> How beneficial will the proposal be for safety and other park work activities: <b>Very high (5), high (4), good (3), limited (2), negligible (1)</b></p>		
<b>Benefits and resilience</b>	<p>Overall benefits for conservation, recreation enjoyment, heritage preservation, management, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benefits should outweigh the possible impacts of the proposed change</li> <li>Are there climate change adaptation and resilience benefits?</li> <li>Does the proposal support environmental resilience, minimise use of non-renewable/high carbon materials?</li> </ul> <p><b>Scoring:</b> Overall benefits for recreation, conservation, climate resilience are: <b>Very high (5), high (4), moderate (3), low (2), negligible (1)</b></p>		
	<b>Total scores</b>	?? / 35	??/ 35

## 6. Proposal score

- Proceed to next step of advice, planning and consenting?

Score 25 - 35	Proceed to the next stage of detailed assessment and permissions where required in liaison with Environmental Science, Biodiversity officers and resource consenting officers (where consents are required)  Refer to the <b>GW AEE Medium Impact Check List</b> or undertake full AEE (e.g. new tracks in high value sites)
Score 13 - 24	Do not proceed. The proposal has some merit so reconsider elements of it and reassess when changes have been made to ensure that important park values are better protected
Score 0 -12	Do not proceed. The proposal should not go ahead unless significant elements of it change to better align with park values. You can reassess it after significant changes are made

If there are uncertainties at this stage e.g., the positive values for people using the park, community or environment are borderline, then do more research or a site visit with key people to discuss issues and options. Everything makes more sense onsite.

## 7. Summary of key considerations in scoring


Use this document as a record of decision making

## 8. Greater Wellington internal assessment process

Proposals will be addressed by representatives from a range of areas of expertise including scientists, biodiversity, parks planning/ strategy, assets, parks resource consenting, mana whenua liaison officers and others.

Where a proposal stacks up, detailed assessment can then be commended using the guidance in Toitu Te Whenua Appendix 2, or a medium impact assessment process based on this.

## 9. OTHER REFERENCES

 [SNZ-Tracks-and-Outdoor-Visitor-Structures-Handbook.pdf](#)

NZCT standards: <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/new-zealand-cycle-trail-design-guide.pdf>

[Mountain biking track grades: Tracks and walks \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)

[Cycle track service standards \(doc.govt.nz\)](#)