

Crofton Downs Trails Proposal

Summary of comments from May - June 2025 consultation survey.

Introduction

A public consultation survey on proposed mountain biking and walking trails in the Outer Green Belt above Crofton Downs was held from 28th May to 24th June 2025. The proposal, by Trails Wellington and Korimako Track Builders, was a revised version of an initial proposal they had put forward in October 2024 for preliminary engagement.

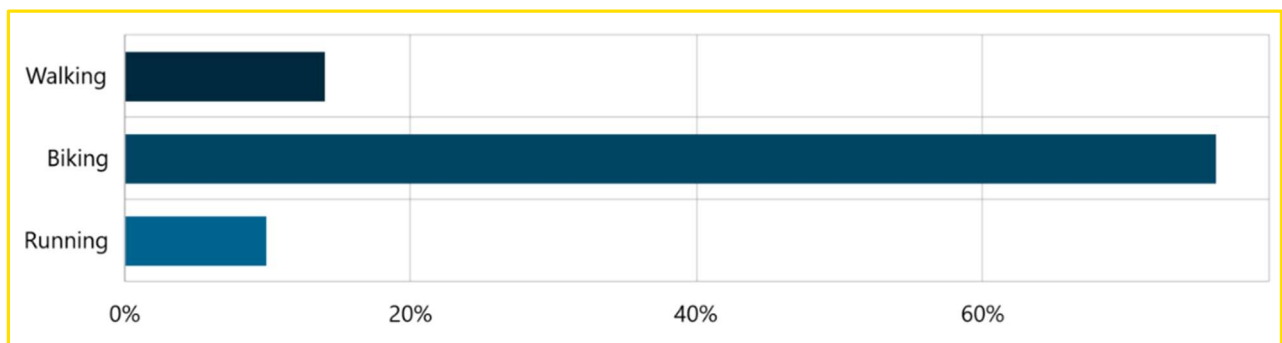
This document summarises the results of the consultation on the revised proposal. Feedback was received from 123 respondents: – 122 through an online survey and one through an emailed submission. Section A summarises the results of the 122 survey questions and Section B summarises the written comments.

A. Survey questions results

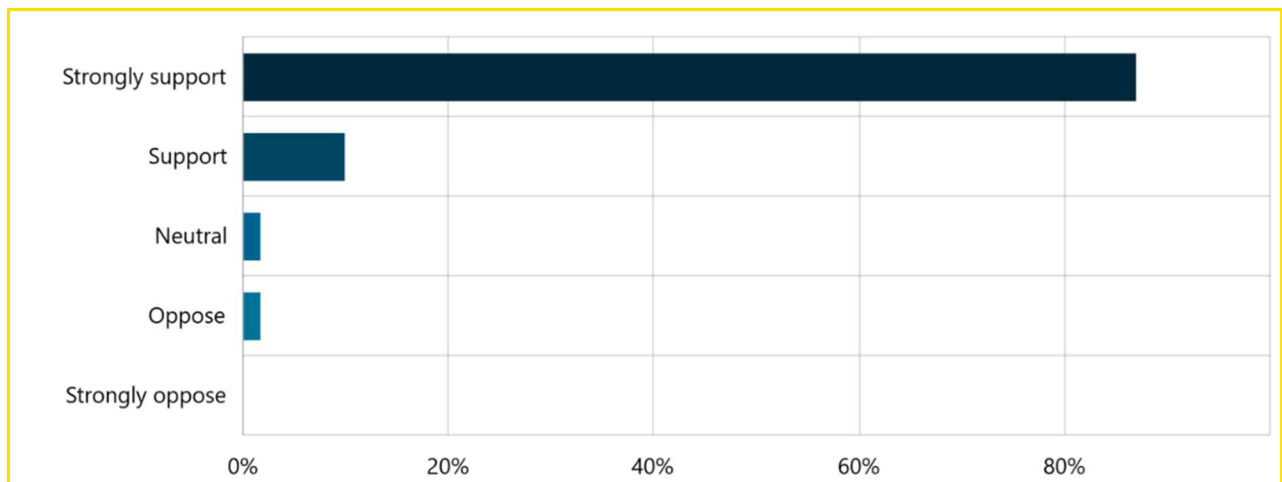
All of the 122 online survey respondents answered the five multi-choice questions, as illustrated in the graphs below.

Question 1: what is your main form of recreation in this area?

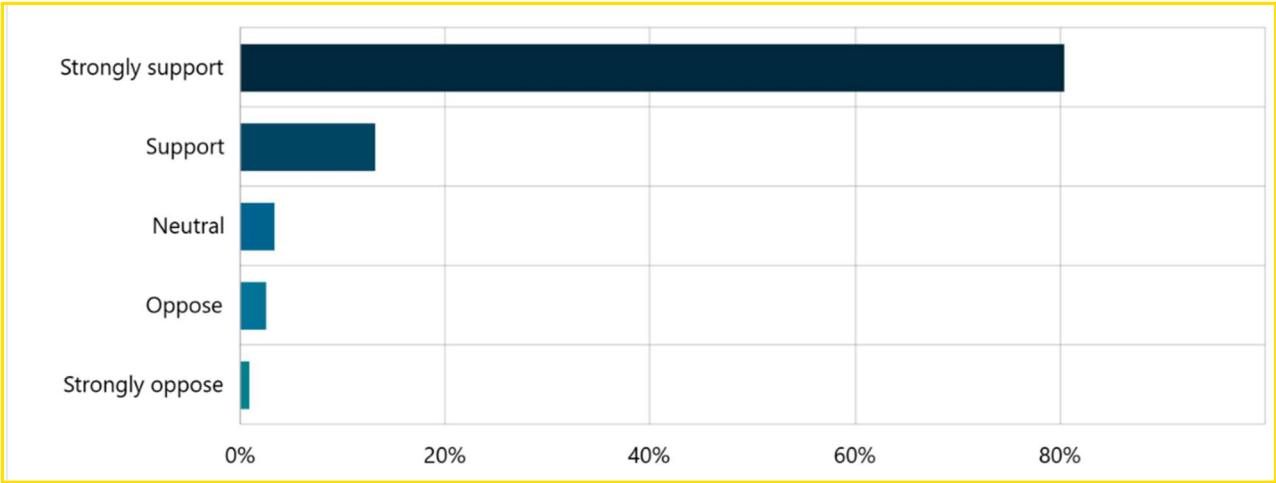
Of the submitters, ninety-three (76.23%) mainly biked in the area, 17 (13.93%) mainly walked, and twelve (9.84%) were mainly runners.



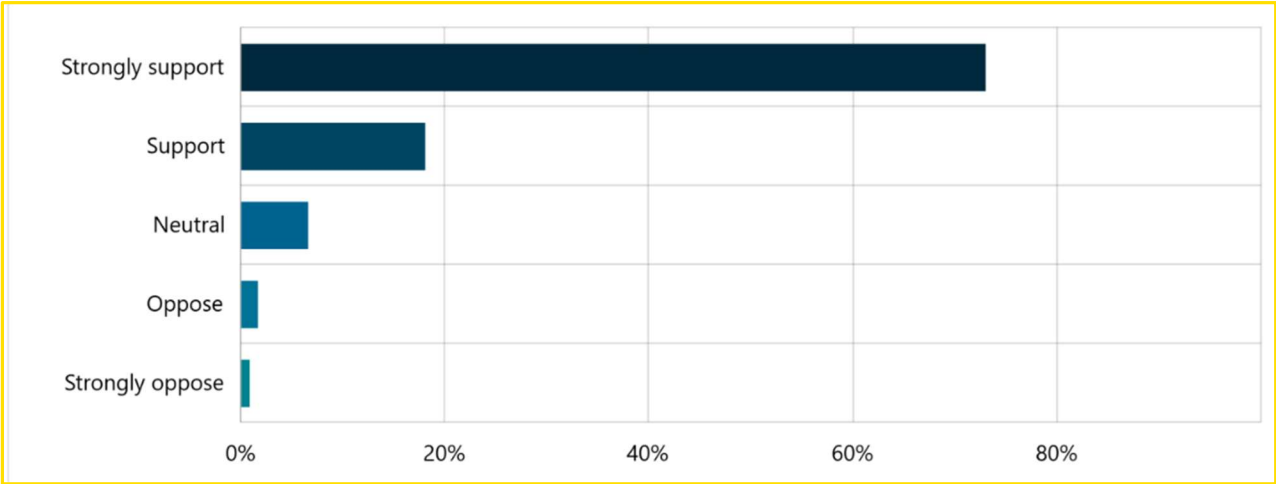
Question 2: To what extent to you support or oppose the creation of the new trails?



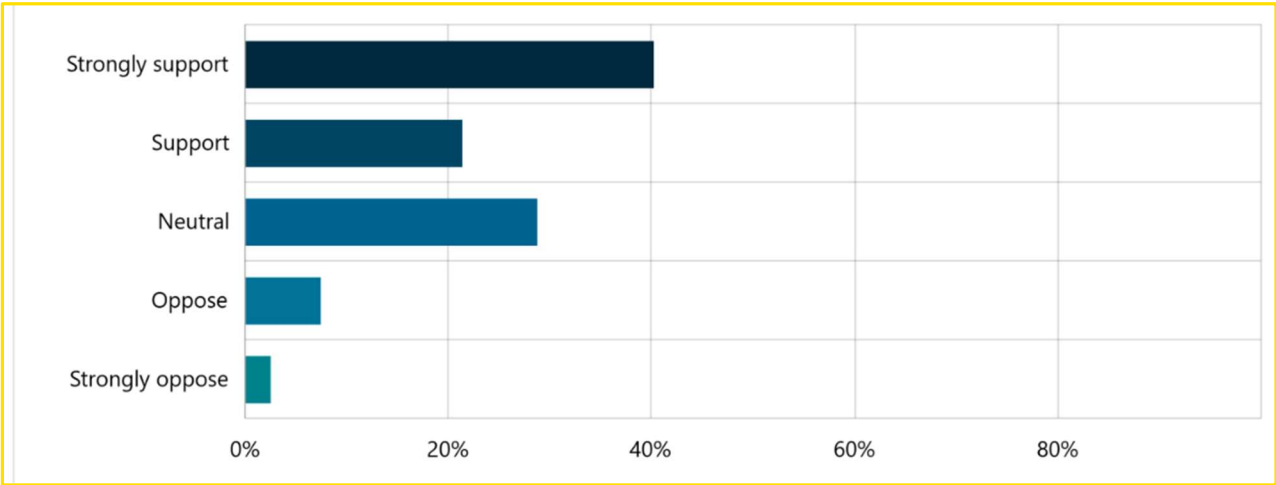
Question 3. To what extent do you support the proposed downhill bike tracks one, two and four?



Question 4: To what extent do you support the proposed shared track three?



Question 5: To what extent do you support making the existing tramping track walking-only?



B. Summary of comments

Comments were received from 71 of the 123 respondents and reflected seven main themes. The main points under each theme are summarised below.

1. Overall Support for the trails

Many respondents expressed strong general support for the development of trails in Crofton Downs, highlighting the benefits for the area's community and recreational infrastructure. Some noted the potential contribution the trails would make to enhancing mountain biking opportunities in the northern suburbs and to Wellington as a mountain biking destination by providing more expert-grade trails. Others thought the new trails would mean bikers would have less reason to resort to illegal track building.

2. Local community benefits

Many submissions highlighted the positive impact on the local community, including increased recreational opportunities and better access to natural areas, including for pest control. Some respondents emphasised the need for trails that cater to local riders, including families and youth, rather than just expert riders.

Comments also highlighted support for and interest in continued local community involvement and volunteering in the new trail development and the need for mountain biking groups and other stakeholders to work together to ensure the trails meet the needs of the community.

3. Preference for intermediate-grade mountain bike trails

There were mixed opinions about the level of difficulty of the proposed trails. Although some supported the two grade 5/6 (expert/extreme) trails, citing their lower cost and maintenance needs, many respondents felt the harder grades were overly favoured, noting those are riskier and would not be rideable for most bikers. It was noted that the early engagement was not adequately reflected in the revised proposal, particularly the majority desire to have easier grade bike tracks suitable for a wider range of users, including families and less experienced bikers.

Many respondents requested instead prioritising intermediate grade 3 and grade 4 trails to better provide for a wider range of riders, and the importance of having shared tracks for novice riders was noted. Suggestions included downgrading one of the proposed grade 5/6 trails to grade 4 or introducing an additional grade 4 trail, particularly off The Crows Nest.

4. Trail use conflicts and safety

Concerns were raised about potential conflicts between different trail users, such as walkers, runners and bikers on shared-use trails. Safety issues were cited, especially where trails are narrow, attract high use or are used at high speeds. The need to manage conflicts on existing trails, such as the Silversky Track, was also noted.

Suggestions included having separate trails for bikers and walkers where possible, making certain trails wider, and ensuring dogs are kept on leads.

5. Environmental and visual impact

Some respondents were worried about the potential impacts of trail construction on the surrounding environment, particularly the scarring and visibility of trails on exposed landscapes.

The need for careful design of trails to avoid creating scars on the hillsides was noted. There was also support for environmental stewardship, particularly preventing illegal trail building and enabling access to help manage pests.

6. Costs and funding

Mixed views were expressed about costs and funding. These included, concern in the current fiscal environment about developing new tracks that depend on land acquisition; concern about technical-level tracks leading to more injury and accident compensation costs; advocacy for the significantly cheaper cost of developing and maintaining grade 5 and 6 tracks as they don't require machinery; and a preference for putting public money into developing up to grade 4 trails, despite the extra cost.

7. Track network and specific tracks - suggestions and comments

<u>Suggestions and queries</u>	<u>Officer response</u>
<u>Tracks 1 & 2</u> Build at least one of these tracks to mountain bike grade 4 standard, or at least to grade 4/5 instead of grade 5/6. The gully on Track 2 would be good for big sweeping corners Start just north of the The Crows Nest summit to keep the summit free of bikes. (see The Crows Nest summit comments below also)	Investigation into potential routes in the head of the valley, where these tracks are proposed, showed it would be difficult to design grade 3 or 4 tracks without considerable impact. On the upper slopes, greater track length, bends and switchbacks would increase scarring on the most visible part of the hill slopes. On the lower slopes, intense switchbacks are required to even achieve grades 5 and 6, so the feasibility of building to an easier grade is doubtful.
<u>Track 3</u> Limit bike riders to uphill direction only to improve safety or make one-way, starting at Silverstream Road and finishing at the Transpower 4WD track so it will be easier for mountain bikers to ascend and ride the tracks again. Add a connection down to parking places on Porokawhiri Road and up to 'the clearing'. The informal walking track north and east of Track 3 (dotted line) is very important to walkers.	Limiting biking to uphill only is not considered optimal as two-way biking would be desirable for beginner riders so they could do return trips on the track. This track will be professionally built according to best practice for to shared track use to reduce potential conflict, including at least 1.5 metre width. Signage will also reinforce the mountain bikers' code of behaviour on shared tracks to respect others and give way to people on foot. The Porokawhiri Road connection will be included. Extending Track 3 to the northeast approximately following the informal walking track would be consistent with the mid-level shared connection indicated in the Outer Green Belt Management Plan. Investigate feasibility alongside detailed track design/assessment in the vicinity of the future reserve land.
<u>Track 4</u> Query whether this track is necessary, given so few walkers use the parallel tramping track. Build this track first, if it takes time for the future reserve land to come into WCC ownership.	See next below for reasons why two separate tracks are proposed. Track 4 would be developed first as it will be some years before the reserve land is likely to come to WCC.
<u>Tramping track (existing)</u> Oppose making walking-only because so few people use it and could separate out the walk and bike users on just one short steep section if shared.	Retain walk-only proposal, given it is one of the few tough walking tracks in the area and the strong support from walking/running community. While this track might serve comparatively few

	walkers, so too would the proposed grade 5/6 mountain bike tracks.
<u>Return uphill mountain bike route</u> Using the existing transpower 4WD track was commended but others asked whether a new climbing trail had been considered.	A new climbing trail has not been proposed because the 4WD track serves the purpose, and is wide enough to accommodate shared, dual-direction use.
<u>The Crows Nest summit area</u> Request for the existing track from the Skyline Track down to The Crows Nest to be upgraded as it is currently walking and running only. Keep The Crows Nest summit a peaceful place, free of infrastructure, bikes, signage.	The existing track from the Skyline Track to the Crows Nest summit would be upgraded to make suitable for shared foot and bike riding use as far as the start of any downhill bike track. Any downhill bike track would start immediately northwest of The Crows Nest summit to maintain it primarily as a simple lookout.
<u>Extra track off The Crows Nest</u> Add an extra track from The Crows Nest area down into Silver Stream built to grade 4 standard as it would help divert riders out of Huntleigh Park.	This suggestion is not considered feasible without significant environmental and visual impact, given the difficulty already encountered in finding a possible grade 5/6 route down from The Crows Nest, which tend to have less immediate environmental impact because they require less earthwork and vegetation clearance.
<u>Silversky Track (existing shared use track)</u> The existing Silversky Track needs to be refurbished and made wider to resolve conflict in places where the track is narrow. Track 4 will put extra conflict on Silversky Track.	Both tracks 3 and 4 would join Silversky Track quite high up the Silversky Track, where some improvements could potentially be made because the contours are somewhat easier. Any useful improvements could be done as part of the of Track 3 construction.

Conclusion

Bearing in mind that most respondents identified biking as their main recreational activity, the feedback, overall, reflects strong support for the project, but with a mix of enthusiasm and concerns about trail grades, safety, environmental impact, and balancing the needs of different trail users.