

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:55 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Attn: Ms Miscamble - re Mountain Biking on Mt Gibraltar

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 2 May 2023 6:04 AM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Barry Arthur <Barry.Arthur@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Shaun Robinson <Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; [REDACTED]
Subject: Attn: Ms Miscamble - re Mountain Biking on Mt Gibraltar

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Ms Miscamble,

No doubt you are aware of the issue of unauthorised mountain biking on Mt Gibraltar. The media (one radio host in particular) are stirring up a lot of dissatisfaction around the issue of young people making trails and downhill mountain biking on the steep slopes of The Gib. Apparently there is a petition circulating and garnering quite a lot of support for allowing this to happen.

Of the hundreds of people who signed the petition asking council to permit this environmentally destructive activity, I wonder how many have spent one minute on their hands and knees pulling out weeds on Mt Gibraltar?

I ask this because [REDACTED] and an amazingly dedicated group of volunteers called the Mt Gibraltar Bushcare Group, have been doing just that for THIRTY YEARS. Over that time they have, quite literally, crawled over every square meter of the Mt Gibraltar bushland reserve, removing weeds and restoring the bush in cooperation with Wingecarribee Shire Council.

I grew up in Bowral and I used to play on Mt Gibraltar as a teenager. Back then it was completely overrun with ivy, blackberries, privet, holly and countless other invasive species. Utes used to do circle work in the inner bowl. The whole reserve was pretty much a weed infested rubbish dump and you wouldn't have been able to ride a bike anywhere (except the fire trails) because the weeds were so thick you couldn't get through them.

Today, thanks to THIRTY YEARS of back-breaking hard work, Mt Gibraltar is the environmental Crown Jewel of the Southern Highlands. Anyone can go there and quietly enjoy a beautifully restored, rare and endangered piece of our shared natural heritage.

This is simply not the place to allow mountain bikers to cut trails, build jumps and banked curves and then race their bikes downhill.

I totally understand that our young people need things to do and places to go that involve getting outside and exercising, but Mt Gibraltar is not the place for this particular activity. The fact is that disturbing the natural environment on Mt Gibraltar is illegal and it is not okay to enter a public reserve and start cutting trails and building jumps without permission. What these mountain bikers have done is actually vandalism and, (according to the signs that used to be up on Mt Gibraltar before vandals, probably mountain bikers, removed them and threw them into the scrub) carries fines of up to \$330,000 (please see photo of sign attached).

I call on the council to please enforce the ban that is already in place preventing off-road biking on Mt Gibraltar and to work hard to find somewhere else for mountain bikers to ride downhill. There is obviously a demand for this sort of activity and it is up to council to work with mountain bikers, young and old, figure out what they need and find places they can do it without damaging a precious and endangered ecological community.

Respectfully,



Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:52 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Letter to the Ms Lisa Miscamble, General Manger, WSC

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

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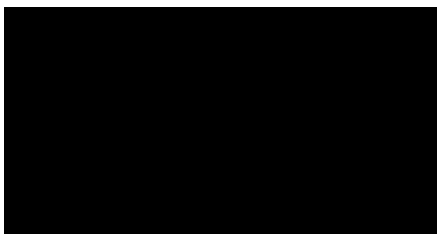
From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 4:39 PM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Letter to the Ms Lisa Miscamble, General Manger, WSC

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

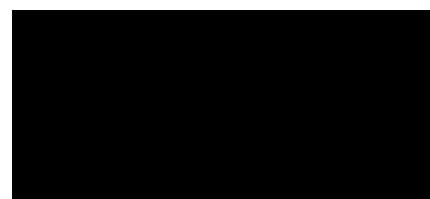
Dear Ms Miscamble

Please find attached my written submission regarding the MTB tracks constructed on Mt Gibraltar without approval. I have also attached my preliminary research into this, please excuse its draft format.

Sincerely



I acknowledge the traditional owners of this continent, and the Gundungurra and Tharawal peoples, traditional owners of the unceded land where I live today. I acknowledge their grief at loss of country, languages and culture, and support their struggle to live life on their own terms.



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The General Manager
Wingecarribee Shire Council
PO Box 141
MOSS VALE NSW 2576

Dear Ms Miscamble

Submission regarding the MTB tracks constructed on Mt Gibraltar without approval

I am writing as a long-term resident of Mittagong, concerned with finding a resolution to this complex and divisive issue.

The stakes are high.

On the one hand is the long-term survival of fragile mountain ecologies, existing in a sea of development, extractive, social and recreational pressures, and largely maintained by committed, long term volunteers. Their detailed knowledge and care offer invaluable gifts to the community.

On the other hand, is the need for young people to get outside to connect to and experience nature, test their wings in sport and recreation, and explore growing independence through risk and initiative in experience. Along with their families and friends, they are players in community harmony.

In the Mt Gibraltar Reserve, the survival of ecological communities is compromised by misinformation and ignorance. In a society increasingly alienated from nature, people know little of either the value or the endangered status of local ecologies, the legal protections for them, or the important role Wingecarribee Shire Council plays in managing and safeguarding nature reserves.

I believe that resolving current tensions requires a deeper mutual understanding of the needs and realities of all stakeholders and respectful dialogue between them. Success hinges on us recognising that we all have things to learn, and that we need to listen with respect, imagination and curiosity to different people in our community, as we seek resolution to opposing positions. In addition, all human activity is constrained by legal and moral obligations, regulatory frameworks and social obligations. Maintaining all of these depends on courage, compassion and hope.

In this submission I will briefly address

- o who I am
- o a preliminary literature search into the impact of MTB tracks in nature reserves (attached)
- o the community petition calling for the tracks to be preserved
- o Council's MTB survey assessing needs and demands towards future planning
- o the current signage in the Mt Gibraltar Reserve
- o imaginative, creative and community-connecting processes towards resolution of an increasingly divisive situation

Introducing myself

I am a doctoral candidate (University of Wollongong) and interdisciplinary artist. In my professional practice, I am particularly concerned with finding ways to rebuild fragmented connections between people, and between people and the natural world. This involves listening deeply to all points of view in any situation, and to finding unusual, inclusive and imaginative ways of getting people with different understandings to listen, think, feel and talk to each other.

██████████ the Gib Reserve for 30 years, and while I have absorbed a great deal about its ecologies, my learning is dwarfed by how much more there is to understand. As a hands-on member of volunteer community group RAW, Regen Action Wingecarribee, I practise regenerative land management practices, as well as supporting advocacy for and intergenerational education towards more sustainable land practices, including in remnant ecologies.

I treasure my thrill-seeking youth on bicycles, horses, hiking trails, snorkelling and scuba diving, have cycled solo around Britain, Europe and North Africa, and contributed to Scottish ecological projects.

Literature search on the impact of MTB tracks in nature reserves

Research from Australia, North America and Europe (please see attached annotated document) describes

- o the growing popularity of various MTB activities
- o the pressure this is placing on national parks and nature reserves around the world
- o the proliferating construction of unauthorised paths for challenging adventure sports
- o the complexity for managers of national parks and nature reserves around the world
- o poor community understanding of the concerns for fragile ecologies that managers, scientists, Indigenous peoples and nature lovers attempt to convey
- o ecological concerns overridden by the energy and sense of entitlement of MTB enthusiasts
- o pressure to open more areas to MTB, that unauthorised activities, social media activity and other campaigns, places on decision makers
- o the degradation of fragile old growth ecologies following capitulation to pressure
- o a need for further research and interdisciplinary strategies in managing conflict/complexity

i. History

Until 2010, most research (see papers 1, 2 & 3) had focussed on how cycling on joint pathways impacts soils. Primary impacts studied are water runoff/erosion, compaction, the introduction of weed species and trail widening, often to avoid boggy areas. This research shows that following the initial soil disturbance of making a path, cycling and hiking contribute similar additional disturbance, while horses' hooves cause considerably more damage.

This research acknowledges the dearth of research knowledge about how more intense and risky MTB use impacts fragile ecologies of. Accordingly, researchers advise that the impacts of the construction of unauthorised paths, especially those including features made to test skill and speed, requires detailed and interdisciplinary studies.

ii. Misrepresenting research

Unfortunately, many MTB magazines (e.g., paper 4) have extended that limited research to all other forms of MTB use, misrepresenting the damage that their sport might cause. This selective review of research by MTB magazines is seen to advance the proliferation of tracks and extend access to protected country. Critics of these MTB writers observe that the authors are adventurers who rarely describe themselves as being inspired by a reverence for nature. Rather, they write about challenging themselves to extend their skills and conquer obstacles nature poses, or that they have built. Such aims to conquer rather than connect, pose significant risks to fragile soils, which are easily eroded, compacted and overrun by invasive species. Then, life forms supported by these soils are disrupted, degraded and endangered.

Confirming this assertion, paper 1 concludes that:

it would appear that they (builders of higher skill obstacles) do not always have a responsible attitude towards environmental integrity

and notes consequences for management strategies:

... turning a blind eye to the presence of such features in natural area in and around cities is unlikely to be the optimum solution, for land managers, users of the reserve and conservation.

iii. More recent research (see 5, 6 & 7)

This confirm fears about increased degradation when reserves are opened to unchecked MTB tourism, and the effects of the proliferation of unauthorised track building. In 2022 the NPA published worrying concerns regarding:

... the intensity and scale of environmental damage involved in the illegal construction of tracks, jumps and obstacles.

and clearly set out the consequent shrinking of threatened ecological area and their precious habitats:

Each illegal track or series of jumps might 'only' affect a few hundred square metres of natural habitat, but the cumulative effect, especially in urban edge parks such as Royal or Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, is the loss of thousands of hectares of national park.

iv. Current NPWS policy, strategy & guidelines for cycling in national parks & reserves (link 6).

Published in October 2022 on the NPWS website, these underscore the need for clear and unambiguous signage that stipulates

- **if and where** MTB cyclists might ride
- the importance for cyclists to stay on the built tracks and control their speed
- respect and not disturb soil or vegetation
- respect other path users and all wildlife

v. Management Implications

The final paper (7) is from 2023 and broadly references previous research. It includes a valuable section, **4.3 Management Implications**, which emphasizes that good management of protected areas requires:

- clear and unambiguous signage
- community access to management policies outlining protections for fragile ecologies

Maintaining oversight of the reserve, and education of communities making unauthorised use of them, are responsibilities that clearly strain the resources of over worked rangers and ecological staff in cash strapped local government bodies. However, this paper offers **volunteered geographic information** as a possible strategy able to assist in managing these complex issues.

- vi. In short, research acknowledges the complexity in managing nature reserves in the face of this burgeoning sport/leisure, points to the importance of clearly visible and unambiguous signage, raises safety concerns; and suggests a possible role for volunteered information.

Community petition to retain the unapproved tracks on the Gib

I understand the community petition to be a response to Council announcing that it would fulfil its responsibilities to protect the Reserve and ensure public safety, by removing/remediating the tracks.

According to the NPWS, (<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/care-for-parks/cycling-mountain-biking>; [NPWS Cycling Policy](#)) riding bikes is generally not permitted in Council managed nature reserves, and unapproved tracks **must** be removed and remediated.

Having read many of the MTB petitioner comments, it is clear how little many parents know about the reserves, their protected status, or the laws meant ensure this. Many of them either fail to understand (or ignore) that the tracks have been constructed illegally on a protected nature reserve.

The derision many petitioners express for both the intrinsic value of fragile Gib ecologies, and the people speaking up to protect them, startled me. In supporting their children's right to continue to use tracks built without seeking approval, they are supporting them in breaking the law. Their demand that their children should be permitted to take what they want from these places, as though it is an unassailable right, bespeaks a sense of entitlement that challenges respectful dialogue.

However, a significant number of petitioners profess a desire to better understand and care for these places, and to find better relationships across conflict created by unauthorised track building. These comments suggest a place for on-site education, collaboration and conflict resolution.

Would clear signage make a difference? The NPWS websites specify that limitations to cycling and track building be clearly signposted. This would seem to be something for WSC to address

Council's MTB survey

Council is to be commended for reaching out to local communities with a survey designed to assess the social needs and demands of MTB riders, while protecting significant places and planning future trail projects.

However, while focussing on what people want and demand, the survey does not address the illegal track building at its root. I wonder why simple questions to gauge understandings of the significance of nature reserves, or regulations limiting MTB cycling in Council managed nature reserves, were not included? Neither is there any mention of the significance of these places to Indigenous people.

I remain deeply concerned about the loss of fragile ecologies, and that some people seem unable to recognise their existence, value, or protected status. The perception that one side must win and the other lose, is unfortunate. It polarises a complex issue and obscures exciting alternatives to a win-lose scenario. This is a recipe for conflict and bitterness, rather than opening new understandings of local nature, that foster a culture of care.

Research shows that

- sanctioning trails increases MTB expansion and usage, and compromises ecological survival
- innovative, inclusive, and interdisciplinary approaches to meeting social conflict over trails are worth exploring, to safeguard ecologies, better connect people with nature, and foster harmony.

It is not clear what WSC intends to do following the survey.

Signage on the Gib

Current signage on Mt Gibraltar includes valuable information about heritage, cultural and natural history. Guidelines for behaviour seem sketchy, unobtrusive and subject to vandalism -- a thorn in the side for effective management?

While fuelled trail bikes and the removal of vegetation or soil are clearly prohibited, the status of cycling and MTB riding is not mentioned. This is at odds with current NPWS guidelines, strategy and policy. It concerns me that there are no obvious safety warnings about risk or illegalities posed by the construction and use of unauthorised tracks.

I remember that some years ago, WSC was sued and obliged to introduce cliff edge signage at the Bowral lookout when a child died after falling. This potential for accident and litigation poses a future threat to Council, should any MTB rider be seriously injured whilst riding tracks on the reserve.

Creativity, imagination and connective social strategies as a way through the current impasse

The situation I have outlined is causing social conflict and ecological management headaches around the world. However, change is possible, and right now we are facing a crying need for such change on the lovely Mt Gibraltar.

Several supporters of biking describe their willingness to learn more about "the bush" and how to protect it as they enjoy it. This encourages me to suggest that we engage in fresh and imaginative approaches with artists, mediators, and educators engaging with all the players, including:

- young people seeking time in the open air (including their desires for thrills, challenges, sport and whatever else brings them to make trails
- residents who know and protect fragile ecologies
- local government decision makers, staff and time-poor rangers

If we can recognise and engage the hopes, dreams, experience and good will of all players, staring across their great differences, what might happen?

As a professional arts worker and socially engaged artist, I engage with communities of all ages and identities in the exploration of issues that concern them and me. Our projects actively engage imagination to deal with dreams, conflicts and seemingly intractable differences. Projects are frequently educative and encourage new conversations and understandings.

My practice is described as interdisciplinary, but my medium is people.

My projects have won local government and industry awards, (including one for WSC) and encourage me to think that the interdisciplinary nature of socially engaged arts practice offers this local issue paths to resolving troublesome differences.

Socially Engaged Arts practice (the subject of my doctorate) can

- involve young MTB people, their parents, and their broader community, in activities, projects and expansive conversations in a spirit of openness and listening, rather than remaining locked in implacable opposition and 'cancellation'
- invite them to observe, learn about, celebrate and protect the mountain
- encourage older residents to learn more about these young people, and explore with them a multitude of ways to be outside, know how nature works
- find ways and places to adventure on bikes without destroying the places they love
- come together to find new ways of doing all of this and pass the ecological baton to younger generations
- ally with scientists and community to create an arts-led citizen science project of world-wide significance
- remember the ties that bind people to each other, whatever our differences, and to the ecological communities that we are part of
- preserve a world our grandchildren and their grandchildren can nurture and love.

Am I dreaming?

That is my job!

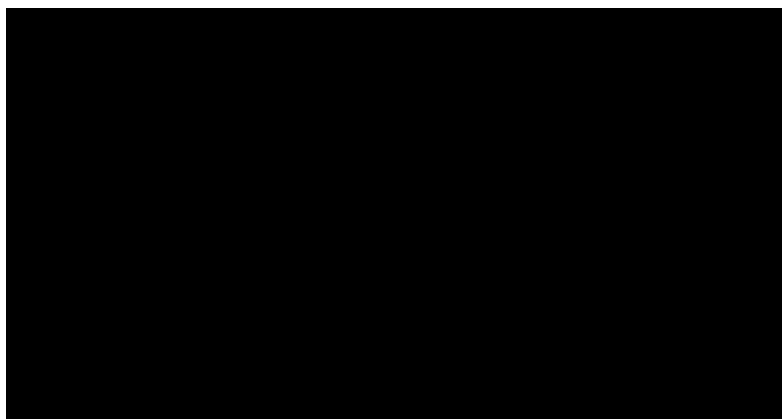
It is also the reason I have spent so much time researching and writing this submission.

I am aware of the very generous arts and culture funding from WSC that supports Ngungungula, and understand that the kind of long term, arts-led project I envisage, requires significant external grant funding.

I have spoken and corresponded with Southern Tablelands Arts CEO Rose Marin, people whose kids love bikes, various members of local land care groups and other artists. I have also circulated my very early research to members of SHWACA, WinZero and friends.

I hope that my submission is of value to you, and I would be delighted to meet with you to discuss these ideas further.

Sincerely



1&2 are Australian papers questioning whether MTB riders who make courses without permission have any environmental concerns or interests, and concluding that letting them do so is likely to be detrimental to the places, their wildlife and ecologies

1. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0169204610000873>

Pickering, C; Castley, J.Guy; Hill, W; Newsome, D 2010 "Environmental, safety and management issues of unauthorised trail technical features for mountain bicycling", *Landscape and Urban Planning*, Volume 97, Issue 1, 30 July 2010, Pp 58-67

Abstract:

Mountain biking is a popular activity in urban areas, including in forest remnants in Australia cities. To increase the technical challenge for riders, trail technical features such as jumps, bridges, mounds and ditches, along with informal trails are often constructed without authorisation. We assessed the social, environmental and management challenges associated with the presence of such features, developed a method for assessing them, and then used this method to examine them in an endangered forest within the Gold Coast in Australia. In a 29 ha remnant of Blackbutt (*Eucalyptus pilularis*) forest there were 116 unauthorised features, mostly jumps, ditches and mounds, which collectively resulted in an area of 1601 m² of bare soil and 4010 m² of undergrowth cleared. Features differed in their size, construction materials used, and their impacts on the environment. Although nearly two thirds had low to moderate safety, most were in moderate to good condition, had fall zones and optional routes for riders. Management options for land managers, in this case a publicly funded University, include (1) feature removal and site rehabilitation, (2) conversion to official features, (3) removal and provision of an alternative location for official features, or (4) maintain the status quo. There are social, financial and environmental benefits and limitations to each of these options highlighting that unauthorised trail technical features are a challenge for planners and managers that often have no easy solution.

Conclusions:

The construction and use of unauthorised trail technical features by mountain bikers has clear environmental, safety and management issues, while operating within an as yet unquantified social setting. In recent years there has been an expansion of sporting activities, such as mountain biking, taking place in natural areas and especially those in the peri-urban setting. Such users have specific requirements and it would appear that they do not always have a responsible attitude towards environmental integrity. The solution of what to do, however, is not always obvious and will vary with the environment, location of a site, who is responsible for managing it, the riding community and the broader community. What is apparent is that turning a blind eye to the presence of such features in natural area in and around cities is unlikely to be the optimum solution, for land managers, users of the reserve and conservation.

2. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249644899_Is_the_evolution_of_mountain_biking_compatible_with_fauna_conservation_in_national_parks

Burgin, Shelley & Hardiman, Nigel. (2012). "Is the evolving sport of mountain biking compatible with fauna conservation in national parks?" *Australian Zoologist*. 36. 201-208. 10.7882/AZ.2012.016.

Abstract

Historically, most people have tended to visit national parks for 'rest, relaxation and invigoration', typically resulting in moderate ecological impacts. However, increasingly, recreation in natural areas is including 'adventure' sports. One such recreation/sport that now incorporates a range of forms, including adventure derivatives, is mountain biking. In the more extreme forms, riders use extensive

trials, often with steep segments and natural or human-made obstacles to demonstrate technical skills (e.g., balance, calculated risk-taking, excitement, speed). **Appreciation of the natural environment is seldom, if ever, a reason for participation.** In this paper we consider the potential for impact on the fauna of national parks. While there is a dearth of information on the impact of mountain biking, **we conclude that park management needs to be strategic in their consideration of the issues associated with mountain biking or the outcome will be further degradation of natural areas and, at the least, loss of many animals if not major threats to populations.**

3. <https://www.lib.washington.edu/msd/norestriction/b67566091.pdf>

Quinn, M. and Chernoff, G., 2010. Mountain biking: a review of the ecological effects. *A Literature Review for Parks Canada–National Office (Visitor Experience Branch)*, pp.1-38.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In order to inform an activity assessment of mountain biking within Canada's national protected heritage places, Parks Canada commissioned the following literature review on the ecological effects of mountain biking. The purpose of this review was to summarize the nature of the ecological perturbations or effects arising from the disturbance of recreational mountain biking. Extensive searches and cross-references were conducted using the most relevant on-line databases available through the University of Calgary library. Searches of the World Wide Web via leading search engines and focused reviews of known mountain biking and trail associations were also conducted. The intent of the initial search was to identify as many papers, reports and theses as possible that addressed topics related to mountain biking. Source materials were then filtered to identify those references that addressed ecological effects of the activity. The research described in this report is concurrent with a complementary effort to understand the demographics, culture, and social effects of mountain biking as a recreational activity.

Mountain biking is a popular and burgeoning recreational activity. Compared to other outdoor recreational activities, there is a relative dearth of understanding and peer-reviewed scientific papers on the ecological effects of mountain biking. The original objective of this literature review was to provide a comparison of published research on the relative effects of four distinct sub-disciplines of mountain biking: cross country, freeride, downhill and bike parks/dirt jumps. However, the lack of published literature focusing on the sub-disciplines, or the comparison between them, made this impossible. Therefore, the review provided herein primarily addresses cross-country riding. Specific effects associated with mountain biking activity and infrastructure characteristic of the other types of use have emerged as a considerable gap in the research literature.

The literature review was conducted within the framework of recreation ecology – the study of the biophysical effects of recreational activity. One of the most important theoretical generalizations arising from recreation ecology is referred to as the curvilinear use-impact relationship. In simple terms, the nonlinear nature of the use-effect relationship suggests that the greatest proportion of ecological effect is generated during the initiation and early use period of a new facility or infrastructural development. This phenomenon has been clearly established for a wide variety of soils and vegetation responses to activity, and suggests that **the majority of the environmental effect occurs when a trail is first developed or constructed.**

The review followed the approach used in the majority of the recreation ecology literature, exploring the ecological effects of the activity on soils, vegetation, water and wildlife individually. Although this framework provides a useful structure in which to discuss the effects of recreation, it is essential to recognize that there are connections, feedbacks and synergies between the categories. Ultimately, effects of disturbance must be addressed with an understanding of the cumulative and synergistic nature of their occurrence.

The available published literature indicates that mountain biking as an anthropogenic disturbance is similar in its environmental effects as other forms of summer season trail use. The effects of mountain biking on soils and vegetation have received the most attention and experimental

Mountain Biking: A Review of the Ecological Effects

2

examination of the four categories. Research has mainly focused on quantifying erosion (created by shear forces) and compaction (created by normal forces) that result from mountain bike use and combine to create "tread incision". Other concerns include water runoff and resulting sediment transport (erosion), and trail widening to avoid muddy or puddled areas. As with other forms of trail-based recreation (hiking, horseback riding), research has shown that the soil type (erodability), terrain relief and amount of moisture have the greatest influence on the significance of mountain biking effects on soils. Researchers also reported that cycling technique and skill level influences the level of impact on soils, with braking/skidding and cutting switchbacks creating the most damage. Vegetation trampling and removal generally follows the curvilinear use-effect relationship described above with de-vegetated trails appearing even after relatively low levels of use. Mountain bike trails as vectors for the spread of non-native exotic plant species has been identified as a concern, but little empirical work is available to draw any conclusions beyond the knowledge that exists for other similar hiking and horse trails. The current review was unable to find any published research on the effects mountain biking on water quality.

The effects of mountain biking on wildlife are primarily related to habitat alteration as a result of impact to soils and vegetation, as well as disturbance of daily or seasonal habitat use. The significance of the disturbance is related to the type, timing, intensity, duration and spatial distribution of use. One of the most significant characteristics of mountain biking as a form of wildlife disturbance is a result of the potential relative speed and silence of the activity. A relatively fast moving, quiet mountain biker may approach an animal without being detected until well within the normal „flight response zone“. The result may be a severe startle response by the wildlife species with significant consequences to the animal and/or the mountain biker. In the case of grizzly bears, such incidents may result in aggressive behaviour toward the mountain biker. In the case of bison, elk and pronghorn antelope, one study did not reveal a significant difference between hikers and mountain bikers with respect to the reaction of any of the three species to their presence.

This review clearly identifies significant gaps in the available literature to assess the ecological effects of mountain biking. Some of the most important knowledge gaps include: 1) To date, there have been few documented interdisciplinary studies of the environmental and social effects associated with mountain biking; 2) Very little has been studied of the recreational ecology of mountain bikes in the Canadian context. Since many of the environmental effects are known to vary according to regional geophysical traits, applying research carried out in other biomes and landscapes may be problematic. Similarly, there are few studies outside of mountainous and high relief terrain areas; 3) No specific research has been published on the water-related environmental effects of mountain biking; 4) Some more focused study of the effects of mountain biking on wildlife would be of benefit; 5) Existing research focuses mainly on the type of recreational activity with little or no emphasis on the timing, intensity, duration and spatial distribution of the activity. Furthermore, there is little in the literature to differentiate between different types of mountain biking; 6) There is a tremendous need for research that addresses the cumulative effects of human recreational activity in protected areas. This includes the need to identify thresholds associated with numbers, timing, type and distribution of use.

4. <https://www.americantrails.org/resources/natural-resource-impacts-of-mountain-biking>
Sprung, Gary, 2003, *Natural Resource Impacts of Mountain Biking: A summary of scientific studies that compare mountain biking to other forms of trail travel.*

International Mountain Bicycling Association, October 2003

Commented [AD1]: This seems to be the source of claims from MTB magazines that MTB clearly does no more harm than other track based activities

Conclusion

Mountain biking, like other recreation activities, does impact the environment. On this point, there is little argument. But with regard to the non-human environment, people often debate whether or not mountain bikes cause more damage to trails, vegetation, and wildlife than other forms of recreation such as hiking and horseback riding.

A body of empirical, scientific studies now indicates that mountain biking is no more damaging than other forms of recreation, including hiking. Thus, managers who prohibit bicycle use (while allowing hiking or equestrian use) based on impacts to trails, soils, wildlife, or vegetation are acting without sound, scientific backing.

In contrast, if a manager prohibits one user group on the basis of providing a particular type of experience for another group, the evidence provided by social studies may or may not justify that decision. The wisdom of prohibiting particular user groups in order to satisfy the desires of other groups is a matter for politics rather than science.

5. <https://npansw.org.au/2022/01/19/have-your-say-cycling-in-national-parks-and-reserves/>

In 2021 The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), called for submissions to their *The draft Cycling Policy, draft Cycling Strategy and draft Implementation Guidelines*, which were on public exhibition until 30 January 2022. Submissions can be by letter, email or via online survey.

What the NPWS proposed?

3 documents that will determine the future of cycling in NSW' national parks and reserves:

[the draft Cycling Policy](#); [draft Cycling Strategy](#); and [draft Implementation Guidelines](#).

These three documents describe the types of cycling experiences that will be provided in parks; define how roads, tracks and trails are selected as suitable for cycling; set design standards for dedicated cycling facilities; and propose measures to ensure that any environmental impacts are detected and remediated.

Excerpts from response from the NPA (National Parks Association of NSW)

Caring about nature begins with personal connections, the experiences that bind us to the natural world and transform us into advocates for the protection of precious ecosystems, species and landscapes. Cycling, like driving or bushwalking, offers a wonderful way of experiencing many protected areas across NSW. It offers the chance to explore thousands of kilometres of management trails throughout the reserve network. Further opportunities for exploration are provided by 'single track' and downhill circuits, specifically constructed by NPWS for use by mountain bikes.

Cycling in protected areas also poses serious risks to nature. The illegal construction of mountain bike tracks, jumps and structures is causing severe environmental damage to national parks and reserves. That damage is the result of the clearance of native vegetation and habitats, the disturbance and loss of natural soils and disruption of waterways. The unapproved construction of tracks has been growing over recent decades, and most especially over the last couple of years. Each illegal track or series of jumps might 'only' affect a few hundred square metres of natural habitat, but the cumulative effect, especially in urban edge parks such as Royal or Ku-ring-gai Chase National Park, is the loss of thousands of hectares of national park.

Although there is much to commend about the exhibited plans they have some disturbing omissions that must be rectified. The foremost is the apparent unwillingness to confront the intensity and scale of environmental damage involved in the illegal construction of tracks, jumps and obstacles.

Commented [AD2]: His conclusion skims over important limitations in the research, mainly the lack of careful research, its failure to address different types of MTB riding and a variety of issues; track quality (sealed tracks cause less erosion and "Trail design, construction, and maintenance may be much more important factors in controlling erosion."); and importantly, he is only comparing the relative effects of different user groups, while not discussing the impact of roads and trails, which he acknowledges to be a significant and negative environmental impact

6. In October 2022 the NPWS published on their website the adopted policy, strategy and guidelines

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/cycling-in-nsw-national-parks>

They also published this general and very clear advice to those wishing to cycle/ MTB ride in national parks and nature reserves

<https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/conservation-and-heritage/care-for-parks/cycling-mountain-biking>

It says:

Cycling routes or mountain biking trails are clearly signposted in NSW national parks. There are a few simple ways you can promote responsible and safe riding.

Ride on open trails

Bikes are not permitted on walking tracks or in wilderness areas and nature reserves (except where signposted). Many parks operate a 'No sign, no ride' policy. Stay on existing trails and don't create new ones.

Leave no trace

Be sensitive to the dirt beneath you. Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones, so when the trail is soft, consider other riding options.

Control your bicycle

If you divert your attention away from the track for even a moment, you could put yourself and others at risk. Obey all bicycle speed regulations and recommendations and ride within your limits.

Always give way

Let your fellow park visitors know you're coming and slow to a walking pace or even stop when passing.

Never scare animals

Animals are startled by sudden movements or loud noises - this can be dangerous for you, the animals and others around you, so it's important to give animals enough room and time to adjust to you. When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain).

Plan ahead

Know your equipment, your ability, and the area in which you are riding, and prepare accordingly.

Do your bit

Help keep trails clear by picking up sticks and reporting maintenance issues to park staff.

In some cases, individual parks may have particular rules of their own, which are listed on trailhead signs and park brochures. In any case, always remember to [stay safe when bike riding](#).

Cycling in national parks

The management of cycling in NSW national parks is guided by the [NPWS Cycling Policy](#), and the [NPWS Cycling Strategy](#).

The policy includes the following:

Policy

1-7. Where can I ride? expand

1. A range of cycling experiences, including mountain biking, may be provided in some national parks and reserves managed by National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), where cycling can be undertaken sustainably and consistent with the conservation of natural and cultural values.
2. National parks and reserves can contain **roads, management trails and tracks**. Access to these roads, trails and tracks for cycling varies according to the reserve type and any specific provisions of the park's plan of management. The following general provisions apply:
 - o **park roads** – cycling on park roads is permitted in all reserve categories. Some roads that pass through national parks and reserves may be public roads that are not part of the park. Rules for the use of public roads are determined by the appropriate roads authority and are not the subject of this policy
 - o **management trails** – cycling is generally permitted on management trails in all reserve categories, except for nature reserves and wilderness areas where it must be specifically permitted in the plan of management and signposted (see para. 12)
 - o **tracks** – cycling on tracks is not permitted in nature reserves or wilderness areas. In all other reserve categories, cycling is only permitted on tracks where it is specifically approved in a plan of management and signposted as such (see para. 11)
 - o **off-track** – cycling off-track is not permitted in all reserve categories (see para. 4 for exceptions).

For parks without a plan of management, decisions about cycling will be made in accordance with the Managing Parks Prior to a Plan of Management Policy (see para. 20 – Cycling and Plans of Management).

Additional access restrictions may apply in declared Special Areas that protect drinking water catchments.

3. Tracks where cycling is permitted may be designated as multi-use, preferred-use or single-use. Tracks may also be designated as one-way to ensure safety or to optimise the experience for users. Conditions may be applied to the use of tracks, such as time or seasonal limits, areas where cyclists must dismount, etc.
4. There may be unique circumstances related to particular landscape characteristics in a park where off-track cycling activities, such as beach or snow cycling, may be permitted by consent for one-off or short time periods. The following applies:
 - o the proposed activity must be subject to environmental assessment and have appropriate conditions applied to protect park values
 - o the park plan of management must include this activity if it is intended to be repeated, ongoing on a regular basis, or may occur for extended periods of time.
5. To help visitors choose appropriate cycling experiences, cycling opportunities in parks and reserves may be classified for difficulty according to the Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines.
6. The impact of cycling on the park environment, park management resources and other park users will be monitored. Where cycling is having an unacceptable impact on park values or visitor safety, management responses may include:
 - o temporary or permanent closure of tracks
 - o revised cycling access arrangements
 - o diverting or rerouting cycling access temporarily or permanently (see para. 21 – Changes to Cycling Access).
7. NPWS will close unauthorised tracks and rehabilitate these on a priority basis, subject to available resources. NPWS will also undertake community engagement and compliance activities to address ongoing unauthorised track building and the risks associated with the use of such tracks (fines may apply under the National Parks and Wildlife Regulation 2019).

7. Smith, I., Velasquez, E., Norman, P. and Pickering, C., 2023. Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the popularity of protected areas for mountain biking and hiking in Australia: Insights from volunteered geographic information. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation and Tourism*, 41, p.100588.

Excerpt:

4.3. Management implications

Visitation to many protected areas is increasing and changing, including in Australia (Norman & Pickering, 2019; Sisneros-Kidd et al., 2021; Svobodova et al., 2019), with mountain biking becoming far more popular (Norman & Pickering, 2019). Managers can better tailor infrastructure and education, improve visitor experiences and reduce social conflict and environmental damage when they have better information about visitor preferences, including for specific activities (Hansen et al., 2021; Mann & Absher, 2008; Norman & Pickering, 2019). For destinations experiencing increased use for mountain biking, management responses can include restricting some activities on some trails, hardening trails, provisioning new single use trails, as well as increase the use of signage to highlight length, type of activities permitted and difficulty of trails (Norman et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2020; Wolf et al., 2015). These strategies can potentially reduce environmental impacts, crowding and conflict (Norman et al., 2019; Rice et al., 2020; Wolf et al., 2015). Managers increasingly need to engage with stakeholder groups via traditional communication methods but also via social media and fitness platforms including when communicating about facilities, changes to access, trail etiquette and best practices (Ferguson, Lynch, et al., 2022; Miller-Rushing et al., 2021; Pröbstl-Haider et al., 2017). Such approaches are part of broader engagement strategies with diverse stakeholder groups, including recreational users, adjacent landowners, other types of protected areas as well as conservation organisations (Worboys et al., 2015). There are increasing examples of the co-design and co-construction of trails, although conflicting mandates among stakeholders and with the primary purpose of the protected areas for conservation will occur (Newsome, 2014; Wolf et al., 2015; Worboys et al., 2015). Opening mountain biking specific trails and facilities outside of protected areas, such as on council lands, commercial forests, or private land, can also help address the increasing demand for riding experiences in and close to urban areas while reducing environmental impacts in areas that are primarily for conserving biodiversity (Hardiman & Burgin, 2013; Wolf et al., 2015).

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:52 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: WSC Mountain Biking Community Survey - input attached

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: BirdLife Southern Highlands - Conservation <blsh_conservation@birdlife.org.au>
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 3:29 PM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: WSC Mountain Biking Community Survey - input attached

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Good afternoon

Please find attached brief input to the MBT community survey.

Birdlife Southern Highlands has completed the online survey - however the design seems directed to individual response so we are providing the attached comments as they more adequately reflect our input as a local group with members regularly using WSC bush reserves.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

regards



BirdLife Southern Highlands
blsh_conservation@birdlife.org.au | birdlife.org.au



**BIRDLIFE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
WSC MOUNTAIN BIKING COMMUNITY SURVEY**

Thank you for inviting comment through WSC Mountain Biking Community Survey. Birdlife Southern Highlands has entered responses to questions on the survey form however the survey seems intended for personal responses. Please include our responses as noted below:

How often do you visit our Council managed bushland reserves in the Shire?*

2.

At least several times a week

3

What recreational activities do you typically undertake in our Council managed bushland reserves? If you have more than one, please select multiple answers.*

1.

Bushcare or other conservation activities

2.

Bird Watching

3.

Bush Walking

4.

Connection with Nature

5.

Other (please specify)

In addition to Birdwatching, our members regularly record sightings, including threatened species (birds and other species) on citizen science portals including Birddata, NatrMapr Wingecarribee, iNaturalist, eBird, Glossy Black Cockatoo/threatened species portal and/or BioNet.

What recreational activities would you like to see more opportunity for within our Council managed bushland reserves? If you have more than one, please select multiple answers.*

1.

Bird Watching

5

Are there are any challenges or issues that you have identified when using our Council managed bushland reserves for recreational purposes?

Birdlife Southern Highlands is concerned that unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails and Trail Bike Riding results in the following negative impacts on WSC bush reserves:

Safety: Birdlife Southern Members have experienced disruption to birding activities by MBT and/or Trailbike Riders using unauthorised tracks, or riding through bush areas, within

**BIRDLIFE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
WSC MOUNTAIN BIKING COMMUNITY SURVEY**

WSC bush reserves. Two recent examples are Leaver Park, Old Argyle Road Firetrail. This presents both a risk to members' safety and disruption of scheduled activities.

Environmental sustainability (eg. erosion, wildlife protection, weed control)

Unauthorised activity significantly disrupts birds, particularly threatened woodland bird species during critical breeding periods. Ethical birding and photography practices emphasis avoiding or moving on promptly when breeding/nesting activity is observed.

6.

Birdlife Southern Highlands **STRONGLY AGREES** with the statement of concern about the construction of unauthorised trails in the Shire.

We support WSC having a clear role providing leadership and community awareness in:

- Minimising the key drivers for the building of unauthorised trails
- Maximising the safe use of Council reserves by all visitors

We also strongly urge WSC to prioritise protecting bushland areas of high environmental and heritage value through the following:

- remove existing unauthorised trails
- monitor areas of HEV where mountain bike/trail bike activity, specifically Leaver Park and Mt Gibraltar.

7 Do you think there have been any other views or attitudes to mountain biking in the Wingecarribee Shire that have not been presented in this survey?

WSC bush reserves can provide a readily accessible option for unauthorised trail construction and riding, as outlined in WSC preamble to this survey. We strongly support Council efforts to mediate problems associated with unauthorised MBT.

Birdlife Southern Highlands proposes:

- The potential for **Council approved** MBT on private land be explored further. Routes previously used by the Highland Fling incorporated areas of private land.
- Removal of unauthorised trails on WSC bush reserves, **particularly Mt Gibraltar, Leaver Park, Old Argyle Road Firetrail** and any other current or future sites.
- Ongoing monitoring of sites where unauthorised trails are removed is strongly recommended including onsite camera surveillance.
- We recognise the importance of MBT as a valid recreational activity for people living in or visiting our area. We appreciate that WSC will undertake community information and awareness of the reasons for policy changes arising from this survey. Birdlife Southern Highlands already assists with Wingecarribee Schools Environment Day. We are available

**BIRDLIFE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS
WSC MOUNTAIN BIKING COMMUNITY SURVEY**

to discuss ways we can support WSC to protect birds by promoting environmentally responsible and sustainable use of bush reserves in our area.

8 Do you think there have been any other views or attitudes to our Council managed bushland reserves in the Wingecarribee Shire that have not been presented in this survey?

No.

Thank you for considering our input



Birdlife Southern Highlands

blsh_conservation@birdlife.org.au

8 June 2023.

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:39 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Illegal Mountain Bike Track.

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED] <>
Sent: Thursday, 18 May 2023 2:34 PM
To: Lisa Miscamble <Lisa.Miscamble@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Illegal Mountain Bike Track.
Importance: High

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Ms Miscamble

I have recently become aware of the illegal bicycle track dug out of the north face of Mt Gibraltar by a group of boys. I became aware of the track when a friend alerted me to a post on a Facebook Group - Just Ask Southern Highlands and Surroundings NSW - where a **group of boys and their parents boast that they have they spent hundreds of hours making a mountain bike track and they are now aghast that they have been asked to stop by the council.** As you are aware this has become a contentious issue and has attracted ill informed publicity and comment from people far and wide who have never ever seen The Gib The council have done very little to counter this nonsense and stop this fiasco.

- I live on Mt Gibraltar;
- I have participated in and for the past three years organised the "Clean Up Australia" event on Mt Gibraltar;
- As a member of the Mt Gibraltar bush care team I have weeded the mountain for the past seven years;
- I regularly walk Mt Gibraltar and I regularly report to council about rubbish dumped on Mt Gibraltar;
- I see the kangaroos and wallabies that quietly creep into our garden at dusk seeking water and food;
- I am a member of a council run group seeking ways to mitigate road kill on local roads including on Oxley Drive of Mt Gibraltar;
- I cherish Mt Gibraltar.

I agree that the boys and teenagers riding mountain bikes on The Gib enjoy the bush and the outdoors but I did not believe they are caring for Mt Gibraltar.

The Mt Gibraltar Reserve supports an endangered ecological community that is protected by State and Federal Laws. The Environment Protection Agency has stated that the council has full powers to stop the mountain bikers activity and to destroy the track. **This is a very clear cut issue and it is time the council stated the facts clearly and made all concerned aware that this activity is illegal and the law must be respected. Please do so now!**

Regards

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Mittagong.

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:51 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Delivery Status Notification (Failure)

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

----- Forwarded message -----

From: [REDACTED]

To: mail@wsc.gov.nsw.au

Cc:

Bcc:

Date: Thu, 8 Jun 2023 22:37:15 +1000

Subject: Mt bike damage to Mt Gibraltar reserve

General Manager WSC

Dear Madam, I totally object to the illegal use of Mt Gibraltar reserve for high impact mt bike activities or in other reserves or 4x4 or fire wood cutting.

I concur with the well written submission by Mt Gibraltar bush are group.

We need to protect all our reserves for our unique fauna and flora, which is at high risk of being lost. Yours sincerely.

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:41 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Cherry Tree Walk

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, 3 May 2023 6:32 PM
To: Administrator Office <AdministratorOffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Lisa Miscamble <Lisa.Miscamble@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Cherry Tree Walk

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

I would like to draw your attention that the land at the Cherry Tree walk is protected like the land at Mount Gibraltar (which you stated). The Cherry Tree walk land is sacred ground it was consecrated and dedicated. But you have decided to change the design of the Monument . I hope you are consistent in all of your decisions. Regards

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:54 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Gib Background

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

☎ 02 4868 0826

✉ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: Lemann <[REDACTED]>
Date: Friday, 19 May 2023 at 4:48 pm
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Gib Background

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Hullo Imogen, I refer you to the Draft Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve Plan of Management. Re Mountain Bikes and tracks.

To be found In WSC Agenda. 14.12.22.

- Inappropriate recreational activities such as mountain bikes resulting in informal track creation, erosion, vegetation degradation and noise pollution P29
- Mitigate any disturbance p35
- Close unauthorised tracks and trails P42
- Unauthorised illegal activities.P45

This Draft Plan is currently with the Crown Lands for approval and will return in maybe two years for Public Exhibition for which we have a submission ready!

X J

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:54 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Mt Gibraltar Bike Track

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: Lemann <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, 30 May 2023 4:45 PM
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: FW: Mt Gibraltar Bike Track

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 30, 2023 7:56 AM
To: 'Ashleigh Bellotti' <Ashleigh.Bellotti@environment.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: RE: Mt Gibraltar Bike Track

Thanks for your response. Your attention is most appreciated. The council has undertaken a community consultation. We are most concerned that the track is eliminated and the area restored. I can supply Wade with our full flora list should he find it useful, this has been verified by the RBG and Kevin Mills. As understanding of ecology progresses we are most concerned about the life under the soil surface, the micro organism, invertebrates and fungi that are appearing to drive the whole ecology. It is this field that is being most damaged at present. We also understand the great difficulty of dealing with this recurring problem. Regards Jane

From: Ashleigh Bellotti <Ashleigh.Bellotti@environment.nsw.gov.au>
Sent: Monday, May 29, 2023 3:27 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: Wade Jacob <Wade.Jacob@environment.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mt Gibraltar Bike Track

Good afternoon [REDACTED]

My name is Ashleigh Bellotti and I am the manager of compliance and regulation for the South East Region, Department of Planning and Environment. I have recently been advised of information you have supplied the Department, relative to the unlawful construction of a mountain bike track and subsequent potential harm to threatened species, on Mt Gibraltar.

I am writing to advise you that Wade Jacob whom is cc'd in this email, will be investigating this matter on behalf of the Department. We intend on firstly liaising with Council to determine what action, if any has been completed regarding this matter. In addition, we will attend site with one of our internal Ecologists to further identify the species purported to be harmed and the extent of such harm. We will also attempt to locate the persons responsible for the harm and assist Council with this matter, as much as possible.

In the interim, Wade may contact you for further information and assistance. Should you have any concerns or context that may assist us with our inquiries, I encourage to contact Wade or myself directly with said advice. I thank you for your concern, in what is a very difficult area for us to navigate. We will be in touch with the result of our inquiries.

Regards,

Ashleigh Bellotti
Senior Team Leader
Compliance and Regulation - South East

Biodiversity & Conservation | Department of Planning and Environment
T 02 6883 5322 | E ashleigh.bellotti@environment.nsw.gov.au
Level 3, 11 Farrer Place, Queanbeyan NSW 2620
www.dpie.nsw.gov.au



We work flexibly. I'm sending this message now because it's a good time for me. I don't expect that you will read, respond to, or action this message outside of your own regular hours.

This email is intended for the addressee(s) named and may contain confidential and/or privileged information. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and then delete it immediately. Any views expressed in this email are those of the individual sender except where the sender expressly and with authority states them to be the views of the NSW Office of Environment, Energy and Science.

PLEASE CONSIDER THE ENVIRONMENT BEFORE PRINTING THIS EMAIL

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:36 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Gib mountain Bikes digging today

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 9 June 2023 5:02 PM
To: Shaun Robinson <Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Karen Guymer <Karen.Guymer@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Administrator Office <AdministratorOffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Lisa Miscamble <Lisa.Miscamble@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Gib mountain Bikes digging today

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Today several young boys were digging more mountain bike obstacles on the Gib extending the existing damage. We understand there was agreement that they would not do this during the discussions. This is illegal and the Council is the authority.

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:43 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Gib mountain Bikes digging today

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

📧 Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, June 9, 2023 5:02 PM
To: 'Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au' <Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Karen.Guymer@wsc.nsw.gov.au
Cc: viv.may@wsc.nsw.gov.au; 'Lisa Miscamble' <Lisa.Miscamble@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Gib mountain Bikes digging today

Today several young boys were digging more mountain bike obstacles on the Gib extending the existing damage. We understand there was agreement that they would not do this during the discussions. This is illegal and the Council is the authority. The boys told the passers-by that they had permission to do this from Graham Day (2ST) and 3000 other people- presumably the petitioners. Please take action.

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:46 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

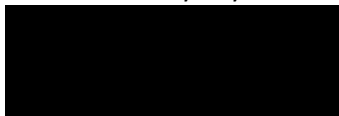
From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Sunday, June 18, 2023 2:17:26 PM
To: Administrator Office <AdministratorOffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Mr May, I am sending you these submissions which seem to have been lost in the report for Wednesday's meeting on Mountain Bike damage.

The matter is quite simply ILLEGAL in the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve and Council is the authority. Council can be prosecuted for not enforcing the environmental laws protecting the Reserve.

There is no way any of the trails can remain and should be deconstructed as soon as possible.



Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:42 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Mount Gibraltar Mountain Bike Trails / Tracks

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 1:02 PM
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Mount Gibraltar Mountain Bike Trails / Tracks

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Good Afternoon Imogen

I'm following up on the review into the impacts of the unauthorised mountain bike trails in Mt Gibraltar Heritage Reserve.

Is there an update on the review? What is its expected completion date and when will the outcomes be reported to council and the general public?

Is there a scope of what the review is assessing e.g besides assessing the environmental impacts will it also include

- confirmation that these trails are works that need to be approved by council,
- details and ramifications of the various breaches of legislation including the lack of consent to do works on council land,
- the proliferation of unauthorised trails (works) on council owned / managed reserves across the Shire especially where a trail is closed and another is created nearby ; and
- council's right and stance on decommissioning unauthorised trails (works) plus the process for the public to follow to seek approval to construct trails (works)?

I request these items are added to the scope of the review, if they are not already included.

Can you supply the current status on whether people can continue to use the unauthorised trails. Are the trails officially closed? Signs are installed, then removed so it's hard to understand the current situation.

Ideally one of the outcomes of this issue is that the general community, particularly the youth and their supporters, are aware of and follow the protocols and procedures to gain support and consent to undertake their projects (works) on council land.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

On Mon, 22 May 2023, 3:48 pm Imogen Baker, <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your response and to answer your questions:


1. Does a baseline map exist
 - a. No, not at this time, it is certainly something that may be done as part of this current review though as the thought is to undertake an impact assessment to ascertain the damage – I'm not the leader of that project but happy to keep you updated on the matter as it progresses.
2. Prioritisation of the PoM with DPE
 - a. While we have no authority over the way that DPE prioritises its works, we absolutely will endeavour to expedite the finalisation of the PoM for public exhibition through regular follow up and requests for updates.
3. Your comments are noted however I don't believe that particular conversation was in regards to this draft PoM as it was presented to Council for endorsement in November 22 to be sent to DPE, since then there have been a few items that required adjustment before submission and it is now with DPE for consideration.


Thanks again for your interest, passion for our environmental spaces and I'm sure I'll be in touch soon with a further update.

Kind regards,
Imogen

Imogen Baker

Executive Officer

 02 4868 0838

 0457 713 079

 Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au




 www.wsc.nsw.gov.au  68 Elizabeth St, Moss Vale NSW 2577  PO Box 141 Moss Vale NSW 2577

We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Tharawal people as the traditional custodians of this place we now call the Wingecarribee Shire. We recognise the continuous and deep connection for Gundungurra and Tharawal people to their Ngurra (Country) and its great cultural significance to First Nations people, both locally and in the region. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

Disclaimer: This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete the message. Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender and are not necessarily the views of Wingecarribee Shire Council. This email may be made available to third parties in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.



From:  >
Sent: Friday, 19 May 2023 2:15 PM
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Jessica Kaiser <Jessica.Kaiser@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Re: Mount Gibraltar Mountain Bike Trails / Tracks

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Good Afternoon Imogen

Thank you for your response to my email and offering to keep me informed of further developments in this issue. It is very much appreciated.

Although I am interested in all aspects of this issue, my particular interest is in the assessment, decommissioning and remediation of these illegal works, and the urgency given to these actions. Is there a baseline map showing the extent of all the trails and location of associated technical aspects and features e.g. jumps, ramps, berms etc. I feel this would be particularly useful as part of undertaking the trail assessments and monitoring for any further illegal works.

In relation to the draft Plan of Management, which I understand is with NSW Crown Lands, I ask that it's progression is proactively managed and given priority, now that the PoMs required for the management of Community Land in bush fire impacted areas appear to have been completed.

I do note a 8 Feb 2017 council resolution, amongst other things, called for "The General Manager ensure that the management plan for Mt Gibraltar is given a high priority". This was included in the topic of "Serious Fire Risk on Mount Gibraltar". It is unclear whether the plan referred to was for the development of a new (but undefined) plan, the existing Fire Management Plan for Mount Gibraltar Reserve (2004), or for the development of the broader Plan of Management for the reserve. Anecdotally a PoM has been requested for many years so was likely to be raised in any discussions on management of The Gib. It does concern me that the progression of the draft Plan of Management has, from my perspective, 'dragged on' for so long and Council's level of commitment to delivering the PoM, acknowledging this mainly relates to the previous council.

Kind regards

On Wed, 17 May 2023, 3:08 pm Imogen Baker, <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au> wrote:
Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your correspondence to Mr May, he has asked that I respond to your request.

I have noted your various concerns regarding the environmental and public safety issues that the Mountain Bike Trails on the Gib are causing. We of course do not condone any unauthorised works on public land and celebrate the environmental asset which is Mt Gibraltar Reserve and are keenly aware of its environmental sensitivities. However, there is no current regulation that disallows bike riding at the reserve. The DRAFT plan of management cites Mt Gibraltar reserve as an area for passive recreation. Once this draft plan is formalised, we would be able to concretely say that bikes were not allowed on the reserve. Until such a time the draft plan of management can be formalised, we are only able to monitor as resources allow for any unapproved works at the site and undertake impact assessments to manage the issue in the interim – which we are doing.

Regarding your requests,

- We have indeed acknowledged and advised that unauthorised trail making is illegal. There is no question about this and in communication with any stakeholder i.e. environmental group, bike riders, businesses, community members and media etc. this has been our message.
- We are undertaking a process to review the impact of the trails at Mt Gibraltar Reserve. We have certainly liaised with neighbour councils on this issue and other relevant groups.

I am sure you would like to be kept informed of any further developments on this matter and I will ensure you receive correspondence as we progress.

Please feel free to reply by email or call me if you wish to discuss further.

Kind regards,
Imogen

Imogen Baker

Executive Officer
02 4868 0838
0457 713 079
Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au

68 Elizabeth St, Moss Vale NSW 2577 PO Box 141 Moss Vale NSW 2577

We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Tharawal people as the traditional custodians of this place we now call the Wingecarribee Shire. We recognise the deep connection for Gundungurra and Tharawal people to their Ngurra (Country) and its great cultural significance to First Nations people, both locally and in the pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

Disclaimer: This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify and delete the message. Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender and are not necessarily the views of Wingecarribee Shire Council. This message may be made available to third parties in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

From: [REDACTED] >
Sent: Tuesday, 16 May 2023 5:07 PM
To: Administrator Office <AdministratorOffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mount Gibraltar Mountain Bike Trails / Tracks

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Good afternoon Mr May

I am dismayed at the extent and impact of the unauthorised mountain bike trails on the natural environment and our public safety within Mount Gibraltar reserve (The Gib). As noted on the Your Say Wingecarribee web site 'Mount Gibraltar is an iconic landmark of special significance, recognised for both its ecological, heritage and cultural values. It is a popular destination for passive recreation for locals and visitors'. From my perspective the trails and their usage are not compatible with these values.

Natural Environment

The creation and use of these unauthorised mountain bike trails and features have, from my perspective, a concerning, detrimental impact on the native species and ecological communities that call The Gib home. Not only is vegetation being removed and damaged, so is the soil. It is being excavated, mounded up, and laid bare, exposing it to compaction and erosion forces. The impact of the trails and their usage on fauna and other ecological functions is unknown.

Public Safety

The mountain bike trails and their usage have safety hazards for riders and passers-by. The trails are not designed or constructed to a specified standard or assessed by qualified people for their safety. The jumps, obstacles, ditches, holes, discarded rocks and rubble pose a real, potentially serious, slip, trip and fall hazard to various users of the reserve.

Planning and Other Regulations

These trails and their technical features:

- are not authorised, approved or consented to by council;
- have not been the subject to requisite planning instruments, Environmental Assessment and range of other land use, cultural and or heritage legislation / regulations.

Muddying The Issue

This issue is not grumpy people stopping kids being kids and having fun.

The trails are not a couple of benign tracks with a few small mounded jumps.

The trails do not follow or substantially use existing authorised Recreational Walking Tracks.

The issue is not resolved through a one sided special interest social and other media campaign.

I request Council

- acknowledges and advises the public these unauthorised trails, and all others on council owned and or managed land, have environmental, public safety, and planning implications. Doing nothing gives the perception of tacit approval and the very real potential for more trails to be established on Mount Gibraltar Reserve as well as other reserves, especially hot spots such as Mansfield Reserve and Mt Alexandra Reserve (outside of the official mountain bike trail area)
- close the mountain bike trails on The Gib and in a timely manner rehabilitate the concerning aspects and features of the trails. Apply this to all other concerning mountain bike trails on council owned and or managed land. I

understand closure and rehabilitation of the trails is not an easy thing to do and may require various strategies to achieve this. Presumably insights and suggestions have or will be sought from other agencies and organisations dealing with the same or similar issues. Many NSW councils have information on their web sites regarding their approach to unauthorised bike jumps and tracks.

Kind regards

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the sender.

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:51 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Mountain Bikes on Mount Gibraltar

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 5:50 PM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mountain Bikes on Mount Gibraltar

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

To the General Manager, WSC

Dear Ms Miscamble

I am in total support of the submission by the MOUNT GIBRALTAR LANDCARE AND BUSHCARE group made to you today.
Mount Gibraltar is VERY fragile country and the damage being done by people riding mountain bikes is frightening.

As a bushcare worker myself, I am aware of the immense effort done over the years by volunteers working on Mount Gibraltar.

I ask that you take steps to halt the vandalism.

Thank you

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:39 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Unauthorised use of public land at Mount Gibraltar

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 19 May 2023 1:31 PM
To: WSC Environment & Sustainability team <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Unauthorised use of public land at Mount Gibraltar

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

To the General Manager,
Dear Ms Miscamble,

I am very concerned about the building of mountain bike tracks on public land at Mt. Gibraltar. I believe this needs to be seen as an issue of public safety, as this area is used by many people for walking, and quiet bush enjoyment

There has, over the years, been strong prohibitions on people doing unauthorised and unsupervised activities on public land in this Shire. Even well-meant activities such as residents mowing around a locality, as used to happen in Exeter, have been discouraged, usually for Public Liability reasons. The Bushcare Section considers the supervision and guidance of volunteers working on public areas to be essential.

Why then is Council apparently willing to permit ad hoc construction of obstacles such as bike jumps, and modifications to make a bushland area more fun for a small group of thrill seekers?

Looking forward to your reply,

Yours faithfully,

[REDACTED]

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**MOUNT GIBRALTAR LANDCARE AND BUSHCARE
C/ PO BOX 204 BOWRAL NSW 2576**

The General Manager
Wingecarribee Shire Council
PO Box 141
MOSS VALE NSW 2576
8.6.23

Dear Madam, SUBMISSION RE MOUNTAIN BIKES AND RESERVES

We are writing on behalf of the above group to summarise our ideas about the current mountain bicycle activities. We all know that there are phases of dangerous activities undertaken by our young. e.g. billycarting, roller skating, scramble biking, skate boarding, stunt riding and now mountain biking. All of these have caused concern and resulted in facilities for them being funded by the community – in this case the Welby Mountain Bike Complex.

It is heartening to see our young using initiative, being creative and testing themselves, and these days, especially, outdoors. It is disappointing to see them being assisted by adults to break the Law. Under this guidance they are learning that it is OK to trash public property. What they are doing on Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve is not on a beach where the sea will mend it, nor on snow where the melt will remove it. It is on soil derived from 180 million year old hard rock that is thin and fragile and supports a unique assemblage of plants, animals, fungi, invertebrates, micro-organism and genes for the future. This is a vulnerable community that has been protected by National, State and Local Government that is this community's and Wingecarribee Shire Council's privilege to care for.



This care has been carried out for the last 30 years with the help of the above group that was appointed in 1993 to assist with care, control and management of the Reserve. This we have done, and put in over \$1 million worth of volunteer in-kind labour hours to be matched by over \$1million worth of grants to restore the degraded forest, industrial heritage and passive recreational potential for a treasure in the centre of the Shire and the urban area. We thought we had secured its protection.



- 2001 NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. *Mount Gibraltar Forest*
- 2008 NSW National Trust Mount Gibraltar Quarries Complex: Industrial Heritage Listing
- 2011 Australian Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act. *Uplands Basalt Eucalypt Forest of the Sydney Basin Bio-region*
- 2013 NSW Heritage Council. Significant Site: *Biodiversity and Industrial Heritage*.

Yet, in all our Bushland Reserves every few years this Mountain Bike trauma reappears and the Council and its volunteers must halt the damage and restore the sites time after time. Each wound leaving irreparable scars and costing the community even more.

This protected Reserve is part of a much bigger concept- the reconnection of fragmented pockets of native vegetation- within the vision of the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative that aims to reconnect the Alps to the Atherton Tableland in order to secure the ability for plants and animal to move as necessary for survival of climate change or other impacts..

It is of extreme consequence to us if the Council does not support the Law and allows this sort of desecration of the Reserve. We have worked for the long, long term future of the planet- not just our local entertainment. Our work is part of a far greater project and endeavour towards recovery.

After all our work the regenerating vegetation is just beginning to reach a state of integrity that will allow it to resist weed invasion and too frequent burning. The succession of plants is beginning to stabilise and the wildlife survives – just. Koalas, Greater Gliders, Powerful Owls, Lyrebirds and Microbats are imperilled. Roadkills are too frequent and the biodiversity connections for replenishments are vanishing.



© Koala - After the rain of the creek from nature's kitchen. The koala has been found in a danger of extinction. Photo credit: David Dowell



There are also Threatened plants such as the *Helychrysum calvertianum* (named for our local heroine Louisa Atkinson) and the unique *Notelea venosa x longifolia* in the creek line

We understand the following is a very difficult concept for many people to comprehend and it is the first principle of Bush Regeneration “Minimal soil disturbance”. What goes on underground drives the whole community and is a very fragile mechanism. It is difficult to see the results of disturbance, such as decline of the Purple Copper Butterfly that depends on a species of ant to protect its caterpillars, while both ant and caterpillar depend on the *Bursaria spinosa* plant which depends on a micro fungi for its nutrition and communication. No Bursaria – no Butterfly. There are flowers that depend on a wasp for pollination that must lay its eggs into Christmas beetle larvae, while the Christmas beetle depends on a large Eucalypt that also needs soil micro fungi for its nutrition. No fungi - no wasp - no beetle -no tree. There are plants that need ants to carry their seed underground and pay them with little edible attachments to the seed. No ants – no seedlings. Nearly every plant needs a friendly soil fungus (mycorrhiza) to help its roots take up food. All of the systems in the ecology depend on the agents of decay in the soil and litter to break down the fallen organic matter to provide their food- and so the cycles are connected. Without expert observation we cannot assess the state of the micro-organisms and the complex relationships in the under- world that drive the whole community. The mountain bike track construction is damaging this fragile underworld through major disturbance and compaction.



Without a flourishing plant community driving the world through photosynthesis- no oxygen for us.



The digging, mounding, compacting, introduction of weed seed and erosion of soil in the creation of all the destructive bicycle tracks has damaging repercussions that are not immediately visible. What happens in the reserve can be described as a web of life, like a spider’s web: if you

touch it anywhere, the whole structure trembles and parts may collapse.

This is the sort of message we need to impart to our young before they do the damage. However, their activities have now reached a scale where the Council must intervene. It has the responsibility and strong powers to enforce the Law (recently confirmed again by the EPA).

There is also the matter of safety, for years walkers of all ages have used the tracks and fire trails and are unsuspecting of barely controlled bicycles commandeering the same tracks. As some of these walking tracks are also firetrails, we would very much like to see the Gib firetrails totally removed from the options for bicycles of any kind.

We also appreciate the difficulties of enforcing the Law when the vandals are elusive, destroy warnings and disguise identities. The search for alternative suitable sites to those damaging all our protected reserve will be interesting and we have already made some suggestions.

In addition the particular area of major damage is very close to one of the very few places for creatures to enter the Reserve - this is the Chinaman's Creek culvert under the railway line and the Bowral to Mittagong Road, traversing of which is hazardous enough, without having any potential wildlife refugees confronting the mountain bike activities on the sanctuary side.

Finally, it is fundamental that any mention of this track is removed from mountain bike Internet WEB sites. No such invitation should be circulated.

In the meantime it is essential that these tracks on Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve are erased as soon as possible before deep erosion lines set in, the recovery potential of the micro world and seed bank in the soil expires and there is a hope of restoring some ecological balance



In view of the scale of the disturbance It appears it would be most efficient to use an earth moving machine and have the culprits help rake and secure the tracks (punishment fit the crime) and it is a crime, then organise planting days as required.

Also, at present there is virtually no indication for a visitor to learn that the Reserve is a protected sanctuary.

Dr Richard Hanbury, Volunteer Convenor
Mount Gibraltar Landcare and Bushcare



Jane Lemann Volunteer Acting secretary and Bush
Regenerator



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Mon, 15 May 2023 16:08:51 +1000
To: administratoroffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au
Subject: ILLEGAL BIKE TRACKS MT. GIBRALTAR (cc)

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Lisa,

First and foremost, we wish to convey our absolute support to you personally, and Council as a whole, in upholding the law and shutting down the illegal and very destructive activity taking place on the Gib.

The parents that are encouraging and supporting their children in their misguided endeavours are setting an appalling example and should hang their heads in shame.

Furthermore, under the law, parents are responsible for the conduct and actions of their children while ever they are minors, and therefore must also bear the consequences arising from those actions. We hasten to add, the parents are clearly culpable in the entire matter and indeed, are on the public record declaring they should be allowed to continue breaking the law while desecrating a listed reserve of state significance.

We understand that Council is exercising leniency as far as the children are concerned, however it would be a grave mistake for that to apply to the adults. There must be consequences for treating the law with contempt otherwise society will be on a slippery slope towards anarchy. Perhaps a small financial penalty as a warning (with far greater penalties for repeat offences) and a request to help Council and the dedicated volunteers carry out the substantial amount of stabilisation and bush regeneration that will be required to remediate the damage done to date.

[REDACTED] the Gib for over 40 years and are participants in Council's Land For Wildlife programme and therefore have an intimate knowledge of the mountain and its environment.

The woodland on the hot, northern aspect of it Gib is particularly fragile and was decimated in the recent 3 year drought. The understory is far less vigorous and thinner than the more protected aspects of the mountain and any restoration work will therefore be even more challenging.

Erosion is already compounding at an alarming rate due to the steep terrain, if the use of the tracks and associated removal of vegetation continues then the already destructive erosion will become catastrophic.

It is imperative that any further degradation is effectively stopped and stopped immediately.

We were all young once and enjoyed all manner of outdoor activities, and no doubt, the young people have been having a whale of a time on their mountain bikes, but it must be enjoyed within the law and in the right place. The Mount Gibraltar Reserve is not, and can never be, that place.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]
Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sun, 4 Jun 2023 17:13:19 +1000
To: "Wingecarribee Shire Council" <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: SUBMISSION: ILLEGAL MOUNTAIN BIKE TRACKS WITHIN THE MT GIBALTAR RESERVE
Categories: Melanie

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

3 June 2023

Ms Lisa Miscamble
General Manager
Wingecarribee Shire Council
mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Lisa,

We are adding to our earlier correspondence (15.05.23), concerning the mountain bike activity on the Gib, as the survey is general in scope and makes no specific mention of the environmental destruction within the Reserve.

It is very disturbing to see the extent and scale of the destruction that has obviously been taking place for years throughout the Gib, it particularly the Mittagong side of the mountain. For whatever reason, it is also obvious Council has completely failed to stop it, yet, Council has the absolute authority, and legal responsibility, to take effective action to protect the biodiversity of the Reserve. We are compelled to ask why it has not done so?

The young people are completely out of control, vegetation has been totally removed from very large areas, big volumes of soil have been excavated and relocated, and compacted, while many new tracks are currently being cleared to expand the ever increasing network.

If Council does not shut down what amounts to environmental vandalism, surely, it will completely forfeit its environmental credibility.

How can Council allow children to get away with destruction of biodiversity on an industrial scale, while knowledgeable bush regenerators require a Certificate to do so much as a pull out a single weed within the very same Reserve? We find this situation not only grossly unfair to the volunteers who have spent decades labouring to restore the Reserve, but also farcical in the extreme.

To state the obvious, areas such as the Mt Gibraltar Reserve that has specific environmental protection, enshrined in legislation, it is axiomatic that the obligations of Council in managing the Reserve are not optional, but mandatory.

We know of bush walkers who will no longer walk on any of the tracks on the mountain, as they do not feel safe to do so, because they have been confronted with mountain bikes. Clearly, fast moving bikes

and bushwalkers cannot safely co-exist on the same tracks. Furthermore, what are the implications for Council should someone get seriously injured, either through riding on illegitimate and hazardous tracks, or, by a rider colliding a walker? At the end of the day, it is rate payer's money that Council is putting on the line when it comes to the possibility of litigation.

We hasten to add we are not against young people, or people of any age for that matter, getting out into the bush and enjoying the healthy fun of mountain biking, but it needs to be done in the right place, with safety, and not in the midst of a protected Reserve. The present activity on the Gib is highly dangerous as the tracks are not properly designed or constructed. There are internationally adopted standards that genuinely minimise environmental impacts while also making the layout as safe as possible for riders.

Whilst the woodland where the tracks are situated is not one of the two plant communities that are listed as rare or endangered on the Gib all woodland within, and contiguous with, the Reserve is critical to the survival of the biodiversity of the entire Reserve. It is a relatively small area of woodland surrounded by ever increasing urban development and needs all the help it can get to be sustainable.

It is also critical habitat for endangered wildlife, among them, the greater glider and koala.

We do understand financial constraints are always a factor for Council when dealing with issues such as that which occurring on the Gib and throughout the Highlands. We have a few suggestions.

The "Welcome" signs throughout the Reserve are excellent, but why not add two more prohibitions? One for NO REMOVAL OR EXCAVATION OF SOIL and the other, NO REMOVAL OF VEGETATION. Additional signs in other key locations would be even more effective.

The casual employment of a retired police officer, perhaps for one day a week, could put experienced and qualified "feet on the ground" to patrol designated mountain bike areas to keep an eye on things. A different day each week would keep the bikers on their toes. Is there a Mountain Biking Association, or Club, in the Highlands that could work with Council to promote safety, environmental awareness and general good behaviour within the biking community?

Please ensure that mountain biking is only permitted in areas that are suitable, and their development is properly planned and constructed such areas need to be kept under systematic surveillance by Council, on a permanent basis to ensure compliance.

Our environment in the Highlands is under enough pressure as it is, examples like what is happening on our most iconic mountain must be stopped and never repeated.

Kind Regards,

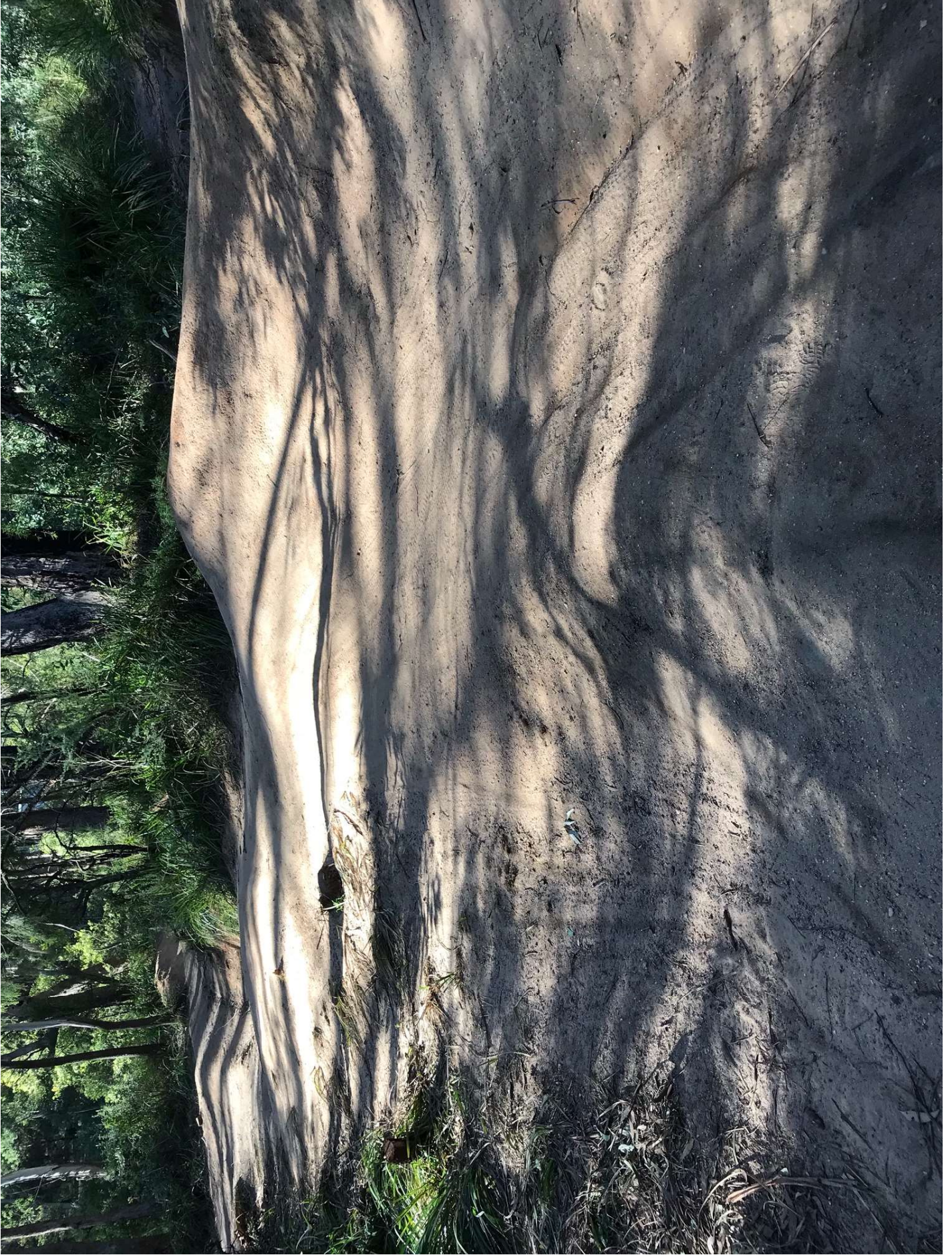


The photographs tell their own story.

Note, you can just make out a chair right at e top of the photograph of creek











SOUTH COAST & TABLELANDS BROADCASTING PTY. LTD.
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To whom it may concern,

Between 9.00am and 12.00 midday Radio 2ST asked listeners to send emails regarding the riding of mountain bikes on Mount Gibraltar whether it be in support of the use of the area for mountain biking or if they believed that they should be stopped from using it and Landcare taking over maintaining the area.

The many emails presented today was in support of the bike riders continuing to use the Gib we received no emails opposing them using the area to ride their bikes.

Just to let you know that the opportunity for people to respond was fair and equitable for both sides and no encouragement was given by the announcer Graeme Day to one side or the other to try and influence the response from those that wished to comment on the issue

119 McMahons Road, North Nowra 2541
Locked Bag 3010
T: (02) 4423 0055
Email: reception@2st.com.au

Branches
Cnr Banyette & Bong Bong Street, Bowral 2576
510 Banyette Street, Mudgee 2850

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, May 19, 2023 10:18 AM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Let the kids ride the Gib trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

I am writing in support of kids being able to ride the trails at the Gib. These are responsible good kids wanting to be active and the great outdoors. Please let them ride the trails.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:00 PM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Let the boys ride

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

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Hi There,

I'm writing to express my support to the young boys being able to ride the gib trails. It would mean so much to our Southern Highland youth to be allowed this tiny corner of the Gib to spend time in our bush.

Let's help our Southern Highlands youth be healthy and happy.

Cheers,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:02 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mtb on the Gib

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Hi.

Thanks for promoting this issue.

Council claims to want to promote youth activities but reading the strategy documents for bikes and youth they have no idea. Completely out of touch.
Kids between 12 and 18 are looking for adventure and self expression. Concrete trails don't offer that.

WSC has an opportunity to be an outdoor destination. Look at what Mtb has done for the snowy mountains. It's bigger than skiing.

At every opportunity the council puts up threatening signs stopping adventure.

These kids want fun yet all council want is to be the fun police. Check out the youth strategy and the photos say it all. Constrained activity. Focus on nerds etc. my grandmother could create more fun than that lot.

Regards

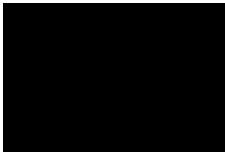
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:04 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Re the Gib Mountain Bike Trails

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Hi Graham

Just a quick email regarding the mountain bike trail at the Gib. Mountain biking is great passion of mine. What I think people who haven't tried the sport don't understand is that it's the opportunity to be immersed in nature that is one of the great joys of this sport. I have ridden up and down the south coast on single trails and fire trails and the rides I remember are the ones where I have seen Glossy Black Cockatoos, lyrebirds and Monitors as well as Waratahs in bloom. If you want young people to respect and nurture nature, then they have to have a reason to become immersed in it. I can understand the passion people have for nature on the GIB and I don't like seeing weeds taking over our bush and the loss habitat for our wildlife and love the work that volunteers do to preserve it, but if we want future generations to develop the same love and respect for it then they need a reason to experience it and protect it. A small section of trail that young people feel some ownership over now will lead to long term love from these young people for the bush in later life.



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:14 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: GIB trails

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Hello,

This is an email to support that the youth who created the GIB trails should be allowed to continue to ride. Do a risk assessment, take necessary safety steps and let the kids back on the track.

With the rising costs of mental health in our young kids these days, the high proportions of gaming addiction and youth suicide - let these kids ride!! Kids should be outside and enjoying life, not being squashed by policies and procedures.

I support the youth being able to ride!!

Thank you
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:19 PM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Let the gib stay

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:33 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mountain bikes & the naysayers

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G'day GD,

Marvelous work boys.
Don't allow others to prevent us using our country.

On the topic of mountain bike trails;
we have over 85% of forests in the Shoalhaven and a pathetic amount of access to them,
not as many hi performance trails as we should have,
all are established in State forests as they are easily accessible,
unfortunately we have a few motorbike riders that damage these few trails causing
considerable erosion and repair work.
We need more!

Imagine the increased income that could be generated by quality mountain bike trails here.
One just needs to observe the ones in Canberra for examples. I'd love to hurtle down a few of
the mountains in our area, and pay to do it

Well done those parents who are standing up to the 'gate lockers'. Get out and get riding.
By the way, where is this trail...I want to go ride on it.

Regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:55 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mount Gibraltar Mountain Biking

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
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Good afternoon

I am writing to declare my support for keeping the Mt Gibraltar riding trails open for push bikes. I'm the mum of 3 teenagers, 2 of which are passionate mountain bikers. My sons are caring, kind, polite young men, who love the outdoors and share a passion with their friends for mountain biking.

We live in Bowral, and I do not want them riding all the way to Welby as it's not safe enough along the side of the road. I am not always available to drop them off in the car, and the Gib is accessible and safe for them to get to from where we live.

I implore our council to let common sense prevail and allow our kids to keep enjoying the beautiful outdoors on their bikes.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 1:04 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Gday,

I definitely support the public should be able to ride the bikes at the Gib. It's a small corner of the bush and it's fantastic, physical and creative for our youth!

Kindly
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 4:25 PM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Gibraltar Mountain Bike Trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

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Report Suspicious

The Gibraltar mountain bike trails are a great place to ride, have fun and make new friends. The trails have been there for more than 10 years now and nobody has had a problem with them. The trails get kids out door which makes them fit and healthy, i believe the trails should be left alone.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 5:06 PM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Gib bike track- let the kids keep it!

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Report Suspicious

Hi

It is so good to hear that a group of kids have collaborated to build themselves an amenity to have fun in the outdoors.

It is dismaying to hear that Council, instead of supporting their endeavours, is wanting to destroy their efforts.

Let the Council engineers do something positive such as to assist to make sure the track is safe.

I support the youngsters keeping their track.

Cheers

[REDACTED]

Bowral

Sent from my iPad

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 8:09 PM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Save the Gibraltar Mountain Bike and Walking Trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
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Report Suspicious

Hi Graham

Thank you so much for taking an interest in the saving the mountain bike trails on Mt Gibraltar.

The youth that regularly ride here are responsible kids, enjoying the outdoors and the bush we are so lucky to have on our doorstep.

As you are aware, there isn't a great deal of entertainment for kids in the tween-teenage years in the Southern Highlands. This little corner at the "The Gib" allows kids to be kids, get exercise, breath fresh air, interact with other kids their own age, make new friendships and enjoy the great outdoors.

This all plays an important role in keeping healthy, both physically and mentally.

It also stops kids on bikes seen as hanging around or congregating at the shops, which tends to upset some locals.

The kids riding and building the trails are respectful of the natural habitat and environment. They are all aware there is a risk riding, but there is also a risk walking across the road.

Let's all allow these trails to stay for all to enjoy.

Many thanks

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, May 19, 2023 6:27 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib Trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi, Please save the Gib Trails to keep our community healthy and happy. Regards, [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Friday, May 19, 2023 10:31 AM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Leave the kids alone on the Gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Report Suspicious

What is wrong with this area is that there's very little for teens to do so in saying that leave them and their trails alone. What harm are they doing? From [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: 2ST Website <donotreply@wpvip.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 12:02 PM
To: Nowra Reception <reception2st@arn.com.au>
Subject: YOU'VE GOT MAIL from Contact - Highlands Mornings with Graeme

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

Report Suspicious

Name

Highlands Sand & Soil

Email

info@highlandssandandsoil.com.au

Subject

The Gib

Message

Hi Graham,

The team at Highlands Sand & Soil in Gantry Place Braemar have been tuning into 2st as we do everyday. We would like to offer our assistance with The Gib matter at hand. We would like to donate any landscaping needs or machines that maybe required to improve The Gib for the communities use.

Just give us a call on 4871 1333 if we can assist.

From the friendly team @ Highlands Sand & Soil

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:54 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Support for MTB access to Mt Gibraltar

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

I want to add my support to the youth of the Southern Highlands to have access to Mt Gibraltar where they can continue to have fun on the MTB trails.

Sincerely

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:47 AM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Mountain biking on the Gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme and team,

I'm writing to show my support of our children being able to ride their mountain bikes on the trails of the Gib. I completely respect the desire for conservation of the area, however I also believe the area can be safely and considerately used by both walkers, running and kids on their bikes. With so little for kids to do in the Highlands, these boys should be commended for creating a healthy outdoors activity for themselves, not penalised by taking it away.

thank you

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:51 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mountsin bike riding on the GIB

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I support our loval boys being able to ride the gib trails. It would mean so much to our Southern Highland youth to be allowed this tiny corner of the Gib to spend time in our bush.

. Let's help our Southern Highlands youth be healthy and happy.

Thank you Graeme Day for caring about our youth.”

Thanks
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:46 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Bike trail

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

I absolutely agree that this trail should be left alone by council and let the kids get on with a healthy lifestyle.

Yours [REDACTED]

Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:43 AM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Gib Trails for youth

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender

You have not previously corresponded with this sender.

Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme

A friend messaged me before to drop an email to show my support for the trails some of the young boys have been making on the Mittagong side of the Gib.

I have lived in the Highlands since 1999 and have been an active member of the SHCC and now Highlands trails for almost 15 years (I am now 45)

These trails represent our youth getting off there backside, picking up a shovel and making something for themselves where there is an otherwise void for this discipline.

Mountain biking in all of its forms is inherently dangerous, these risks are taken on by riders as long as riders mitigate the risk to a long level by wearing the necessary safety gear ie full face helmet, goggles and pads the authorities should be able to work with these young guys.

Best Regards

[REDACTED]

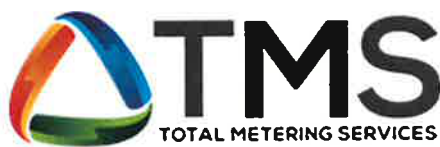
TOTAL METERING SERVICES

1/21 Rodeo Rd, Gregory Hills NSW, 2557

Phone: 1300 TMS 123 (1300 867 123)

Mobile: 0414 081717

Email: matthew.brown@totalmeteringservices.com.au



From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:40 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject:

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
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Report Suspicious

I support allowing our kids to rid the tracks on the Gib. Outdoor experiences are right of passage for our youth.
Keep them busy or they find their own fun

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:33 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: The Gib & MTB trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

Just a quick one regarding the MTB trails the kids have built on the Gib. I have been up there and seen the works now & prior to our massive downfalls of rain we endured last year. The kids have put a massive effort in but of course without any form of permission.

Doing it where they have is probably the best in terms of the minimisation of Flora damage in the area. In saying that the Gib is of course a heritage listed area so it's not ideal.

They don't really have anywhere else to go except Welby which is not Gravity style MTBiking (its Cross Country - XC) & let's face it.. it's an old tip.. not great either.

Council need to realise this is not going to just go away.. I have seen many tracks built in various locations throughout the highlands over the last 10 years because apart from ordinary Welby.. there is nothing else.

I think if the kids were educated somewhat in the flora & fauna of the area by the appropriate groups it could conceivably work.

Regards

[REDACTED]

Sent from a small screen

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:20 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: support for southern highlands youth - gib trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hello
We support the gib trails for Southern Highlands youth to continue to be able to ride their bikes at the Gib.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 11:10 AM

To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>

Subject: Gib trails - I support our children being able to ride the gib trails

This Message Is From an External Sender

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Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

I support our children being able to ride the gib trails.

I'm a mother of 4 teenagers and want to thank you, Graeme for caring about our youth and being their voice. I want them to be healthy and happy and free to explore and ride the trails on the Gib. It gives many parents peace of mind as we're forever wanting our children "off their devices".

My children are 5th generation in the Southern Highlands and it saddens me to think, this little bit of freedom they currently have will be taken away.

Thanks again for your support - it's greatly appreciated!

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:57 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Support Mountain Bike riding on the Gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Dear Graham,

As the mothers of one of the boys who participates in this activity I am in complete support of this continuing to happen.

Kind regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:52 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib MTB trail support

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme.

[REDACTED] suggested I give you an email regarding support for the mountain biking in the southern highlands - specifically regarding the Gibraltar trails council are planning on demolishing without providing a reasonable alternative for the local kids.

I have a small business in the Highlands - producing mountain bike racks that are weld together kits in which I send all over the country. In the last 18 months I've sold over 600 kits, have built this up post Covid and have had the racks featured in Australian mountain bike magazine.

My background prior to this is over 20 years experience in the mountain bike industry. From being a junior Australian and state champion in the u/15 and 17s division onto becoming a mountain bike instructor in the early days of Thredbo mountain biking, post this I have gone onto part own a bicycle shop, before moving into wholesaling - I was team manager for a freestyle bmx team and have now ended up in the fabrication side of things.

I grew up riding mountain bikes on the Illawarra escarpment - much like these children riding non sanctioned trails and forever battling against council/national parks threats of destruction. Wasting rate payer dollars to destroy sustainable trails which has only ever had the reverse effect and pushed kids to build trails in other locations. One major point - the trails I grew up riding in the Illawarra which were not sanctioned. All still exist, 20 years later. Infact they have multiplied immensely. The original trails span from Thirroul down to Mt Kembla/Mt Keira and everywhere in between.

If an alternative solution is not provided with the Gibraltar site being destroyed - in my experience of being a long term member of the bicycle community this will in turn create the opposite effect that "bushcare" believe they are trying to achieve by forcing the kids out of a small well maintained area that flows with the natural course of the landscape. Aside from a couple of small jumps this trail has hardly effected the unmaintained area. I note the fire trail to even access this location has been "closed until further notice" for several years now - to even destroy the small circuit these kids have built realistically should require forced maintenance on this trail before council can even have access. I note advocates for the destruction of these trails have already been in there sabotaging them - essentially putting children's lives at risk.

My entire life has surrounded off-road bicycles - the council has arranged a meeting with the kids and their parents and seemingly refuse to have myself involved in any discussion at this. Whereas I am likely one of the most qualified people in the region to at least be involved in

some discussion. It appears they are basically ambushing the kids into a re-education course on the importance of bush land that council have not touched in many many years.

My stance on it is that this will merely create more unsanctioned trails in the region, council has every ability to gain funding to support the expansion of mountain biking in the community via state grants. A site already exists which would make an excellent alternative at the former Welby tip site which is currently housing a few cross country trails - unfortunately this existing style of trail suitable for these kids.

As a side note - Matt Ward from trailcare has already tried contacting council on providing a FREE service of assessing the region. To which has fallen on deaf ears. He cannot get any response from council. Matt has successfully produced several mountain bike parks across Sydney which are on prior Tip sites - he is the perfect person to involve and cannot even get a response. I've attached his correspondence too.

It's time for Wingecarribee to step up.

Regards



ATTN: Adan Davis - RE: Offer of Assistance with Mount Gibraltar issues

Dear Mr Davis,

I represent Trail Care, an organisation that has been working with local and state government agencies for over a decade to assist in managing issues relating to mountain bikes.

Over the weekend, I was contacted by numerous sources regarding the unsanctioned trails at Mt Gibraltar, and would like to offer my services to Council. In situations like this, we have a policy to offer consultancy services free of charge, given the importance of acting fast to avoid unfortunate and unsustainable outcomes.

The current situation is obviously a tricky one for council, given environmental, risk, and social considerations. However, having been around these many times over the last 15 years, I've seen first hand the unfortunate outcomes and unintended consequences of rushed decision making. I'm also concerned that there could be an escalation of tensions on-site, having seen evidence of local people seeking to demolish/sabotage jumps without involvement of council. There are, however, ways this can be turned into a win for council and the community.

As an introduction to myself, professionally I am a commercial lawyer, and I work with Trail Care on a not-for-profit basis given personal satisfaction in outcomes that I'm able to provide to the community. Some of the local projects with which I've been involved include:

- Bare Creek Bike Park: I prepared the final concept plan, consulted and assisted on-site throughout the approval and construction process, and now am responsible for ongoing maintenance and a safety officer program.
- Golden Jubilee Bike Park: Ku Ring Gai had a similar situation to what you face now; I identifying an opportunity to modify an existing underutilised facility to provide the desired user experience, assisted with user group engagement, and worked with Council employees onsite to design and construct the current facility.
- Wyatt Avenue Bike Park: in late 2022 we delivered a bike park aimed at young/inexperienced riders, working in collaboration with a Northern Beaches Council landscaping team. This model allowed the council to deliver a fantastic facility at a much lower cost and complexity base, as the majority of works were conducted using council's own internal resources under guidance from Trail Care. We handled all works which require specialist understanding of trail construction and design.

I've also been heavily involved in a range of other projects, including the Illawarra NPWS mountain bike projects that have been ongoing to several years.

In any case, feel free to contact me via email or on [0408228833](tel:0408228833) any time.

Regards,

Matt Ward
Trail Care
Strategy and User Experience

The logo for Trail Care, featuring the words "TRAIL CARE" in a bold, sans-serif font. The word "TRAIL" is in a dark green color, and "CARE" is in a lighter green color. The letters are closely spaced and have a slight shadow effect.

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 9:52 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Bike Trails

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Report Suspicious

Morning Graham,

Not to delve too deeply into whataboutism but the land care group could turn their attention to the dirtbikes terrorising the trails around Mt Alexandra, the young fellas under discussion sound like they're being much more respectful than many who use the trails and tracks, and the fuddy-duddies need to recognise this is a community, where the interests of all ages need to be catered for, not just their interests now they've retired with nothing better to do than yell at clouds.

Cheers,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 9:52 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Lock outs

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Gday Graeme

Kids will be kids & kids have been building bike tracks & jumps in the Australian bush for eons.

Increasingly we're seeing groups trying to lock up vast tracks of the Australian bush in the name of conservation. It's not conservation, it's preservation and they are two vastly different things.

Preservation models invariably lock Australians out!

Australians need more access to our bush parks & reserves, not less and our kids need to be encouraged not restricted.

Let kids be kids and leave them alone.

Regards
[REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:00 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Land Care

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
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Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme

I was a senior officer in what was the Bush Fire Brigade (now Rural Fire Service) for 30 years and regually did hazard reduction which protected the bush and animals However the Greenies now lock up the tracks and stop any body getting in that includes fire services.
It would appear that they only want the bush for animals. plants and greens not the population to enjoy.

I suggest the kids claim they are Aboriginal and the land is theirs and council should get off their land.
Problem solved.

Regards
[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:10 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: The gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Let our kids keep the gib!



Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:10 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: The gib

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Let our kids keep the gib!



Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:11 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mt Gib Doc and Maps_Save_the_gib_mtb_trails.pdf

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

Thanks for your continued support for the kids Mountain Bike Trails on the Gib. I'm a parent of 2 of the boys who ride there daily.

The trails need to stay. They have existed there for decades and have never been in better condition. The state of the reserve as a whole is a different story.

Attached is a council document with my notes and concerns I hope you may get time to look at.

In summary the "Gib" reserve is a broad canvas that seems to be categorised too narrowly in its environmental classification.

It appears the small area where the trails have existed for decades sit under the classification of "soils derived from Hawkesbury sandstone". This is not the area of forest growing on the trachyte derived soils which is classified as a unique endangered ecological community. I believe this to be the summit area of the gib and the inner bowl area. The trails are nowhere near this.

I'm not a scientist but it appears that the broad classification needs an immediate review.

An immediate review should consider the stakeholders of 2023 that include these teenagers as key users of the reserve.

Soils derived of Hawkesbury sandstone in which these trails have existed for decades, I would assume represent most of the coastal bush land of NSW and are abundant with no immediate threat of environmental extinction?

Precedents across NSW would show hundreds of endorsed mountain bike trails on this soil type across NSW and beyond.

Regards

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:18 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: The Gib.

This Message Is From an External Sender
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Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

Would be nice if both group's can amicably work together.
I am aware that the Landcare group have devoted many years to the natural environment around the area.
I have also heard the argument put forward by the information that the boys had recorded during the interaction with the Landcare members on the day and from the parent/s of the boys, but unless I missed it I haven't heard any representation from the members of the Landcare group, so it seems a little 'one-sided'.

Cheers, [REDACTED] Moss Vale.

Email sent using Optus Webmail

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:27 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Support for Highlands Youth / MIB 1 rails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi,

Thank you for raising the awareness of this important community issue.

I am parent and I believe that these activities are essential for the physical, mental, and emotional health of young people.

From own experience, I have two boys who ride there and love seeing them improve their physical fitness, reducing stress, increasing self-confidence and social skills.

I also welcome ways that the community can educate our young people to develop a love of nature and an appreciation for the environment.

Regards

[REDACTED]

**APEX
ADVISORS**
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



P (02) 8358 9150

PO Box 488 | Level 1, 118 Main Street, Mittagong NSW 2575

admin@apexca.com.au | www.apexca.com.au

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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 10, 2023 10:50 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Cc: mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Save the Gib Trails

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Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

It was great to hear your support for the youth of the community today. My boys (aged 13 and 11) both helped to build, and maintain the current jumps at the Gib. It really has been such a wonderful outlet for them both, and their friends.

Facilities for the youth of Mittagong and the northern villages of the Highlands are seriously overlooked. For a council that has not so much as provided a basketball hoop for them to use, no skate park, no asphalt pump track, not to mention no pool(!), to take this away from them would be very damaging. They have had to make their own outdoor fun, and it's not hurting anyone.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 10, 2023 10:51 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Mt Gibraltar

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

I'm writing as a long time resident and rate payer of Southern Highlands, living close to Mt Gibraltar.

I believe its vitally important we provide the youth of the Southern Highlands access to parts of Mt Gibraltar for riding their mountain bikes - as it keeps them occupied and healthy and supports their wellbeing.

Keeping the youth off the streets and out of crime should be an important community consideration. Restricting the amount of healthy activities is not in the best interests of the community.

Placing caveats on what/how/why the youth can explore the Highlands is counter productive - with outdoor activities already extremely limited; resulting in the young moving to Sydney/Wollongong/Canberra as soon they turn 18.

One can only hope common sense and a happy medium can be found.

Cheers

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 16, 2025 10:57 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib Trail

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme

Just a quick email in support of the trails in the Gib should stay UNTIL COUNCIL FIND another alternative for our youth.

Thanking you for your support

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:37 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib Trail

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme

Just a quick email in support of the trails in the Gib should stay UNTIL COUNCIL FIND another alternative for our youth.

Thanking you for your support

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:41 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: The Gib Mountain Bike trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Dear Graeme,

I hope you are well. I am just emailing to say I heard your segment this morning with a mother in support of the existing Gib Mountain Bike trails. I have been following this on Social media for some time.

I am very much in support of keeping the trails the local youth have improved in recent months. I believe it is assisting them with life long skills. Team work, negotiations and decision making. It also allows them to socialise in a positive way with their friends, and spend time in the outdoors. There is little for the Southern Highlands youth to do activity wise in this area.

Please see attached link for Wollondilly Council in relation to fixing the bike jumps in their LGA.

https://www.yoursay.wollondilly.nsw.gov.au/tahmoor-bmx-park-adventure-play-upgrade?fbclid=IwAR1DLrHmpAXJhp8Yv6mDwnbgI97v3JQP-pXQg9Jaj_ULdM-pm0EcA5FXvx0

I have often seen local youth at the Market Place with their mountain bikes eating food from the local area. It would be a great shame for our youth to need to travel out of area to access bike trails of this nature. This would take potential local business out of area.

The local youths have worked long and hard to maintain these tracks, and I feel it would send a detrimental message to the youths should Council proceed to remove these trails.

I applaud you in your support for this matter, and appreciate your voice for the youth who are often overlooked in this LGA.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Warmest regards, [REDACTED]

Sent from my iPhone

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:42 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Re support for gib trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi
[REDACTED] here, a local resident of [REDACTED] from where the trails are.

I am in full support of these trails and think the boys have done an amazing job with them.

Unfortunately there are too many old farts in our town that have nothing better to do than spoil their fun.

If you think about it kids can't even ride from Mittagong to Bowral because there are no cycle paths. There is no infrastructure for these kids - no where for them to hang out and ride their bikes in the highlands. Let's address the real issues here. Councils incompetency!

These kids are engaging in a healthy sport. Mountain biking is so good for them and trail building involves physical labour, and science and maths. These kids know their angles! I would much rather my kids engage in this sport than turn to drugs or roam the streets looking for trouble.

I don't see how council will knock these down any time soon, they can't even fix a pot hole!

Kind Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:45 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Gib trail support

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi. Good morning.

As local highlands resident , residing [REDACTED] of the gib, I am voicing my support to our local kids to be able to use the area to ride their bicycles.

As a parent myself , I have seen the benefits of my children running playing bike riding with their mates and families.

Benefits of being kids. Let our kids enjoy being children.

This teaches them mate-ship, comrade, skills , responsibility and how to navigate with risk.

To name a few, all of which are beneficial to being a healthy active young person. Both physically and mentally.

The environment we live in places too many restrictions on everyday living. This is apparent in our everyday lives. We are living with too many constraints. The virtue of self responsibility, ownership ,common sense and decision making are slowly disappearing. I believe our children needs to learn this skills at a young age.

Thank you
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:46 AM
To: Graeme Day <graemeday@arn.com.au>
Subject: Support Youth Gib Trails

This Message Is From an Untrusted Sender
You have not previously corresponded with this sender.
Report Suspicious

Hi Graeme,

We would like to support the young boys/girls that have spent lots of outdoor time making these MTB trails on the Gib.

We applaud them for their efforts and encourage all Southern Highlands residents to get out and have a look at what some team work can do.

They are having fun, connecting with their peers, staying off their mobile devices and keeping themselves fit & healthy.

We are members of the Highlands Trails MTB club and really appreciate others taking initiative to make more rideable trails here.

Thanks for showing your support, much appreciated.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Melanie Schutz

From: Nowra Reception
Sent: Thursday, 18 May 2023 10:31 AM
To: Graeme Day; Melanie Schutz
Subject: Listener call

Hey Gday,

██████████ from Bomaderry Tasty Kebabs called to say she is in full agreeance with the kids making their bike tracks

If the parents want to get a petition together, Bec will happily put this up in the shop and have as many people sign as possible

██████████
Regards,

Mel Biggers




Administration - 2ST/PowerFM
ARN Regional

119 McMahons Road | North Nowra | 2541 - Locked Bag 3010 | Nowra | NSW | 2541

T: (02) 4423 0055

E: reception@949powerfm.com.au

Follow us on social:

2ST  / Power FM  



From: 2ST Website <donotreply@wpvip.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:20 AM
To: Nowra Reception <reception2st@arn.com.au>
Subject: YOU'VE GOT MAIL from Contact - Highlands Mornings with Graeme

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

Report Suspicious

Name

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Subject

BOYS ON BIKES

Message

I fully support the boys wanting to ride their bikes on the Gib.

From: 2ST Website <donotreply@wpvip.com>
Sent: Thursday, May 18, 2023 10:28 AM
To: Nowra Reception <reception2st@arn.com.au>
Subject: YOU'VE GOT MAIL from Contact - Highlands Mornings with Graeme

This Message Is From an External Sender

This message came from outside your organization.

Report Suspicious

Name

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

Subject

Gib Mountain bike trails

Message

I am a nature lover and have walked through the tracks on the Gib. I totally support the boys being able to continue riding the trails there as can see no damage to the bush. Council should let them be as the tracks, that have always been there, are now more effective as a potential fire break because they are cleared of the weeds.

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:44 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: bikes on Mt Gibraltar

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, June 10, 2023 10:20:40 PM
To: Administrator Office <AdministratorOffice@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: bikes on Mt Gibraltar

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Viv,

[REDACTED]

Bikes having fun on the Gib. Sorry

1. it is illegal: Threatened species; Environmental Protection; Heritage Council etc.
2. It's dangerous. Kids have make a cliff: something goes wrong, there's a fall and a broken neck. How will you feel then.
3. Echidna and platypus were mates of the dinosaurs you know. Will bikes dodge the echidna ? They're messing up the creek: home to the platypus. Not to mention the rest of the wild life.

And the vegetation should not be dug and disturbed. It can't cope with that.

Please Viv. Can't you help there.

[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:36 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: ATTN: environment and sustainability team; Asset manager; General Manager; Administrator: RE Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails, correspondence from council, MBT survey

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 25 May 2023 at 8:01 pm
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>, Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: ATTN: environment and sustainability team; Asset manager; General Manager; Administrator: RE Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails, correspondence from council, MBT survey

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Firstly, thank you Imogen for sending me this info re a survey.

I appreciate the need for some kind of consultation on a complex issue of competing demands, interests and legal obligations.

To the rest of Council, I have several questions about the current situation re unauthorised trails:

1. Is this survey in response to mountain bike trail riders' creating unauthorised and illegal trails and objecting to Council closing those trails down?
2. What is Council intending to do with the results of the survey?
3. Has a meeting with the creators and users of the unauthorised trails on Mount Gibraltar occurred?
4. What is the outcome of that meeting?
5. What is the status of the trails now - is Council allowing continued riding on an illegal track?
6. If so, on what grounds is council allowing continued use of illegal trails that contravene several laws and Council's obligations?
7. Does council accept liability for any injury caused by continued use of illegal trails?

I look forward to your response to my questions

regards
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, 19 June 2023 5:35 PM
To: Lisa Miscamble <Lisa.Miscamble@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: ATTN : The General Manager and Viv May.

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

I am resending the email below. For some reason (possibly an incorrect address) the email was not received.

The error message said:

"The recipient server did not accept our requests to connect".

regards
[REDACTED]

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live, the Gundungurra people, over which land Sovereignty was never ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Begin forwarded message:

From: [REDACTED]
Subject: council processes
Date: 16 June 2023 at 8:01:22 am AEST
To: lisa.miscamble@wsc.org.au

Dear Ms Miscamble

On 25th May I wrote to Council with several questions regarding the unauthorised making mountain bike trails.

Council's automatic response tells me to allow 10 working days for a response.

On 9th June (11 working days later) I wrote again to inquire where my response was.

On 15th June (14 days later) I received a response from a Shaun Robinson, assets manager.

This response did not respond to my questions at all.

I also find that his response is a prepared response that he is sending to several people , regardless of their questions.

I am concerned that:

1. Council is not following its own processes in responding to the public in its own time frame.
2. Council is not actually responding to the public but sending out blanket replies that do not address the matters raised with them.

3. That issues to do with regulation, the law, the environment is being handed over to the "assets manager".
4. That illegal activity is being allowed to continue. The trails on mount gibraltar are currently being extended, despite the makers being told to take no further action on them.
- 5 That council appears to be condoning illegal activity.

I ask you:

Is responsibility for protection and care of natural environment, adherence to regulation and law, the remit of the assets manager?

Were a group of teenagers to erect climbing frames on Council Chambers, or to build a skate park within Corbett Gardens, would Council engage in consultation with the builders and allow the activities to continue pending community consultation and council deliberations?

Is Council taking steps to prevent further construction of the trails on Mount Gibraltar pursuant to your own directions to the makers to NOT undertake any further works?

Does Council stand by its 10 working day response time?

I look forward to a response to my concerns and questions within 10 working days

regards

[REDACTED]

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live, the Gundungurra people, over which land Sovereignty was never ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:36 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: ATTN: environment and sustainability team; Asset manager; General Manager; Administrator: RE Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails, correspondence from council, MBT survey

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 15 June 2023 5:33 PM
To: Shaun Robinson <Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Cc: Sara McGufficke <Sara.McGufficke@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Karen Guymer <Karen.Guymer@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Re: ATTN: environment and sustainability team; Asset manager; General Manager; Administrator: RE Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails, correspondence from council, MBT survey

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Hello Mr Robinson

It wonder if you read my email as you have not answered my questions at all.

I note also that:

1. it has taken 14 working days and a follow up email from me to receive any response from Council to my email of 25th May. This is despite council having a policy of responding within 10 working days.
2. Your response appears to be a prepared response, which basically says nothing I do not already know, and which does nothing to substantially respond to my very direct questions.

I am repasting my questions here in the hope you, or someone else at council will read and respond to them.

1. Is this survey in response to mountain bike trail riders' creating unauthorised and illegal trails and objecting to Council closing those trails down?
 2. What is Council intending to do with the results of the survey?
 3. Has a meeting with the creators and users of the unauthorised trails on Mount Gibraltar occurred?
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 6. If so, on what grounds is council allowing continued use of illegal trails that contravene several laws and Council's obligations?
 7. Does council accept liability for any injury caused by continued use of illegal trails?

regards

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live, the Gundungurra people, over which land Sovereignty was never ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

On 15 Jun 2023, at 4:18 pm, Shaun Robinson <Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Hi [REDACTED]

Council officers have been reviewing the matter and the management pathways available, all of which will be considered at Ordinary Council Meeting 21 June 2023.

The construction of unauthorised mountain bike tracks within bushland is not a situation that is unique to the Wingecarribee Shire, with councils all across the State having similar experiences – but a range of different of management actions have been adopted across these occurrences. The objective is to ensure we find the correct balance across all our bushland reserves in encouraging usage of these unique and beautiful environments, whilst minimising any negative impacts.

At Council Meeting 21 June 2023 the fundamental management strategy will be determined as well as, if required, any interim arrangements for the existing trail.

As with all Council Meetings, it is encouraged that residents attend Council meetings as part of the public galley, no registration is required. For agenda items that may be of particular interest, residents can also make representation to Council during the public forum prior to the meeting. An application to make a presentation during the public forum just needs to be submitted, and is accessible via the Council website here:

<https://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/council/council-meeting-minutes-agendas#section-4>

The public forum will commence at 3pm and the Council meeting at 3:30pm at the Moss Vale Civic Centre.

Regards,
Shaun

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

— 02 4868 0888

— Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

— www.wsc.nsw.gov.au — 68 Elizabeth St, Moss Vale NSW 2577 — PO Box 141 Moss Vale NSW 2577

We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Tharawal people as the traditional custodians of this place we now call the Wingecarribee Shire. We recognise the continuous and deep connection for Gundungurra and Tharawal people to their Ngurra (Country) and its great cultural significance to First Nations people, both locally and in the region. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

Disclaimer: This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain confidential information. If you are not the intended recipient, please notify the sender and delete the message. Views expressed in this message are those of the individual sender and are not necessarily the views of Wingecarribee Shire Council. This email may be made available to third parties in accordance with the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009.

From: [REDACTED]
Date: Thursday, 25 May 2023 at 8:01 pm
To: Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au>, Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: ATTN: environment and sustainability team; Asset manager; General Manager; Administrator: RE Unauthorised Mountain Bike Trails, correspondence from council, MBT survey

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Firstly, thank you Imogen for sending me this info re a survey.

I appreciate the need for some kind of consultation on a complex issue of competing demands, interests and legal obligations.

To the rest of Council, I have several questions about the current situation re unauthorised trails:

1. Is this survey in response to mountain bike trail riders' creating unauthorised and illegal trails and objecting to Council closing those trails down?
2. What is Council intending to do with the results of the survey?
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6. If so, on what grounds is council allowing continued use of illegal trails that contravene several laws and Council's obligations?
7. Does council accept liability for any injury caused by continued use of illegal trails?

I look forward to your response to my questions

regards
[REDACTED]

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live, the Gundungurra people, over which land Sovereignty was never ceded. I pay my respects to Elders past and present.

On 25 May 2023, at 4:47 pm, Imogen Baker <Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au> wrote:

Good evening,

As we have previously corresponded on the issue I am writing to inform you that the consultation survey for the Wingecarribee Shire Council - Mountain Biking Community Survey is now open, and we encourage your valuable feedback on this important matter.

Mountain Bike (MTB) riding has gained significant popularity across NSW, and the demand for suitable areas to ride within our Shire is steadily increasing. However, we also recognise the importance of preserving our bushland reserves and conserving biodiversity, as well as catering to the preferences of users who value the connection with nature and enjoy passive recreational activities in these cherished spaces.

To address these concerns and better understand the needs and demands for increased MTB facilities within our Shire, Wingecarribee Shire Council is conducting a survey. The purpose of this survey is to develop a sustainable framework for future trail projects while safeguarding the ecological and heritage values of our bushland reserves.

By participating in this survey, you will play a crucial role in shaping the future of mountain biking experiences in our Shire.

The survey aims to achieve the following objectives:

- Identify the potential role that Council's natural reserves may play in providing mountain biking experiences across the Wingecarribee Shire.
- Protect bushland areas of high conservation and heritage value.
- Minimise the drivers for the construction of unauthorised trails.
- Maximise the safe use of Council reserves by all visitors.

We invite you to participate in this registered survey, which is now open and can be shared with any Shire resident you think may be interested in this topic.

To provide your feedback, please click on the link below. The submissions will close by 4:30pm on Thursday, 8 June 2023.

<https://www.yoursaywingecarribee.com.au/mountain-bike-trails-within-wingecarribee-shire>

Your input is greatly appreciated, and your feedback will contribute to the development of a well-rounded plan that caters to the interests of the community while preserving our natural treasures.

Thank you for your time and participation. Should you have any questions or require further information, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Kind regards,

Imogen Baker

Executive Officer

— 02 4868 0838

— 0457 713 079

— Imogen.Baker@wsc.nsw.gov.au

— www.wsc.nsw.gov.au — 68 Elizabeth St, Moss Vale NSW 2577 — PO Box 141 Moss Vale NSW 2577

We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Tharawal people as the traditional custodians of this place we now call the Wingecarribee Shire. We recognise the continuous and deep connection for Gundungurra and Tharawal people to their Ngurra (Country) and its great cultural significance to First Nations people, both locally and in the region. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and extend that respect to all First Nations people.

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Mittagong
2575

8/6/2023

Ms Lisa Miscamble
General Manager
Wingecarribee Shire Council

SUBMISSION RE MOUNTAIN BIKES AND RESERVES

I am writing regarding the current situation, survey and council deliberations regarding mountain biking activities in the Wingecarribee Shire, particularly with reference to such activities within native forest areas and on Mount Gibraltar, within the protected ecological communities.

Background:

Mountain Biking and the associated trail making in natural forest areas are growing activities. The trails are enjoyed by many people. They provide outdoor activity and enjoyment. The biking and trail making also create damage to eco-systems and potential dangers to other users of public space. Mountain biking and trail making is a locally, nationally and globally growing activity which needs to be carefully managed to both allow for its enjoyment and to protect vulnerable natural sites and all users of outdoor public spaces. There is clearly a demand to provide suitable places for people to engage in the recreational activity of mountain biking and trail making. These places need to be carefully selected and managed to provide not only space for the activity but also protection for the environment and all users. Likewise, there is a need for education on the vulnerability of ecosystems, on trail making that acknowledges that vulnerability, on minimising damaging environmental impact, on restoring eco-systems and on safety awareness.

I submit that any protected natural forest and heritage areas, including Mount Gibraltar, cannot be suitable places for any kind of mountain bike trail making and riding. I further submit that the local council needs to enforce protection of public natural forested and protected areas, and to undertake extensive local community education on the importance and status of natural forested areas. Council needs to work with the community to develop appropriate areas for mountain biking and finally to develop a program of community building that brings together all interest groups within the community to contribute to discussions, education, and appropriate trail making.

Environmental and legal issues:

Burgin and Hardiman (2012) state:

The potential for trail erosion, compaction, incision and widening from mountain biking is, however dependent on climate, slope and other environmental variables. Steep slopes with sparse vegetation and/or fine homogenous soils are most susceptible to damage (Goedt and Alder 2001; White et al. 2006). The greatest impacts from biking typically occur early in trail use, on downhill (braking and skidding) and uphill (wheel spinning) slopes (especially when wet), and on curves (braking and skidding) (Goedt and Alder 2001; White et al. 2006; Chiu and Kriwoken 2003).

Mount Gibraltar itself is a steep slope with thin soil covering and several watercourses and is a highly sensitive, unique and vulnerable ecology protected under several acts:

- 2001 NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act. *Mount Gibraltar Forest*
- 2008 NSW National Trust Mount Gibraltar Quarries Complex: Industrial Heritage Listing
- 2011 Australian Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.
- 2013 NSW Heritage Council. Significant Site Listing for: Biodiversity and Industrial Heritage.

Council's own website states:

There are **three threatened ecological communities (TECs)** found within the reserve. The Mount Gibraltar Forest covers the largest area within the reserve however Robertson Basalt Tall Open Forest and a small amount of Southern Highlands Shale Forest and Woodland also occurs, which reflects the geological diversity within the reserve.

The Mount Gibraltar Forest was originally listed as endangered in 2001. **In 2016, the Mount Gibraltar Forest in the Sydney Basin Bioregion was listed as endangered under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.** This TEC is closely associated with the rock type known as microsyenite (trachyte).

In November 2011, the Mount Gibraltar Forest was listed as a TEC through an amendment to the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The forest was described in the Act as an Uplands Basalt Eucalypt Forest (UBEF) Endangered Ecological Community of the Sydney Basin Bioregion.

The Gib has an interesting mix of plant community types because of the presence of microsyenite, sandstone and shale. (WSC 2023)

As Council's website states, the plant community (the protected forests) exists due to the particular soil quality. It is just this soil, and therefore the forest dependent on it, that is threatened by the mountain biking activity.

Not only is the mountain home to protected forests, it is also a source of two of the rivers in the Sydney Drinking Water Catchment: the Wingecarribee and the Nattai Rivers which feed into the Wollondilly River and then into the Warragamba Dam. The rock of the mountain sheds water very quickly, and is susceptible to rapid erosion of the in places thin soil cover, as has been recently evidenced in heavy rains and consequent damage to both roads and the reserve over the last few years. There is an extensive site of slippage on the south-western face of the mountain. The unauthorised trails on the mountain have been constructed adjacent to and across a watercourse, thereby exposing it to erosion and degradation of the water quality flowing into the catchment.

The listings of the forests, and its place in the water catchment, carry legal obligations which it is Council's duty to apply.

Social and community issues:

The construction of unauthorised trails in protected and natural forest areas is causing conflict and distress in the community. While MB riders want to be able to pursue their sport, others in the community wish to protect finite natural resources for the current and future communities. This is leading to conflict here as in other areas.

The trajectory of moving towards accommodating unauthorised trails in other localities has resulted in increased demand for trails, increased use of the trails and increased ecological damage ... Natural area managers are increasingly confronted with threats of appeals and litigation against their efforts to restrict what they perceive to be inappropriate recreational activities within protected areas. Such conflict with recreationists can be supported by the associated tourism and retailing industries who have commercial interests in the use of areas for their sport (Sarre 1989). **The trail ahead therefore requires serious consideration of how best to deal with mountain biking and the associated degradation of natural areas, and potential loss of plant and animal species.**

(Burgin and Hardiman 2012)

Allowing continued unauthorised trail making and use, in a protected endangered environment, will set a precedent to others. To allow the continued use of unauthorised trails is to send a signal: do what you wish and then ask for or demand permission.

If council does not enforce the law, does not control the unauthorised and illegal actions, then it is opening up the risk that others will follow suit, perhaps not only in regards to trail making. To allow the unauthorised making and use of trails is in effect saying that it is okay to break the law. Council needs to consider whether it wishes to send such a message to the community.

Obligations:

Council needs to observe and implement applicable legislation.

Council needs to put resources into leading the community to an understanding that it is unacceptable to use public and protected land to the ends of particular interest groups without consideration of broader community and ecosystems.

There is a need for community education on the status and significance of protected ecological communities.

There is a need for effective signage informing users of reserves and protected environments, of what is not allowed within them and of the legal and financial consequences of breaches.

Conclusion:

A brief search of current literature on mountain biking and its impacts suggest there is room for further research on the environmental impact of mountain biking. However, current research, practice and experience demonstrate that there is both an environmental and social impact of unauthorised trail making and use. In the absence of further research, and until research establishes beyond doubt the impact of bike trail making and use, a precautionary approach (not permitting unauthorised trail making and carefully managing any authorised trail making) is advisable to protect in particular peri-urban natural forests which are under pressure from multiple sources.

Burgin and Hardiman (2012) propose that in order:

To minimise the potential for such protracted conflict over mountain biking (or indeed any other emerging sport), decisions must be based on:

- Sound ecological and social research
- Engagement with stakeholders (e.g., mountain bikers, other recreation users, relevant commercial interests, local residents, researchers)
- Developing options
- Wide dissemination of decisions and clearly explained reasons for decisions
- Monitoring activities, including studies to determine long term chronic impacts and on-going community attitudes

New South Wales National Parks, faced with similar environmental, financial and community issues as a result of mountain bike trail making and using has determined that:

Through coordinated planning, assessment and monitoring processes, **we will continue to conserve the parks' natural and cultural values as a priority.** This will be achieved through park zoning, closure and **rehabilitation of**

unauthorised tracks, incorporating educational learning opportunities into experiences and monitoring track/network performance. **All tracks require environmental impact assessment before construction.**

(NSW Department Planning Environment, 2022)

NSW National Parks (DPE 2022) is currently overseeing development of cycling in parks. However, this is happening with planning and in accordance with a cycling policy. It also includes collaborating with stakeholders and environmental assessment. The strategy premises that “parks are irreplaceable and many are sensitive to any disturbance” and that “ a cautious approach is necessary” (NSW Department Planning Environment, 2022)

As has occurred and is occurring, in other localities, with ongoing issues related to trail making and riding,

Without a strong strategic approach to mountain biking that includes community engagement, underpinned by quality ecological and social science, the outcome will be further degradation of natural areas and, at the least, loss of many animals if not major threats to populations. We also predict that there will be on-going conflict between mountain bikers and other recreationists and residents.

(Burgin and Hardiman 2012)

Proposal:

I propose that council begin a process of community education and conversation on how as a community we can provide for the desires of mountain bikers to practice their sport, whilst respecting vulnerable environments and other users of public reserves.

An engaged community action, such as workshops, to share ideas, needs, desires, information, knowledge and skill is a positive way to manage this issue which is causing rift in the community.

If this community action involved ecologists, trailmakers, riders, bushwalkers, artists, bushcare workers, educators, and other community members it could turn a conflictual situation into a positive, engaging and community building one that enhances the shire, its reputation and its value to all community members whilst protecting a valuable and unique ecosystem.

If riders and walkers and other community members could come together to develop a plan together, work together on trail making and maintenance, on restoring damage and supporting the health of the natural environments, this process would not only meet the different needs and wishes of community members, it would protect and even possibly support the natural environment, respect laws, enhance the sport, and it would build community. There are many models for such community working and building.

Such a program could even be a trail-blazer/ flagship of how to positively engage communities in what is a widespread conflict of interests causing environmental and social damage in many communities.

References

Burgin, Shelley & Hardiman, Nigel. (2012). "Is the evolving sport of mountain biking compatible with fauna conservation in national parks?" *Australian Zoologist*.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249644899_Is_the_evolution_of_mountain_biking_compatible_with_fauna_conservation_in_national_parks

NSW Department Planning Environment, 2022 *Park Management*, "Cycling in NSW national parks"

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-management/cycling-in-nsw-national-parks>

Wingecarribee Shire Council, 2023 *Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve*

<https://www.wsc.nsw.gov.au/facilities/parks/mount-gibraltar-heritage-reserve>

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:53 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Mountain Bike Riding on Mount Gibraltar Campaign

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

☎ 02 4868 0826

✉ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 12:33 PM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mountain Bike Riding on Mount Gibraltar Campaign

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Ms Lisa Miscamble

Please find my response to the Mount Gibraltar Mountain Biking Issue.

Thank you

[REDACTED]
Gundungurra Country
[REDACTED]

Ms Lisa Miscamble
General Manager
Wingecarribee Shire Council
mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au

Thursday 8 June 2023

Dear Ms Lisa Miscamble

I am writing to you, as a resident of Wingecarribee to express my concern over the current and aggressive campaign to open sites on Mount Gibraltar for Mountain Biking.

The issue of mountain biking on Mount Gibraltar was first brought to my attention on Facebook through a sponsored news item by Win News that was celebrating the initiative and teamwork of seven boys for building mountain bike tracks on the Mittagong/Railway Parade side of Mount Gibraltar.



It is my understanding that this activity is illegal, and no efforts have been made by council to enforce the law. Please correct me if I'm wrong. I understand that council would, in the first instance, prefer to negotiate for a solution but please do not relax laws to allow mountain biking on Mount Gibraltar. The decision to establish the reserve for conservation purposes and passive enjoyment was a hard-won achievement by the Bushcare group and

others who has worked voluntarily for over 30 years to restore the integrity of this small but unique and irreplaceable reserve.

In response to the WIN News FB post, I made what I thought was a helpful, if not benign, comment. I remarked that the reserve is a conservation site, a delicate ecosystem, and suggested the boys use the already established mountain bike tracks at Welby or Penrose. I was subsequently 'piled on' with hostile and vitriolic comments. What concerns me is that such an angry and aggressive campaign that has such destructive consequences on a delicate and already distressed ecosystem, has achieved traction within the council decision making process, evidenced by a small and confusing survey. I am all for council resources being directed toward the needs of a growing youth population but in a planned consultative way, not through knee-jerk reactions. My concern is that council is bending to the voices of seven boys, their protective parents, and a cohort of rallied supporters. I am also concerned that the council might be persuaded to retract some land from the protection of law, which will lead to further erosions of use and protections of the reserve as it currently stands.

Yesterday I visited Welby Mountain Bike Trails. Welby Mountain Bike Trails has a 16km network of bush trails ranging from easy to more difficult. I met a mountain biker who said he comes up from Wollongong once a week to use them, says hardly anyone uses them and it's great. How can these tracks, in addition to the tracks at Penrose, not meet their needs? There are footpaths and traffic lights all the way from Moss Vale.

I would like to know if the demands of those advocating to open Mount Gibraltar for Mountain Biking will meet the needs of all, or a significant proportion, of youth in the Southern Highlands. Are girls, for example, being consulted about what facilities they would like to see developed in the southern highlands? Are there programs that could involve children in the remediation and care of the environment rather than the destruction of it? Does youth entertainment necessitate the destruction of the environment? There is an air of entitlement by the adults in these demands: kids should be free to do as they please; the 'need' for downhill gravity (maybe a stint in Hay would distinguish between 'need' and 'want'); the inflexibility to find other sorts of entertainment between trips to Welby and Penrose; and the expectation that resources should be available directly on their doorstep.

I can see the value of a skate/BMX park in the Moss Vale/Bowral/Mittagong/Renwick area, that will also cater for the needs of active children. Such a park would take up less space and does not have to be in bushland but rather a location where their guardians can keep an eye on them in town. Could I suggest Glebe Park, near Bowral swimming pool or Bong Bong racecourse as possible sites. I'm sure there are even more appropriate ones.

While the dispute seems to be over illegal tracks on the Mittagong/Railway Parade side of the mountain, I happened upon more destruction on the Bowral side just above and opposite Queen Street. This discovery occurred only a week ago after I sighted a football sized wombat joey running all over Oxley Drive near Queen Street on Thursday 1 June at 11.30am. There was a deceased wombat further up the hill, presumably the joey's mother. Another wombat had been hit by a vehicle in a similar spot just two weeks prior (roadkill

significantly impacts the mental health of people who care). When I approached the joey, it took off up into the bush. Safe for the moment I thought. I contacted the local wildlife group Wombatise and together, Tania Clancy and I entered the bush where the wombat was last seen. We were surprised to come across a network of illegal bike tracks, created by felled saplings, large dirt mounds, wooden ramps, tree trunks and rocks. Sleepers have been brought in for further developments. There is rubbish everywhere (ropes, suitcase, plastic bags, drink bottles) and plants within a wide range of the tracks had been trampled on. A wombat hole is located between these illegal tracks and the road. I'm guessing no wombat lives there now, since two are recently dead and the likelihood of the joey surviving is low. There are many wombat holes in the vicinity that are in danger of being disturbed or filled in.







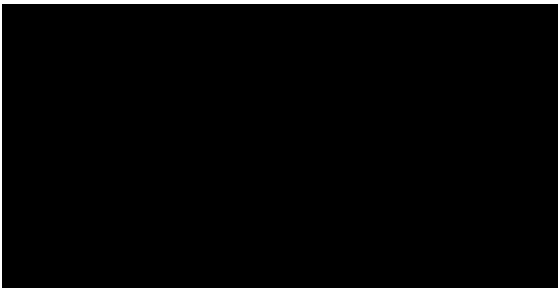


To learn from experiences around the world, this author's insights, and observations of the impact of mountain biking in Colorado is worth reflecting on. And of course, a brief internet search will raise many articles on the topic.

<https://www.thewildlifeneews.com/2019/06/18/impacts-of-mountain-biking/>

Thank you for your attention.

Yours sincerely



Mittagong NSW 2575



Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:43 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: Proposal for mountain bikes on the Gib

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

☎ 02 4868 0826

✉ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, 8 June 2023 11:17 AM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>; Karen Guymer <Karen.Guymer@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Proposal for mountain bikes on the Gib

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear associates

There are many reasons for this mountain biking project to be abandoned.

There is already a substantial mountain bike track in Welby which is hardly ever used. Sally Clarke and I interviewed a mountain biker who comes up from Wollongong to the Welby site and he said it's ample and a fantastic run but very rarely used!

So why on earth would you want to betray all the hard-working Bushcare people as well as the ethos of a reserve and Land For Wildlife by creating another bike track that may not even be used?

I think this proposed destruction of Mount Gibraltar bush land demonstrates greedy and selfish human indifference. There are other sites at Colo Vale as well.

Resident rare animals live at Mount Gibraltar evidence by scats such as the greater glider and various species are evident.

It's a well known fact that our government betray our wildlife with their offsets so wild places and their animals aren't protected.

We know for a fact on the northern end of Mount Gibraltar endured cruel acts against the black Swamp Wallaby with people rushing through on their bikes and lots of litter so you're only encouraging more human encroachment more destruction of the natural world in a place that we historically value.

I'm so disappointed that Council even consider destroying that beautiful Land For Wildlife. Land For Wildlife is a initiative from council and yet you're a traitor to your own initiative. So hard to believe.

If the bike track is allowed then again encroachment and destruction of sacred places will become a common day practice thanks to poor management.

Hope you can see through this beyond the fever for tourism and population.

My best
[REDACTED]

Shaun Robinson

From: Shaun Robinson
Sent: Tuesday, 20 June 2023 9:44 AM
To: Shaun Robinson
Subject: RE: WinZero Letter re Mountain Bike Tracks on Mt Gibraltar

Shaun Robinson

Manager Assets

📞 02 4868 0826

✉️ Shaun.Robinson@wsc.nsw.gov.au

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, 13 June 2023 8:00 AM
To: Wingecarribee Shire Council <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: WinZero Letter re Mountain Bike Tracks on Mt Gibraltar

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

To Wingecarribee Shire Council

Please send copies to:

General Manager, Lisa Miscamble
cc. Karen Grymer
cc. Imogen Baker
cc. Legal Officer

Please find attached WinZero submission regarding the illegal mountain bike track on Mt Gibraltar.

One issue that is of particular concern to us would be granting permission for young people to vandalise public or private property through the use of a "petition" not only raises environmental concerns and safety hazards but also sets a dangerous precedent. This action encourages a disregard for the rights and belongings of others, fosters a culture of disrespect for communal spaces, and undermines the fundamental principles of mutual respect and cooperation

We feel the issue can be solved in an amicable way with council leadership and WinZero would be willing to help on a Task force and help with educating the public

Enforce the laws that protect endangered ecological communities. This could involve improving the signage of these areas and increasing the number of rangers patrolling the area, and issuing fines to people who violate the law.

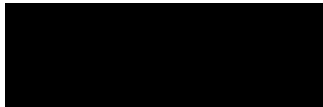
Create a task force to develop a plan for managing mountain biking in the area. This plan could include identifying areas where mountain

biking is allowed, and developing guidelines for building and maintaining trails.

Educate the public about the importance of protecting endangered ecological communities. This could be done through public talks, workshops, and other educational events.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Gaye White



M | 
W | winzero.com.au

WinZero Inc
P.O. Box 1193
Bowral NSW 2576
info@winzero.com.au
www.winzero.com.au

General Manager
Civic Centre
68 Elizabeth Street
Moss Vale NSW 2577

Dear Lisa Miscamble,

Re: Illegal Mountain Bike Trails in The Mt Gibraltar Heritage Reserve

I am writing to you today on behalf of WinZero, a local environmental group. We are writing to express our opposition to the illegal mountain bike tracks that have been constructed on the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve.

We understand that the construction of these tracks was done by a group of young people who were trying to create a new place to ride their bikes. However, we believe that this activity is harmful to the environment and poses a safety hazard to both riders and other users of the Reserve.

The Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve is a protected area that is home to a variety of threatened and endangered plants and animals. The construction of the mountain bike tracks has caused significant damage to the soil and vegetation, and the disturbance will introduced invasive plant species. This damage will have a negative impact on the Reserve's ecosystem and could lead to the decline of some of its plant and animal populations.

In addition to causing environmental damage, the construction of mountain bike tracks in the endangered ecological community of the protected Mt Gibraltar heritage reserve could lead to a decline in plant and animal populations. Furthermore, these tracks pose significant safety risks for both riders and other reserve users. Given that the tracks intersect with areas frequented by hikers, walkers, and runners, riders traveling at high speeds could be difficult to spot, increasing the likelihood of collisions and accidents.

Granting permission for young people to vandalize public or private property through the use of a "petition" not only raises environmental concerns and safety hazards but also sets a dangerous precedent. This action encourages a disregard for the rights and belongings of others, fosters a culture of

disrespect for communal spaces, and undermines the fundamental principles of mutual respect and cooperation.

We are aware that the following laws protect the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve:

- **NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995:** This law protects critically endangered ecological communities, such as the Uplands Basalt Eucalypt Forest that is found on the Reserve.
- **NSW National Trust Mount Gibraltar Quarries Complex: Industrial Heritage Listing:** This listing recognizes the historical and cultural significance of the quarrying operations that took place on the Reserve in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
- **Australian Government Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999:** This law protects threatened species and ecological communities, and provides for the management of invasive species.
- **NSW Heritage Council. Significant Site: Biodiversity and Industrial Heritage:** This designation recognizes the Reserve's importance for both its biodiversity and its industrial heritage.

Councils in New South Wales (NSW) are required to enforce environmental laws that protect endangered ecological communities. The penalties that can be imposed on councils who fail in this duty include:

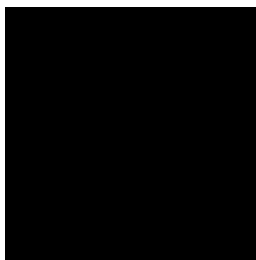
- Criminal prosecution: Councils can be prosecuted by the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) for failing to enforce environmental laws. If found guilty, councils can be fined up to \$110,000.
- Civil penalty: The OEH can also issue a civil penalty to councils who fail to enforce environmental laws. The amount of the civil penalty is determined by the severity of the breach.
- Other enforcement measures: The OEH can also take other enforcement measures against councils who fail to enforce environmental laws, such as:
 - Issuing a compliance notice requiring the council to take action to comply with the law
 - Taking the council to court to seek an injunction preventing the council from continuing to breach the law
 - Taking the council to court to seek a declaration that the council has breached the law

The OEH takes a proactive approach to enforcing environmental laws. This means that the OEH will not only investigate complaints about environmental breaches, but will also proactively monitor councils to ensure that they are complying with the law.

We urge you to take action to remove the illegal mountain bike tracks from the Mount Gibraltar Heritage Reserve and to ensure that the Reserve is protected from further damage. We would also like to see the Council work with local mountain biking clubs to find alternative riding areas that are not located in sensitive environmental areas.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Secretary - WinZero Inc
on behalf of WinZero Board

cc. Karen Grymer

cc. Imogen Baker

cc. Legal Office

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thu, 20 Apr 2023 09:23:50 +1000
To: "Wingecarribee Shire Council" <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Mt Gibraltar Mountain Bike and Walking Trails
Categories: ECM Registered;Jessica

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Council,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am 13 years old and live in the highlands. I am contacting regarding the recent news that the trails on Mt Gibraltar will be destroyed.

As a teenager, I love being outdoors and riding bikes especially, and the Mount Gibraltar trails have been the main place where my friends and I can go to have fun, socialise and get exercise. With the clear lack of quantity and quality of trails in the Southern Highlands, we simply wanted to have a place where we can do our sport that we love with our friends. My friends and I have dedicated countless hours, days and weeks, to form the place The Gib is today, which is a well-built, fun, and diverse trail network, which so many people ride and appreciate. We have also ensured that we always clean up any rubbish we have around the spot and keep it looking presentable and non intrusive to the landscape, as well as not disturbing surrounding houses. Whilst adding to the trails, we have always been extremely cautious of the flora and fauna in the area, and made sure that we work around any habitats for animals, or important plants and trees. As a young person myself it is absolutely essential to have a well built and diverse trail network where riders of all capabilities can come to enjoy mountain biking, progress, overcome challenges get exercise, socialise and have fun. This is what we have worked towards for so long and achieved at The Gib. As the whole young mountain biking community on The Gib would agree, if these trails are demolished, it will also completely eliminate one of the largest social branches in all of our lives. My friends and I are completely distressed, overwhelmed and heartbroken that all our hard work and freedom is being stripped away from us, and we feel that it is completely unfair that we are having our trail network demolished and our awesome community crushed just because of one complaint. We are willing to do whatever it takes and follow whatever instructions we need, to ensure our dreams and hard work isn't taken from us. We would be fully open and happy to see some more implemented safety measures such as signs that show the difficulty of each trail or even rebuilding certain sections of the trails, to make them even safer. We would absolutely love to be able to work with the council, to make The Gib an even better and safer place. I think that knocking these trails down is the completely wrong way to handle this situation, and the council are not seeing what a great place The Gib trails are, and how well they could be utilised to provide a great and accessible trail network for everyone. With such a strong, happy and open community at The Gib we are completely and utterly heartbroken at this situation and we desperately beg that you can find a solution, other than just demolishing it.

Regards,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sun, 28 May 2023 08:10:35 +1000
To: "Wingecarribee Shire Council" <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: MOUNTAIN BIKE AND OTHER USERS SURVEY
Categories: ECM Registered;Lorraine

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Can we please have the MTB SURVEY NAME CHANGED TO INCLUDE OTHER USERS OF BUSH HABITAT?

Can we please have designated horse trails considered whilst considering mountain bike trails? Below is an excerpt from Brisbane city council that combines Koala habitat, walking and HORSERIDING :

Walking track information and track map

The Brisbane Koala Bushlands offer a variety of walking tracks. Horse riding is permitted on designated trails within the bushlands.

To see a map of the bushlands, track locations, grading and length of the tracks, download the:
.....

<https://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/clean-and-green/natural-environment-and-water/bushland-reserves/brisbane-koala-bushlands>

Please include this information with any put forward about the current MTB survey

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Tue, 30 May 2023 18:07:25 +1000
To: "Wingecarribee Shire Council" <mail@wsc.nsw.gov.au>
Subject: Wingecarribee Shire Council – Mountain Biking Community Survey
Attachments: the 2022 YEAR 11 SENIOR GEOGRAPHY PROJECT.pdf
Categories: Melanie

External Email: This email was sent from outside the organisation, please be cautious with links and attachments in the email.

Dear Sir / Madam,

My name is [REDACTED], I am currently a year 12 student studying at Wollondilly Anglican College. I am also a keen mountain biker and as part of a major school geography project I completed a study looking at whether the local Southern Highlands MTB trails met the requirements of the local MTB community.

As the Wingecarribee Shire Council is currently conducting the MTB community survey, my report may be of interest to those conducting the survey research.

Please find attached a copy of my report. If you think this is of use, please forward this to the relevant person.

If further clarification or information is required please do not hesitate to contact me.

Warm Regards,
[REDACTED]



To what extent do the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the Southern Highlands?

SENIOR GEOGRAPHY PROJECT 2022

Geography | 18/08/2022



Contents

Research Question 2

Aims..... 2

Hypothesis 2

Methodology..... 3

 Method 1 – Primary Data 3

 Method 2 – Secondary Data 3

Results 4

 Aim 1 – Amount of Trails and Variety 5

 Aim 2 – What Trails Are Currently Used the Most 6

 Aim 3 – Maintenance 7

 Aim 4 – Travel..... 8

 Aim 5 – Racing..... 9

Conclusion 10

Evaluation 18

Bibliography..... 20

Acknowledgements 21

Appendix A – Survey 22

Appendix B – Cover Letter..... 33

Appendix C – Background Information 34



Research Question

To what extent do the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the Southern Highlands?

Aims

1. To investigate the variety and number of mountain biking (MTB) trails in the Southern Highlands (SH).
2. To identify the most popular MTB trails in the SH.
3. To identify if the MTB trails in the SH are maintained and rideable.
4. To consider where and why the MTB community travel outside of the SH.
5. To evaluate the capacity of the local MTB club to hold races or large events in the SH.

Hypothesis

1. There is quite a limited amount of current MTB trails in the SH with not much variety. The trails are generally not family friendly.
2. The easiest loop around Welby Mountain Bike Park (Welby) will be the most commonly ridden trail.
3. The trails in the SH are not maintained and some trails become unrideable due to neglect.
4. Many people in the local MTB community will prefer to travel outside the area to ride more maintained trails rather than ride locally. However, there will be an equal balance in how much time the community rides locally and in other areas. The most common place outside of the SH will be Wylde Mountain Bike Park in Western Sydney.
5. The local club is very limited and constricted in where and how races are planned and take place.



Methodology

Within this report, the extent to which the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the SH was researched. This was done by collecting both primary and secondary data.

METHOD 1 – PRIMARY DATA

Qualitative data was collected through a closed question survey with a few open-ended questions. The closed questions made it possible to see how many people answered in the same way for each particular question. This was important as it created a clear idea of how the needs of the community were being met, or not, for a particular point. Also, by implementing a few open-ended questions a comprehensive perspective formed covering all ideas from the community.

The survey was conducted online through the software Google Forms, and posted, with prior permission, on the Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page. When compared to a paper survey, the online platform made it possible to reach out to a broader range of participants within the community. It also allowed the data to be collected and summarised efficiently. The data collected then was put into tables and graphs using excel so that the results could be analysed and presented visually.

The survey was released on the 23rd of March 2022 and closed on the 14th of April 2022. 32 individuals took part in the survey who either lived within the SH or were part of the Southern Highlands Cycling Club and considered the MTB trails at Welby as their local trails.

METHOD 2 – SECONDARY DATA

Extensive background research took place to develop more coherent idea of what the research question involved. This involved researching other similar reports and case studies, collating maps, reviewing newspaper articles and council websites. The local Southern Highlands Cycling Club website was used extensively as well as ground, oblique, aerial and satellite photographs. This data was collected before the survey was put together to influence and determine appropriate questions to be raised. Such qualitative data was collected in order to support or disprove the primary data, strengthening the reports findings.

Results

The research question is being conducted within the SH region as shown in Figure 1. The MTB trails that are currently available within this area are; Wingello and Welby.

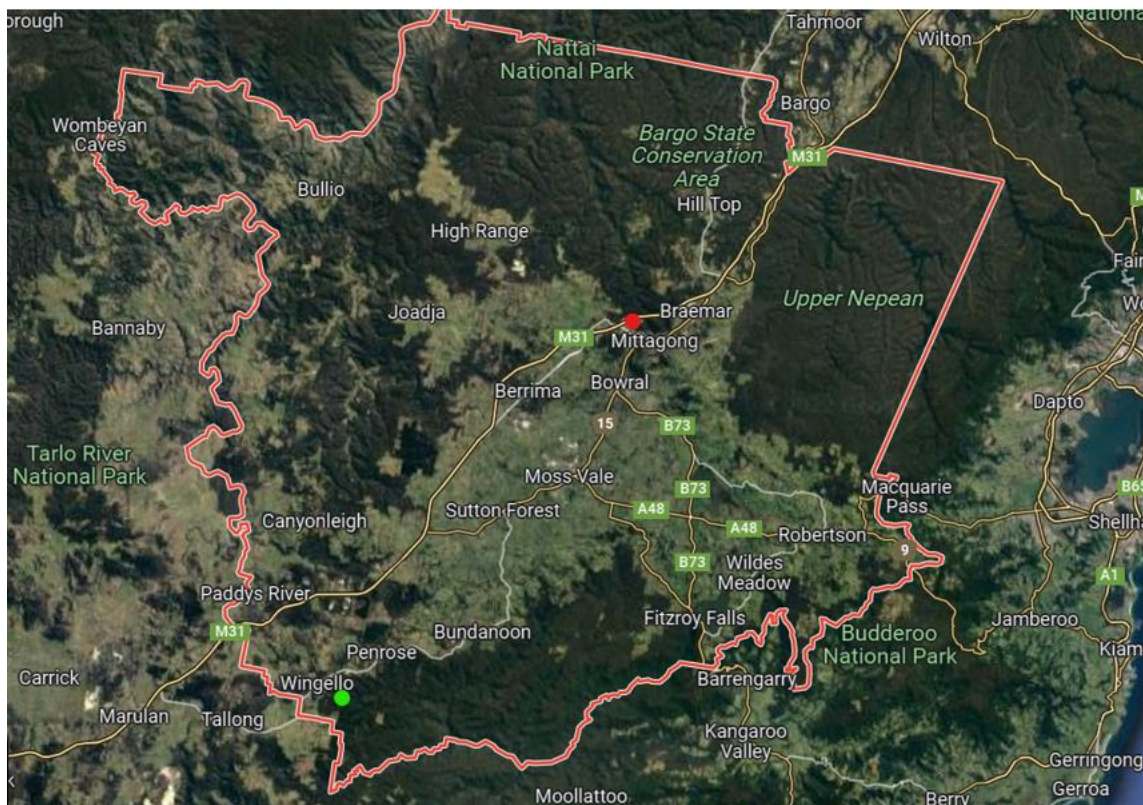


Image 1: Satellite map of the boundaries of the Southern Highlands. Welby Mountain Bike Park shown by a red circle and Wingello Mountain Bike Park shown by a green circle. Google Maps, 2022.

Welby Mountain Bike Park is centrally located for both the local MTB community in the SH and as a 'stop-over' location for travellers between Sydney and Canberra. This location is also popular for people who live in Sydney and travel down for the weekend to visit. Welby has the potential to grow the tourism side of the community even further.

AIM 1 – AMOUNT OF TRAILS AND VARIETY

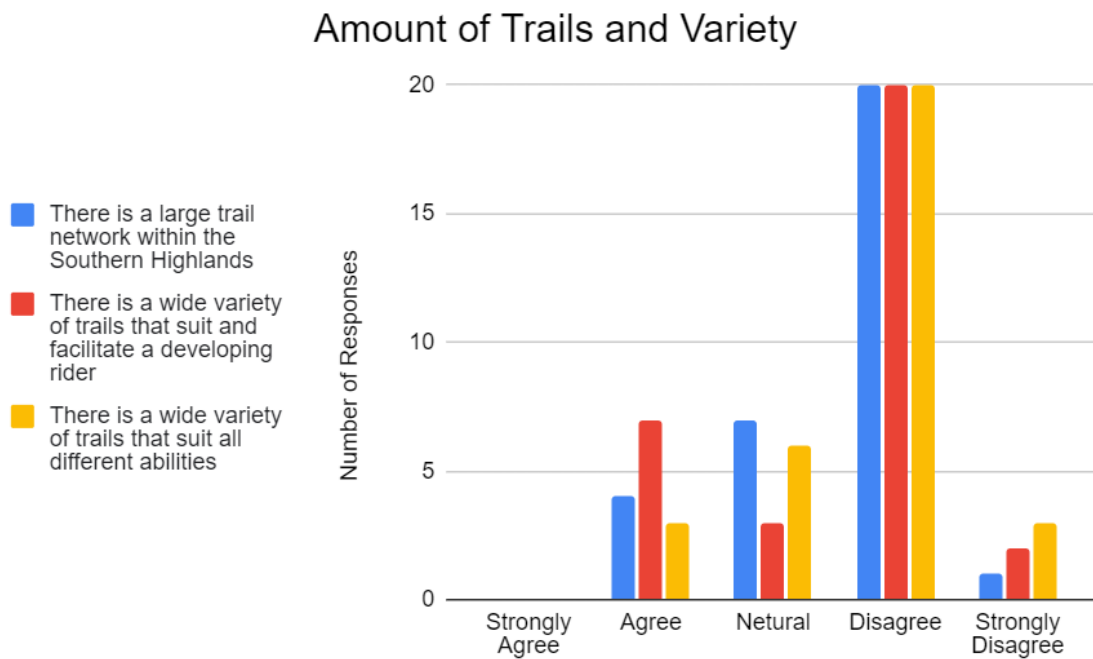


Figure 1: The response from the MTB community concerning the number and variety of the local MTB trails

To investigate whether the variety and number of trails within the SH were suitable for a variety of different types of MTB riders. Figure 1 shows a majority, 62.5%, of people concluded the trails within the SH were currently not meeting the needs of the community. The column graph shows this clearly as 20 people out of 30 across all question areas disagreed there was a large trail network or variety for the developing rider or was suited to riders of all abilities. The graph also shows how strongly the community believes this as no one strongly agreed with the statements and only a few responders agreed or were neutral.

The results from this question support Aim 1, which investigated the variety and number of MTB trails in the SH.

AIM 2 – WHAT TRAILS ARE CURRENTLY USED THE MOST

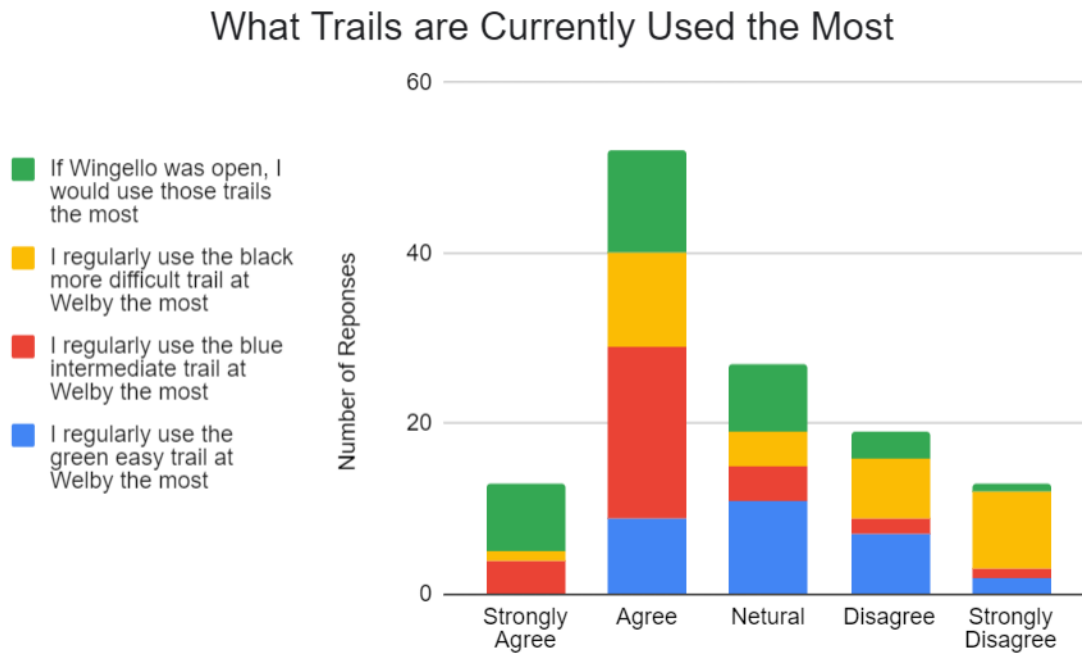


Figure 2: The spread of trails used by the MTB community

Figure 2 is a composite column graph showing how particular trails within the SH are used. When this survey was taken the MTB trails at Wingello were closed due to recent fire damage and lack of repair. These trails were very popular with 62.5% of responders either strongly agreeing or agreeing that if Wingello were open, they would use those trails the most.

Both the black and green trails at Welby were used similar amounts as 29-34% of responders agreed while 22% disagreed to regularly using those trails the most. However, the majority of responders identified themselves as regularly using the blue, intermediate trail at Welby with 76.4% of responders strongly agreeing and agreeing.

This supports Aim 2 as it identifies which MTB trails in the SH are used the most. The blue trail at Welby was found to be the most popular trail.

AIM 3 – MAINTENANCE

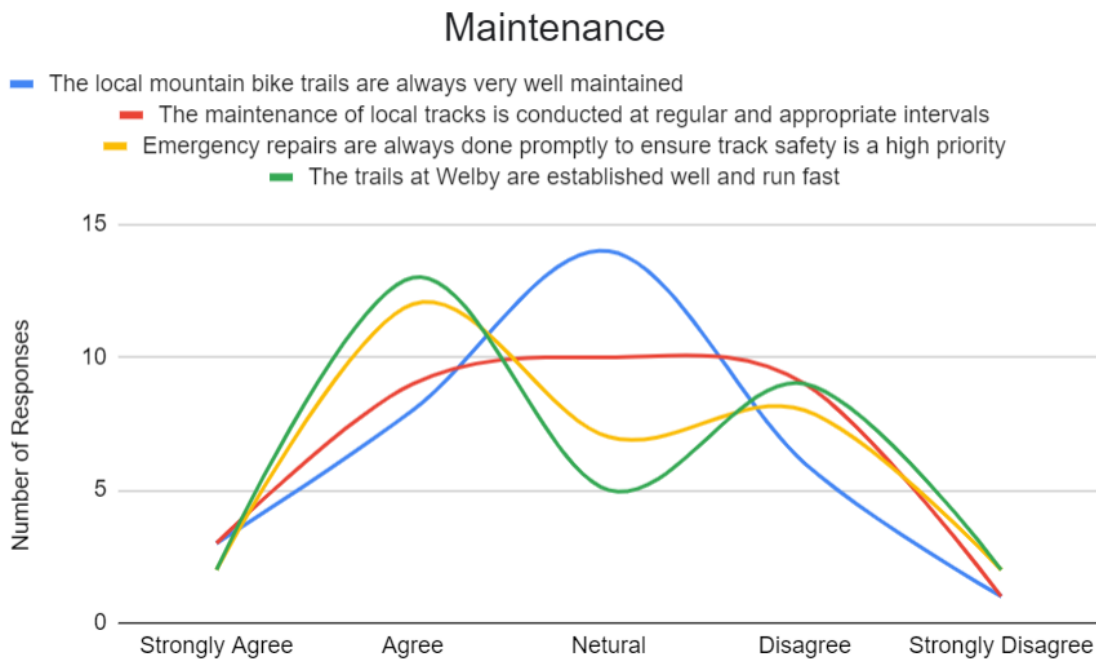


Figure 3: How well the local MTB trails are maintained

The MTB community in the SH recorded their level of agreement towards maintenance of the MTB trails. Figure 3 shows a divide as there is no clear response over the four questions asked. The line graph shows a majority of neutral responses to how the MTB trails are generally maintained as 43% of responders suggested this.

There appeared to be a general 'agreement' for both the yellow and green lines indicating emergency repairs were done promptly and the trails were established and run fast, however there is another peak slightly lower where responders disagreed with these statements.

Although there are some conflicting results, this supports Aim 3 as it identifies whether or not the MTB trails in the SH are maintained and rideable.

AIM 4 – TRAVEL

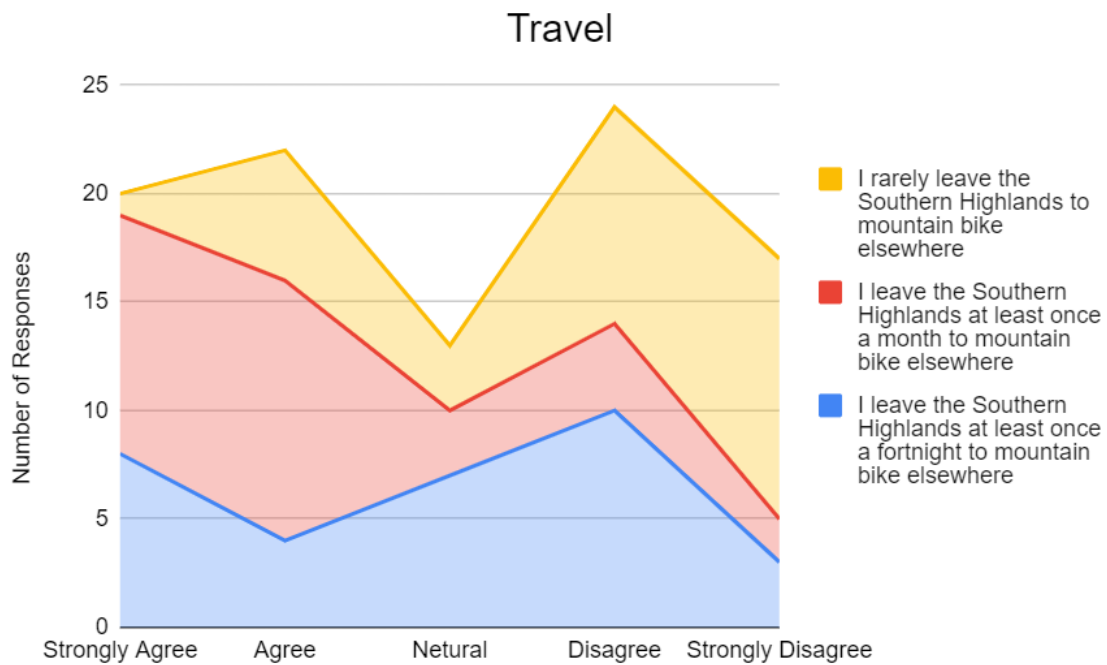


Figure 4: How often the MTB community leaves the Southern Highlands to ride

To determine if the local trails of the SH meet the needs of the community it was researched whether other areas pull the local riders away. The responders stated how often they left the SH to go riding. This graph shows a clear trend most cyclists are leaving the community at least once a month to ride elsewhere. This is seen by the red area as a majority of responders either strongly agreed or agreed to the statement.

It is also shown most, 68.8%, disagree or strongly disagreed they rarely leave the SH to ride elsewhere; this confirms there is a large amount of MTB riders leaving the SH to ride rather than riding locally.

This supports part of Aim 4 that states, “To consider where and why the MTB community travel outside of the SH.”

AIM 5 – RACING

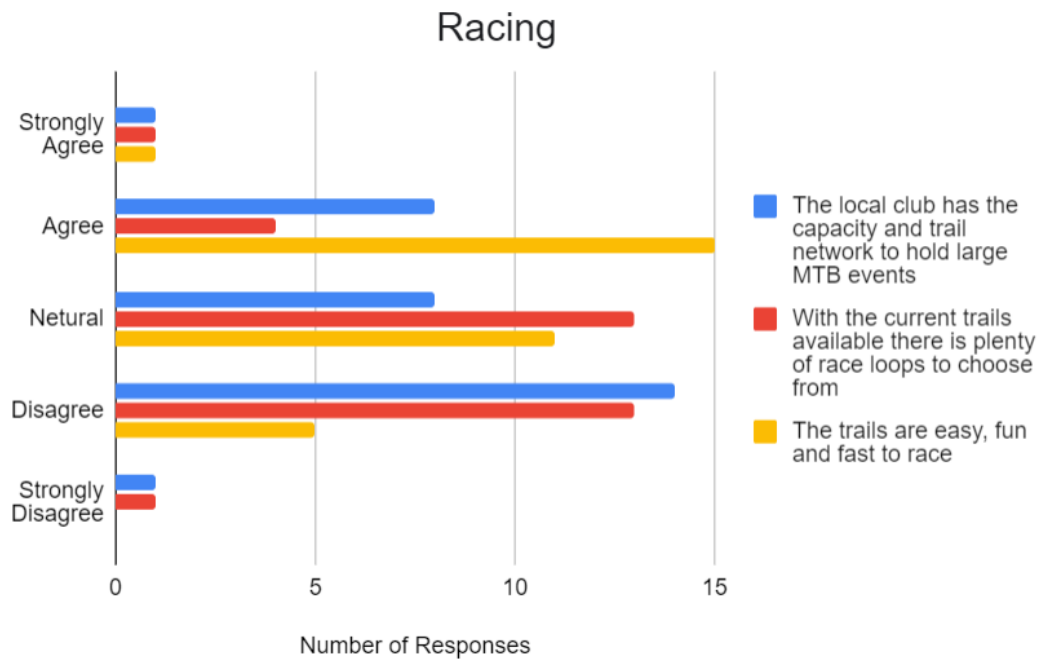


Figure 5: What the local MTB community believe the standard of trails are for racing

Figure 5 illustrates the capacity to hold large events is poor as the blue bar shows a majority of responders, 43.8%, disagree the local club has the capacity and trail network to hold large MTB events. Another 40.6% state there are not enough available trails to create proper race loops. However, the races which are held are easy, fun and fast to the best of the club's ability to do so, shown by the yellow bar with a majority of responders, 46.9%, agreeing or feeling neutral towards the idea.

The responses gathered around racing support Aim 5 which was to evaluate the capacity of the local MTB club to hold races or large events in the SH.



Conclusion

This project was designed with the popularity of Mountain Biking in Australia in mind, to determine the extent the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the SH. Primary data was collected from a survey and further secondary data was found from a variety of sources including social media platforms and newspaper articles to further prove or disprove the data collated from the respondents.

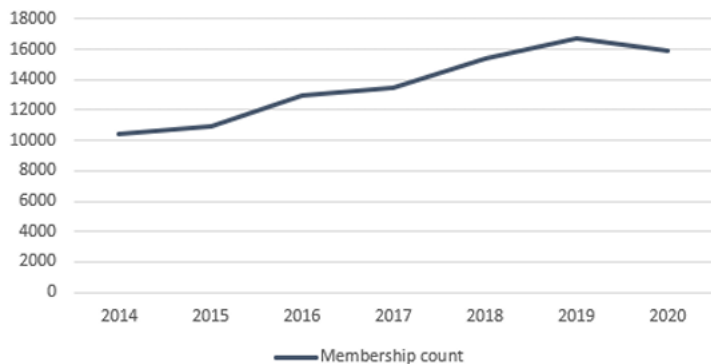


Image 2: Mountain Bike Australia Membership count, 2014 - 2020. AusCycling, 9 March 2021, pg.8.

In early 1980 MTB started to flourish and quickly became popular within Australia. MTB has now been recognised as one of the fastest growing recreational activities globally. Within the last 5 years, Mountain Bike Australia has reported a membership increase of around 60%, resulting in a membership record of 17,625 members across the nation.

The very first Australian Mountain Bike Championships was held in 1984 with over 50 riders participating. The sport then continued to gain popularity after the very first competition in the Olympics where Australian Cadel Evans competed in 1996. By 2004, the first large-scale dedicated MTB parks were developed. These MTB parks and other trail networks have continued to grow rapidly as large numbers of people joined the sport. This also led to the development of MTB facilities in alpine regions where MTB became a major summer activity. From 2005 to now, MTB technology has dramatically increased, improving user experience and resulting in the MTB industry growing substantially.



Image 3: Bart Brentjens wins gold in first Olympic MTB race in 1996. Sue George, June 21 2021.

The growth and passion of the sport within the SH has been seen through a large number of responses towards the survey - 32 surveys completed within 21 days - and the recent growth of the club with around 46 people participating at every race.

Aim 1

The first aim was to investigate the variety and number of MTB trails in the SH. The first part of the hypothesis expected there would be a limited number of MTB trails in the SH. This was proven with a majority, 62.5%, of responders disagreeing with the statement, “There is a large trail network within the Southern Highlands”.

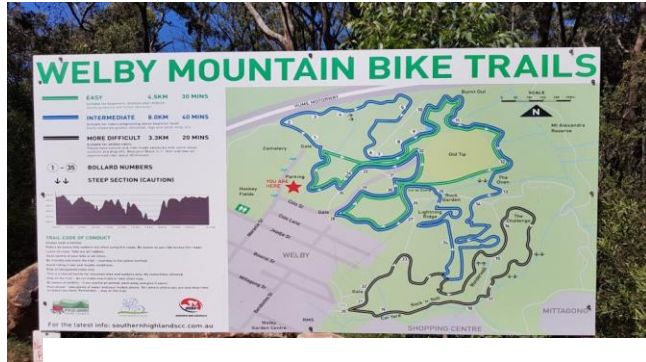


Image 4: Sign outside of the Welby Mountain Bike Park trails showing the number of loops and trails available. Wingecarribee Shire Council, 2022.

These results were clearly supported by further comments, which include, “We need a lot more km of single track with a broader variety of terrain” and “We have very few sanctioned mountain bike trails in the southern highlands”. This may have been the case as responders were comparing local trails to those at specific MTB parks such as Stromlo (ACT), as well as those they may have seen that exist in Europe. The local trails were identified as “limited”. Local riders could see the potential of modern MTB trail networks and recognized that the local area is well behind in this regard.

The results also showed there was a majority of responders disagreeing there is a wide variety of trails that suit a developing rider. This supports the hypothesis which stated there was not much variety at all. 62.5% of responders disagreed there was a wide variety of trails. This was further supported by comments such as, “The current selection of trails is very limited” and “The terrain in the region would allow different types of trails to be built if additional site access were permitted”.

These comments show the riders within the community have already identified the lack of variety the local trails provide and what has then prevented the further development and improvement of the current trails. This shows the absence of variety of trails available through the lack of opportunity to change the current situation.

The final part of the hypothesis states, “The trails are generally not family friendly”. 71.9% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed the trails are family friendly while only 9.4% of respondents agreed. This is supported by comments including, “I have friends with younger children and most of the trails would not be suitable” and “We need more trails for families and children”. This may be due to the poor quality of the trails and the lack of variety which is on offer for such a group of people.

This shows there is room for improvement for the local MTB trails to grow in size and variety to suit all kinds of riders.



Aim 2

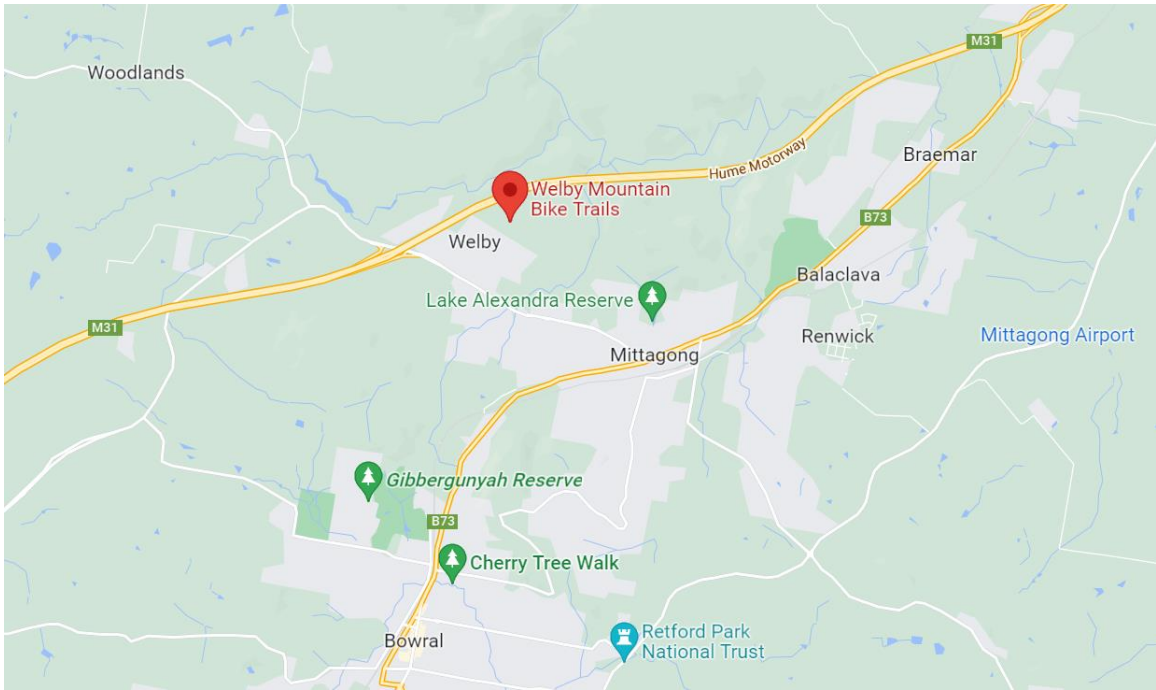


Image 6: Pin pointing the location of Welby and its central location within the inner part of the Southern Highlands. Google Maps, 2022.

The second aim was to identify the most popular MTB trails in the SH. It was hypothesised that, “The easiest loop around Welby will be the most commonly ridden trail.” This was disproven as most, 76.4%, of respondents agreed to riding the blue intermediate trail the most often. This might have been the case as the easiest loop is extremely short, uninteresting and rarely maintained. However, 62.5% of responders indicated if the other local MTB park, Wingello, was open, it would be used the most. This may be the case as Wingello had a much larger trail network with better maintained trails and variety. This was also shown in the comments when a respondent stated, “I would ride Wingello regularly but would still ride Welby more as it is much closer to my home”. This also conveys that the location of the trails plays a major role in their popularity. Further comments gathered by the open question, “What is your go to mountain bike trail?” supported this point with responses like, “Welby, it’s close to home”, “Welby for convenience” and “Welby because it is our main trail network in the southern highlands”.

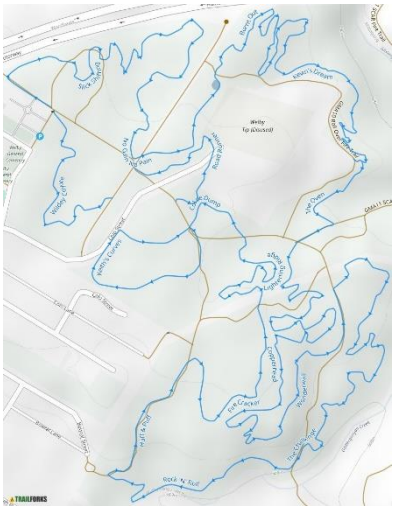
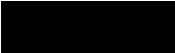


Image 5: The blue, intermediate trail at Welby. Trailforks, 2022.

Generally, these comments show that Welby is a very popular spot to ride due to its location.



Aim 3



Image 7: A series of photos where Welby has been damaged. Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page, 2020 – 2022.

The third aim was to identify if the MTB trails in the SH are maintained and rideable to the standard required by the community. The results gathered disprove what was hypothesised as, “The trails in the SH are not maintained and some trails become unrideable due to neglect.” Most respondents were neutral towards the question that the trails are always very well maintained. The results also show there was a lean towards agreement for both that emergency repairs are always done and the trails at Welby run fast and smooth.

Further analysis of responses in the “further comments section” did not align with the quantitative data. Many of the comments went on to discuss the state the Welby trails are currently in and how the lack of volunteers and the lack of money available to put into the trails clearly reflects how poorly maintained the trails are. Such comments included, “Welby is terrible”, “Welby can be a great track but (more) regular heavy maintenance is needed to stop the serious mud and washouts causing the rocks to become increasingly exposed”.

Further comments also suggest the people who do work on the trails do their very best {“the local trail crew do a great job”} and work hard however there is limited numbers that do so which reflect the state the trails are in. Others also suggest lack of funding contributes to the lack of development and maintenance of smoother trails. A respondent expressed this



Image 8: Local trail crew at Welby fixing the trails. Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page, 2022.

well stating, “Some maintenance is done by a few individuals who should be congratulated for their efforts. But there is no official maintenance schedule and all maintenance is left to the club who have to finance it themselves. The trails are on council land but council provides zero manpower, money or time to maintain these trails, despite them being a community resource. The SHCC has taken on the job of looking after the trails but do not always have the resources or manpower to do it effectively. Machinery required for proper upgrading of the trail is expensive!”

The results collected show that the trails themselves are maintained well however the original variety and standard is already very low. A respondent mentioned this as, “Welby was never originally built by professional trail builders & has continued problems with drainage issues”. A predominantly neutral result may be the most appropriate outcome as summarised by one respondent, “It would be unfair for me to comment negatively about the maintenance because it is run by hard working volunteers.”

Overall, this shows that the local MTB trails are maintained as well as they can be for the number of people that put the hard work in however there is still room for improvement with increased resourcing and funding.

Aim 4

The fourth aim was to consider where and why the MTB community travel outside of the SH. The first part of the hypothesis states that, “Many people in the local mountain biking community will prefer to travel outside the area to ride more maintained trails rather than ride locally. However, there will be an equal balance in how much time the community rides locally and in other areas.”

This hypothesis was proven by the ratio of results received which agreed to rarely, monthly and fortnightly leaving the SH to ride elsewhere. Little to no responders either strongly agreed or agreed to rarely leaving to ride elsewhere while a majority of responders strongly agreed and agreed to leaving to ride elsewhere monthly and a small group of responders strongly agreed and agreed towards leaving the SH fortnightly. This shows a balance in riding locally and in other areas



Image 9: High quality of facilities of the pavilion at Stromlo Mountain Bike Park. TripAdvisor, 2022.

however there is a strong preference to travel outside the area to ride better maintained trails as found in the comments. This was identified through the question, “What is the

main reason for leaving the Southern Highlands to go mountain biking?”. Such comments include, “To ride a wider variety of tracks including, flow style, jump tracks, pump tracks & tracks with more features.”, “Quality and length of trails” and “Better facilities”. There is also a group of cyclists within the SH that do ride elsewhere fortnightly. Such a respondent expressed, “I hardly ride locally anymore - because there’s so much good riding elsewhere... But if the trails were developed locally (and the rain stops!) I would absolutely get out there. It has to be fun though. Welby is rocky and just does not compare to other trails.”

This result is a reflection of the trails that are currently available within the SH. As a rider develops and grows in their skills and confidence, they look to increase the trail difficulty or length. Welby does not offer this and therefore riders are having to look elsewhere, only riding at Welby out of convenience. Riders also leave the area, as commented above, for more fun trails that are better developed.

The second part of the hypothesis states, “The most common place outside of the Southern Highlands will be Wylde Mountain Bike Park in Western Sydney.” This part of the hypothesis was disproven as Wylde MTB Park was not the most popular cycling destination for SH MTB riders. This was shown through the open-ended question, “Where do you commonly leave the Southern Highlands to ride?” with respondents expressing they ride in Canberra, Mt Stromlo, Nowra and a wide variety of other local locations as well as those in the high country. Only one respondent indicated that they visited Wylde MTB Park.

Stromlo MTB park in Canberra was expressed as a very popular place to ride outside the Southern Highlands with 17 out of 27 responders commenting this. As the popularity of MTB has grown, specific bike parks such as Stromlo have been created to facilitate the needs of broad communities in practicing and competing in the sport. This commercial construction of MTB trails attracts riders from all over the country to enjoy the well built and maintained trails.

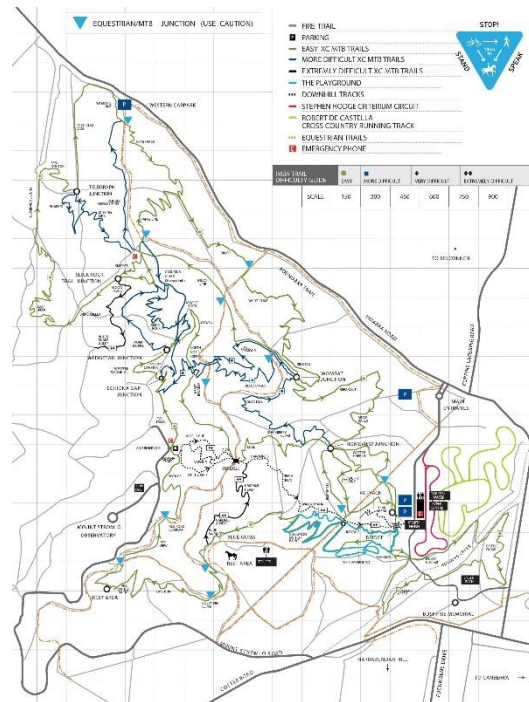


Image 10: Map of the trails at Stromlo Mountain Bike Park. CORC, 2022.



Aim 5

The fifth aim was to evaluate the capacity of the local MTB club to hold races or large events in the SH. The hypothesis stated that, “The local club is very limited and constricted in where and how races are planned and take place.”

This was proven as, 43.8%, a majority of responders disagreed that the local club has the capacity and trail network to hold large MTB events. 40.6%, of responders either felt neutral or disagreed that the current trails provide plenty of race loops to choose from.

This is also supported with comments like, “The trails we have are what we have so we make do with them. The network is not large and huge sections of it are in such poor disrepair that we cannot use them for racing.” and “Access to an event centre with proper parking, toilets, showers and change rooms are required. Hiring toilets and lack of facilities is costly and time consuming for a volunteer organization.”

These comments as well as the results collected show that Welby, the trail centre of the SH, does not have the trails or the proper facilities to hold large events.

MTB in the SH is very popular with people of all ages taking part and a small but rapidly growing MTB club regularly organizing local races and events. Some of the local competitors race at state and national level. The local MTB trails are known by the wider community to be quite rough, slow and hard to ride making them not family friendly and putting off new and younger riders.



Image 11: Races held at Welby. Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page, 2020 – 2022.

The results and responses collected show the local trails are currently not meeting the needs of the cycling community in the SH. Respondents conclude there is an absence of trail quantity and variety. The intermediate blue trail at Welby is the most popular trail in the SH and the trails at Welby, although often in poor condition, are maintained to the best of the ability of the small volunteer workforce. Stromlo MTB park in Canberra is an extremely popular riding destination for SH locals to visit monthly and the current trails in the SH do not have the capacity to hold large MTB events. A respondent summarises



this well stating that, “Mountain biking has become so popular over past few years & unfortunately our small trail network struggles to keep up with amount of use.”



Evaluation

Overall, the investigation was successful, however some opportunities for improvement were observed.

Successes

There were many successes throughout the investigation particularly in gathering the results and drawing conclusions. There was also a high level of interest in the project which indicated that there are many areas for possible future investigation. A high volume of responses were received from the survey along with many detailed comments. This gave the ability to draw clear evidence-based conclusions in order to answer the research question.

This project was effectively paced with a large portion of the report done early. The survey was put out as early as possible allowing more time to collect then review the results and write up a strong conclusion.

A major success of this project was the sense of achievement that came from completing the task. This particular area of research, MTB, is a growing area of investigation which provided the quantity and quality of results to support an in-depth project. This brought a decent sample size to be able to thoroughly review the research question. The aims formulated were directly linked to the questions asked in the survey allowing clarity throughout the conclusion. The question asked was quite big however the results collected enabled reliable and comprehensive responses to be developed.

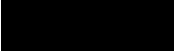
Limitations

There were very few limitations within this project area as before starting the project there was a lot of thought put into how to develop the clearest answer and response towards the research question. However, there were several problems that did arise.

The sample gathered was quite narrow, being from only one source group within the community. The survey that was made to answer the research question was only put up on the Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page. This narrowed the sample pool, targeting a single interest group, albeit a key one, from the community. This was quite a limitation as a broader Facebook page concerning the Southern Highlands would have been able to represent a wider variety of users of the MTB trails and allowing a larger sample pool.

Due to the large amount of aims with three questions for each, totalling fifteen questions, a lot of different data was collected from the survey. This resulted in the over collection of data making it extremely hard to fully analyse all the information collected.

The selection and formation of questions for the survey was initially quite a long process. Many problems occurred while making the questions for the survey to be able to



specifically target the aims, which could answer the research question, without doubling up on questions that might give similar results. Lots of effort, editing and redoing was involved to overcome this problem resulting in a clear and concise survey.

Through each limitation and problem was growth and further development of the project. Lots was learnt from each set back pushing the report to a higher quality and standard.

Further Investigation

In the future this research project could be explored in much more detail across many more specific areas regarding the local MTB trails and involving a larger sample of the community. A major outcome of researching and carrying out a project such as this could be the exploration of the economic and tourist impact that a local MTB park can have on the local community's economy. During research, two MTB parks that clearly displayed a positive economic benefit to the local community were Stromlo MTB Park in Canberra and Blue Derby MTB Park in Tasmania. (See Appendix C for further information around these parks and the benefit they have on the community)

The high level of interest from the local community was a great aid in being able to collate a wide variety of ideas on what they would like to see improved in regards to the MTB trails in the Southern Highlands. Most respondents proposed ideas that included support from the government and trail building companies in order to take action and put the Southern Highlands on the MTB map. 29 out of 32 responders had great suggestions on how to improve the local trails displaying a strong involvement of the community and interest in the area. Such ideas put forth include; "We need more professionally built trails & more volunteers to help maintain the trails we already have. This sport is going to continue to grow rapidly so we need to cater for more riders of all abilities." and "Some serious funding by local government to establish trails in state forest and repair existing trails after recent rain." A particular comment sums up what the results from the survey has shown in its entirety through the suggestion, "The ability to bring machinery in to improve the trails. The volunteers can only do so much and do a great job in keeping the trails to the level they are. If you want to promote MTB in the Highlands and bring MTB tourism to the area the standard needs to be improved. We are lucky to have a great club they just need more support from government and council."

The success of this project was extremely important as it will allow many members from the local MTB club to put forth their ideas and thoughts to the local council. This is in order to show the council that the benefits of improving the MTB trails in the Southern Highlands will not only serve as a great facility for the local community but also as a desirable tourist attraction and destination for national and state MTB events, attracting MTB riders of all abilities from around the country.

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Acknowledgements

██████████ Geography teacher Wollondilly Anglican College (WAC) 2022, significantly helped throughout this project. ██████ provided assistance throughout the entirety of the investigation and gave advice and feedback whenever needed. This project would not be of the same standard without her assistance. Also, those who completed the survey were an extremely important part of the investigation. The quantity and quality of responses received were both to a high standard thanks to those who completed the survey from the Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page. George Foster should also be acknowledged in regard to the devotion of his time proof reading the final draft.

The ethical responsibility of conducting a geographical research investigation was taken into consideration during this project; the confidentiality of all the survey respondents was maintained, all questions in the survey were stated clearly and fairly in order to obtain fair data, and all sources of information were acknowledged.



Appendix A – Survey

Local Mountain Biking Trails in the Southern Highlands Survey

My name is [REDACTED] As part of the syllabus requirements for my Year 11 Senior Geography Project I am investigating the question - 'With the popularity of mountain biking in Australia, to what extent do the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the Southern Highlands?'

This survey is intended primarily for school purposes, individual identities and responses remain private and confidential. The outcome of this research may be put forth to the local council to help towards funding local trail maintenance and upgrades in the future. Your feedback would be very much appreciated. The survey should take less than 5 minutes to complete.



(not shared) [Switch account](#)





Amount of trails and variety

There is a large trail network within the Southern Highlands

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

There is a wide variety of trails that suit and facilitate a developing rider

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



There is a wide variety of trails that suit all different abilities

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Further comments?

Your answer



What trails are currently used the most

I regularly use the green easy trail at Welby the most

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I regularly use the blue intermediate trail at Welby the most

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



I regularly use the black more difficult trail at Welby the most

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

If Wingello was open, I would use those trails the most

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

What is your go to mountain bike trail? And why?

Your answer _____

Further comments?

Your answer _____



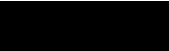
Maintenance

The local mountain bike trails are always very well maintained

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The maintenance of local tracks is conducted at regular and appropriate intervals

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



Emergency repairs are always done promptly to ensure track safety is a high priority

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

The trails at Welby are established well and run fast

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Further comments?

Your answer _____



Travel

I leave the Southern Highlands at least once a fortnight to mountain bike elsewhere

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

I leave the Southern Highlands at least once a month to mountain bike elsewhere

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



I rarely leave the Southern Highlands to mountain bike elsewhere

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Where do you commonly leave the Southern Highlands to ride?

Your answer

What is the main reason for leaving the Southern Highlands to go mountain biking?

Your answer

Further comments?

Your answer



Racing

The local club has the capacity and trail network to hold large MTB events

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

With the current trails available there is plenty of race loops to choose from

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree



The trails are easy, fun and fast to race

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Further comments?

Your answer

General comments - what would you like to see improved in regards to the MTB trails in the Southern Highlands?

Your answer

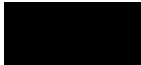
Thank you so much for helping me by completing the survey!

Submit

Clear form

Appendix B – Cover Letter

Meaghan Stanton, MTB Race Director
Southern Highlands Cycling Club
PO Box 2182, Bowral NSW 2576,
Australia


Wollondilly Anglican College
Remembrance Drive
TAHMOOR NSW 2573

18nd March 2022

Dear Meaghan,

My name is April Foster, I am currently studying Geography in Year 11 at Wollondilly Anglican College. As part of the syllabus requirements I must conduct primary research to investigate a geographical issue.

I have chosen to research the question, 'With the popularity of mountain biking in Australia, to what extent do the local trails meet the needs of the cycling community in the Southern Highlands?'

I am writing to request permission to collect primary data in the form of a survey to assist me in my investigation of this topic. I would like to reach out to the local mountain biking community at races and on online platforms if that was possible.

I look forward to hearing from you in regard to your assistance with my research.

Regards,





Appendix C – Background Information

Established in 2007, Stromlo Forest Park took shape with the encouragement of World Trail. Only a year later after opening Stromlo Forest Park was the venue for Round 6 of the UCI Mountain Biking World Cup and in 2009 hosted the pinnacle of international mountain biking events, the UCI Mountain Biking World Championships. To this day the park has over 40km of trails as well as a pump track, multipurpose event pavilion, 1.2km road criterium track, 2.5km grass cross country running track, equestrian trails, toilet facilities and drinking water which has proved to be a major mountain biking destination worldwide.

In 2020, the ACT government stated, “Currently, the 1,200-hectare Stromlo Forest Park attracts over 1,000 weekend mountain bike riders daily and at the end of December 2019, visiting bike riders to Canberra spent an estimated \$30 million in the local economy.” This shows the large scale of riders that are keen to ride well-made trails and how much it has contributed the local economy by creating additional employment opportunities and bolstering local businesses.

This shows how the creation of a major commercial MTB park has affected the local community making Canberra a major cycling destination drawing a growing area of tourism that ultimately boosts the economy as stated by the ACT government. A very similar case also occurred in Tasmania.

Blue Derby Mountain Bike Park was established more recently in 2015. The park provides riders with over 125km of single-track mountain bike trails. In 2017 and 2019 Blue Derby Mountain Bike Park held Round 2 of the Enduro World Series, these were the first times Australia held a stage of this competition. The popularity of this mountain bike park is also shown as it attracts 30, 000 visitors annually who spend 4-5 nights in the township of Derby. The return on investment to date has been estimated at approximately \$30 million per year. Stage 2 in the development of Blue Derby is expected to attract over 138,000 visitors, create 51 full time jobs and add a further \$6.88 million to the economy. Blue Derby Mountain Bike Park is a major outstanding facility that a large amount of mountain bike riders are able to practice and develop on as well as being an extremely important part of the Tasmanian economy.



Activities Log

Date	Detail of Activity
04.02.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Received SGP assessment notification in class.
09.02.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– A plan and list were made of everything that needs to be done in order to achieve success within the report.
12.02.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Idea development of broad topics to research with some construction of basic research questions.– Checkpoint 1 sheet was completed.
14.02.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Checkpoint 1: Overview and topic selection. Informal discussion of topic with Mrs Miller.– The report document was set up and contents page was made.
27.02.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Checkpoint 2: Selecting the topic. This was submitted to be checked over.
01.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The research question was crafted, the list of aims and resulting hypothesis were completed.
05.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The survey was made and cover letter was written and reviewed.
14.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Some research was put into developing the background research idea.
17.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The methodology of the report was created and planned out.– Checkpoint 3: Aims, Hypotheses and Methodology were submitted to be checked over.
23.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The survey was posted on the Southern Highlands Cycling Club Facebook page.
24.03.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– A large number of responses were recorded on google forms early on.
11.04.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The background research was completed.
14.04.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The survey was closed to further responses.
28.04.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The background research was fully edited.– An email was sent out to the mountain bike club director, Meaghan, to update the participants of the survey of where the report is up to.
29.04.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The results were started to be collated into graphs for each section within results.
31.05.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– The introduction to the results was written.– Each graph for every section within results were collated and the main trend within each of the graphs was recorded.
16.06.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Aim 1 – 3 result paragraphs were written.
1.07.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">– Aim 4 and 5 result paragraphs were written.



28.07.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The results paragraphs were submitted for feedback.
03.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The results paragraphs were edited from Mrs Millers feedback.- The conclusion was started including the introduction, Aim 1, 2 and 3 paragraphs.
04.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Conclusion paragraphs for Aim 3, 4, 5 and overall were written.- Evaluation, bibliography, acknowledgements and appendices were written.- The process towards the final draft of the report was edited by George Foster.
05.07.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Loose ends and unfinished or unpolished paragraphs were fixed up.
07.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The whole report was roughly edited for a final draft submission.
15.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All feedback from Mrs Miller was taken into account and the report was fixed accordingly.- The background section was taken out and then integrated into the conclusion and appendix c.- The research question, aims, hypothesis, methodology, results and conclusion were all edited and finalised.
16.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- All maps, photographs, statistics and graphs were put into the report and captions for each were written.
17.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The activities log was neatened up and collated.- The report was checked over to make sure it has everything it needs.
18.08.22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- The evaluation, bibliography, acknowledgements, appendix a, appendix b and appendix c were all edited and finalised.- The final report was then submitted.