



DRAFT TRAILS STRATEGY

PLANNING FOR OUR PEOPLE
OUR PLACE OUR FUTURE

Acknowledgments

Cessnock City Council Staff are thanked for their contributions into the development of this Strategy:

Peak body representatives, government agencies, neighbouring local government staff, members of local community groups and community members also contributed to the development of this document and are thanked for their time and contributions.

Cessnock City Council acknowledges that within its local government area boundaries are the Traditional Lands of the Wonnarua people, the Awabakal people and the Darkinjung people.

We acknowledge these Aboriginal peoples as the traditional custodians of the land, and pay our respects to Elders past and present. We also acknowledge all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who now live within the Cessnock Local Government Area

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00 Executive Summary

Cessnock City Council (CCC) engaged Tredwell Management to develop a Trails Strategy to provide a vision for the region's trails network, with a consistent policy framework to guide development and management of trails across the Local Government Area (LGA). The Strategy will enable Council to support healthy, active lifestyles and embrace opportunities for tourism and economic activity.

The key objective of the project is to provide a vision and consistent policy framework to guide the development and management of trails across the Cessnock LGA. The term 'trail' for the purpose of the Strategy includes unsealed pathways which are publicly accessible for active recreation.

The Cessnock LGA is part of the popular, fast growing, Hunter Valley Tourist Region with evolving tourism trends and target markets. The region is experiencing population growth and increasing cultural diversity, with existing high rates of physical inactivity and the associated health outcomes. Some areas of the LGA have relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, demonstrating the need for provision of active recreation opportunities which are accessible and free or low-cost.

Trail activities, such as walking, running/jogging, bushwalking and cycling are among the highest participation activities in New South Wales and this participation is expected to continue to grow in line with broader trends towards the growth of unstructured and adventure recreational activities.

Provision of high-quality trails offers a diverse range of benefits to communities including in the areas of health, transport, conservation, economy and cultural identity. Of particular relevance are examples from a number of Australia's world-class wine regions which are providing opportunities for visitors to explore the regions using bike trail networks.

Numerous studies have aimed to quantify the return on investment in trails. For example, a study in the United States found that for every US\$1 invested into trails, there was \$2.94 in direct public health benefit.

Best-practice trail planning is guided by the following 8-stage trail planning process involving proposal, framework, site assessment, concept development, corridor evaluation, detailed design and approvals, construction & management.

The desktop and on-ground trails audit identified that there are currently 8 formalised Council-managed recreational trails across the Cessnock LGA. These trails are in varying condition, with some being formalised, defined trails and others being informal routes providing opportunity for further development. The trails have been identified as 'Convent Hill Loop Trail' in Cessnock, the 'Abermain to Weston Link', 'Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail' in Weston, 'Kookaburra Trail' in Kurri Kurri, 'Kitchener Dam Loop Trail' in Kitchener, 'Wollombi Brook Nature Walk' in Wollombi, 'Wine Country Stroll' in Pokolbin and the 'Hunter River Nature Walk' in Greta.

Some towns also have urban walks which display local heritage, such as the Cessnock Heritage Walk, Wollombi Village Walk, or a specific theme, such as the Kurri Kurri Mural Walk. There is also an extensive network of national parks and state conservation areas within the LGA which provide recreational trails, and there are also trails within state forests.

Cross-regional trails are great assets to the region and include the Great North Walk, The Convict Trail and Tourist Drive 33. Current trail development projects include The Richmond Vale Rail Trail and 'The Precinct' Mountain Bike Park.

Key trail activity areas (informal use) are around the areas of Pit Horse Paddock in Richmond Vale, Abernethy informal trails, within the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) and the Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council Lands.

Rail corridors, Songlines and historic stock routes are strategic corridors across the LGA which may also present opportunities for future recreational trails.

Trail marketing and promotion are a key element of trail management, particularly to ensure that the appropriate level of trail information is provided to potential users, and that this information is kept up to date. There is currently no single comprehensive information source identifying trail opportunities across the Cessnock LGA.

Community and stakeholder consultation informed the development of the Trails Strategy through a series of consultation mechanisms including an online community survey, an internal stakeholder meeting, a key external stakeholder meeting, a community trails workshop and targeted stakeholder interviews.

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The following trail planning principles underpin the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy and the associated Strategy and Action Plan.

1. Ensure socially, economically and environmentally sustainable trail development and management.
2. Provide trails which are readily accessible, provide links between key destinations and promote active lifestyles.
3. Provide a diverse range of trail opportunities and encourage the broadest possible community participation.
4. Maximise use of existing trails where they are appropriately located and have the capacity to sustain additional use.
5. Manage trails professionally, effectively and equitably.
6. Provide safe trails through adherence to relevant legislative and activity safety requirements.
7. Ensure that universal design principles are embedded into trail design and development.
8. Maximise the opportunity to attract trail-related programs and events.
9. Encourage community involvement in the planning and design of trails.
10. Involve local Indigenous People in the planning, design & interpretation; of trails which have Aboriginal heritage values.
11. Support, promote and advocate for trail users in relation to relevant issues within the region.
12. Develop & maintain partnerships to provide trails and associated facilities.

The **VISION** for the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy is:

A high quality, integrated trails network that encourages considerate trail use, active lifestyles and showcases the region's distinct natural areas, Indigenous & European cultural heritage values, contributing to social, environmental and economic benefits.

In order to deliver the Vision, the following series of Strategic Outcomes have been developed:

A: Integrated Planning & Management

B: Sustainable & Accessible Trail Network

C: Increased Participation through Marketing and Programs

D: Development, Management and Maintenance

E: Community, Tourism & Economic Development

A strategic approach to the delivery of a trails network across the region is proposed, principally based around recognising areas that offer distinct trail opportunities across character zones. The five strategic zones identified are the Hunter Gateway Zone, the Wine Country Zone, the Heritage Zone, the Outdoor Adventure Zone and the Wilderness Zone.

A phased and prioritised Strategy and Action Plan has been prepared to guide the focus of Council and its partners towards the achievement of the trails network vision. Potential trail projects have been identified and broadly prioritised based on need/demand, feasibility, location and benefit.

Implementation of the Trails Strategy will include consultation with stakeholders and the wider community. Each action has an indicative timeframe (short, medium, longer) which should be reviewed periodically. Council will work with its partners towards implementation of the Trails Strategy, acknowledging that the schedule of implementation will be influenced by funding priorities.

Some actions will be reliant on the successful completion of other actions. Implementation will be staged as it is not feasible to deliver all of the identified trail projects at the same time.

The following indicative cost estimates are used:

| Cost | Estimated Cost Range |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Low (L) | <\$100,000 |
| Medium (M) | \$100,000 - \$500,000 |
| High (H) | >\$500,000 |

Collaboration will be required between Council and a variety of partners, noting that some of the identified actions may not be deliverable without such support. Partners include State Government, Local Land Councils, Hunter Region LGAs, Private Land Owners and groups and individuals in the Wider Community.

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Strategic Outcome A: Integrated Planning & Management

| Strategy A1: Focus on Existing Trails & Trail Development Projects | | Strategy A3: Trail Corridor Preservation Policy | |
|--|--------------------|---|--------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/Timeframe | Summarised Actions | Priority/Timeframe |
| A1.1 Upgrade and develop the existing Council-controlled trails. | Short | A3.1 Prepare & endorse a Council policy to preserve strategic corridors of land where there is potential for future trail projects. | Short |
| A1.2 Deliver new trail development projects across the LGA, | Longer | | |
| A1.3 Formalise, develop & enhance strategic linkages. | Ongoing | A3.2 Advocate for the public acquisition of land which has the potential to contribute to strategic trail projects into the future. | Ongoing |
| A1.4 Advocate for the enhancement of trails within National Parks, State Conservation Areas, State Forests & Crown land. | Ongoing | | |
| A1.5 Progress with the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. | Short | A3.3 Acknowledge the multi-faceted historical contexts behind strategic corridors & incorporate these into trail developments. | Ongoing |
| A1.6 Ensure that trail signage, mapping and information across the LGA is up-to-date. | Short | | |
| A1.7 Ensure that information for trails has coordinated branding & marketing approach. | Short | | |

| Strategy A2: Integrated Trail Planning Framework | | Strategy A4: Master Plans | |
|--|---------|--|--------|
| A2.1 Establish a Trails Reference Group. | Short | A4.1 Develop and implement a master plan for Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri. | Short |
| A2.2 Facilitate Trails Reference Group meetings | Ongoing | A4.2 Develop and implement a master plan for Bimbadeen Lookout. | Short |
| A2.3 Encourage, advocate and seek funding for a designated Trail Planning and Development Officer. | Ongoing | A4.3 Develop a master plan for the Richmond Main Precinct. | Longer |
| A2.4 Incorporate trail planning initiatives into broader community planning. | Ongoing | | |
| A2.5 Strengthen partnerships and cross-border collaboration with Councils across the Hunter Region | Ongoing | | |
| A2.6 Incorporate Indigenous, cultural, educational and heritage interests into trails | Ongoing | | |
| A2.7 Ensure that new trail and transport developments encourage active transport. | Ongoing | | |
| A2.8 Embrace opportunities for the trails network to build community awareness of the region's high biodiversity significance. | Ongoing | | |
| A2.9 Ensure that all of Council's trail developments adhere to applicable standards and integrate sustainable design principles. | Ongoing | | |
| A2.10 Review the scope of various Strategic Plans to ensure alignment and interconnectivity as they relate to similar topics, without duplication. | Medium | | |

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Strategic Outcome B: Sustainable & Accessible Trails Network

| Strategy B1: Key Trail Information Points | | Strategy B4: Convent Hill Loop Trail | |
|--|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe | Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| B1.1 Install a 'Primary Trailhead' sign at the Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre. | Medium | B4.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Convent Hill Loop Trail. | Short |
| B1.2 Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri. | Medium | B4.2 Establish trailhead infrastructure at Bridges Hill Park. | Short |
| B1.3 Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign at Bridges Hill, Cessnock. | Medium | B4.3 Install trailhead sign at the Millfield St / Yango St entrance. | Short |
| B1.4 Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign in the Wollombi Village Centre. | Medium | B4.4 Install signage in line with the site's <i>Playground & Access Improvement Project</i> . | Short |
| B1.5 Ensure consistency of trail information provided on maps and signs. | Ongoing | B4.5 Upgrade infrastructure in line with the <i>Playground & Access Improvement Project</i> . | Short |
| B1.6 Ensure that 'Key Trail Information' signs are designed to be regularly updated. | Ongoing | | |
| B1.7 Allocate appropriate resources for regular review & update of trail information. | Ongoing | | |

| Strategy B2: Richmond Vale Rail Trail | | Strategy B5: Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail | |
|--|--------|--|--------|
| B2.1 Continue with the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. | Short | B5.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant & representative name for this trail. Suggested: Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail. | Short |
| B2.2 Develop trailhead infrastructure at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri. | Medium | B5.2 Decommission the existing trailhead signage at Chinaman's Hollow. | Short |
| B2.3 Enhance existing trails and develop new trails from Log of Knowledge Park. | Short | B5.3 Establish new trailhead signage at Chinaman's Hollow. | Short |
| B2.4 Assess feasibility of linking Richmond Vale Train Junction and Richmond Main. | Medium | B5.4 Promote this trail as a Grade 1 Universal Access Trail. | Short |
| B2.5 Assess the feasibility of trails linking Log of Knowledge Park to other towns/ destinations across the LGA. | Medium | B5.5 Investigate options to extend the trail west to Date Ave, Weston. | Medium |

| Strategy B3: Connectivity between Cessnock & Kurri Kurri / Abermain to Weston Link | |
|---|--------|
| B3.1 Explore options and undertake works to enhance connectivity of the existing trail between Forbes St and Date Ave. | Short |
| B3.2 Investigate options to extend the trail east beyond Date Ave to Chinaman's Hollow/Maybury Peace Park, Weston. | Medium |
| B3.3 Investigate options to extend this trail east to Kurri Kurri and west to Cessnock, and to establish trailheads with appropriate signage at the start/end destinations. | Medium |
| B3.4 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Colliery Link Trail. | Medium |

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| Strategy B6: Kookaburra Trail | |
|---|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| B6.1 Maintain Kookaburra Trail as a key strategic link between Log of Knowledge Park and Lang Street. . | Short |
| B6.2 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Kookaburra Trail. | Short |
| B6.3 Work with local community/ organisations to clear rubbish from surrounding bushland areas. | Short |
| B6.4 Close unauthorised vehicle access points to the surrounding bushland areas. | Short |
| B6.5 Decommission the adjacent network of unauthorised tracks. | Short |
| B6.6 Improve the trail surface through landscaping/design. | Short |
| B6.7 Develop trailhead infrastructure at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri. | Medium |
| B6.8 Remove existing waymarker signage along the Kookaburra Trail and replace with modern waymarkers. | Medium |
| B6.9 Consider opportunities to include easy Technical Trail Features to enhance the appeal for beginner mountain bike riders. | Medium |

| Strategy B7: Kitchener Dam Loop Trail | |
|--|-------|
| B7.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Kitchener Dam Loop Trail. | Short |
| B7.2 Decommission the adjacent network of unauthorised tracks. | Short |
| B7.3 Establish new local-level trailhead signage at the car park . | Short |
| B7.4 Review existing waymarker signage and install new waymarkers where required. | Short |
| B7.5 Develop and install interpretation signage along the trail. | Short |
| B7.6 Work cooperatively with NPWS to maintain and upgrade infrastructure that is on park. | Short |

| Strategy B8: Wollombi Brook Nature Walk | |
|--|---------|
| B8.1 Continue to maintain and progressively improve the Wollombi Brook Nature Trail. | Ongoing |
| B8.2 Integrate the Wollombi Brook Nature Walk with a wider network of walk trails. | Short |

| Strategy B9: Wine Country Stroll | |
|--|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| B9.1 Determine the consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Wine Country Stroll. | Short |
| B9.2 Determine the most appropriate start/ end locations for the Wine Country Stroll. | Short |
| B9.3 Undertake a Road Safety Audit of the intersect of the bikeway & McDonalds Rd. | Short |
| B9.4 Establish new trailhead signage at the identified appropriate locations. | Short |
| B9.5 Review the location of existing waymarker signage and install upgraded/ new waymarkers where required. | Short |
| B9.6 Explore options and establish a wider network of recreational trails in this area, | Short |
| B9.7 Ensure provision of infrastructure in line with the <i>Recreation and Open Space Strategy</i> at Pokolbin Park and Rest Area. | Short |

| Strategy B10: Hunter River Nature Walk | |
|---|-------|
| B10.1 Determine the consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Hunter River Nature Walk. | Short |
| B10.2 Work with the local community/ organisations, including the recently established Landcare group, to clear rubbish from the Hunter River Nature Reserve. | Short |
| B10.3 Decommission the network of unauthorised tracks adjacent to the Hunter River Nature Walk with the objective of enhancing the trail experience and protecting the natural environment. | Short |
| B10.4 Improve the trail surface through landscaping and design to mitigate the effects of gully erosion along the trail. | Short |
| B10.5 Install new trailhead signage at the car park where the trail starts/ends outlining key trail information. | Short |
| B10.6 Install directional signage at the alternative car park directing to the trailhead. | Short |
| B10.7 Remove existing waymarker signage along the Hunter River Nature Walk and replace with modern waymarkers ensuring that trail alignment is clearly articulated. | Short |
| B10.8 Develop and install interpretation signage along the trail to integrate the site's interesting historical context. | Short |

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| Strategy B11: Cross-Regional Trails and Vehicle Touring Routes | | Strategy B13: Provision of Positive Trail Experiences | |
|---|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe | Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| B11.1 Encourage resolution of land ownership issues for the Great North Walk, particularly the Pokolbin Spur section. | Short | B13.1 Ensure that trail experiences are safe and shared-use zones are created. | Short |
| B11.2 Enhance the connectivity and consistency of the Great North Walk | Short | B13.2 Develop and promote a trail-user code of conduct for the trails network. | Short |
| B11.3 Determine the appropriate northern trailhead location for the Great North Walk. | Short | B13.3 Develop a program for removal of rubbish from bushland areas. | Short/ Ongoing |
| B11.4 Review and update existing cross-regional vehicle touring routes | Short | B13.4 Undertake a study for provision of suitable areas for trail bike riding & 4WD. | Medium |
| B11.5 Support the promotion of, and access for, the Cessnock Birding Routes | Short | B13.5 Promote authorised areas for trail bike riding and 4WD. | Short |
| B11.6 Develop a series of vehicle touring routes which showcase the region | Short | B13.6 Integrate the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design. | Ongoing |
| B11.7 Support concepts and embrace opportunities to link the Cessnock LGA to the Blue Mountains via a long-distance trail. | Longer | Strategy B14: Local Trails | |
| Strategy B12: Key Trail Activity Areas | | 14.1 Continue to support the concept of a mountain bike park within the LGA. | Short |
| B12.1 Formalise a network of cycle trails to showcase the region to tourists via bike. | Medium | B14.2* Enhance trail linkages in Branxton, utilising the existing pedestrian underpass. | Longer |
| B12.2 Support the use of the privately-owned Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) for authorised recreational uses. | Ongoing | B14.3* Formalise a recreational trail through Stanford Merthyr. | Longer |
| B12.3 Undertake an audit of the informal trails network at Pit Horse Paddock to identify future trail opportunities. | Medium | B14.4* Formalise a recreational trail from Log of Knowledge Park to Stanford Merthyr. | Longer |
| B12.4 Determine the most appropriate and complementary uses for the area surrounding the Abernethy Poppet Head and Dam, and formalise the trails network accordingly. | Medium | B14.5* Formalise an off-road cycling trail utilising the existing informal trail adjacent to Kearsley Road, from Lake Rd to Abernethy, | Longer |
| B12.5 Support the continued conservation of bushland areas which have high conservation value and consider opportunities to establish recreational trails. | Ongoing | B14.6* Create a loop trail utilising available corridors along creeks in urban areas, such as Black Creek & Bellbird Creek. | Longer |
| | | B14.7* Develop a local heritage trail in Cessnock if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer |
| | | B14.8* Develop a local heritage trail in Kurri Kurri if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer |
| | | B14.9 Continue to support the Wollombi community with management and promotion of the "Wollombi Village Heritage Walk". | Longer |
| | | B14.10* Develop a local heritage trail in Greta if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer |
| | | B14.11* Develop a local heritage trail in Branxton if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer |

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Strategic Outcome C: Participation, Promotion and Marketing

| Strategy C1: Programs & Events | | Strategy C2: Signage, Mapping & Information (Continued) | |
|--|------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe | Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| C1.1 Provide a supportive framework for trail-related programs/ events. | Ongoing | C2.6 Advocate for the appropriate budget/ resources to update trail information maps/ brochures and information sources on a regular basis (i.e. every 3 years or as required). | Ongoing |
| C1.2 Support regular & free fitness groups/ programs (e.g. Heart Foundation Walking Group, parkrun) utilising trails in the region. | Ongoing | | |
| C1.3 Host a calendar of events which encourages local residents to live active lifestyles and utilise trails. | Ongoing | C2.7 In line with the relevant signage strategies, update and enhance visitor information signage at key points across the LGA to include information about the region's Trails Network and other recreational opportunities. | Ongoing |
| C1.4 Encourage and promote the use of virtual challenges utilising apps/online platforms. | Ongoing | | |
| C1.5 Support healthy workplace programs. | Ongoing | | |
| C1.6 Investigate opportunities to expand current volunteer programs to promote local community involvement. | Ongoing | C2.8 Ensure Visitor Information Centre staff are comprehensively informed and regularly updated to provide accurate and updated trail information to visitors. | Ongoing |
| C1.7 Establish and maintain partnerships with neighbouring Councils and event organisers to link compatible destinations via cross-border programs and events. | Ongoing | | |
| C1.8 Work with event organisers to ensure the ongoing sustainability of programs & events occurring in the LGA. | Ongoing | C2.9 Investigate opportunities for the inclusion of Aboriginal language and histories in signage. | Short |

| Strategy C2: Signage, Mapping & Information | | Strategy C3: Promotion & Marketing | |
|---|-------------------|---|---------|
| C2.1 Identify suitable trails managed by other agencies to be promoted in Council's suite of trail information. | Ongoing | C3.1 Develop a coordinated approach to marketing Council's trails network through a Trails Marketing Strategy. | Short |
| C2.2 Ensure that all trail information sources use the correct Trail Classification System. | Ongoing | C3.2 Ensure that all trail signage is designed in alignment with the Council's Signage Strategies (2015). | Short |
| C2.3 Maintain the ground-truthed GIS data prepared as part of this Strategy to ensure that accurate GIS files remain available for the preparation of trail maps, and for use in management/planning. | Ongoing | C3.3 Develop a Trails Network logo for inclusion on all future trail signage . | Short |
| C2.4 Develop and maintain a website (or webpage hosted by Council) that provides comprehensive details of all trail opportunities within the region. | Short/ Ongoing | C3.4 Ensure that trail information signage is placed at strategic locations. | Short |
| C2.5 Develop a contemporary resource which details the best trails across the LGA. | Short | C3.5 Remove dysfunctional, damaged and illegible trail signage and replace with contemporary and appropriate signage. | Short |
| | | C3.6 Integrate the region's best and most distinct trail opportunities into packaged tours / day trips. | Short |
| | | C3.7 Encourage use of online interactive platforms for trail-related activities. | Ongoing |
| | | C3.8 Update and maintain information about existing trails within the Cessnock LGA on key third-party interactive online platforms. | Ongoing |

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Strategic Outcome D: Development, Management & Maintenance

| Strategy D1: Management Structures | |
|---|------------------------|
| Summarised Actions | Priority/ Timeframe |
| D1.1 Establish a Cessnock LGA Trails Reference Group. | Short |
| D1.2 Prepare a Trail Management Plan for each of Council's trails to ensure that all trail management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. | Short |
| D1.3 Based upon the roles outlined in Trail Management Plans [Action D1.2], ensure adequate trail maintenance schedules and procedures are defined, resourced and adhered to. | Short |
| D1.4 Develop a Management and Maintenance Manual as a guide for all trail managers, community and volunteers. | Short |
| D1.5 Engage proactively and collaboratively with partners in key trail development projects. | Short |

An ongoing commitment of funds and resources will be required to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. A range of funding options will need to be considered, together with the sourcing of potential grant programs.

Opportunities to form partnerships with other potential stakeholders will need to be sought where this would deliver synergies and successful outcomes assisting in the completion of the Action Plan.

Potential external funding sources are available through federal and state government programs which could support the development of trail projects. In addition to government funding programs, private and commercial sector opportunities may also be available.

The implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan should be continually monitored by Council staff, in collaboration with the Trails Reference Group, with annual reports to Council. The overall progress should be evaluated after five years, with amendments to the strategies, actions and supporting information as required.

Strategic Outcome E: Community, Tourism & Economic Development

| Strategy E1: Community & Economic Development | |
|---|---------|
| E1.1 Support the development of trail-related special events in the LGA. | Ongoing |
| E1.2 Encourage communities, townships and businesses connected to the existing/future trails network to become 'walker, bicycle and/or horse rider friendly'. | Ongoing |
| E1.3 Encourage businesses to promote, utilise and enhance trails and associated visitor experiences. | Ongoing |
| E1.4 Encourage trail managers and interest groups to share trail information. | Ongoing |
| E1.5 Support initiatives which accommodate cycle tourists on train and bus transport across the wider region. | Ongoing |
| E1.6 Support and encourage initiatives which promote both conservation and appreciation of the region's natural assets. | Ongoing |
| E1.7 Promote Aboriginal Tourism to people who live in and visit the Cessnock LGA. | Ongoing |

The establishment of a Trail Reference Group [Refer Action A2.5] will significantly support the successful implementation of the Strategy and ensure that initiatives are reflective of evolving Council, community and user group needs and aspirations.

01

Introduction



View from Hunter River Reserve, Greta

01 Introduction

Project Background and Scope

Cessnock City Council (CCC) engaged Tredwell Management to develop a Trails Strategy which will provide a vision for the region's trails network, with a consistent policy framework to guide development and management of trails across the Local Government Area (LGA).

The Strategy will enable Council to support active and healthy lifestyles and embrace opportunities for trail-related tourism and economic activity.

The Trails Strategy applies to the Cessnock LGA in its entirety, however, areas of significant interest which are a key focus include:

- Locations where the natural environment can be appreciated and leveraged to increase participation
- Locations where physical activity opportunities are limited within townships
- Locations that link users to recognisable sites
- Existing or potential inter-municipal and cross-border linkages.

The term 'trail' for the purpose of the Strategy includes unsealed pathways which are publicly accessible for active recreation. This includes fire trails, maintenance tracks, purpose built single and multi-use trails, identifiable trails which have developed over time and sealed recreational paths. The development of this Strategy has focused on the following types of trails:

- Walking/ running
- Mountain biking
- Horse riding
- All abilities access

While not the focus of the Strategy, some consideration has been given to recreational trails used by motorised vehicles (e.g. driving route trails, 4WD and motorbike areas) which may influence and/ or complement the recreational trails network.



KEY OBJECTIVE

Provide a Vision and consistent policy framework to guide the development and management of trails across the Cessnock Local Government Area

Project Approach



02

Context



View of Mt Yengo, Yengo National Park

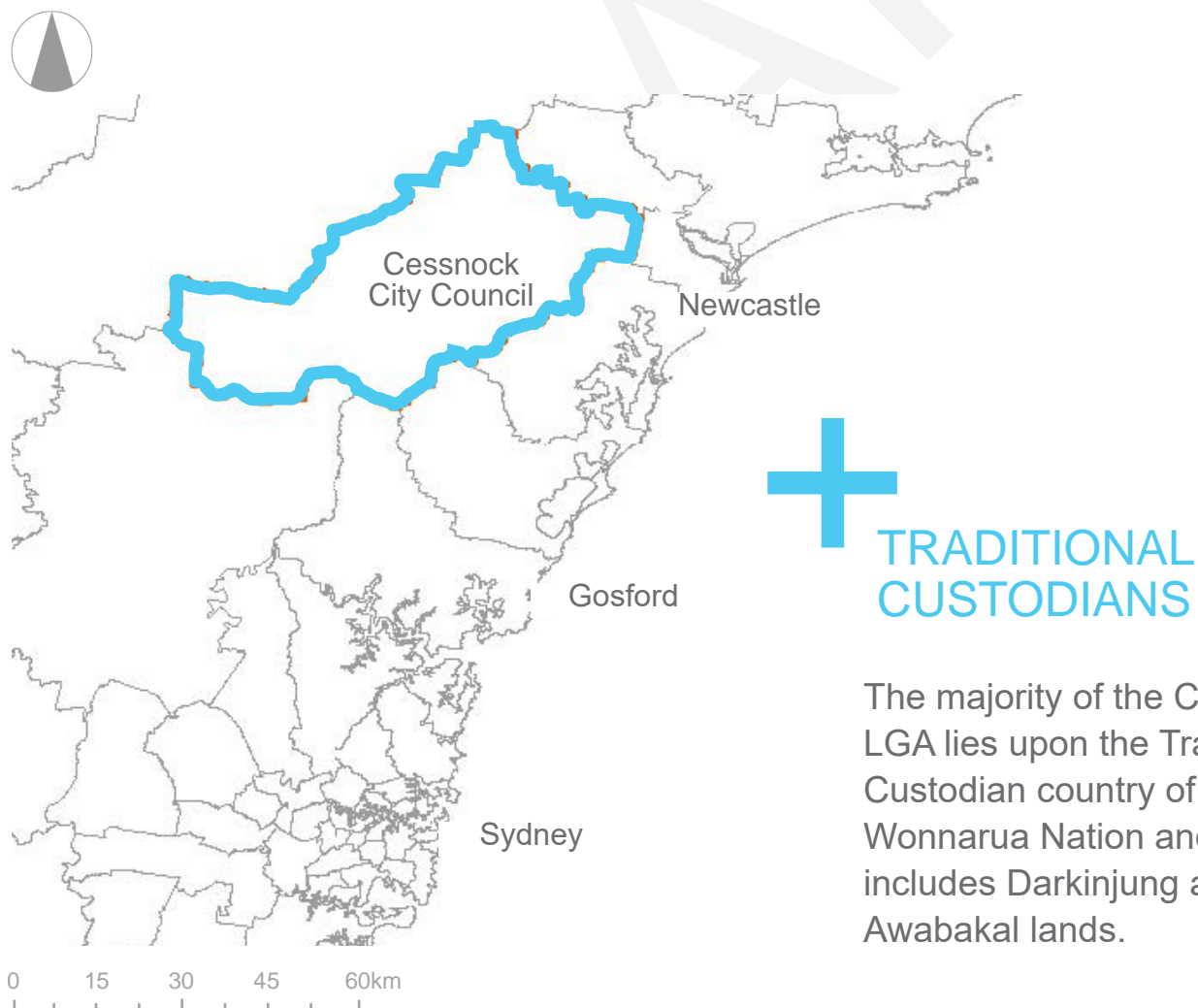
Overview of the Cessnock LGA

The Cessnock LGA is located in the Hunter Valley, New South Wales, about 120 kilometres north of Sydney and 40 kilometres west of Newcastle. The majority of the LGA lies upon the Traditional Custodian country of the Wonnarua Nation and includes Darkinjung and Awabakal lands.

The Cessnock LGA encompasses a total land area of 1,950 square kilometres, and shares boundaries with the LGAs of Maitland City, Newcastle City, Lake Macquarie City, Central Coast, Hawkesbury City and Singleton.

The Cessnock LGA is part of the broader tourism region of the Hunter Valley, one of Australia's best-known wine regions. Known as 'Wine Country', it is home to award-winning cellar doors and restaurants, fine food production and dining, and is also a major entertainment centre hosting major international acts in the vineyards.

The region includes outstanding National Parks and State Forests, including Watagans National Park, Werakata State Conservation Area and Yengo National Park. Mount Yengo, located in Yengo National Park, is of high significance to Aboriginal peoples. It is the place from where Baiame jumped to return to the spirit world after he had created the lakes, rivers, mountains and caves in the area. When Baiame jumped towards the sky, he flattened the top of Mount Yengo, this flat top can still be seen today.



TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

The majority of the Cessnock LGA lies upon the Traditional Custodian country of the Wonnarua Nation and includes Darkinjung and Awabakal lands.

Literature Review

A wide range of strategic documents and policy positions are relevant to the development of the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy.

An important component in the development of the Trail Strategy is the review of a wide range of background information to ensure that the Trails Strategy is developed in alignment with the wider objectives across the state, region and local areas.

The following documents have been reviewed for consideration in the development of the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy:

State-level Documents

- *State Plan - NSW 2021*
- *Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks (2012)*
- *NSW Sustainable Mountain Bike Strategy (2011)*
- *NSW Walking Strategy Literature Review (2011)*

Regional-level Documents

- *Hunter Regional Plan 2016 - 2036*
- *Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036*
- *Hunter Valley Visitor Economy Destination Management Plan (2013)*
- *Hunter Regional Transport Plan (2014)*
- *Plans of Management: Parks & Protected Areas*

Cessnock City Council Documents

- *Community Strategic Plan 2017 to 2027*
- *Recreation & Open Space Strategic Plan (2018)*
- *Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan (2016)*
- *Cycling Strategy (2016)*
- *Economic Development Strategy (2014)*
- *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 - 2020*
- *Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 - 2021*
- *Health & Wellbeing Plan 2017 - 2021*

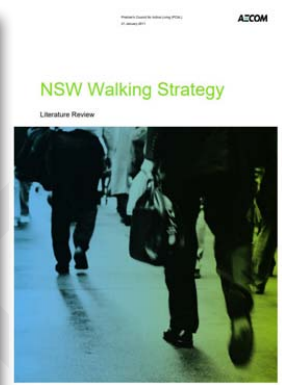
Key visions, strategies and policies relevant to the development and management of trails within the Cessnock LGA have been identified and outlined in Appendix A: Literature Review.



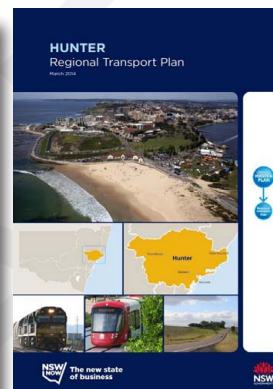
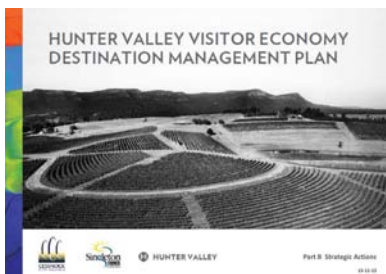
It is important to ensure that the Trails Strategy is developed in alignment with the wider objectives across the state, region & local areas.

02 Context

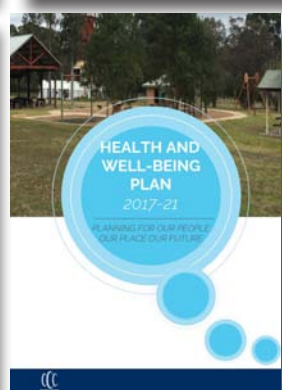
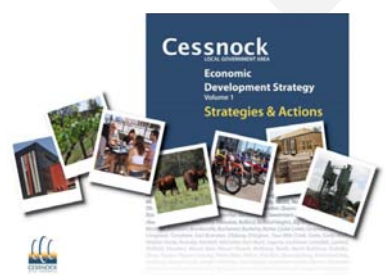
State



Regional



Local



Legislative Context

Key legislation which influences the development of trails is outlined below with an overview of the purpose, requirements and the regulator.

| Legislation | Overview of Purpose | Key Requirements | Regulator |
|---|--|---|---|
| <i>Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999</i> (Commonwealth) | To protect matters of national environmental significance (MNES). E.g.: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critically Endangered: Regent Honeyeater Endangered Ecological Communities (EEC). | Any disturbance to MNES requires approval. | Commonwealth Department of the Environment and Energy |
| <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> (NSW) | To maintain a healthy, productive and resilient environment for the greatest well-being of the community, now and into the future, consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. | Process is dependent on purpose, nature, location & extent of vegetation clearing. May include development consent, native vegetation and/or preparation of a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report. | NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment |
| <i>Crown Land Management Act 2016</i> (NSW) | To regulates the governance of Crown reserves to facilitate decision making about the future use of Crown land with consideration of environmental, social, cultural heritage and economic factors. | The Act authorises councils to manage Crown land as if it were public land under the <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> (LG Act) with the default classification of 'community land'. | NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment |
| <i>Local Government Act 1993</i> and <i>Local Government Amendment (Governance and Planning) Act 2016</i> (NSW) | To provide the legal framework for the NSW system of local government; to set out the responsibilities and powers of councils; to facilitate community engagement. | All Council actions must be in accordance with the Local Government Act 1993 and subsequent amendments and regulations. This outlines Councils powers relating to community land. | NSW Office of Local Government |
| <i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979</i> (Part 5) (NSW) | To ensure public authorities fully consider environmental issues when undertaking or approving activities that do not require development consent. | If activities are likely to significantly affect the environment, a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) will need to be submitted. | NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment |
| <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i> and <i>Threatened Species Conservation Amendment Act 2002</i> (NSW) | To conserve biological diversity and promote ecologically sustainable development. | An 'assessment of significance' is required to identify potential impacts on listed species, populations of ecological communities. Further consideration through a 'species impact statement'. | NSW Office of Environment and Heritage |

Local Trail Usage

A key component of consultation for the Trails Strategy was a survey of the local community to determine current usage, interests and perceptions as they relate to trails in the LGA. 195 community members responded to the online survey.

A snapshot of the survey engagement and findings is provided here, with details provided in Appendix C: Consultation Outcomes.

Respondent Profile

Gender: (46 did not disclose)

| | |
|--------|----|
| Female | 75 |
| Male | 74 |

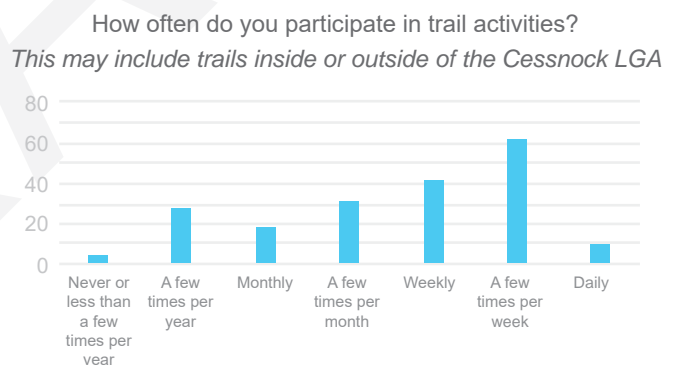
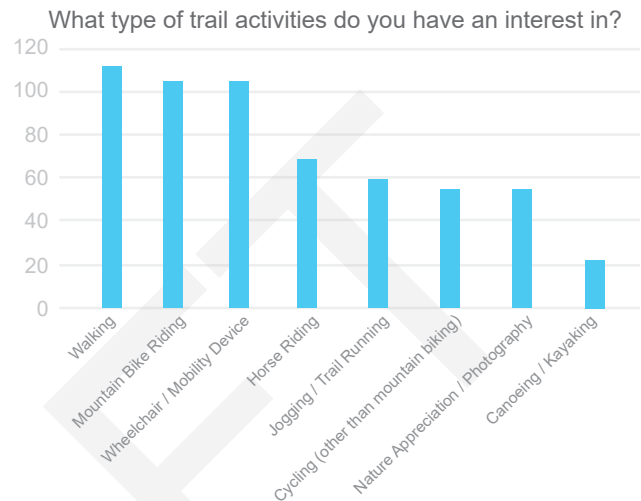
Age: (46 did not disclose)

| | |
|---------------|----|
| 35-50 years | 66 |
| 51-64 years | 53 |
| 65 years+ | 17 |
| 25 - 34 years | 11 |
| 19 - 24 years | 2 |

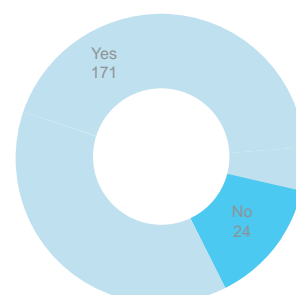
Location: (49 did not disclose)

| | |
|--------------|----|
| Cessnock | 19 |
| Kurri Kurri | 9 |
| Heddon Greta | 8 |
| Mt Vincent | 7 |
| Congewai | 6 |
| Pokolbin | 5 |

Trail Usage



Have you used a trail in the past 12 months?
This may include trails inside or outside of the Cessnock LGA



Community Profile

In order to effectively plan for a strategic trails network, an understanding is required of the defining characteristics of the Cessnock region and likely future directions for trail planning.

A series of indicators are outlined here to help identify potential implications for trail planning in the Cessnock LGA. Data has been sourced from:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census
- Public Health Information Development (2015)
- Hunter Visitor Profile - Year Ending March 2019

+ SNAPSHOT

59,101 people

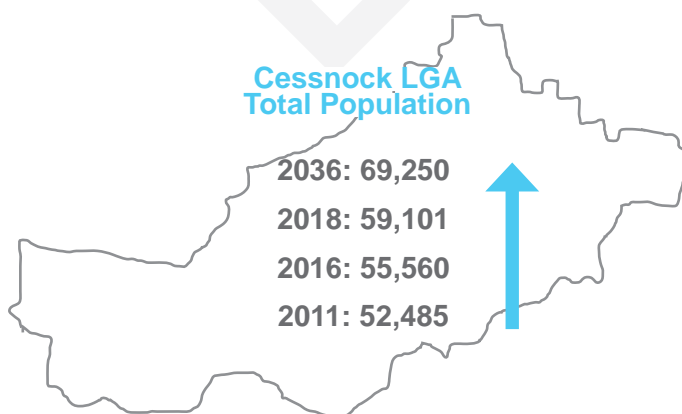
1,996 km² land area

Growing volunteer base

High 'health risks' rating

Varied levels of disadvantage

#1 region for domestic day trips



Resident Population

- Resident population of 59,101 (2018) across a geographic area of 1,996 km².
- 28.2% of households are couples with children, compared with 25.4% in Regional NSW.
- Largest ancestries: Australian, English & Scottish.
- Major differences between the age structure of the Cessnock LGA and Regional NSW:
 - A larger percentage of 'Young workforce' (12.9% compared to 11.0%).
 - A smaller percentage of 'Seniors' (8.7% compared to 11.4%).
 - A smaller percentage of 'Empty nesters and retirees' (12.0% compared to 13.1%).
 - A smaller percentage of 'Older workers & pre-retirees' (12.8% compared to 13.8%).

Tourism/Visitor Economy

Cessnock is part of the popular, fast growing, Hunter Valley Tourist Region which is currently Regional NSW's number 1 region for domestic day trips and number 2 region for domestic overnight visitors.

2018 visitor numbers for the Hunter region noted:

- 7.9 million domestic day trip visitors (up 21.5% on the previous year) who spent \$857 million (up 17%). The average spend per visitor was \$108.
- 4.2 million domestic overnight visitors (up 10% on the previous year) who stayed 11.3 million nights (up 20.1%) and spent \$1.8 billion (down 2.5%).
- The average length of stay in the region was 2.7 nights and the majority of visitors came to the region for the purpose of a Holiday (42%), followed by visiting friends and relatives (38%).
- Sydney was the largest source market (47%), followed by Regional NSW (37%). Visitors from interstate accounted for 16% of the region's visitors and business.
- 26% of the domestic overnight visitors were aged 15-29 years, followed by 30-39 years old (18%), 50-59 years old (16%), 40-49 years old (16%) and 60-69 years old (15%).
- Tourism is a growing industry in the Hunter Valley. Between 2014 and 2019, domestic day trippers have increased by 52.1% and overnight visitors have increased by 49.4%.

Key community indicators and their implications on trail planning

| Indicator | Implication on trail planning |
|--|--|
| High rates of physical inactivity & obesity Cessnock has higher rates of obesity, physical inactivity, smoking & alcohol consumption when compared to the state average, as well as higher incidence of hospitalisation due to diabetes, coronary heart disease & chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (2013). 32.3% of adults are noted to be obese, compared to the state's average of 26.4% (2015). | There is an increasing need to provide accessible and affordable physical activity opportunities across the LGA to encourage regular exercise and healthy lifestyle habits. Trails can contribute to health outcomes through providing both active recreational opportunities & active transport routes. |
| Evolving tourism trends and target markets The <i>Hunter Valley Wine Country Destination Management Plan</i> (2014), covering Cessnock and Singleton LGAs, encourages the region to extend its visitor experiences in the areas of nature, soft adventure, golf/sport, culture & heritage. | Residents and businesses in the region can benefit from income generated from trail-related tourists. Higher quality and quantity of trails & associated infrastructure can help to capitalise on these opportunities. Provision and promotion of trail networks and events will attract more visitors and encourage travellers to stay in the area for longer. |
| Community leadership & volunteerism The 2016 Census found that 13.8% of residents in the Cessnock LGA had engaged in volunteer work within the prior year. This rate increased from 12.5% in 2011. | Many trail projects are dependent on local community leadership & volunteer efforts which are recognised as invaluable resources. It is imperative that volunteers and community groups are effectively supported, recognised & valued in their roles so that they can continually contribute to the trails network across the LGA. |
| Recent population growth & change Between the 2011 & 2016 Census', the LGA's population increased from 52,486 to 56,720 representing an increase 9.3%, at an average annual rate of 1.7%. The median age increased from 37 to 38, with a population age structure with slightly more younger (<19 years) and older (>55 years) residents than the rest of NSW. | It is essential that the trails network can support the experienced population growth and demand for such facilities. Participation trends and preferences vary across age groups and life stages, particularly among younger and older populations. It is important that recreation opportunities are relevant to the population and target user-groups. |
| Projected population growth The <i>Hunter Regional Plan 2036</i> identifies that the Cessnock LGA's population is forecast to grow by more than 13,000 people, to reach more than 69,000 residents by the year 2036. | It is important that planning initiatives are long-sighted and will support the region to thrive with larger and denser populations. For example, the preservation of natural areas and trail corridors now will provide opportunities for future populations. |
| Cultural diversity In 2016, 6.3% of people in the Cessnock LGA were born overseas, this is projected to increase as the population grows. This rate is lower than the rest of regional NSW (11.2%) and significantly lower than the average across Australia, where 26.3% of people were born overseas. | It is important that opportunities offered across the region cater for people from different cultural backgrounds to ensure that visitors and new residents from culturally diverse background can enjoy trail-based activities, and that these experiences are welcoming to those with limited experiences in Australia's natural areas. |
| Levels of disadvantage The Cessnock LGA has a relatively high level of socio-economic disadvantage with a SEIFA Index score of 925, (compared to 971 across Regional NSW). The levels of disadvantage vary significantly across areas of the LGA, with Allandale/Lovedale/Pokolbin/Mount View having the lowest level of disadvantage (SEIFA index score of (1,093) while Cessnock North/East had the highest level of disadvantage (855). | Trails provide free physical activity and recreation opportunities to the community, encourage community involvement and participation in physical activity and encourage connections with nature. It is important that trails are promoted as a free physical activity and are accessible to people across the region regardless of their level of socio-economic disadvantage. |

Demand and Trends

Understanding the rates of participation in trail-related activities and trends which are likely to influence this allows for the development of a forward-thinking Trails Strategy which can effectively plan for the future.

A series of indicators and trends are outlined here to help identify potential implications for trail planning in the Cessnock LGA. Key information sources are:

- *AusPlay Participation Survey* for NSW, Sport Australia, January 2018
- *The Future of Australian Sport*, CSIRO, 2013.

Participation Rates

The latest release of AusPlay Participation Data outlines that walking (recreational) is the most popular sport/physical activity among NSW adults with an estimated 2,839,600 people (44.2% of the population) participating at least once between January 2018 and December 2018. Athletics (including jogging and running), cycling and bush walking also featured among the 10 most popular sports/physical activities. The table below displays this data with the corresponding participation rates.

| | Activity | NSW Adult Participation Rate | Estimate ('000) |
|----|------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Walking (recreational) | 44.2% | 2839.6 |
| 2 | Fitness / Gym | 35.4% | 2276.0 |
| 3 | Swimming | 18% | 1159.2 |
| 4 | Athletics* | 14.7% | 944.2 |
| 5 | Cycling | 9.9% | 637.2 |
| 6 | Football (soccer) | 6.3% | 402.6 |
| 7 | Bush walking | 5.9% | 380.3 |
| 8 | Yoga | 5.6% | 358.9 |
| 9 | Golf | 5.1% | 325.5 |
| 10 | Tennis | 4.9% | 316.8 |

*Includes jogging & running)



KEY TREND

As we become increasingly time poor, sport and recreation is being tailored to meet personal needs. This is largely being influenced by the increased use of online tools and applications to individualise sport. Health, rather than competition, is becoming a major driver for participation in physical activity.

Key Trends and Implications on Trail Planning

| Trend | Implication on trail planning |
|---|---|
| Changing participation preferences Increasingly busy, time fragmented lifestyles mean people are increasingly becoming involved in individualised recreational activities rather than traditional, structured sports. Trail activities can generally occur at any time, individually or in groups. | Individualised recreational pursuits, such as walking, cycling and horse riding, can expect to experience significant increases in participation levels over coming years. It is important to ensure that infrastructure for such activities can cater for demand. |
| Inactivity and obesity Inactivity is the fourth largest cause of non-communicable disease in Australia. Inactivity in children is growing, linked to a decline in physical activity in schools, less active commuting & changing behaviours. | Provision of active recreation facilities and services is a role of all levels of government which is becoming increasingly acknowledged and valued in the community. It is important that investment is well planned for maximum community participation. |
| Technology advancements – web-based systems Recreation and physical activities are being transformed by technology. For example, social technologies have created online communities (e.g. Strava) and fitness tracking technologies (e.g. Fitbit). | Competitive levels of trail-based activities no longer require a formalised event structure. Competitions can be held on virtual platforms, allowing trail users to compete against themselves and the times/skills of other, based on GPS enabled apps. |
| Technology advancements – user-generated content Online trail information is becoming increasingly accessible via user generated platforms (e.g. Trailforks, WildWalks). | While this can be an excellent initiative, it is important that these online platforms are developed and maintained in collaboration and partnership with trail managers to ensure accuracy of information, particularly to ensure that unauthorised trails are not promoted. |
| Technology advancements – E-bikes Bikes, and the ways people use them, are changing rapidly as technology advances. The latest electric bikes (e-bikes) can generate tremendous power, in either pedal-assist or direct-drive modes. | E-bikes make cycling more accessible to newer and less capable riders and increase the ride duration for more experienced riders. This is likely to increase rates of participation and trail usage. It is important for trail managers how E-bikes might affect trail infrastructure, access, other trail users and the environment. |
| Screen time over nature time Through technology advancements and increased wealth, children and adults are offered an increasingly diverse range of recreational activities. It has been reported that there is a 'nature deficit', where people are spending more time on screens rather than in nature. | There is an identified need to encourage people to 'get back to nature' through encouraging recreational activities in natural areas. It is particularly important for young people to experience nature, as this is known to be a key factor in the encouragement of environmental stewardship throughout later stages of their lives. |
| High facility standards and community expectations Today's society places high expectations upon community facilities including community recreational infrastructure and there are increasing standards for public safety and risk mitigation. | There is increasing pressure to provide high quality facilities which meet community expectations and are compliant with standards such as risk management and environmental management measures. Trail managers are required to exercise due diligence relating to trail planning, maintenance and management. |
| Leveraging from sport and recreation Governments at all levels and companies are increasingly utilising sport and recreation to achieve policy objectives. Sport and recreation are increasingly incorporated to tackle a range of issues such as childhood obesity and social inclusion. | Trails can be used as a tool to engage wider sectors of the community. Programs involving trail-based activities can stimulate interest in topics such as active lifestyles & protection of natural areas. These opportunities should not be looked at in isolation, particularly when objectives of such initiatives can support each other. |

Benefits of Trails

Recreational trails offer a diverse range of benefits to communities. These trail benefits are clearly apparent when aligned to the existing trail network within the Cessnock LGA.

Health

Improved physical and mental well-being.

Example: The Convent Hill Loop Trail offers residents and visitors the opportunity to engage in physical activity by walking up Convent Hill and through Bridges Hill Park utilising outdoor fitness equipment.

Transport

Practical transportation corridors.

Example: The Richmond Vale Rail Trail will provide a key active transport link from Hexham to Kurri Kurri.

Conservation

Preservation of natural areas.

Example: The Wollombi Brook Nature Walk is being regenerated by Wollombi Valley Landcare. The trail provides an opportunity for appreciation of the natural area while having minimal environmental impact.

Economy

Positive economic drivers.

Example: The Hunter Valley offers the famous Wine Country, iconic National Parks and much more. Providing and promoting quality trails within towns and parks encourages visitors to stay longer.

Cultural Identity

Access and awareness of historical & cultural features, including Indigenous culture.

Trails provide the opportunity to showcase Indigenous connections to country and associated stories.

Sites such as the Poppet Head Heritage Park at Kitchener showcase significant parts of the region's history, this can be elaborated upon through enhancements to interpretation along the Kitchener Dam Loop Trail.

Wine Region Trail Networks

Wine regions across Australia and the world are embracing the growing sector of trail tourism and taking opportunities to showcase their region and associated businesses through trail networks.

While the Hunter Valley Wine Region does have a number of trails, it does not currently have a coordinated trails network to draw visitors. Some of the best trail examples from Australia's world-class wine regions are outlined below.

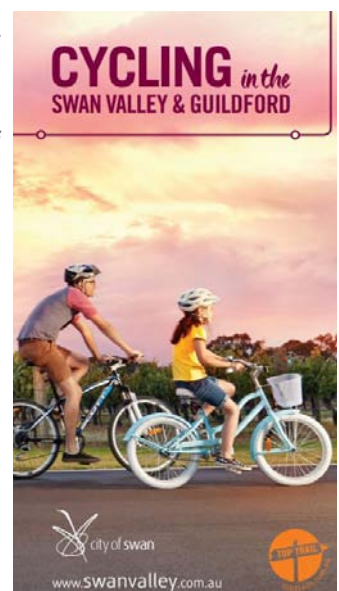
The Riesling Trail, Clare Valley, SA

The Riesling Trail is a 35km multi-use trail which follows the gentle contours of a former railway line through the pastoral heart of South Australia's Clare Valley. This well-marked route two hours north of the state capital of Adelaide has a number of storyboards alongside the trail that help unravel the history of the rail line, the landscape and the Ngadjuri people who have called it home for thousands of years.



Swan Valley Heritage Cycle Trail, WA

The Swan Valley Heritage Cycle Trail is made up of three routes, 4km, 30km or 32km, and follows a shared-use path that is suitable for riders of all ages and fitness levels. A series of signs interpret the rich history, interesting characters and natural elements of the region.



Return on Investment in Trails

High quality trails and associated activities support public health priorities and the development of nature/adventure-based tourism, resulting in a positive economic impact.

A number of studies have aimed to quantify the return on investment in trails. Through various quantitative methods, the following studies have identified the potential for high quality trails to bring significant tourism and public health benefits.

Case Studies: Return on Investment

The Riesling Trail, Clare Valley, South Australia

A *Trails Research Report* (2004) determined that the Riesling Trail (a 35km rail trail) contributed an estimated \$1.08 million per year to the local economy, with an average of \$216 per person per visit to the region. The majority of this economic activity was generated through shopping, accommodation and food/drink expenditure.

Bike/Pedestrian Trails, Nebraska, United States

A *Cost-Benefit Analysis of Physical Activity Using Bike/Pedestrian Trails* (2004) from the United States concluded that trail development is an effective investment to reduce health care costs associated with inactivity. The study found that every US\$1 investment in trails for physical activity led to US\$2.94 in direct public health benefit.

The Bibbulman Track, Western Australia

The *Bibbulman Track User Survey Report* (2015) estimated that the average user daily expenditure per person per day is \$38.71, with overnight walkers spending more than day walkers. The average total direct expenditure was estimated at \$13.1 million per year.

Murray to Mountains Rail Trail, Victoria

A *Longitudinal Study of the Murray to Mountains Rail Trail* (2009) found that average direct expenditure was \$244 per person per day on the trail over the Easter period. The majority of this expenditure is on food and beverages at venues such as the café shown in the figure below. These research findings demonstrate that cycle tourists are high yield visitors, regularly exceeding expenditure in regional areas of other visitors.



Rail Trail Cafe, Porepunkah, VIC

+ RETURN ON INVESTMENT

A study in the United States found that for every US\$1 invested into trails, there was US\$2.94 in direct public health benefit.

A photograph of a dirt trail winding through a forest. Sunlight filters through the trees, creating a dappled light effect on the ground and foliage. The trail is surrounded by green grass and various plants. The background shows more trees and a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a lens flare effect.

03

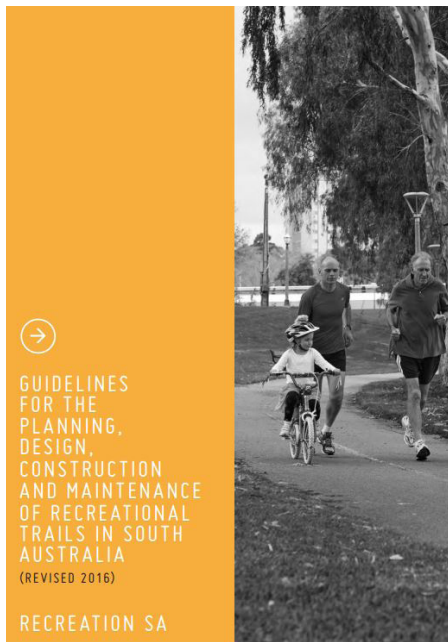
Trail Planning & Governance

Wollombi Brook Nature Walk

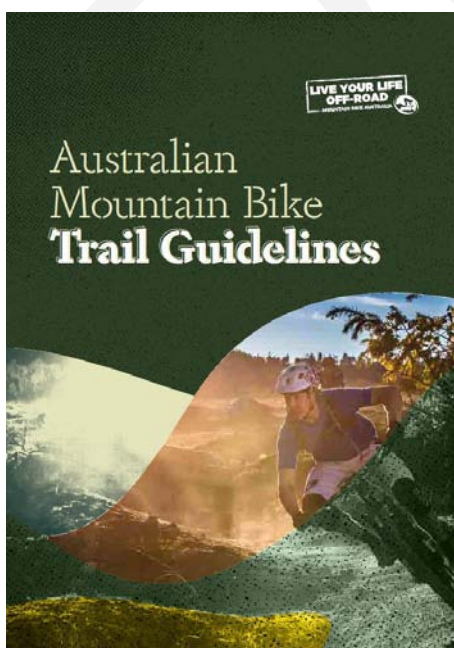
03 Trail Planning & Governance

Best-Practice Trail Guidelines

The publication *Sustainable Recreation Trails Guidelines* (2016) provides guidelines for the planning, design, construction and maintenance of recreational trails.



The *Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines* (2019) provide for a consistent approach to planning, designing, constructing and managing sustainable mountain bike trails across Australia. They support trails which align with landholder & rider expectations & minimise environmental impacts.



As highlighted in the *Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines* (2019), it is important to develop *the right trail, in the right area, the right way and for the right reasons*.

It is acknowledged that the word sustainable may mean different outcomes from different perspectives, such as: trail user sustainability, social sustainability, economic sustainability, environmental sustainability, management resources, and land use.

Sustainable trails:

- It is fundamentally important that recreational trails are socially, economically and environmentally sustainable.
- It is vital that high quality recreational trail experiences are developed in landscapes that can support such activities.
- Natural areas can be enhanced through the development of sustainable trails which protect biodiversity and raise environmental awareness.
- Community wellbeing can be enhanced through well-designed and managed trails which improve access & support physical activity.

Accessible trails:

- Accessibility is determined by:
 - Proximity to populations / visitor attractions
 - Proximity to transport facilities (i.e. roads)
 - Existing or proposed linkages to other trails
 - Presence of existing trail support facilities
 - Nature of the terrain and landforms
 - Access for emergency vehicles

SUSTAINABLE TRAILS

It is important to develop *the right trail, in the right area, the right way and for the right reasons*.

03 Trail Planning & Governance

8 Stage Trail Planning Process

The following 8 stage trail planning process is regarded across Australia as best-practice and has been outlined in various trail planning guidelines.

While it can be broadly applied to most trail planning projects including upgrades and formalisation of informal trails, each step is specifically relevant to the development of trails in new trail corridors.

1 Proposal

The proposed area is either supported in principle for trail development, or is not supported due to environmental, social or cultural constraints. Or the proposal may identify suitable areas.

2 Framework

A project outline is developed by the project steering group (stakeholders), including: project objectives, project management model, stakeholder roles, target market, requirements, standards, execution, and ongoing trail management model.

3 Site Assessment

A broad scale study of the area is undertaken which identifies constraints, soil types, vegetation etc.

4 Concept Planning

Opportunities are identified and conceptual trail plan is prepared including infrastructure requirements. Broad trail corridors are physically flagged in the field.

5 Corridor Evaluation

Detailed assessment of trail corridor.

6 Detailed Design & Approvals

Detailed trail design is produced and physically flagged in the field, including: trail classifications, technical trail features, construction types and specifications. Planning for the use of Sustainable Trail Building Techniques to mitigate potential environmental impacts.

Approval processes may include: environmental approvals (refer Legislative Context in Section 02), Development Application (DA), Construction Certificate (CC), and/or Complying Development Certificate (CDC). Where works are proposed within a road reserve, formal approval must be obtained as required under Section 138 of the *Roads Act 1993*.

7 Construction

Trail is constructed in line with the detailed design.

8 Management

The Trail Management Plan is implemented detailing maintenance and monitoring requirements.

03 Trail Planning & Governance

Trail Naming Conventions

Trail names play an important role in facilitating:

- Visitors to identify and understand the nature of the trail
- Management to promote and maintain the trail
- Emergency services to access the trail and identify specific locations

Trail names are to be determined by the land manager with respect to the following considerations:

Consistency

Trail naming should be consistently approached throughout the network. A trail's name needs to be clearly determined to prevent confusion for management and users. For example, the trail linking Aberdare and Weston does not have a clearly identified name. For the purposes of this Strategy it has been referred to as the 'Aberdare to Weston Link'. It is likely that this route has a number of colloquial names.

Relevancy

A trail's name should reflect the distinct natural and/or cultural features of the trail. Interpretive signage may be used to reinforce the relevance of the trail's name whilst educating users. For example, the name 'Wine Country Stroll' demonstrates that the trail will showcase features associated with the wine region.

Representation

Trail names can be used to represent basic information about the trail such as location, key features and characteristics. Non-representative trail names can be misleading. For example, it would be reasonable for potential trail users to expect that 'Kookaburra Walk' is not suitable for bike riders, however, this is not the case. Renaming the trail as 'Kookaburra Trail' would be more representative.

An example of a representative trail name is the 'Hunter River Nature Walk'. This demonstrates to users that one of the key trail features is the Hunter River, and the fact that the trail is suitable for walkers only (not bike or horse riders).

A series of definitions are provided in *Appendix B: Trail Names & Signage* to assist in the determination of trail names which are consistent, relevant and representative to support trail promotion.

Signage Considerations

The *Cessnock LGA Signage Strategy* (2015) and the *Hunter Valley Wine Country Signage Strategy* (2015) outline the relevant hierarchies, locations and styles for signage across the LGA and Wine Country region. It is important that signage styles for trails align with the relevant signage strategies.

Key elements for consideration when developing signage for recreational trails are outlined below:

- **Adherence to Recognised Standards**

Information conveyed will comply with recognised Australian standards, thereby ensuring a high quality and safe experience for all trail users.

- **Consistency and Uniformity**

All signs will conform to accepted standards and will maintain a consistent theme along the entire trail.

- **Quality Information**

Quality on-trail information is provided as well as brochures and mapping. It is important that users are confident in the information provided.

- **Location**

Design and placement of signs is determined with consideration to the user's approach speed, impact on the scenic amenity and ability to be seen without obstruction of trees etc.

- **Visually Attractive and Simple**

Signs are visually attractive, easy to comprehend and suitable to the natural surroundings.

- **Materials**

Signs are designed to be resistant to factors such as vandalism and extreme weather events.

There are a range of different types of recreational trail signage. These can be classified into the following:

1. Trailhead
2. Waymarking
3. Directional
4. Interpretive
5. Management/warning

The requirements of each of these types of recreational trail sign are outlined in *Appendix B: Trail Names & Signage*.

03 Trail Planning & Governance

Governance & Management

Trails across the Cessnock LGA are subject to management by a variety of trail managers, with some being a collaborative effort between a public authority & a community group. For example, the Wollombi Brook Nature Trail is an example of a successful partnership with a community group (Wollombi Valley Landcare) who advocate for & manage some elements of the trail. Some other trails across the LGA are located in National Parks, State Conservation Areas or State Forests. In some cases, a trail can traverse multiple land tenures and be managed by an overarching body, such is the case with the Great North Walk which is managed by the NSW Government (Crown Lands).

As trail development, management and maintenance is often a collaborative effort, it is important that a clear governance model is established to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the trails network. An important step in this process is to identify the partners involved and clearly define the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder. Key partners for the Cessnock City Council Trails Network are identified in the Strategy & Action Plan. With so many potential partners it is important to clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of each party and to establish and agree upon appropriate service levels.

The Management Plan of each trail needs to identify partners in management and/or maintenance and clearly define roles and responsibilities. This could be agreed upon through a Memorandum of Understanding, a formal partnership agreement or a trail licensing agreement through Council which can assist landowners to manage risk and liability.

Key considerations for trail governance:

- Trail management
 - Legal responsibility for trail maintenance
 - Trail user compliance
 - Management of funds and funding applications
 - Community consultation
- Trail maintenance
 - Maintenance coordination
 - Mowing and vegetation management
 - Conservation and invasive species management
 - Infrastructure repairs/replacement
 - Management/maintenance of tools and machinery
 - Rubbish collection
 - Maintenance/cleaning of amenities
- Risk management
 - Hazard identification
 - Maintenance of safety/warning signage
 - Hazard control measures (e.g. fallen trees, erosion hazards)
- Promotion & marketing
 - Information collation
 - Map creation
 - Brochure design and updates
 - Website design and updates
 - Social media updates and regular activity
 - Promotional material approval
 - Brochure distribution
 - Contributions to external online platforms



ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

It is important to clearly identify roles & responsibilities and to establish agreed appropriate service levels.

03 Trail Planning & Governance

An effective management model may include the establishment of a Trail Management Committee working with local government or other public authorities under a Memorandum of Understanding for management of the trail.

The roles and responsibilities of such a Committee could include:

- Strategic management of the trail and its ongoing development.
- Development and implementation of relevant planning and policy governing the trails operation.
- Ensuring standardisation of the trail.
- Advocacy and submission to Council and other external organisations for budgeting and external funding for future development, operation and marketing of the trail.
- Ensure the quality of the trail and its facilities are maintained to the agreed service level.
- Aid in the development process of the trail.
- Operate within and be accountable for approved budgets.

Case Study: Rotorua Trails Trust, NZ



The Rotorua Trails Trust works to enhance the value of existing trails in the region by linking them together and improving them, for multi-use where possible.

This includes better links with trails in the surrounding districts and with national networks. The trust works with various landowners and stakeholders including Councils, Government agencies, recreational and environmental groups.

The Trust is an advocate for new and better trails and new uses of trails. The Trust develops and manages the trails network, and seeks funding, sponsorships and contracts to resource this.

The Trust members are all volunteers and are continuing the work - and achievements - of the Rotorua Mountain Bike Club and trail builders over the last quarter century. The Club has already developed a superb range and quality of trails in the Whakarewarewa forest as to make Rotorua 'the world's best all-year-round mountain biking centre'. The Trust is working towards extending these trails and improving the network, as achieved through volunteer working bees & working days.



Volunteer Working Bee, Rotorua, NZ

The Trust has also recently hired staff members & uses contractors to help manage the trails.

More information: www.rotoruatrailstrust.co.nz

04

Types of Trails



Pit Horse Paddock Informal Trails, Richmond Main

04 Types of Trails

Trails Hierarchy

A successful trails network requires trails of different levels of significance in order to meet the needs of different user group/market segments.

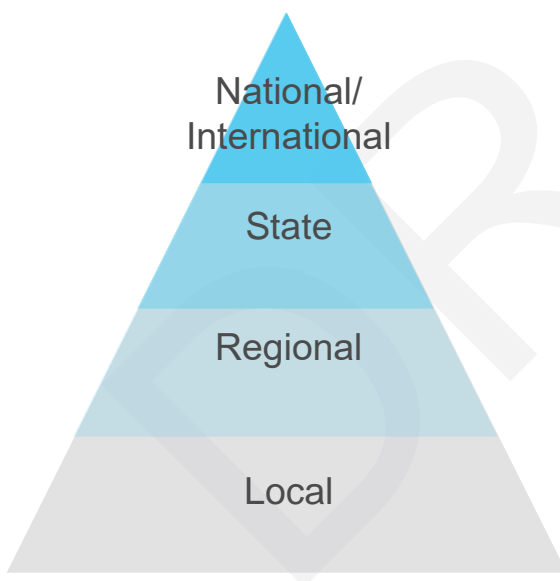
The trails hierarchy provides a guide for the level of infrastructure required for trails to meet the needs of their intended users and to ensure that an appropriate standard of facilities is provided.

A trail's level on the hierarchy indicates the partnerships required to successfully manage the trail, the level of promotion likely to be appropriate and the infrastructure which can be expected by users.

As there is currently no state-level Trails Strategy to guide the management of trails in NSW, the trails hierarchy relevant to the Cessnock City Council trails network has been adapted from *Victoria's Trails Strategy 2014-2024*.



The trails hierarchy provides a guide for the level of infrastructure required for trails to meet the needs of their intended users and to ensure that an appropriate standard of facilities is provided.



04 Types of Trails

International/National Trails

| Characteristics | Attributes | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World-class trail experiences located within the natural and cultural landscapes, with the highest standard of management & promotion. • Support high yield trail-based tourism products including accommodation. • Destinations, attracting international and interstate visitors. • May include major trail hubs that attract high international and interstate use, high level competitions and events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exemplars of the competitive strengths of NSW and Australia as a trail destination. • Uniquely representative of NSW's natural & cultural landscape values. • High priority government support at the State level for trail development and management and listed as a priority within State plans and strategies. • Support viable high yield trail-based accommodation and associated products and services. • Higher levels of interstate visitation than State significant trails and significant international visitation, interest and appeal. • Directly and indirectly provide economic benefits to the State. | <p>Blue Mountains Trails Network</p> <p>Royal National Park Coastal Trail</p> |

State Trails

| Characteristics | Attributes | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant trail experiences which represent NSW's varied landscapes, with a high standard of management & promotion. • Support a range of trail-based products and a motivator for intrastate and interstate visitation. • May attract some international visitors. • May include some major trail hubs & attract high level competitions and events. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative of the region's and/or NSW's natural and cultural landscapes. • Government support at a regional level within regional plans and strategies. • Support viable trail-based and associated regional tourism products, services and programs. • Significant intrastate and interstate visitation, interest and appeal. • Directly or indirectly provide economic benefits to a region and/or the State. | <p>Great North Walk (parts)</p> <p>Richmond Vale Rail Trail (proposed)</p> |

04 Types of Trails

Regional Trails

| Characteristics | Attributes | Examples |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails and facilities used by people across a wider region, including intrastate visitors, for recreation, transport, health and wellbeing. • Generate significant economic benefits to the region. • May include trail hubs accommodating various trail experiences across a region. • Important regional recreational and tourism assets and when combined with other regional scale trail resources they can be state recreation or tourism assets or resources. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be located within close proximity to residential areas and/or connected to community services and open space areas. • Representative of the region's natural and cultural landscapes. • Provide access to a diversity of trails of varying difficulty, length and type. • Provide opportunities for different trail-user groups for active recreation, health and wellbeing. • Be recognised across the region as a popular trail and/ or trail network and frequented by people from the surrounding region. | <p>Wine Country Stroll (potential)</p> |

Local Trails

| Characteristics | Attributes | Examples |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trails and facilities used by local residents for recreation, transport, health and wellbeing. • Mainly attract local users primarily for independent trail-based recreation activities. • Generate economic benefits to the local area. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many are closely located to residential areas and are often connected to community services and open space areas. • Representative of the local natural and cultural landscapes. • Provide access to trails which are generally accessible by users of varying fitness and/or shorter in length. • Provide opportunities for groups for active recreation, health and wellbeing. • Be recognised by local residents as a trail and/ or trail network and frequented by people from the local area. | <p>Convent Hill Loop Walk Kookaburra Trail Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail</p> |

04 Types of Trails

Trail Classification Systems

Trail classifications allow land managers to develop trails that are appropriately designed for the anticipated trail users and to provide suitable levels of facilities and management.






Trail grading systems are a primary means of informing people about the features of trails and assists in their marketing and promotion.

Grading systems are designed to assist people to make informed decisions on route selection to ensure they match their skill level to the difficulty of the trail.

Walking Trails

Walking trails are classified according to the *Australian Standard 2156.1-2001 Walking Tracks – Classification and Signage*.

The aim of this system is to encourage people who are not regular or confident bushwalkers to get out there and give it a go. It is specifically designed to reassure entry level walkers, particularly persons with a disability or people walking with children, that a particular trail is suitable for their skill level. Under this system, walking trails are graded on a difficulty scale from grades one to five, as outlined below.

| Classification | | Description |
|----------------|--|---|
| Grade 1 |  | Suitable for persons with a disability with assistance |
| Grade 2 |  | Suitable for families with young children |
| Grade 3 |  | Recommended for people with some bushwalking experience |
| Grade 4 |  | Recommended for experienced bushwalkers |
| Grade 5 |  | Recommended for very experienced bushwalkers |

+ GRADING SYSTEMS








Designed to assist people to make informed decisions on route selection to ensure they match their skill level to the difficulty of the trail.

04 Types of Trails

Mountain Bike Trails




The International Trail Marking System is used universally on ski fields and has been adapted by the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) for mountain bike trails.

The Australian Mountain Bike Management Guidelines (2019) adopted the IMBA system with some additions and further interpretations, as outlined below.

| Classification | | Description |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| Very Easy |  | Wide trail, no obstacles. Suitable for beginners |
| Easy |  | Wide trail, some obstacles. Suitable for beginners with off-road bikes. |
| Easy with intermediate Sections |  | Single trail, some obstacles. Suitable for mountain bike riders. |
| Intermediate |  | Single trail, obstacles. May include steep sections. Suitable for skilled mountain bike riders. |
| Intermediate with Difficult Sections |  | Challenging & variable, some steep climbs/descents, loose surfaces, & unavoidable obstacles. Suitable for competent mountain bike riders. |
| Difficult |  | Dangerous & unavoidable obstacles, some sections will be easier to walk. Navigation & personal survival skills are highly desirable. Suitable for experienced mountain bike riders. |
| Extreme |  | Dangerous, severe trails & unavoidable obstacles, extreme levels of risk, some sections will be easier to walk. Navigation & personal survival skills are highly desirable. Suitable for experienced mountain bike riders. |

Horse Riding Trails

The Horse Trail Difficulty Rating System includes a description of horse trail classifications, as outlined below.

| Classification | | Description |
|----------------|---|---|
| Easy |  | Most suitable for novices seeking a relatively short distance trail requiring a basic level of skill and horse & rider fitness. Most likely to be fire roads or wide single tracks with a gentle grade (not exceeding 10%) and a relatively obstacle free, hardened natural surface. Likely to be shared-use. |
| Intermediate |  | Most suitable for riders seeking a short to medium distance trail requiring moderate levels of skill/fitness. Most likely to be a combination single trail and/or fire road with obstacles, variable surface, and a moderate slope. Likely to be shared-use. |
| Difficult |  | Suitable for riders seeking a very challenging trail requiring a high level of skill, fitness, and basic navigation skills. Most likely to consist of challenging single trail and/or fire road with many obstacles, variable surface, and steep sections. Some trail routes may not be marked at all. Likely to be shared-use, however may be located in remote areas where encounters with others may be minimal. |

05

Existing Trails Audit

◀ WALKING
TRACK

Kitchener Dam , Poppethead Park

05 Existing Trails Audit

Trails Audit Methodology

Existing trails which are Council controlled were audited through a process involving desktop research and on-ground assessments. Trails were identified through the following information sources:

- *Walking Trail Guide, Cessnock Local Government Area Booklet* (2006)
- Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre website & visit
www.huntervalleyvisitorcentre.com.au/
- Cessnock City Council website
www.cessnock.nsw.gov.au/
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services
www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/visit-a-park
- Consultation with the community, key internal & external stakeholders.

An on-ground assessment of trails across Cessnock City Council was undertaken over a one-week period in July 2019, using a GPS device to collect a range of information for specific trails. The information collected included the alignment of trails (Council controlled), records of key attributes and photographs. Data captured by the full audit is recorded in the Trails Audit Matrix.



EXISTING TRAILS

Trails across the Cessnock LGA are in varying condition, with some being formalised, defined trails and others being informal routes providing opportunity for further development.

Existing Trails

The identified existing trails have been mapped, with their general location identified on the Existing Trails Audit Map on the next page.

The audit identified that there are currently 8 formalised Council-managed recreational trails across the Cessnock LGA. These trails are in varying condition, with some being formalised, defined trails and others being informal routes providing opportunity for further development.

The trails are:

- Convent Hill Loop Trail, Cessnock
- Abermain to Weston Link
- Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail, Weston
- Kookaburra Trail, Kurri Kurri
- Kitchener Dam Loop Trail, Kitchener
- Wollombi Brook Nature Walk, Wollombi
- Wine Country Stroll, Pokolbin
- Hunter River Nature Walk, Greta.

It is noted and considered within the Strategy that some towns also have walks which display the town's heritage, such as the Cessnock Heritage Walk, Wollombi Village Walk, or a specific theme, such as the Kurri Kurri Mural Walk.

There is also an extensive network of national parks and state conservation areas within the LGA which provide recreational trails, and there are also trails within state forests.

One of the greatest assets of the region's existing trails network is the Great North Walk which links Sydney to Newcastle, with a northern extension linking to Pokolbin. This trail traverses various land tenures including some Council land, large sections of national parks, state conservation areas, state forests and crown land. It is noted that sections of the trail and associated infrastructure, such as signage, within the Cessnock LGA are in varying condition.

In addition to the formal trails which have been identified across the LGA, 'key activity areas' have also been identified where trail activities are occurring in an informal manner, often unauthorised and not managed by the land owner.

While not part of the existing trails network, two proposed trail projects have been included on the Existing Trails Audit to demonstrate their proposed location in relation to existing trails.

LEGEND

Existing Trails (Council Controlled)

- 1 Convent Hill Loop Trail
- 2 Abermain to Weston Link
- 3 Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail
- 4 Kookaburra Trail
- 5 Kitchener Dam Loop Trail
- 6 Wollombi Brook Nature Walk
- 7 Wine Country Stroll
- 8 Hunter River Nature Walk

Cross-Regional Trails (Formal/Authorised)

- The Great North Walk
- Convict Trail / Route 33 (Drive Trail)

Key Trail Activity Areas (Informal/Unauthorised)

- a Richmond Vale / Pit Horse Paddock
- b Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ)
- c Mindaribba LALC Lands
- d Abernethy

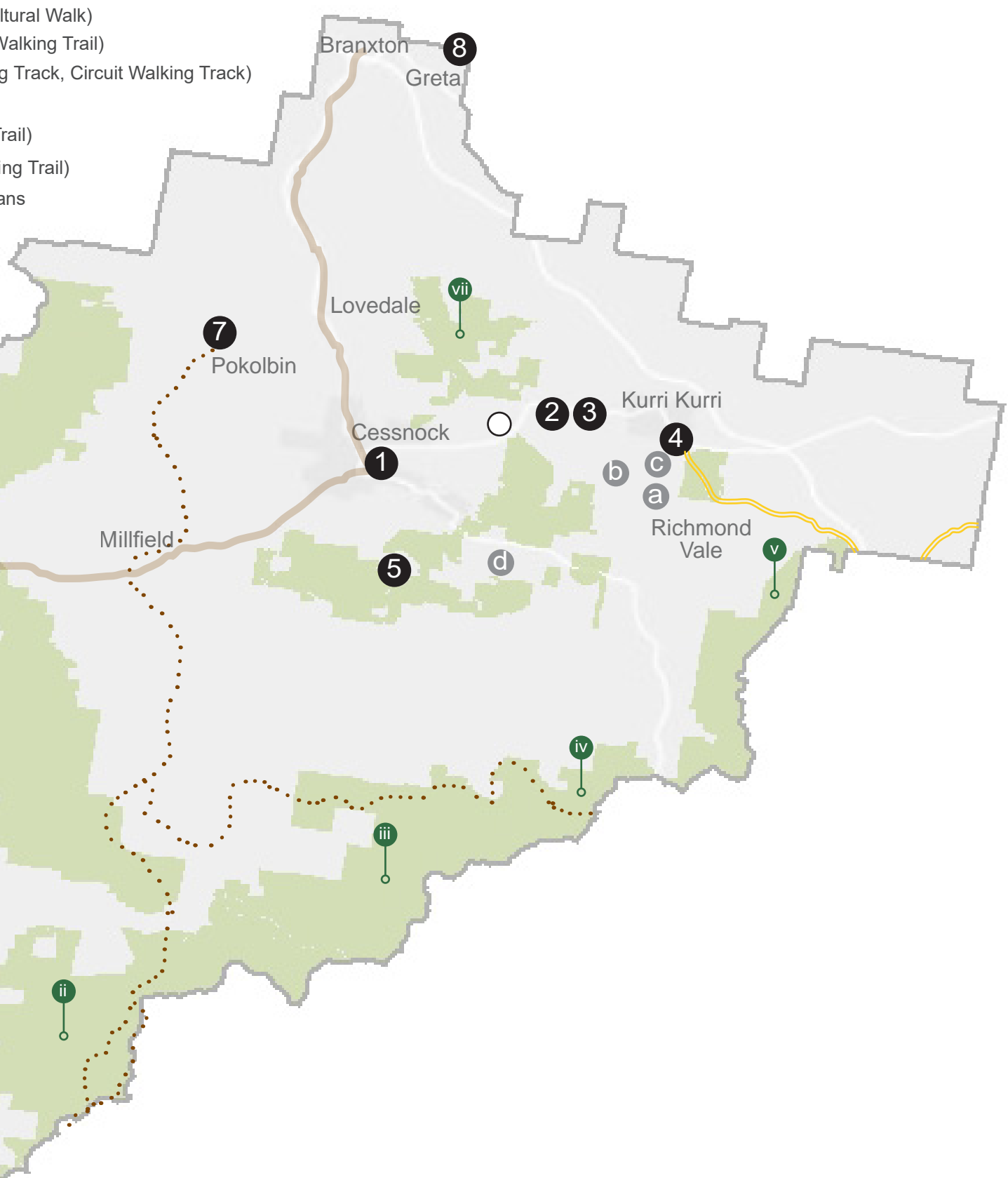
Trails within National Parks / State Forests

- i Yengo National Park (e.g. Big Yango Loop Trail, Finchley C...
- ii Olney State Forest (e.g. The Pines Walking Trail, Rock Lily V...
- iii Watagans National Park & State Forest (e.g. Turners Walking...
- iv Heaton State Forest (e.g. Heaton Loop Trail, Watagan Trail)
- v Sugarloaf State Conservation Area (e.g. Sugarloaf Summit T...
- vi Pokolbin State Forest (e.g. Broken Back Trail, Campbell Spr...
- vii Werakata State Conservation Area (e.g. Astills Trail, Deadma...

Trail Development Projects

- Richmond Vale Rail Trail
- 'The Precinct' Mountain Bike Park

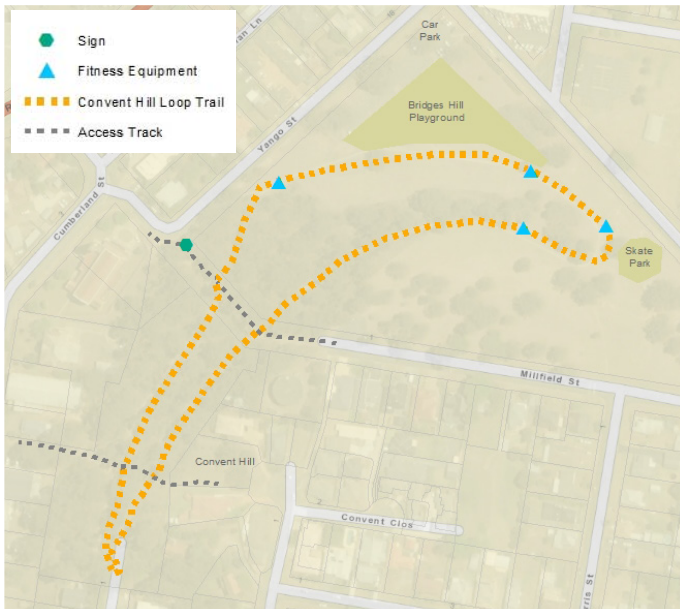




Existing Trails Audit Map

05 Existing Trails Audit

1 Convent Hill Loop Trail



| Walk | Grade 2 | 1km | LOOP |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | |

The Convent Hill Loop Trail takes you through Bridges Hill Park and up Convent Hill, beginning at the car park on Yango Street. The trail winds its way through natural bushland behind St Joseph's Catholic Church and Convent, offering breathtaking views across Cessnock to the Watagan Mountains. The trail continues back to Bridges Hill Park passing outdoor fitness equipment, the skate park and Bridges Hill Playground. The access tracks include stair climbs.



2 Abermain to Weston Link



| Walk & Cycle | Grade 2 | 2km | EACH WAY |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|----------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | |

The Abermain to Weston Link provides for walking and cycling adjacent Cessnock Road between Bailey Park and Forbes Street, however the four off-road sections of trail are not connected. For cyclists, this pathway provides sections of off-road riding to link with the on-road bike lanes. Signage along the trail provides historical information relating to local heritage, such as the Abermain Collieries and Railway Station. Some sections of this trail are concrete, flat surfaces while other sections are formed of natural materials.



05 Existing Trails Audit

3 Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail



| Walk | Grade 1 | | 2.5km | LOOP |
|---------------|--------------------|--|--------------|------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | | TRAIL LENGTH | |

The Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail provides a leisurely walk from the car park with amenities at Chinaman's Hollow to the playground and picnic facilities at Maybury Peace Park. The trail includes a footbridge over the water channel, a boardwalk which underpasses Cessnock Road and a path around the pond, where ducks can be seen paddling. This trail has a flat, even surface with no steps or steep sections and is suitable for all people, including those with limited mobility.



4 Kookaburra Trail



| | | | | |
|----------------|---------|--|-------|----------|
| Walk | Grade 2 | | 1.4km | EACH WAY |
| Off Road Cycle | Easy | | | |

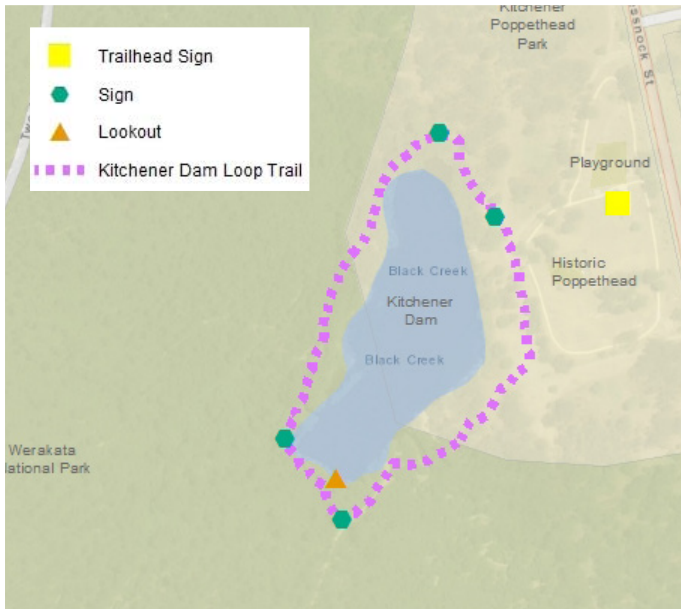
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|


The Kookaburra Trail begins at Log of Knowledge Park and takes you through natural bushland adjacent Mulbring Street, finishing at Lang Street which provides a footpath linking to the Kurri Kurri Town Centre. Listen out for laughing Kookaburra calls as you walk or ride along the trail. This area is frequented by unofficial trail bike riding and four wheel driving so be alert when riding & walking. This trail is located on Crown Land which is currently subject to an Aboriginal Land Claim.



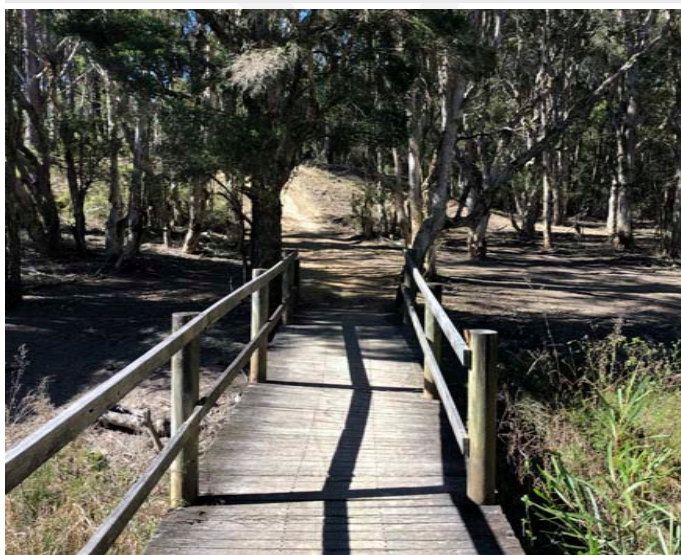
05 Existing Trails Audit

5 Kitchener Dam Loop Trail




| Walk | Grade 3 |  | 900m | LOOP |
|---------------|--------------------|---|------|------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | | |

The Kitchener Dam Loop Trail meanders through natural areas around the Kitchener Dam. The trail begins from the Poppethead Park car park, with waymarking signs provided for walking in an anti-clockwise direction. This park is the site of the historic Poppethead of the Aberdare Central Colliery which still stands tall in the park. The dam is also a remnant of this mining history and is now home to a variety of wildlife including mallards, black swans, native wood ducks and red bills.

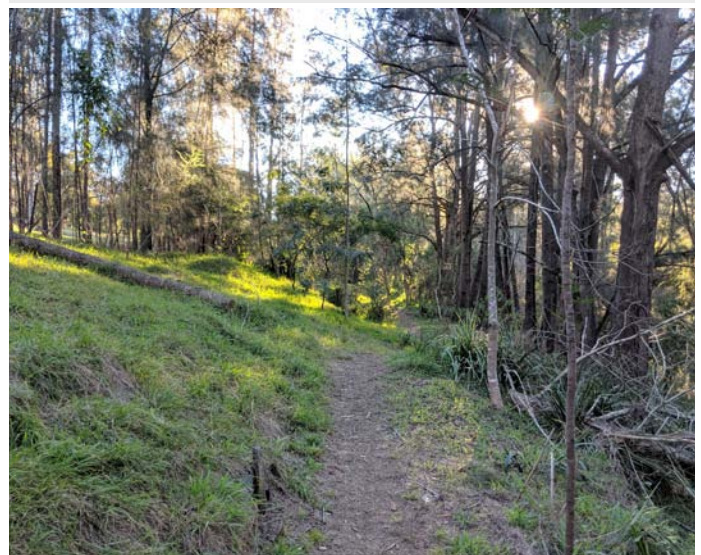


6 Wollombi Brook Nature Walk



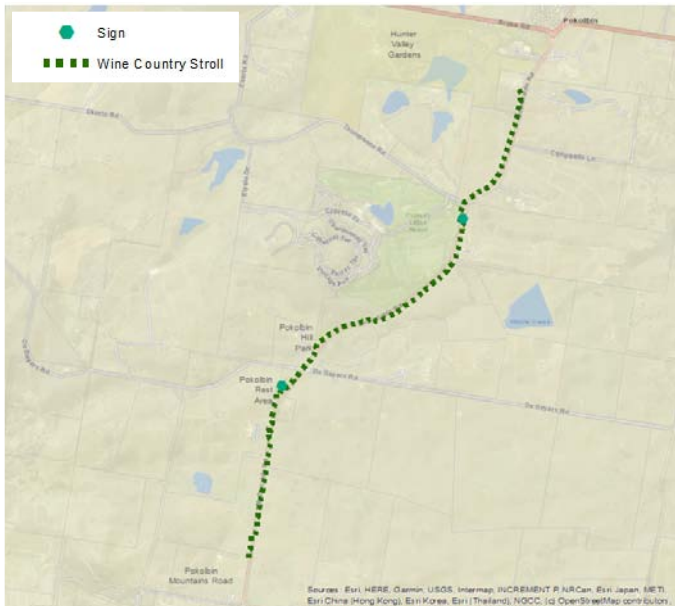
| Walk | Grade 2 |  | 250m | EACH WAY |
|---------------|--------------------|---|------|----------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | | |

This Nature Walk meanders alongside the Wollombi Brook from Wollombi Road to Negro Street, with stairs for accessing the banks of the Brook. "Wollombi" means "meeting of the waters" in Darkinjung language. This peaceful natural setting provides the opportunity to take time out, rest on one of the seats, and enjoy the sounds and sights of the whispering She-Oaks, the trickling brook and a variety of birds which inhabit the Wollombi Brook Wildlife Corridor.



05 Existing Trails Audit

7 Wine Country Stroll

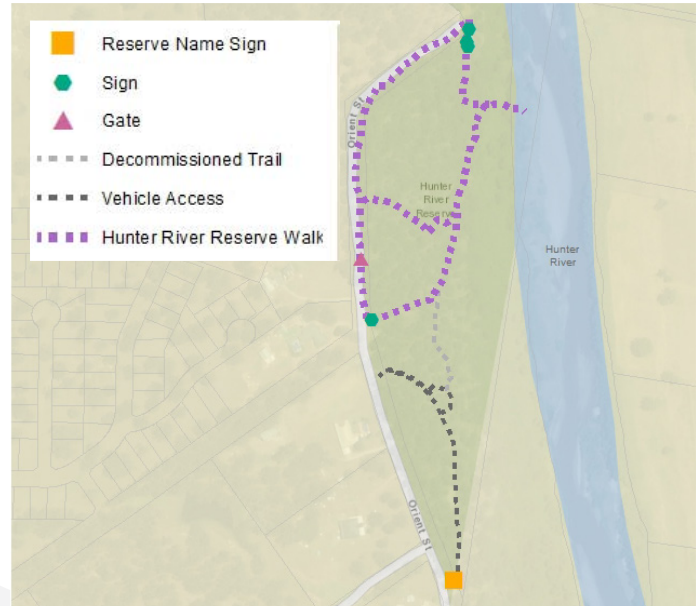


| Walk | Grade 2 | | 4.1km | EACH WAY |
|------------------|--------------------|--------------|-------|----------|
| Off Road Cycling | Easy | | | |
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | | |

The Wine Country Stroll offers the opportunity to explore some of the prominent wineries and landscapes in Pokolbin by foot or by off-road bike. The trail provides a route adjacent the vineyards of McDonalds Road, between Broke Road and Pokolbin Mountains Road. Scenic rest points are located along the trail at Pokolbin Hill Park and Pokolbin Rest Area. The Wine Country Stroll forms the most northern section of the Great North Walk.



8 Hunter River Nature Walk



| Walk | Grade 3 | | 900m | LOOP |
|---------------|--------------------|--------------|------|------|
| PRIMARY USE/S | GRADE / DIFFICULTY | TRAIL LENGTH | | |

This Nature Walk provides access to the bank of the Hunter River via enchanting sandstone steps which were laid by relief workers during the Great Depression, between 1934 and 1939. The walk begins at the northern end of Orient Street and features panoramic views over Lochinvar, the Hunter River and mountain ranges. Walkers may choose to return via the fork in the sandstone steps, or take the longer route which provides more spectacular views. This trail is suitable for most ages and fitness levels, however there are some steep sections.



05 Existing Trails Audit

Existing Cross-Regional Trails

The Great North Walk

The Great North Walk is a long-distance (250km) multi-day (12 - 18 days) bushwalk from Sydney to Newcastle. It was opened as part of the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations and has been managed by the NSW Government's Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA). The trail is currently governed by the NSW Government's Crown Lands Division. The walk's name was derived from the Great North Road, which was built by convicts between 1826 & 1836 to link Sydney to Newcastle.

Approximately 90km of the Great North Walk lies within the Cessnock LGA. While the primary objective of developing the trail was to link Sydney and Newcastle, a northern extension was included in the alignment which extends north from Congewai to Pokolbin. This northern extension offers opportunities to attract walkers into towns and destinations within the Cessnock LGA. The majority of the trail alignment is located on public land, in some places sharing alignment with other routes such as national park trails, The Watagan Track & the Wine Country Stroll in Pokolbin.



Council investigations, published in the *Agenda of the Ordinary Council Meeting of the Cessnock City Council on 15 May 2019*, identified the following:

- *There are issues with private ownership of parts of the Great North Walk. Some property owners have prevented access*
- *The Pokolbin Spur section is deemed most appropriate to package as a visitor experience due to ease of access, appropriate duration of walk, and low to moderate risk*
- *The Pokolbin Spur can be easily accessed at either Millfield or Pokolbin.*
- *The most marketable component of the Pokolbin Spur leads off Shingle Gully Rd, Millfield through to Pokolbin Mountains Rd, Pokolbin (13.1kms).*
- *The six maps specifically covering the Great North Walk in other LGAs are currently out of print and Crown Lands has confirmed that the maps are currently being reviewed and updated. No official maps cover the Cessnock LGA.*
- *The prime manual used by hikers does not cover the Pokolbin Spur*
- *Should Crown Lands progress private ownership and inter-departmental negotiations and agreements, council could write requesting inclusion in future editions.*

The conclusion states:

The Great North Walk is a significant natural asset to NSW, offering many opportunities. Crown Lands are required to resolve issues with land ownership and agreements. The Pokolbin Spur offers a prime opportunity to leverage increased visitation of the Great North Walk. The legal implications of the majority of land being privately owned would need to be fully mitigated before greater visitation could be further leveraged.



05 Existing Trails Audit

Trail Development Projects

The Convict Trail

The Convict Trail is a series of destinations which follows the general alignment of the Great North Road. The 240km Great North Road was constructed by convicts between 1826 and 1834 to provide an overland route between Sydney and the Hunter Valley. Relics of convict times are still visible and well preserved at locations along the route.

Tourist Drive 33

The Convict Trail is a series of destinations which follows the general alignment of the Great North Road. The 240km Great North Road was constructed by convicts between 1826 and 1834 to provide an overland route between Sydney and the Hunter Valley. Relics of convict times are still visible and well preserved at locations along the route.

Tourist Drive 33 is the scenic gateway for motorists travelling from Sydney into the lower Hunter Valley, following the historic convict trail, The Great North Road, stretching from the Peats Ridge exit on the Pacific Motorway to the township of Branxton in the heart of wine country.

Richmond Vale Rail Trail

The Richmond Vale Rail Trail is a proposed 32-kilometre cycling and walking track along the former Richmond Vale rail line between Kurri Kurri and Hexham, with further links to places such as Shortland and Tarro, and through the Hunter Wetlands National Park.

The western trailhead, in Kurri Kurri, will be located at the Log of Knowledge Park, just south of the town centre. The shared trail will provide a link for cyclists that will enable them to undertake journeys without having to ride on the Pacific Motorway, Hunter Expressway or New England Highway.

The rail trail will provide a great active transport choice for locals & visitors, passing through old railway tunnels & over bridges, amongst wildlife habitats. It will also provide opportunities in the areas of transport, tourism, recreation, heritage, economic and social development.

Once developed, the trail's concept design will be used to secure future funding for detailed investigation, design and construction.

'The Precinct' Mountain Bike Park

This proposed project is a collaborative effort between Cessnock Police, Crown Lands, Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council and Cessnock City Council, with the support of a number of local organisations. The group has put forward the project proposal for state government funding, as a strategy to divert youth crime and improve the well-being of residents.

This project is focused on developing a site that covers 385 hectares of land to the eastern side of Cessnock. The area has previously been a hot spot for criminal activity, illegal dumping and other antisocial behaviour.

'The Precinct' could become home to an extensive network of mountain bike trails, cross-country running clubs, orienteering for local schools, native regeneration groups & Aboriginal history talks and trails.



05 Existing Trails Audit

Key Trail Activity Areas

Pit Horse Paddock, Richmond Vale

There is an informal network of mountain bike trails on Council managed Crown land adjacent the site of the historic Richmond Main colliery. This network has been developed over time by local mountain bike riders. The terrain is relatively flat and, if a formalised trail network was developed on this site, it would likely be suitable for novice mountain bike riders (e.g. children and families).

The wider area, known as Richmond Main (primarily Crown land), includes the Richmond Vale Rail Museum, significant heritage features displaying the area's historic colliery, and valuable natural bushland.

There are currently a number of proposals for the further development of this area, including a formalised mountain bike park, a pump track, walking trails and an RV Park (Recreational Vehicles).



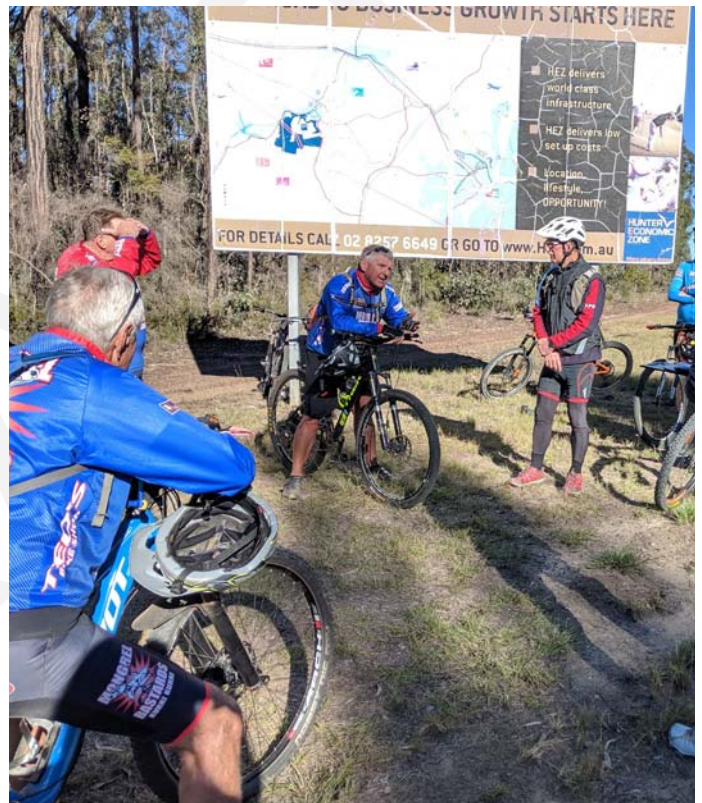
Informal Trail, Pit Horse Paddock

Abernethy

There is a network of informal trails, primarily on Crown Land and in national parks surrounding the Abernethy township. There is an informal trail adjacent Kearsley Road, on the eastern verge, that provides a key connection to Lake Road. This area has significant environmental and heritage values, and is used by local horse riders, mountain bike riders and walkers. This area may provide opportunity into the future for formalised trails.

Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ)

This 850 hectare area is privately owned and currently consists of a sealed road surrounded by dense bushland. The bushland has highly significant conservation value, being a nesting site for the Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater. The sealed road is used as a criterium track by local cyclists, including for weekly races by the Hunter District Cycling Club.



Informal trails in the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ)

Mindaribba LALC Lands

Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) is the landholder of large sections of land across the LGA, particularly around the Kurri Kurri area. There are significant networks of informal trails throughout this region and the Mindaribba LALC has issued permits for the use of this area by specific user groups and for specific events.

The informal trails network is known to be used (without landholder authorisation) by other local mountain bike riders, as the network connects to HEZ, Richmond Main, and the region's national parks/state conservation reserves.

05 Existing Trails Audit

Other Strategic Corridors

Rail Corridors

There is a network of rail corridors across the Cessnock LGA, with linkages into neighbouring areas, which are relics of the region's historic collieries and associated rail industries, as well as some modern-day mine and rail activity.

There is a movement within the local community, in-line with broader trends across Australia and the world, to develop this network of rail corridors into a recreational trails network. The current trail development project for the Richmond Vale Rail Trail is a great example of such an initiative in action.

The wider network of rail corridors provides opportunity to link various towns, villages and destinations across the Cessnock LGA with strategic locations such as Newcastle (via Hexham) and Newcastle.

While the South Maitland Railway is still active, it is anticipated that the life of the active rail line is limited. Preservation of rail corridors, and acquisition as public land where required, would be essential components of developing this network of strategically connected rail trails for recreation and transportation uses. Integration with other recreational trails (e.g. in Pokolbin/Wine Country) and of heritage features may also be an opportunity provided with this.

It is noted that Council's *draft Local Strategic Planning Statement* (LSPS) identifies the objective to re-establish rail services in the future (long term) for some rail corridors. This will need to be considered.

The map below indicates the existing network of rail corridors across the Cessnock LGA, colour coded according to their existing use/status.

Songlines

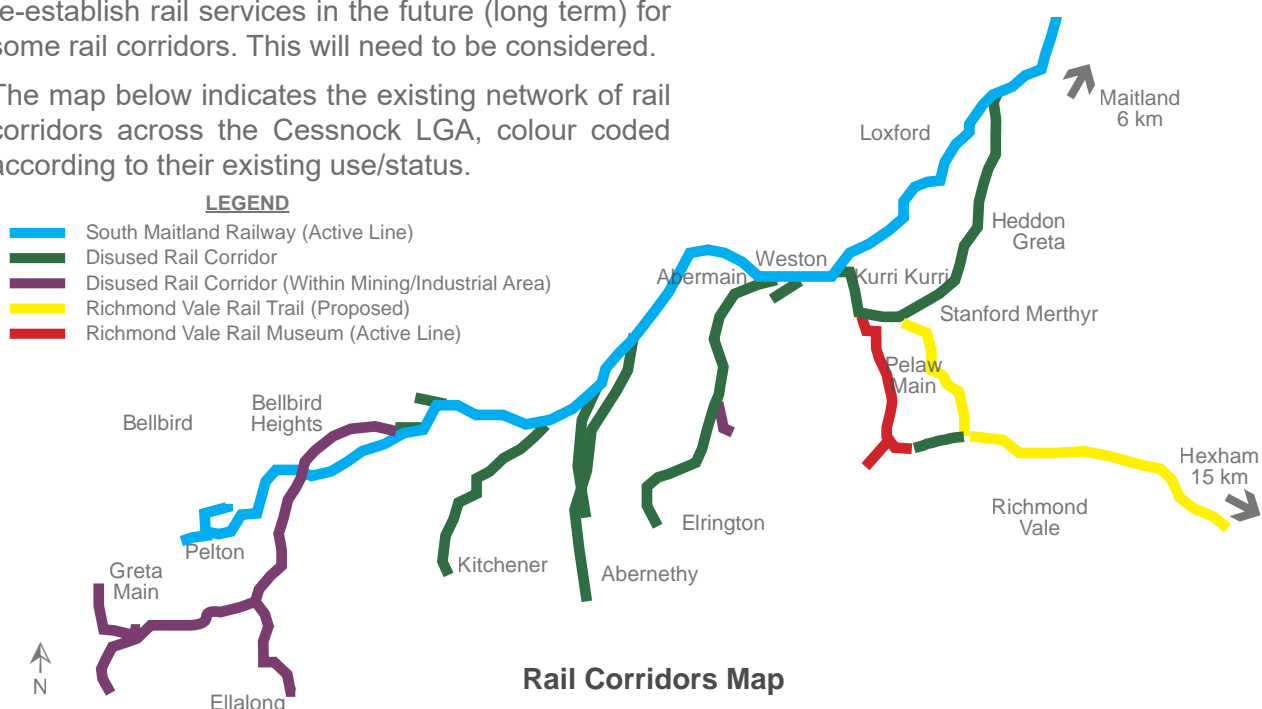
Songlines have been a prominent feature of Aboriginal cultures for over 60,000 years. They trace astronomy and geographical elements in ancient stories that have helped shape the landscape and have contributed to the laws by which Indigenous people have lived, and the origins of country. Songlines were first used as a form of communication across areas of Australia and have been passed from elder to elder over thousands of years. Many of the routes embedded in these songlines have turned into corridors which have formed Australia's historic and modern-day road, rail and trail networks.

There may be significant opportunity across the Cessnock LGA to collaborate with Aboriginal people to integrate the recreational trails network with the stories associated with Songlines across the region.

Historic Stock Routes

The Hunter Valley is rich in early colonial history, such as the establishment of the Great North Road. This formed part of an important travelling stock route for the movement of cattle, sheep & horses to and from markets in Maitland & Sydney. Many of these corridors remain preserved and host native vegetation.

A proposal exists for the establishment of bird watching routes across these sites, and there may be opportunity for the incorporation of recreational trails.



05 Existing Trails Audit

Current Trail Signage

Trails across the Cessnock LGA have varying levels and types of signage. Examples of the signage present at various trails across the LGA are shown here to illustrate the current suite across the existing trails network.



Directional Sign - Great North Walk, Millfield



Wayfinding Sign - Kitchener Dam Loop Trail



Wayfinding Sign - Great North Walk, Pokolbin



Trailhead Sign - Kitchener Dam Loop Trail



Interpretation Sign - Abermain to Weston Link



Trail Name Sign - Wollombi Brook Nature Walk

05 Existing Trails Audit



Trail Name Sign, Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri



Trailhead Sign, Chinaman's Hollow, Weston



Wayfinding Sign - Kookaburra Trail, Kurri Kurri



Wayfinding Sign, Pit Horse Paddock (informal)



Interpretation Sign - Kurri Kurri Heritage



Hunter Valley Wine Country Signage, Pokolbin

05 Existing Trails Audit

Current Trail Marketing & Promotion

Current trail marketing and promotional materials are an important consideration when assessing the existing trails network. This is a key element of trail management, particularly to ensure that the appropriate level of trail information is provided to potential users, and that this information is kept up to date.

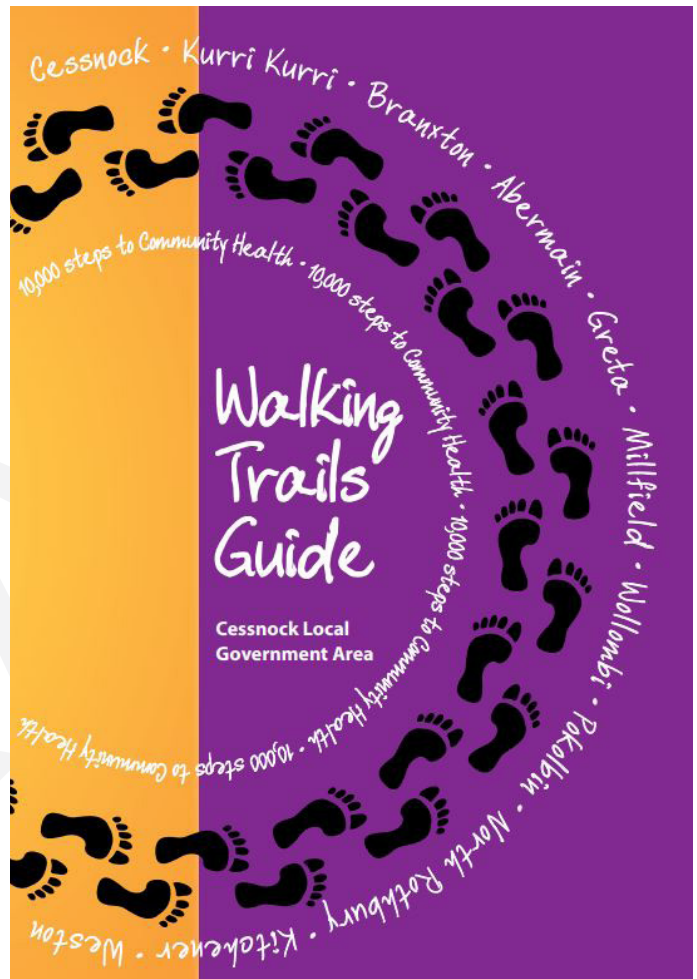
The key resources currently providing trail-related information relating to trails across the Cessnock LGA are illustrated over the following pages.

It is evident that there is currently no single comprehensive information source identifying trail opportunities across the Cessnock LGA.

Cessnock LGA Walking Trails Guide (2006)

Produced by: Samaritans

Available: Hard copy & online
<https://www.samaritans.org.au>



Relevant trail references:

- Convent Hill Start Your Heart Walk (Convent Hill Loop Trail); Cessnock History Walk
- Kookaburra Trail; Kurri Kurri Mural Walk
- Abermain to Weston; Maybury Peace Park/ Chinaman's Hollow (Trail)
- Hunter River Reserve Walk
- Poppethead Dam Walk (Kitchener Dam Loop Trail)
- Wine Country Stroll
- Astills Trail (Werakata State Conservation Area)
- Wollombi Brook Walk
- Great North Walk

+ TRAIL INFORMATION

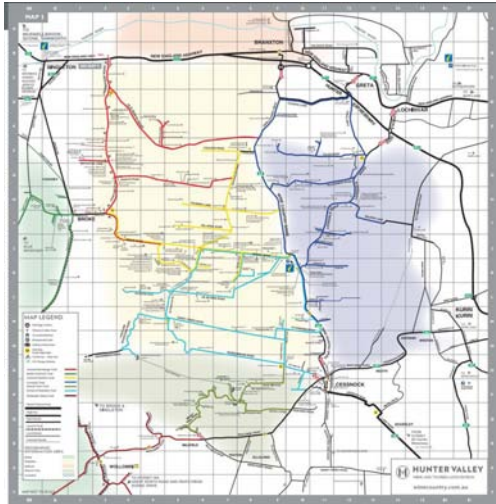
Currently, there is no single, comprehensive & up-to-date information source identifying trail opportunities across the Cessnock LGA.

05 Existing Trails Audit

Hunter Valley Wine Country Visitor Map (2019)

Produced by: Hunter Valley Tourism Association

Available: Hard copy & online
<https://www.winecountry.com.au>



Trail references:

- Great North Walk
- Wine Country Stroll

Hunter Valley Wine Country Official Visitor Map (2019)

Produced by: Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre / Cessnock City Council

Available: Hard copy & online
<https://huntervalleyvisitorcentre.com.au>



Trail references:

- Great North Walk (Bimbadeen Lookout to Pokolbin)
- Hermitage Road Bikeway (Singleton City)
- Astills Picnic Area & mountain bike loop (Werakata State Conservation Area)

Kurri Kurri Directory & Tourist Guide (2019)

Produced by: Towns with Heart Inc.

Available: Hard copy at Visitor Information Centres



Trail references:

- Kurri Kurri Mural Walk
- Iconic Pubs Walk
- Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail (Maybury Peace Park Walk)
- Kookaburra Trail Walk
- Rotary Park Walk

Heritage, Culture & Nature Attractions (2019)

(Printed Word Document List)

Produced by: Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre

Available: Hard copy at Visitor Information Centres & online <https://huntervalleyvisitorcentre.com.au>

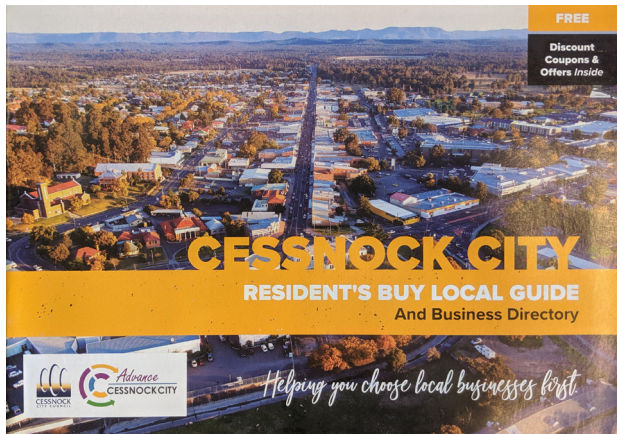
05 Existing Trails Audit

Cessnock City Resident's Buy Local Guide (2018)

Produced by: Cessnock City Council

Available: Hard copies around the LGA & online

<https://advancecessnock.com.au>



Trail references:

- Werakata SCA, Abernethy Dam, remains of Aberdare South Colliery (informal)
- Great North Walk - Bimbadeen, Mount Bright Lookouts

Wildwalks.com

Produced by: WildWalks

Available: Online

<https://wildwalks.com.au>



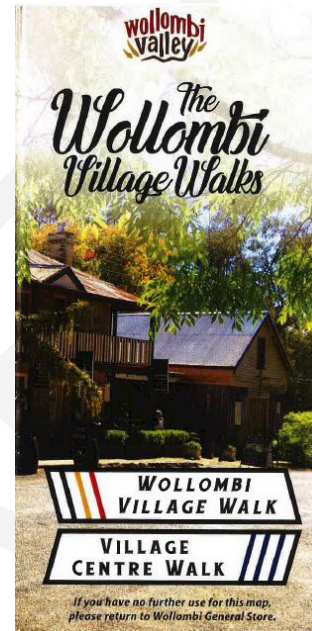
Cessnock LGA trail references:

- Great North Walk (includes various day walk options, excludes northern extension to Pokolbin)
- Hunter Lookout & Great North Walk Loop, (Heaton State Forest)

Wollombi Village Walks (2019)

Produced by: Wollombi Village Chamber of Commerce

Available: Hard copy at Visitor Information Centres & online www.hboc.org.au



Trail references:

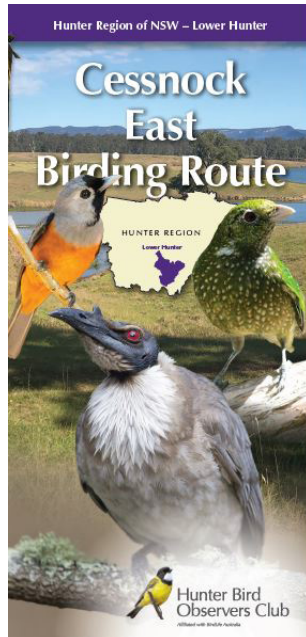
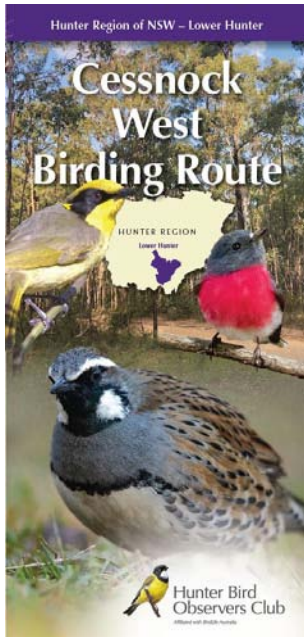
- Wollombi Village Walk
- Village Centre Walk

05 Existing Trails Audit

Cessnock Birding Routes (2019)

Produced by: Hunter Bird Observers Club

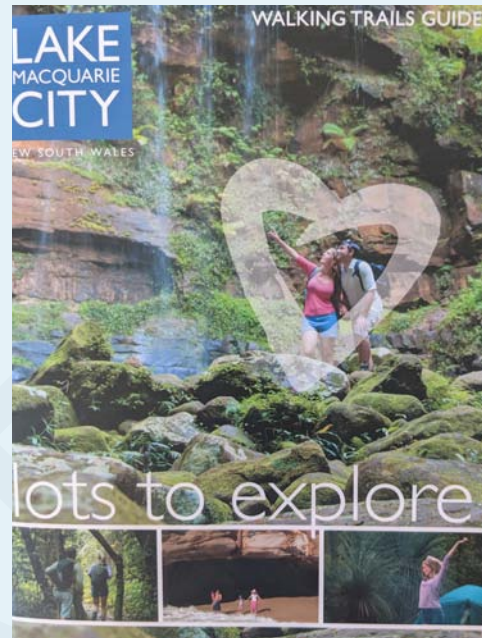
Available: Hard copy at Visitor Information Centres & online www.hboc.org.au



Trail references:

- Stanford Merthyr Crown Reserve (informal)
- Werakata State Conservation Area (disused railway alignment - informal)
- Werakata State Conservation Area (Fire tracks)
- Kitchener Poppet Head Park Dam Loop Trail

Example: Lake Macquarie Walking Trails Guide



Lake Macquarie Tourism has produced a Walking Trails Guide which is a great example of an effective way to promote trail experiences.

The guide is readily available as a hard copy booklet, with the information also provided online at www.visitlakemac.com.au.

Information is simple to interpret and is graphically displayed, with photographs illustrating the landscapes and trail experiences on offer.

Information provided includes an overview of trail locations and contextual information (e.g. walking checklist, environmental care, local walking groups), followed by specific trail details.

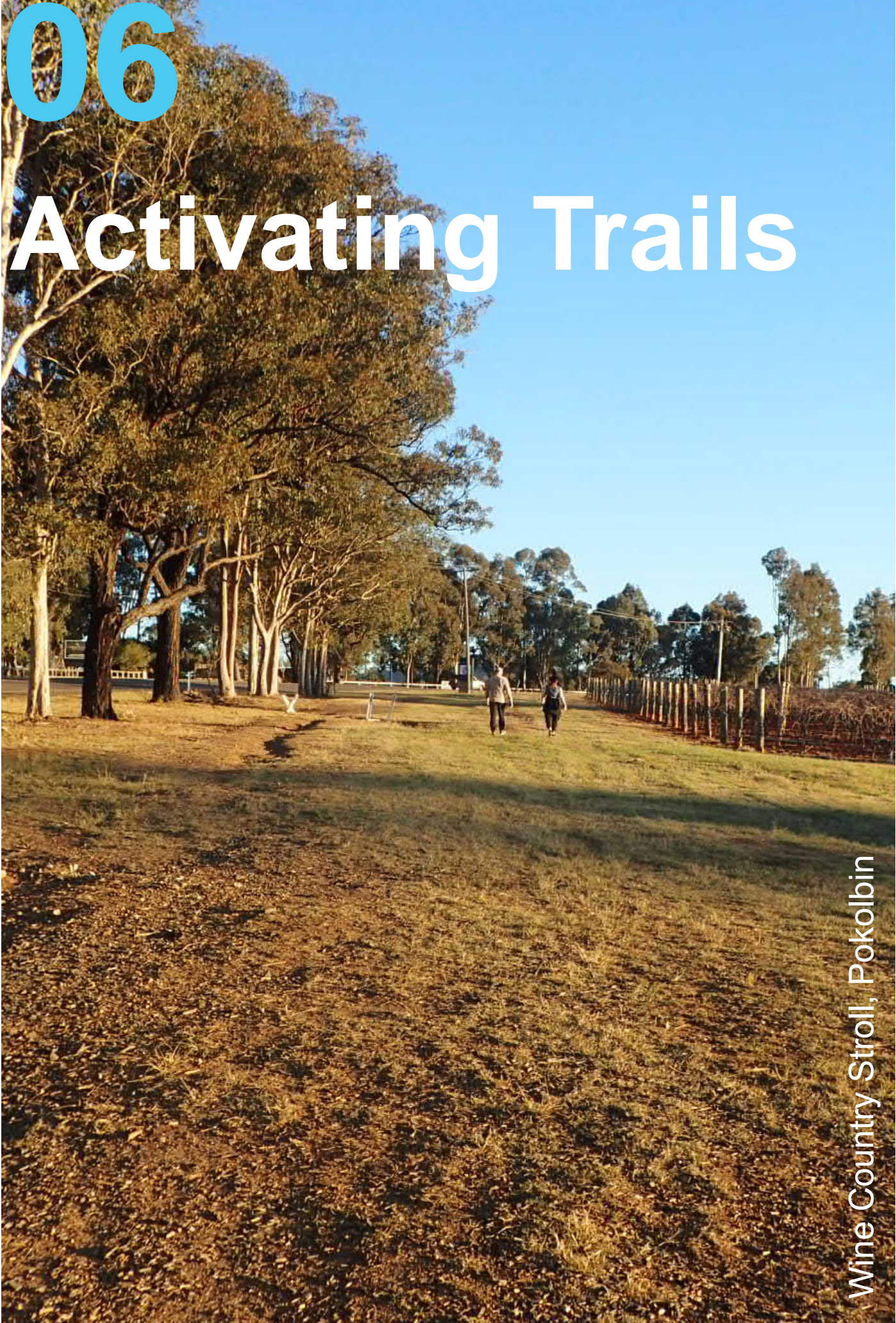
Each trail is identified on a map, showing the start/end points and details such as type (loop or linear), distance, grade/level and facilities.

Best-practice trail guides will also identify the grade of each trail according to the relevant grading system (e.g. 2156.1-2001 Walking Tracks – Classification & Signage), outline safety considerations and trail management contact details.

06

Activating Trails

Wine Country Stroll, Pokolbin



06 Activating Trails

Access for All

To increase rates of physical activity and the use of trails across the region, it is imperative that all people can access the trails network. If trails are designed inclusively, the benefits of trails will have greater positive impact within the local community.

The Australian Walking Tracks Grading System identifies that Grade 1 trails are those which are accessible to people in a wheelchair with assistance.

The Chinaman's Hollow/ Maybury Peace Park Trail is an accessible Grade 1 trail which can cater for people in a wheelchair. This provides a great trail opportunity in a relatively natural setting for local residents and visitors with access restraints.

The *Australian Adaptive Mountain Biking Guidelines* (2018) provide a detailed guide to help land managers, trail builders, event directors, mountain bike clubs, charities and associations develop inclusive mountain bike trails, events and programs for people with disabilities in Australia. The guidelines acknowledge the adaptive mountain biking categories of hand-cycling, adaptive leg-cycling, tandem and modified mountain bikes within the disciplines of cross-country (XC), gravity enduro (GE), downhill (DH) and touring.



While not all trail classification systems account for universally accessible grades, it is important that universal design practices are integrated where possible in all trail developments and programs.

Example: TrailRider in NSW National Parks



Source: www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au

The NSW National Parks provides a TrailRider all-terrain wheelchair for visitors at various national parks (NP) across the state (currently Kamay Botany Bay NP, Dorrigo NP & Kosciuszko NP).

This offers people with mobility restrictions the opportunity to experience the national parks.

The TrailRider has handles at the front & back, which allow guides to manoeuvre the chair on walking tracks that are not wheelchair-accessible, including up and down stairs.

Trails provide opportunities for physical activity which should be available to all people including both physical and non-physical disabilities. While the development of accessible trail infrastructure is important, it is also vital that trail-related programs and events are accessible for all.

Physical activity programs and events which are inclusively designed and raise awareness of issues in the wider community can significantly help improve participation rates and connections among the community.

+ UNIVERSAL DESIGN

It is important that universal design practices are integrated where possible in all trail developments and programs.

06 Activating Trails

Programs, Events & Online Platforms

Programs and events play an important role in promoting active participation, influencing the level of usage for trails and related infrastructure and contributing to the region's economy.

Modern day programs and events are often integrated with online interactive platforms (e.g. phone apps). There is a wide range of platforms available which provide the opportunity to increase active participation in local communities by allowing trail users to track their activity, share their experience and compete with other users. Many platforms also provide incentives to get active (and to use their platform), such as challenges where users compete with others across their local community, or even across different states and countries. Key popular online platforms include mapmyfitness, Strava & Trailforks.

The following programs, events and online platforms have been identified within the Cessnock LGA and are important considerations for trail planning.

parkrun (Nulkaba)



The Nulkaba parkrun takes place on the grounds of St Phillips Christian College every Saturday at 8am.

'parkrun' is a series of 5km runs held on Saturday mornings in areas of open space around Australia. They are open to all, free, are safe and easy to take part in. There may be future demand for additional parkrun groups within the Cessnock LGA, particularly in areas close to population centres.

Quarry Mining Wollombi Wild Ride



Quarry Mining Wollombi Wild Ride is an annual recreational Mountain Bike Event intended for riders of all standards. There are 3 separate courses to pick from: a reasonably flat 13.5km short course; a mid distance 30km course; and a longer course for more experienced riders. All courses are not very technical and are mostly on fire trails and gravel roads around the Wollombi and Laguna area of the Hunter Valley.

Australian Mountain Bike Orienteering Championships (September 2020)



The Australian Mountain Bike Orienteering (MTBO) Championships will be held in the Cessnock LGA region in September 2020. This event is organised through the Newcastle Orienteering Club & Orienteering NSW. Landholder approval is gained, including use of land in National Parks where required. Comprehensive mapping is undertaken for these events using Lidar Imagery technology.

06 Activating Trails

Port to Port



Port to Port is a mountain bike event which takes place over four days. Racing in wave start format, there are challenging climbs, thrilling descents and single track. The race is suitable to riders of all levels.

Stage 1 (in 2020) is held across 48km in the Pokolbin Mountains, starting and finishing at businesses in the Wine Country region.

Great Cycle Challenge



The Great Cycle Challenge is one of Australia's biggest cycling events. People of all ages, abilities and states set themselves a personal riding goal and challenge themselves to pedal throughout October to fight kids' cancer. Kilometres are logged throughout October via the GCC app, Strava, MapMyRide, personal GPS devices or manually through the challenge webpage.

OzeBuddy



Ozebuddy is a social platform with its office in Cessnock, facilitating interactions between people who share similar fitness goals. The platform helps members look for people both within and outside their community who have similar fitness goals and who enjoy meeting new people. Users can find training buddies and fitness mentors who can inspire, motivate and coach them.

Local Example: BioBlitz Events



A BioBlitz is a citizen science event where scientists and naturalists work with the community to explore their local area with the aim of recording as many species as possible. Cessnock City Council facilitates such events, (e.g. Poppethead Park, Kitchener on Sunday, 8 September 2019). The events include a number of interesting walks & activities in bushland.. Due to the conservation significance of the Cessnock area, highly skilled ecologists and botanists are attracted to such events in the region.

Opportunity: Heart Foundation Walking Groups



The Heart Foundation supports & promotes Australia's largest free walking group network. This is a social, fun and easy way for people to walk and be active. It is associated with the Prime Minister's One million steps.

There are currently no registered groups in the Cessnock LGA, however, the Heart Foundation has made contact with Council officers to consider being a host organisation. Nearby townships which currently have registered walking groups include Singleton, Maitland and Newcastle.

Information on how to become a host organisation is provided on the Heart Foundation's Website <https://gowalking.heartfoundation.org.au/>

Heart Foundation Walking can help set up & maintain walking groups in local communities. Host Organisations & their nominated Local Coordinators come from a variety of organisations such as health & community centres, councils & workplaces, and are a vital part. Local Coordinators receive training, ongoing assistance, support and resources.

06 Activating Trails

Crime Prevention

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a crime prevention strategy that focuses on planning & design to reduce opportunities for crime. NSW Police promotes the use of these strategies and provides Safer by Design courses which are accessible to Council staff. Use of these principles reduces the likelihood of essential crime ingredients (law, offender, target, opportunity) from intersecting in time & space. All CPTED strategies aim to create the perception or reality of capable guardianship. Further information is available via <https://www.police.nsw.gov.au>.

The four key strategies of CPTED are:

Territorial Re-enforcement

Community ownership of public space sends positive signals to the community. Places that feel owned and cared for are likely to be used, enjoyed and revisited. People who have guardianship or ownership of areas are more likely to provide effective supervision and to intervene in crime than passing strangers and criminals rarely commit crime in areas where the risk of detection and challenge are high. Effective guardians are often ordinary people who are spatially 'connected' to a place and feel an association with, or responsibility for it.

Territorial re-enforcement uses actual & symbolic boundary markers, spatial legibility & environmental cues to 'connect' people with space, to encourage communal responsibility for public areas & facilities, and to communicate to people where they should/not be and what activities are appropriate.

Space/Activity Management

Space/Activity Management strategies are an important way to develop and maintain natural community control. Space management involves the formal supervision, control and care of the development. All space, even well planned and well-designed areas need to be effectively used and maintained to maximise community safety. Places that are infrequently used are commonly abused. There is a high correlation between urban decay, fear of crime and avoidance behaviour.

Surveillance

People feel safe in public areas when they can see and interact with others, particularly people connected with that space, such as shopkeepers or adjoining residents. Criminals are often deterred from committing crime in well-supervised places.

Natural surveillance is achieved when normal space users can see and be seen by others. This highlights the importance of layout, orientation and location; the strategic use of design; landscaping and lighting – it is a by-product of well-planned, well-designed and well-used space.

Technical/mechanical surveillance is achieved through mechanical/electronic measures such as CCTV, help points and mirrored building panels. It is commonly used as a 'patch' to supervise isolated, high risk locations.

Formal (or Organised) surveillance is achieved through the tactical positioning of guardians. An example would be the use of on-site supervisors, e.g. security guards at higher risk locations.

Access Control

Access control treatments restrict, channel & encourage people/vehicles into, out of and around areas. Way-finding, desire-lines & formal/informal routes are important crime prevention considerations. Effective access control can be achieved by using physical & symbolic barriers that channel/group pedestrians into areas, therefore increasing the time & effort required for criminals to commit crime.

Natural access control includes the tactical use of landforms and waterways features, design measures including building configuration; formal and informal pathways, landscaping, fencing and gardens.

Technical/Mechanical access control includes the employment of security hardware. Crime, Design and Urban Planning: From theory to Practice Formal (or Organised) access control includes on-site guardians such as employed security officers.

Formal (or Organised) access control includes on-site guardians such as employed security officers.

06 Activating Trails

Code of Conduct

Establishing a Code of Conduct for each trail and/or the entire trail network is an appropriate way to manage the impacts of trail use on other trail users, the natural environment and trail infrastructure. The essential messages conveyed by various codes of conduct seek to promote environmentally sound and socially responsible trail use.

The Code of Conduct should be displayed on trailhead signage and accessible online, and may include:

- Permitted trail use (e.g. walk, bike and/or horse)
- Environmental/heritage impacts & mitigation measures (e.g. do not feed wildlife, take rubbish away, respect culturally significant places)
- Risks of using the trail/s (e.g. bushfire risk, risk of falling rocks) & mitigation measures/safety advice (e.g. bushfire awareness)
- Emergency procedures & contact details (e.g. fire, ambulance, police)
- Trail manager contact details (e.g. Council)
- Trail user etiquette.

Trail Stewards & Leave No Trace

By caring for the trails they use, trail stewards promote and encourage others to do the same - which benefits everyone in the long-term via more sustainable and low-impact usage.

The Seven Leave No Trace Principles are:

1. Plan ahead and prepare.
2. Travel and camp on durable surfaces.
3. Dispose of waste properly.
4. Leave what you find.
5. Minimise campfire impacts (be careful with fire).
6. Respect wildlife.
7. Be considerate of other visitors.



Example Code of Conduct: Tasmania's Mountain Bike Plan

Principle 1: Respect other trail users

- Alert other trails users of your presence
- Slow to their speed when passing
- Slow down for corners and blind spots
- Give way to walkers & horse riders

Principle 2: Stay on the designated bike riding tracks and trails

- Do not trespass on private land
- Ride only on trails approved for bikes
- Do not create new trails, short cuts or obstacles.

Principle 3: Minimise your impacts on the environment

- Avoid muddy trails – seek alternative after rain
- Avoid skidding
- Take out your litter 'leave no trace'
- Respect the local flora and fauna
- Keep your bike clean to prevent the spread of weeds and plant diseases.

Principle 4: Be a safe rider

- Plan ahead – know your equipment and the area that you are riding in
- Wear a helmet and other appropriate protective equipment
- Know your ability and keep your bike under control
- Be prepared for sudden changes in weather conditions
- Carry tools and spares
- Let someone know where you are going
- Carry a mobile phone.

Principle 5: Get involved

- Report trail hazards, incidents and maintenance issues
- Take part in trail maintenance days
- Set a good example for other riders

07

Consultation



Kurri Mongrels, Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ)

07 Consultation

Consultation Process

The development of the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy was informed by community consultation and stakeholder engagement. This process was organised and managed through the development of a Consultation & Engagement Plan. A series of consultation mechanisms were used to engage with the wider community and key stakeholders. These mechanisms were:

- Online Community Survey (26 June – 25th July)
- Internal Stakeholder Meeting (16 July 2019)
- Key External Stakeholder Meeting (17 July 2019)
- Community Trails Workshop (18 July 2019)
- Targeted stakeholder interviews (phone, emails, meetings)

Information was provided to stakeholders and the wider community through distribution of an informative flyer. The flyer was distributed via email to the stakeholder database, and via Council's Facebook.



COMMUNITY DESIRES

- Preservation of culture & nature;
- Designated and regulated trails;
- Trails a vehicle for social change;
- High quality trail information;
- Consistent information sources

Key Themes

Community Consultation

- Support for the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail.
- Desire for connectivity between trails and for healthy lifestyles to be accessible.
- Desire for consistent & updated information.
- Opportunities presented by historic rail corridors, stock routes and songlines.
- Use trails as a mechanism to raise awareness of the region's heritage & conservation values.
- Need to incorporate Indigenous heritage and mining/rail heritage features into trails.
- Opportunities to address broader social issues with trails, programs and events.
- Importance of enhancing the Great North Walk.
- Need to create awareness of the region's high conservation value.
- Need to provide appropriate locations for motorcycle riding and four wheel driving (separate to horse riders, bike riders, walkers).
- Need to clear rubbish and address issues causing rubbish dumping in natural areas.

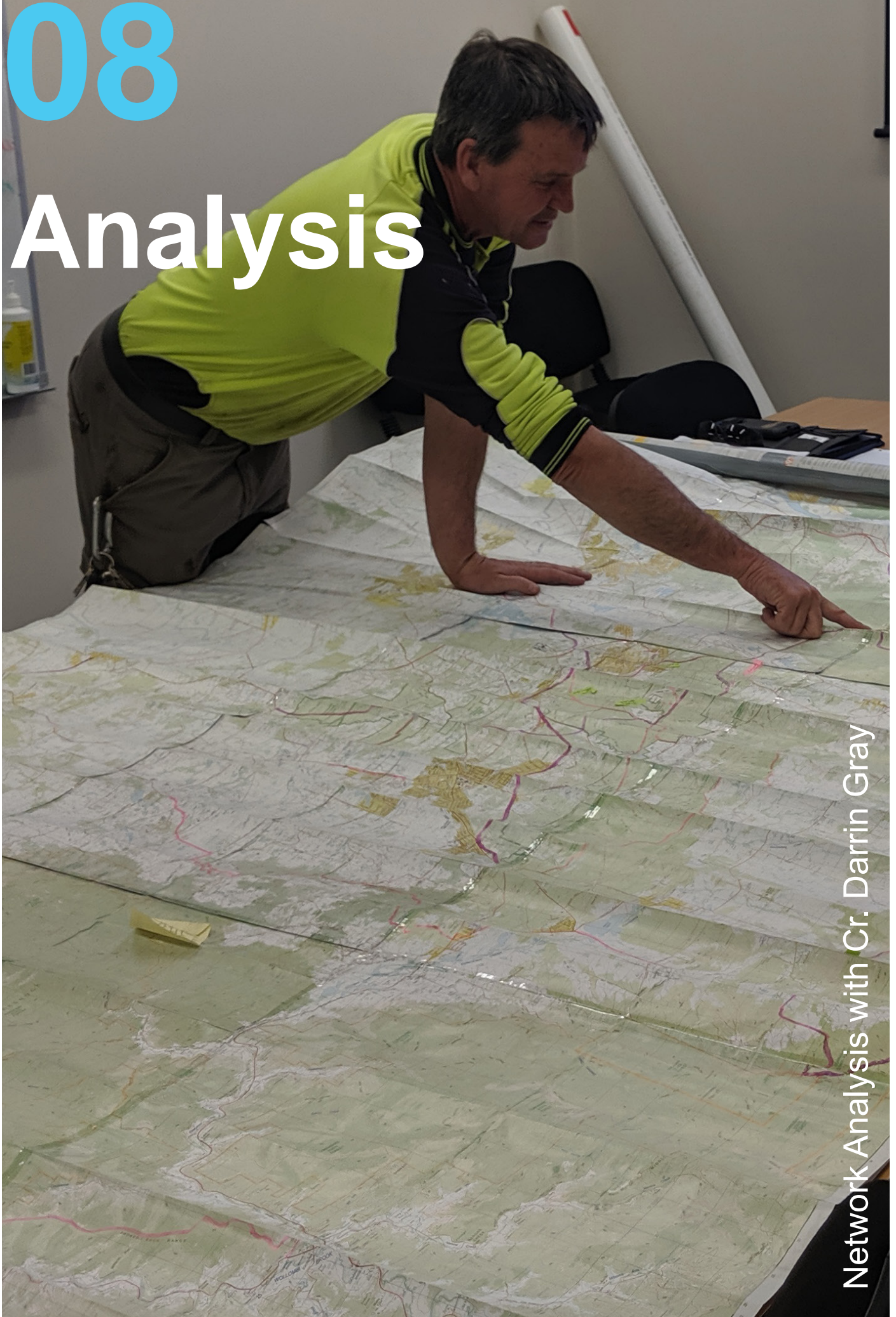
Key Stakeholder Consultation

- Progress with the Richmond Vale Rail Trail.
- Development of The Precinct Mountain Bike Park, catering for Adaptive Mountain Biking.
- Integrating needs of all trail-user groups.
- Cater for gravel riding as a growing activity.
- Need for effective governance; consistent & collaborative planning; sustainable design & maintenance; community engagement; investment & financing.
- Linking to tourism opportunities & infrastructure.
- Recreational use of fire trails may help deter unauthorised activities (passive surveillance).
- Consideration of Native Title/Aboriginal land claims & management structures
- Interest in how other Councils manage trails
- Providing tourist access to the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area from the Hunter
- Opportunities to address broader social issues with trails, programs and events.

Further details are provided in Appendix C: Consultation Outcomes

08

Analysis



Network Analysis with Cr. Darrin Gray

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Strong community interest and support for trails.
- Council and community support for current trail development project: Richmond Vale Rail Trail.
- Undeveloped historic corridors (rail/Songlines).
- Highly varied and diverse landscape settings, with great opportunities for bird watching.
- Proximity to Greater Sydney (<2 hour drive), with large population (nearly 4 million).
- Local culture of outdoor recreational activities.
- Existing drive trails showcasing the region (Convict Trail, Route 33).
- Trail user groups in the wider region (existence of formal and informal groups).
- World Heritage Wilderness (Yengo NP), significant tourism destination (Hunter Valley Wine Region) & renowned multi-day trail (Great North Walk) within the LGA.
- Large network of national parks, state conservation areas, state forests & Council/Crown bushland.
- Regional and coordinated approach to Tourism across the Hunter.

Weaknesses

- Fragmented trails network across various land tenures.
- Lack of coordinated approach to providing information about trails within the region.
- Inconsistent range of signage styles/condition.
- Limited & inconsistent signage, mapping & promotional material.
- Inconsistent & non-representative trail naming.
- Limited availability and quality of trail information at Visitor Information Centre.

Opportunities

- High/increasing participation in trail activities
- Improving wellbeing of the community.
- Provision of low cost, easily accessible recreation and physical activity opportunities.
- Integration with existing and new local businesses/industries to service trail use.
- Enhancing connectivity of trails/active transport.
- Regional collaboration between Councils.
- Enhanced community awareness, appreciation & stewardship of trails & natural areas.
- Development of themed trail experiences to showcase the region (e.g. heritage).
- Promotion of Grade 1 Universal Access Trail (Chinaman's Hollow/Maybury Peace Park Loop Trail).
- Synergies across Council, government & community objectives (e.g. Health, Social).
- Integration of trails with Indigenous cultural heritage and Songlines.
- Increasing tourism & population numbers.

Threats

- Potential impacts upon environmental and cultural heritage values.
- Limited capability of landowners to financially contribute to trail development & management.
- Private land crossing key strategic trail corridors.
- Inappropriate/unauthorised use of trails (e.g. rubbish dumping, use by motorised vehicles) having negative impacts upon trail user experiences.
- Competing funding priorities.



09

Future Trails Network

Werakata State Conservation Area

09 Future Trails Network

Strategic Planning Pyramid

The establishment of a common Vision for the Cessnock City Council trails network provides a goal for Council, other organisations and the wider community to coordinate initiatives towards. As illustrated below, the **Vision** facilitates the development of associated **Strategic Outcomes**, which in turn provide the framework for the development of **Strategies** (specific approaches to achieve the Strategic Outcomes and fulfill the Vision). Individual **Actions** are then identified to deliver on each of the Strategies and address the relevant issues identified during the research and consultation phases.

Utilising this approach produces a strategic plan with clearly articulated actions, responsibilities assigned and an estimate of likely resources required - resulting in a clear and actionable implementation plan to deliver the overall Vision.



Trail Planning Principles

The following trail planning principles are broadly based on the best-practice trail planning guidelines, and have been tailored to guide trail planning in the Cessnock LGA. These principles underpin the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy and the associated Strategy and Action Plan.

- 1 Ensure socially, economically and environmentally sustainable trail development and management
- 2 Provide trails which are readily accessible, provide links between key destinations and promote active lifestyles
- 3 Provide a diverse range of trail opportunities and encourage the broadest possible community participation
- 4 Maximise use of existing trails where they are appropriately located and have the capacity to sustain additional use
- 5 Manage trails professionally, effectively and equitably
- 6 Provide safe trails through adherence to relevant legislative and activity safety requirements
- 7 Ensure that universal design principles are embedded into trail design and development
- 8 Maximise the opportunity to attract trail-related programs and events
- 9 Encourage community involvement in the planning and design of trails
- 10 Involve local Indigenous People in the planning, design & interpretation; of trails which have Aboriginal heritage values
- 11 Support, promote and advocate for trail users in relation to relevant issues within the region
- 12 Develop & maintain partnerships to provide trails and associated facilities

09 Future Trails Network

Trails Network Vision

The following Vision has been developed based on the findings of the Trails Strategy development process, informed by the issues and opportunities that emerged during community and key stakeholder consultation, background research and on-ground assessments.



A high quality, integrated trails network that encourages considerate trail use, active lifestyles and showcases the region's distinct natural areas, Indigenous & European cultural heritage values, contributing to social, environmental and economic benefits.

Strategic Outcomes

In order to deliver the Vision, the following series of Strategic Outcomes have been developed.

A Integrated Planning & Management

Underpinning a sustainable, integrated and accessible trails network is a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning through key stakeholder collaboration and prioritised & targeted investment.

B Sustainable & Accessible Trail Network

Initial focus on upgrading the existing trails network to deliver sustainable and accessible trails within identified existing trail activity areas. Build upon the improved existing trail network to provide additional recreational trail opportunities, maximising the potential of the region to cater for a wide range of recreational trail users and aiming to deliver outstanding trail experiences.

C Increased Participation through Marketing and Programs

Encourage strong local community and visitor participation in recreational trail activities through effective promotion and marketing of the region's trails and the associated programs and experiences available.

D Development, Management and Maintenance

Underpinning a sustainable, integrated and accessible trails network is a strategic and coordinated approach to trail planning through key stakeholder collaboration and prioritised & targeted investment

E Community, Tourism & Economic Development

Capitalise on the opportunities presented by a well-designed trails network for health, environmental, cultural, economic and transportation/liveability benefits.

09 Future Trails Network

Strategic Zones

The following strategic approach to the delivery of a trails network across the region is proposed, principally based around recognising areas that offer distinct trail opportunities across character zones. The five strategic zones are:

- Hunter Gateway Zone
- Wine Country Zone
- Heritage Zone
- Outdoor Adventure Zone
- Wilderness Zone

The general geographic areas of these character zones are illustrated in the Trails Network Vision Map on the following page.

These zones have been outlined to identify the distinct and key strengths of different parts of the LGA, in relation to their potential themes for the trails network.

Hunter Gateway Zone

The Hunter Gateway Zone is centred around Cessnock, acknowledging that this is the region's largest population centre and is a key service centre for visitors. It is important that residents and visitors are provided with opportunities to get physically active at a low cost, and that information is provided to stimulate usage of trails located in the natural areas outside of Cessnock. A large proportion of visitors to the area would likely pass through Cessnock towards the Hunter Valley Wine Region.

Wine Country Zone

The Wine Country Zone offers experiences in the renowned Hunter Valley Wine Region and activities associated with the viticulture industry, such as events and functions. Enhancing the provision of recreational trails across the Wine Country Zone will support the region's tourism goals. A key opportunity exists to provide high quality walking and cycling experiences across the region which is likely to broaden the market of visitors to the region and provide unique experiences. This zone extends north from Cessnock with key localities being Pokolbin, Branxton and Greta, with potential for enhanced connectivity towards Singleton.

Heritage Zone

The Heritage Zone is strongly characterised by the region's colonial heritage features associated with mining and rail. There is also significant potential to showcase Indigenous heritage and culture across this region. The township of Kurri Kurri is the key population centre of this zone, with strong cultural and geographical connections to existing colonial heritage features such as Richmond Main, the Richmond Vale Railway Museum, the Richmond Vale Rail Trail (proposed), and Log of Knowledge Park. There is further opportunity for enhanced connectivity and promotion of the various historical collieries and rail networks across this zone, such as at Kitchener (Poppet Head Park) and Abernethy.

Outdoor Adventure Zone



The Outdoor Adventure Zone has the potential to be promoted for trail enthusiasts who seek 'off-the-beaten track' experiences. This region is largely characterised by large areas of national parks, state conservation areas and state forests. The Great North Walk is one of the Cessnock LGA's key trail assets which provides a key opportunity for connectivity between the region's natural areas via recreational trail/s. The key trail information point for users of trails in this zone is the Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre which would ensure that trail users are choosing experiences suitable for their levels of fitness and abilities.

Wilderness Zone



The Wilderness Zone is characterised by remote and rugged natural areas, such as Yengo National Park, which forms part of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness Area. Wollombi Village has the opportunity to leverage from visitors to the wilderness areas and also to promote the strong Indigenous cultural heritage of the region. Wollombi village provides opportunity to attract users of these areas as a key trail information point and service hub for the wilderness zone. Future potential for connectivity between the Blue Mountains and the Cessnock LGA via recreational trail/s would provide an iconic trail experience stimulating significant benefit to the region.

LEGEND




Key Trailheads

-  Primary Trailhead, Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre, Pokolbin
-  Secondary Trailhead, Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri
-  Secondary Trailhead, Bridges Hill, Cessnock
-  Secondary Trailhead, Wollombi Village

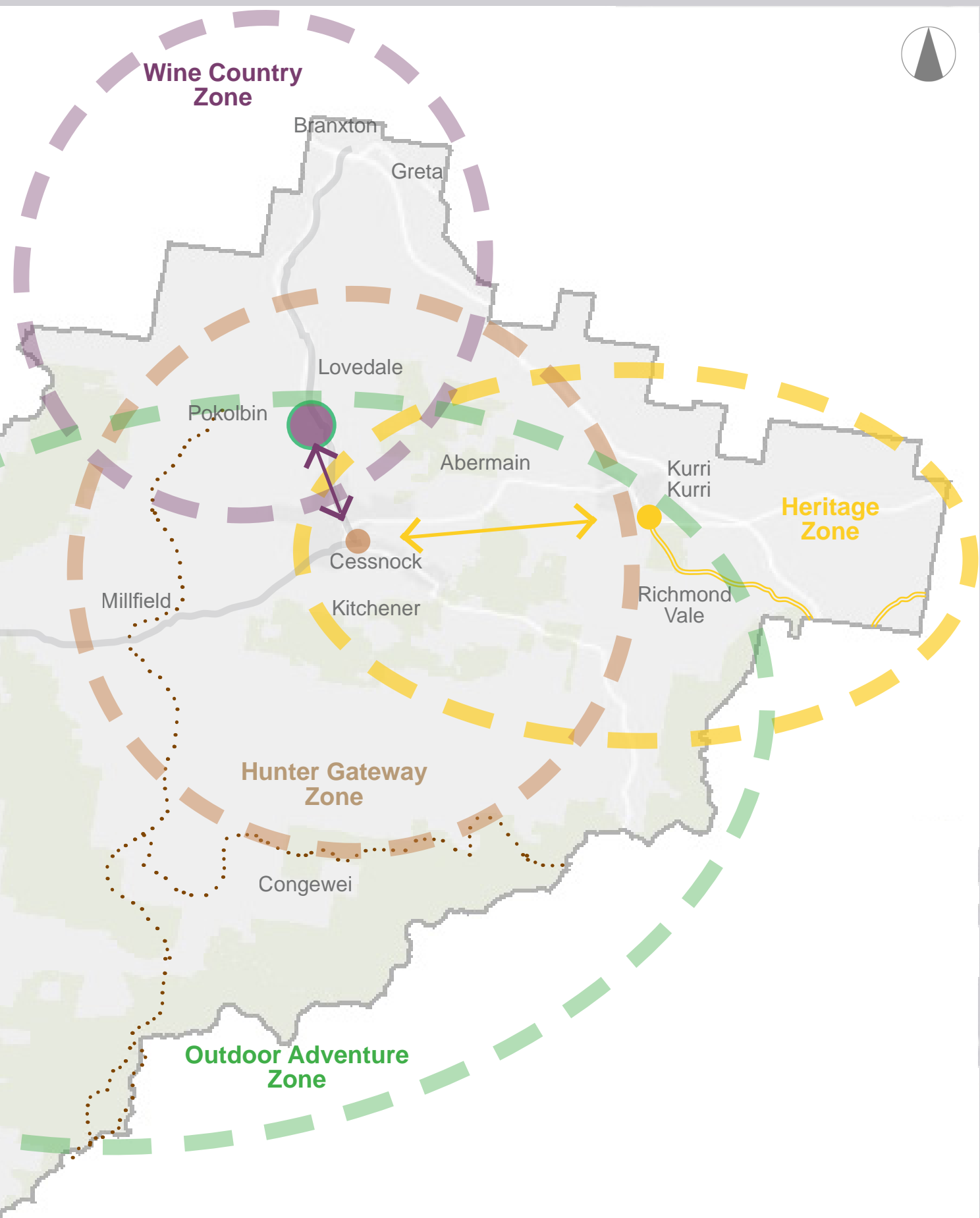
Key Strategic Linkages

-  Kurri Kurri to Cessnock
-  Cessnock to Wine Country

Cross-Regional Trails

-  Convict Trail / Route 33 (Drive Trail)
-  Richmond Vale Rail Trail
-  The Great North Walk





10

Strategy & Action Plan

Hunter Valley Wine Country, Pokolbin

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Project Assessment & Prioritisation

In order to effectively focus available funding (private, local, state, federal) to deliver a quality network of recreational trails across the Cessnock LGA, a phased and prioritised strategy and action plan is required.

Potential trail projects have been identified and broadly prioritised based on:

- **Need/Demand:** field observation, professional judgement and input from Council staff.
- **Feasibility:** project size, resource requirements/ cost, social, economic or environmental constraints, likelihood of successful implementation.
- **Location:** Proximity to residential populations, proximity to existing trails networks, identified gaps in current provision, connectivity, proximity to significant visitor/tourist attractions.
- **Benefit:** Overall benefit to the region and community (social, environmental, economic).

It is anticipated that implementation of the Trails Strategy will include consultation with stakeholders and the wider community. Levels of community interest in a project should further inform prioritisation. A potential project that generates a high level of public interest and is considered to be relatively easy to implement at reasonable cost should be prioritised above a project requiring substantial funding, has significant constraints and limited public interest.

Each action has an indicative timeframe (short, medium, longer). These should be reviewed periodically. Council will work with its partners towards implementation of the Trails Strategy, acknowledging that the schedule of implementation will be influenced by funding priorities.

Key projects requiring initial feasibility studies, design development and/or cross-agency collaboration will likely take multiple years. Some actions will be reliant on the successful completion of other actions.

Implementation will be staged as it is not feasible to deliver all of the identified trail projects at the same time.

Indicative Cost Estimates

An estimate of the resources required to implement each action has been identified to inform Council with its budget processes. These are broad estimates and should be reviewed prior to implementation or as part of annual business and budget planning. The following indicative cost estimates have been used in the Strategy & Action Plan:

| Cost | Estimated Cost Range |
|------------|-----------------------|
| Low (L) | <\$100,000 |
| Medium (M) | \$100,000 - \$500,000 |
| High (H) | >\$500,000 |

Partners

There are various complexities surrounding trail planning and development, including multiple land tenure, cross government boundary/regional projects involving multiple government departments, and the diverse, and sometimes conflicting aspirations of community stakeholders (e.g. environmental groups, trail user groups). Recognising this, Council will need to collaborate with a variety of partners, noting that some of the identified actions may not be deliverable without such support. Partners include:

- Cessnock City Council (CCC)
 - Visitor Information Centre (VIC)
- Trails Reference Group (TRG) Refer *Action A2.5*
- NSW Government (NSW Gov.)
 - National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS)
 - Forestry Corporation of NSW (ForestryCorp)
 - Crown Lands (CL)
 - Destination NSW (DNSW)
 - Roads & Maritime Services (RMS)
 - NSW Police (Police)
- Local Land Councils
- Hunter Region LGAs
 - Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC)
 - Newcastle City Council (NCC)
 - Singleton City Council (SCC)
 - Maitland City Council (MCC)
- Private Land Owners (Private)
 - South Maitland Railways (SMR)
 - Traditional Owners (TO)
 - Developers
- Wider Community (Community)
 - Hunter Bird Observers Club (HBOC)
 - Richmond Vale Rail Museum (RVRM)
 - Trail Promoters (e.g. online platforms)

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Strategic Outcome A: Integrated Planning & Management

Focus on Existing Trails & Trail Development Projects

Strategy A1: Upgrade existing Council-controlled trails, advocate for improvements to trails managed by other agencies and progress with current trail development projects.

Rationale: It is recommended that future trail development initially focuses on formalising the existing trails network, particularly at locations where opportunities exist to encourage increased physical activity, appreciation of the LGA's bushland areas and/or stimulation of economic activity.

8 existing Council-controlled trails have been identified across the LGA. These trails are in varying condition, with some being formalised, defined trails and others being informal routes providing opportunity for further development. In addition to these trails in natural areas, some towns also have walks which display the area's heritage features (i.e. heritage walks) or a specific theme (e.g. the Kurri Kurri Mural Walk).

The *Community Strategic Plan, Cessnock 2027* identifies the need for increased tourism & visitation, protection & enhancement of the natural environment, improved utilisation of existing open space and improved transport links. Improvements to the trails network & progression of trail development projects will support these objectives.

Great North Walk

One of the greatest assets of the region's existing trails network is the Great North Walk, which links Sydney to Newcastle, with a northern extension linking to Pokolbin. This trail traverses various land tenures including some Council land, large sections of national parks, state conservation areas, state forests and crown land. Council has also identified some issues relating to private land ownership, particularly in the section across the Pokolbin Spur. The condition and functionality of the trail surface and associated infrastructure (e.g. signage) within the Cessnock LGA are highly varied. This trail is managed by the NSW Land and Property Management Authority (LPMA), in cooperation with various land holders for specific parcels.

National Parks and State Conservation Areas

There is an extensive network of national parks and state conservation areas within the LGA which provide recreational trails and associated infrastructure, as well as some trails within state forests. Enhancing these trail networks is an opportunity for the relevant land holder (i.e. NPWS), which would have great benefit to Cessnock LGA residents and visitors. While Council does not control these trails, partnerships can encourage and support the enhancement process, particularly relating to integrating these trails into the LGA's wider trails network.

Trail Naming & Branding

Consistent naming & branding will raise the profile of the CCC trails network and identify trails so that users can see the connections and differences across the various trail experiences offered.

| Action | Priority/ Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|------------------------|--|------------|
| A1.1 Upgrade and develop the existing network of Council-controlled trails across the LGA, in line with Strategies B3 to B11. | Short | CCC, TRG | Medium |
| A1.2 Deliver new trail development projects across the LGA, in line with Strategies B12 & B14. | Longer | CCC, TRG | Medium |
| A1.3 Formalise, develop & enhance strategic linkages between key tourism precincts (e.g. Hunter Valley Wine Country), key trail activities areas, population centres and regionally important long distance trails (i.e. Richmond Vale Rail Trail & Great North Walk). | Ongoing | CCC, NPWS, Forestry Corp, Crown Lands, Private | Medium |
| A1.4 Advocate for the enhancement of trails within National Parks, State Conservation Areas, State Forests & Crown land within the LGA, and support integration with Council's Trails Network. Work with managers of these trails to determine those suitable for promotion. | Ongoing | CCC, NPWS, Forestry Corp, Crown Lands, Private | Low |
| A1.5 Progress with the development of a recreational trail along the Richmond Vale Rail Line, known as the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. [Refer also Strategy B2]. | Short | CCC, LMCC, NCC, NPWS | High |
| A1.6 Ensure that trail signage, mapping and information across the LGA is up-to-date, with trail names which are consistent, relevant & representative of the trail experience. [Refer also Strategy C2]. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| A1.7 Ensure that information for trails across the LGA is consistent and up-to-date, with a coordinated branding and marketing approach. [Refer also Strategy C3]. | Short | CCC, DNSW, VIC | Medium |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Integrated Trail Planning Framework

Strategy A2: Develop an integrated trail planning framework for Cessnock City Council and its partners.

Rationale: It is important that an integrated approach to planning for trails is undertaken, coordinating efforts between various government agencies, community groups and individual trail users. Integrated trail networks offer synergies to achieve positive outcomes across various sectors such as health, recreation, transport, environmental, culture and heritage and there is a need to ensure that effective and coordinated trail planning and management approaches are facilitated. Regular collaboration will need to be maintained, and trail planning and implementation adequately resourced.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| A2.1 Establish a Trails Reference Group, inviting key representatives of Council, specific trail user groups, Chambers of Commerce, Regional Health Authorities, Aboriginal Land Councils/Traditional Owners & Tourism Authorities. [Refer also Action D1.1]. | Short | CCC, User Groups, TO, DNSW, Community | Low |
| A2.2 Facilitate Trails Reference Group meetings, providing opportunities to discuss the implementation of the Cessnock Trails Strategy and other future trails initiatives. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG | Low |
| A2.3 Encourage, advocate and seek funding for a designated Trail Planning and Development Officer to coordinate implementation of the Cessnock Trails Strategy. Consider opportunities to share this resource across LGA boundaries (e.g. Hunter Region LGA's) to support collaboration with efficiencies and synergies. | Ongoing | CCC, Hunter Region LGAs | Medium |
| A2.4 Incorporate trail planning initiatives into broader community planning such as local and regional plans (e.g. strategic plans, development plans), tourism strategies and initiatives of other relevant organisations. | Ongoing | CCC, NSW Gov., NPWS, DNSW | Low |
| A2.5 Strengthen partnerships and cross-border collaboration with Councils across the Hunter Region to implement mutually beneficial trail development projects. | Ongoing | CCC, Hunter Region LGAs | Low |
| A2.6 Incorporate Indigenous, cultural, educational and heritage interests into trail development initiatives where relevant & feasible. | Ongoing | CCC, TO, TRG | Low |
| A2.7 Ensure that new trail and transport developments are designed to cater for and encourage active transport (i.e. walking, cycling) between key facilities/precincts. | Ongoing | CCC, RMS | Low |
| A2.8 Embrace opportunities for the trails network to build community awareness of the region's high biodiversity significance and value. This may include interpretation signage at key locations and programs/events with a conservation focus. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| A2.9 Ensure that all of Council's trail developments adhere to applicable standards and integrate sustainable design principles (e.g. <i>Australian Standard AS2156.1 Walking Tracks Part 1: Classification and Signage</i> , <i>Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines</i> , <i>Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks</i>). | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, NPWS | Low |
| A2.10 Upon scoping for the review of Strategic Plans, ensure that project scopes are reviewed to ensure alignment and interconnectivity as they relate to similar topics, without duplication (e.g. Trails Strategy, Cycling Strategy & Pedestrian and Mobility Plan). | Medium | CCC | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Trail Corridor Preservation Policy

Strategy A3: Ensure public access to Council owned/managed land is maintained and seek to secure public access to additional land where this forms a strategic corridor for potential future trail/s.

Rationale: As the region's population continues to grow there will likely be increased demand over time for further strategic trail developments. Particularly in the Heritage Zone, where there are disused rail corridors there may be significant opportunities for the future development of trails which link townships and historic features along existing strategic corridors (i.e. Songlines, historic stock routes and rail corridors). The viability of these future projects will rely upon the preservation of public access to these corridors, as well as alternative proposals for this land. Future requests to Council to restrict/close public access along such corridors (e.g. easements and unmade road reserves) must be considered in the context of delivering these trail projects. There may be opportunity for Council to acquire land relating to these strategic corridors, particularly once they are no longer required for their initial use (e.g. upon closure of mines/railways).

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|---------------|------------|
| A3.1 Prepare & endorse a Council policy to preserve strategic corridors of land where there is potential for future trail projects. | Short | CCC | Low |
| A3.2 Advocate for the public acquisition of land which has the potential to contribute to strategic trail projects into the future. | Ongoing | CCC, NSW Gov. | Low |
| A3.3 Acknowledge the multi-faceted historical contexts behind strategic corridors and incorporate these into trail development initiatives along these corridors where relevant & feasible. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG | Low |

Master Plans

Strategy A4: Develop master plans at key trail locations to ensure that facilities are appropriate to the trail network, cater for trail users and embrace potential synergies with other planning projects.

Rationale: Master Planning processes ensure that a strategic approach is taken to the development of key sites with consideration of broad contexts and that all stakeholders have the opportunity to contribute to site designs.

Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri (Heritage Zone)

Log of Knowledge Park will be the western trailhead of the proposed Richmond Vale Rail Trail. It is anticipated that the development of this trail will significantly increase the number of trail-related visitors to this park, and the wider region. While the proposed Rail Trail is still in the planning stages, it is important that this trailhead at Kurri Kurri is appropriately developed to ensure that benefits of the rail trail project can be embraced, with promotion of the Cessnock LGA and its wider trails network.

Bimbadeen Lookout (Hunter Gateway & Outdoor Adventure Zones)

Bimbadeen Lookout is Council's premier location for scenic views. It is easily accessible from the highway, is frequently visited by locals and visitors and is a strategically important destination along the Great North Walk. The parcel of land is Council-controlled and there is significant opportunity to enhance the functionality of the space and the broader visitor experience.

Richmond Main Precinct (Heritage Zone)

The precinct surrounding the Heritage-listed Richmond Main Colliery provides significant opportunity as a recreational trails hub, linking with the precinct's heritage and natural features. The Richmond Vale Rail Museum currently operates at this precinct, there are informal trail networks used by mountain bikers (i.e. Pit Horse Paddock), and there is significant opportunity to promote this as another trail destination for users of the proposed Richmond Vale Rail Trail.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------|------------|
| A4.1 Develop and implement a master plan for Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri, to ensure that the site provides infrastructure, in line with the <i>Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan</i> , as the LGA's trailhead location for the proposed Richmond Vale Rail Trail. | Short | CCC, TRG | High |
| A4.2 Develop and implement a master plan for Bimbadeen Lookout to ensure provision of a positive experience, appropriate promotion of trail opportunities from the site, sufficient infrastructure and acknowledgment of the area's multi-faceted historical context. | Short | CCC, Crown Lands, TRG | High |
| A4.3 Develop a master plan for the Richmond Main Precinct with the objective of establishing a recreational trails hub with integration into the site's cultural and natural heritage. Inform with the outcomes of the audit of the informal trails network. [Refer also Action B12.3]. | Longer | CCC, RVRM, Crown Lands, TRG | High |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Strategic Outcome B: Sustainable & Accessible Trails Network

| Key Trail Information Points | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| <p>Strategy B1: Ensure that up-to-date on-ground trail information is provided at strategic locations across the LGA. Ensure this information is consistent with other information sources, and appropriately reviewed & updated.</p> <p>Rationale: The Trails Network Vision identifies locations for 'Key Trail Information Points' across the LGA. These strategic locations have been determined based on proximity to trails (current & future/potential), the likeliness to attract new trail users, and the availability of support facilities. These 'Key Trail Information Points' are also sited at strategically important locations from a broader tourism perspective, with opportunities to provide information on all of the region's visitor attractions, as well as recreational trails.</p> <p><u>Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri (Heritage Zone)</u></p> <p>Trailhead of the proposed Richmond Vale Rail Trail and existing trailhead of the Kookaburra Trail which may provide key strategic connections into the town centre and beyond.</p> <p><u>Bridges Hill, Cessnock (Hunter Gateway Zone)</u></p> <p>Convent Hill and Bridges Hill are a key recreation destination in Cessnock. The precinct has been recently upgraded through the implementation of the <i>Bridges Hill Convent Hill Master Plan</i> and this has also included some upgrades to the Convent Hill Loop Trail.</p> <p><u>Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre, Pokolbin (Hunter Gateway, Wine Country & Outdoor Adventure Zones)</u></p> <p>The existing centre point for Visitor Information in the LGA. Strategically located in the Hunter Valley Wine Country district and has potential to link to existing trails in Pokolbin.</p> <p><u>Wollombi Village (Wilderness & Outdoor Adventure Zones)</u></p> <p>An existing key visitor destination in the south west of the LGA, attracting a high volume of visitors, with strong natural and cultural heritage features. Close proximity to Yengo National Park which has Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and forms part of the Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness Area.</p> | | | |
| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
| B1.1 Install a 'Primary Trailhead' sign at the Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre, Pokolbin. This sign will identify the trails offered in the Hunter Valley Wine Country, as well as provide an overview of the wider trails network. This sign should also promote other outdoor adventure opportunities within the LGA. There may be future potential to integrate this site as a trailhead (start/end point) for a Wine Country Trails Network (including cycle, walk and/or drive trails). [Refer also Action B 12.1]. | Medium | CCC, VIC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| B1.2 At the appropriate point of the progression of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail project, install a 'Key Trail Information' sign at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri. This trailhead sign will provide trail information relating to the Richmond Vale Rail Trail, as well as provide an overview of the wider trails network. [Refer Action A4.1]. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B1.3 Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign at Bridges Hill, Cessnock. This sign will identify the trailhead for the adjacent Convent Hill Loop Trail, as well as provide an overview of the wider trails network. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B1.4 Install a 'Key Trail Information' sign in the Wollombi Village Centre. This sign will identify the trails offered in the local area (e.g. Wollombi Brook Nature Walk), as well as provide a comprehensive overview of the wider trails network, particularly opportunities to explore trails in Yengo National Park and the associated World Heritage Wilderness Area. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B1.5 Ensure that trail information provided on maps for the region are consistent with the information on new 'Key Trail Information' signs. Identify the location of the Key Trail Information Points for trail users to gain on-ground trail information. [Refer also Strategy C2]. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, VIC, DNSW, Trail promoters | Low |
| B1.6 Ensure that 'Key Trail Information' signs are designed to have information regularly updated to keep information provision up-to-date as the trails network changes over time. [Refer also Strategy C2]. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B1.7 Ensure that appropriate resources/budget are allocated for regular review & update of information provided at Key Trail Information Points. [Refer also Strategy C2] | Ongoing | CCC, TRG | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

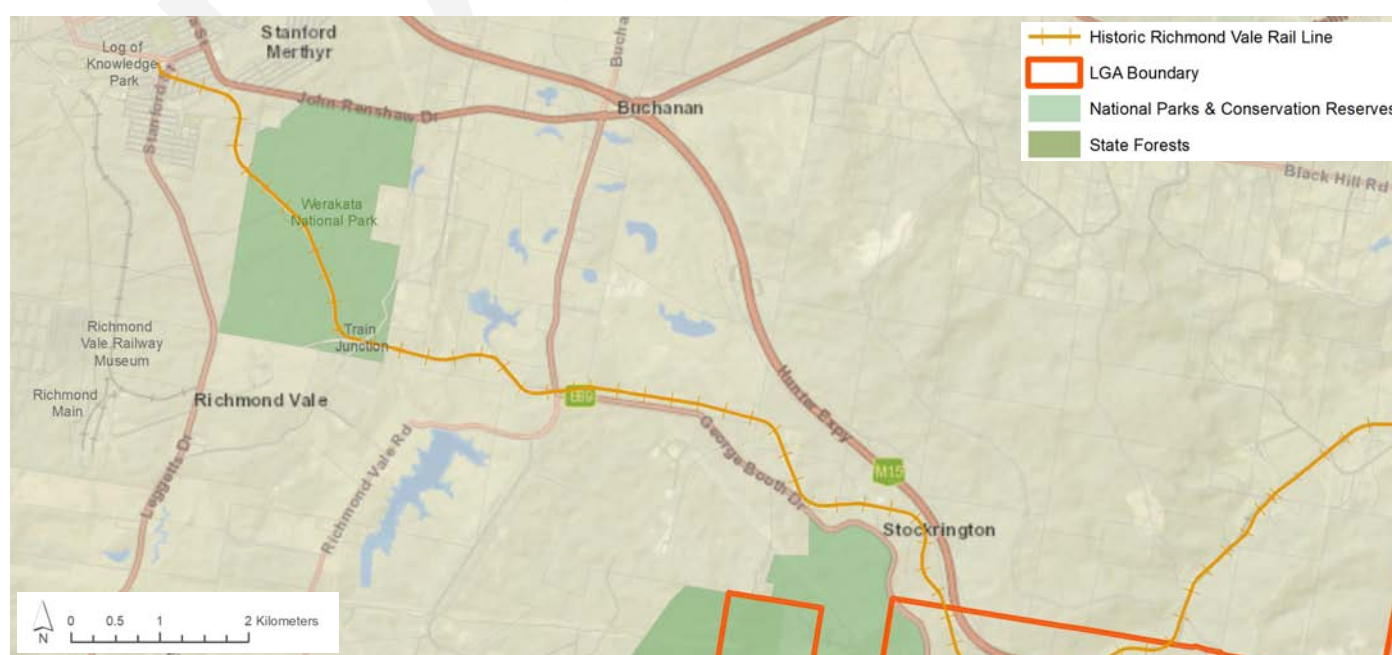
Richmond Vale Rail Trail

Strategy B2: Continue to progress with the development of a recreational trail along the Richmond Vale Rail Line.

Rationale: The development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail (RVRT) (Heritage Zone) has significant community support and anticipation, and has been subject to comprehensive planning processes. Once developed, this trail is anticipated to bring significant benefits to the Cessnock LGA relating to economy, recreation, health, transport, conservation, culture and heritage. New trail development opportunities will arise through the development of this trail, such as strategic connections and loops linking to the rail trail. This trail development initiative will increase the strategic significance of Log of Knowledge Park, with increased visitor numbers seeking trail opportunities.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|----------------------|------------|
| B2.1 In collaboration with Newcastle, Lake Macquarie LGAs and National Parks & Wildlife Services continue with planning and approval processes for the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. [Refer also Action A1.5]. | Short | CCC, LMCC, NCC, NPWS | High |
| B2.2 At the appropriate point of the progression of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail project, develop trailhead infrastructure at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri, to provide information about the Richmond Rail Trail, other trail experiences and promote connectivity to the town centre. [Refer also Action B1.2]. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B2.3 Enhance existing trails (i.e. Kookaburra Trail) and develop new trails where possible from Log of Knowledge Park, establishing this site as a Secondary Trailhead for the region's trail network. Ensure that these trails are appealing to the anticipated visitors associated with the Richmond Vale Rail Trail. [Refer also Strategy B6]. | Short | CCC, MLALC, TO, TRG | Low |
| B2.4 Assess the feasibility of developing a link from Richmond Vale Train Junction (fork in the rail network at Richmond Vale) to Richmond Main, utilising the National Park fire track to Leggerts Drive, followed by Council land to the historic Colliery. (See location map below). [Refer also Action A4.3]. | Medium | CCC, RVRM, TRG, NPWS | Low |

Location Map - Richmond Vale Rail Trail



10 Strategy & Action Plan

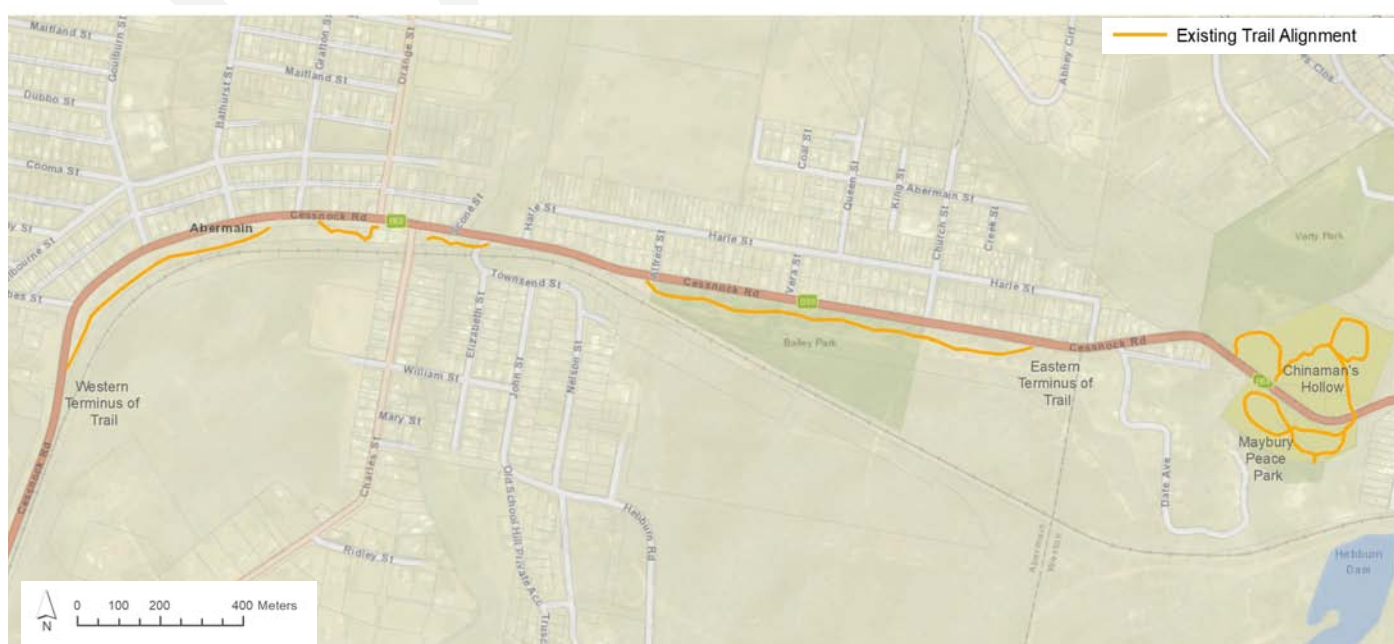
Connectivity between Cessnock & Kurri Kurri / Abermain to Weston Link

Strategy B3: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure between Cessnock and Kurri Kurri and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: Cessnock and Kurri Kurri are home to the largest populations within the LGA, with much of the population concentrated in a narrow urban spread between these two towns. These are two key towns in the Hunter Gateway Zone and the Heritage Zone. It is important that there is connectivity between these two population centres via active transport (i.e. walk/cycle). Currently, there is a trail referred to as the Abermain to Weston Link which has sections of shared use path and is not connected in all sections. There are challenges to connecting these sections with the wider trails network, such as the narrow verge limiting opportunities for a trail along Cessnock Road between Date Ave and Maybury Peace Park. Opportunities may present to enhance these connections through off-road trails, either adjacent to Cessnock Road (partly existing), alongside the active South Maitland rail corridor or through bushland areas. It is anticipated that the life of the active railway line is limited and a trail along this alignment may present as a key opportunity in the future.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|---------------|------------|
| B3.1 Explore options and undertake works to enhance connectivity of the existing trail (incorporating sections of shared-use path) between Forbes St and Date Ave, with consideration of the opportunity to meet the needs of a Grade 1 (universal access) walking trail. (See location map below). | Short | CCC, RMS | Medium |
| B3.2 Investigate options to extend the trail east beyond Date Ave to Chinaman's Hollow/Maybury Peace Park, Weston. [Refer also Action B5.5]. (See location map below). | Medium | CCC, RMS | Low |
| B3.3 Investigate options to extend this trail east to Kurri Kurri and west to Cessnock, and to establish trailheads with appropriate signage at the start/end destinations. Consider building upon the existing shared pathway and/or opportunity to utilise the South Maitland Rail Corridor. | Medium | CCC, RMS, SMR | Low |
| B3.4 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Colliery Link Trail. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |

Location Map - Abermain to Weston Link



10 Strategy & Action Plan

Convent Hill Loop Trail (Hunter Gateway Zone)

Strategy B4: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure at Convent Hill and Bridges Hill and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: This trail is currently marketed as the “Convent Hill Start Your Heart Walk” which was the name determined in 2006 for the preparation of the Cessnock LGA Walking Trails Guide, a new name is proposed which is reflective of the trail experience: “Convent Hill Loop Trail”. Convent Hill and Bridges Hill are a key recreation destination in Cessnock. The precinct has been recently upgraded through the implementation of the *Bridges Hill Convent Hill Master Plan* and this has also included some upgrades to the Convent Hill Loop Trail. Further improvements, particularly relating to trail signage, will enhance the trail experience and clearly articulate the trail experience on offer.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-----------|--------------|------------|
| B4.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Convent Hill Loop Trail. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B4.2 Establish trailhead infrastructure (including a Key Trail Information Sign) at Bridges Hill Park to include trail map and information. [Refer also B1.3]. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B4.3 Install trailhead sign at the Millfield St / Yango St entrance to include trail map and information. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B4.4 Install wayfinding and interpretation signs in line with the Bridges Hill Park Playground and Access Improvement Project | Short | CCC | Low |
| B4.5 Upgrade trail infrastructure in line with the <i>Bridges Hill Park Playground and Access Improvement Project</i> (i.e. stairs). | Short | CCC | Medium |

Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail (Hunter Gateway Zone and Heritage Zone)

Strategy B5: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure at Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: Chinaman's Hollow and Maybury Peace Park provides the LGA's only Grade 1 Walking Trail experience, which is suitable for people with reduced mobility. The trail surface is in good condition, and the loop trail offers connectivity between the car park to the north of Cessnock Road (Chinaman's Hollow) and the playground to the south (Maybury Peace Park). A section of the trail has been decommissioned (across the bridge to Hebburn Dam) and the content on the existing trailhead sign is not up to date.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|--------------|------------|
| B5.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Chinaman's Hollow & Maybury Peace Park Trail. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B5.2 Decommission the existing (and outdated) trailhead signage at Chinaman's Hollow, which is located adjacent to the road/not along the trail alignment. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B5.3 Establish new trailhead signage at Chinaman's Hollow, at the beginning of the trail alignment, outlining key trail information (including map, distance, difficulty etc.). | Short | CCC | Low |
| B5.4 Promote this trail as a Grade 1 Universal Access Trail, suitable for people with limited fitness and mobility. Ensure that the required support facilities (i.e. disabled car parking) are maintained and that the trail surface remains smooth and free of obstacles to be suitable for mobility devices such as wheelchairs. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B5.5 Investigate options to extend the trail west to meet the existing trail between Date Ave, Weston and Abermain. [Refer also Action B3.2]. | Medium | CCC, RMS | Low |

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| Kookaburra Trail (Heritage Zone) | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------------|------------|
| Strategy B6: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Kookaburra Trail and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network. | | | |
| <p>Rationale: The Kookaburra Trail is currently promoted as a walking trail from Log of Knowledge Park to Lang Street, Kurri Kurri, through bushland areas. The trail experience requires improvements, as the bushland area is currently subject to unauthorised uses (i.e. motorised vehicles and high levels of illegal rubbish dumping). The trail has way markers along the route, noting “Kookaburra Walk - Kurri Kurri Tidy Towns”, however the trail alignment on the ground remains unclear due to an extensive network of unauthorised trails throughout the bushland area.</p> <p>This trail provides a strategic connection between Log of Knowledge Park and the footpath on Lang Street which connects to the Kurri Kurri town centre. As this trail will share a trailhead with the proposed Richmond Vale Rail Trail, it is recommended that the trail re-branded from ‘Kookaburra Walk’ to ‘Kookaburra Trail’, as the key user group is likely to be mountain bike riders.</p> <p>While this trail is managed by Cessnock City Council under a Crown license, the land either side of the trail alignment is subject to an Aboriginal Land Claim. This trail may provide a key opportunity for a partnership with Traditional Owners to improve the trail experience while conserving the biodiversity values of this bushland and showcasing Indigenous cultural heritage. It is noted that this area is of critical importance as a nesting ground for the Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater.</p> | | | |
| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
| B6.1 Maintain Kookaburra Trail as a key strategic link between Log of Knowledge Park and Lang Street, providing for connectivity to the Kurri Kurri Town Centre. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B6.2 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Kookaburra Trail. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B6.3 Work with local community/organisations to clear rubbish from the bushland areas surrounding the Kookaburra Trail. [Refer also Actions B13.3]. | Short | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B6.4 Work with the landowners to close unauthorised vehicle access points to the bushland areas surrounding the Kookaburra Trail. | Short | CCC, MLALC, TO | Low |
| B6.5 Work with the landowners to decommission the network of unauthorised tracks adjacent to the Kookaburra Trail to enhance the trail experience and protect the natural environment. | Short | CCC, MLALC, TO | Low |
| B6.6 Improve the trail surface through landscaping/design to restore the trail from effects of gully erosion. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B6.7 Develop trailhead infrastructure at Log of Knowledge Park, Kurri Kurri, which provides information about the Kookaburra Trail as well as the Richmond Vale Rail Trail and connectivity to the town centre. [Refer also Actions A4.1, B1.2, B2.2]. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B6.8 Remove existing waymarker signage along the Kookaburra Trail and replace with modern waymarkers reflecting the updated trail name and ensuring that trail alignment is clearly articulated. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B6.9 Consider opportunities to include easy Technical Trail Features adjacent to the trail to enhance the appeal for beginner mountain bike riders. | Medium | CCC, TRG | Low |

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Kitchener Dam Loop Trail (Heritage Zone)

Strategy B7: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Kitchener Dam Loop Trail and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: The Kitchener Dam Loop Trail provides a walking trail experience through bushland surrounding the Kitchener Dam. While the trailhead is located on land managed by Council in Kitchener Poppet Head Park, part of the trail is located within the Werakata State Conservation Area. This section of the National Park is subject to high volumes of use by unauthorised trail bike activity which can detract from the trail experience. All future plans and initiatives with this trail will need to be in consultation or collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Services.

Trail information is currently provided within Poppet Head Park, through display of a trail map with some basic trail information. This presents significant opportunity for improvement, with a trailhead sign established at the car park where the trail starts/ends. Waymarking signage along the trail is currently provided, with arrows directing users in an anti-clockwise direction.

Various infrastructure along the trail requires upgrade and ongoing maintenance, such as a lookout over the dam and boardwalks in sections of the trail subject to inundation.

There is also opportunity to integrate interpretative signage with the interesting historical context of the site, particularly as it relates to the Poppet head on display in Poppet Head Park.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-----------|----------------|------------|
| B7.1 Adopt a consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Kitchener Dam Loop Trail. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B7.2 Decommission the network of unauthorised tracks adjacent to the loop trail with the objective of enhancing the trail experience and protecting the natural environment. | Short | CCC, NPWS | Low |
| B7.3 Establish new local-level trailhead signage at the car park adjacent Poppet Head Park (at the beginning of the trail alignment) outlining key trail information (including map, distance, difficulty etc.). | Short | CCC, NPWS | Low |
| B7.4 Review the location of existing waymarker signage and install additional waymarker information at intersections where required. | Short | CCC, NPWS | Low |
| B7.5 Develop and install interpretation signage along the trail to integrate the site's interesting historical context, particularly as it relates to the Poppet Head on display in Poppet Head Park. | Short | CCC, NPWS, TRG | Low |
| B7.6 Work cooperatively with National Parks and Wildlife Services to maintain and upgrade infrastructure that is on park. | Short | CCC/NPWS | Medium |

Wollombi Brook Nature Walk (Wilderness Zone and Outdoor Adventure Zone)

Strategy B8: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Wollombi Brook Nature Walk and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: The Wollombi Brook Nature Walk is looked after by Wollombi Valley Landcare volunteers who progressively work on rehabilitating the area's vegetation. The short trail provides a great opportunity for locals and visitors to experience the village's natural areas and provides access to the Wollombi Brook. The trail has well-kept support infrastructure (seating and picnic table) and there is existing interpretation signage acknowledging the Aboriginal custodians and the cultural significance of the region. There may be opportunity to further promote this high-quality trail experience.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|---------------|------------|
| B8.1 Support Wollombi Valley Landcare to continue to maintain and progressively improve the Wollombi Brook Nature Trail and the surrounding natural area. | Ongoing | CCC, WVL | Low |
| B8.2 Support the Wollombi community to integrate the Wollombi Brook Nature Walk with a wider network of walk trails from a Secondary Trailhead located in the Village Centre, which also promotes the Village Walks. [Refer also B1.4]. | Short | CCC, WVL, TRG | Low |

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Wine Country Stroll (Wine Country Zone)

Strategy B9: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Wine Country Stroll and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: The Wine Country Stroll offers the opportunity to experience the Vineyard District via walking or bike. The trail forms the very northern extension of the Great North Walk, along McDonalds Road from Pokolbin Mountains Road to Broke Road. While the trail is located along a scenic road verge and offers a pleasant trail experience, there is opportunity to significantly improve the trail with signage, surface improvements (in sections) and improvements to the connectivity of the trail alignment.

Both the northern and southern trail start/end points are not distinct locations. The southern end of the trail abruptly ends to the north of Pokolbin Mountains Road, particularly for bike riders who are then merged onto the road. At the northern end, the trail ends at the back of McGuigan Cellars with no signage or directions to other destinations. The condition of the trail surface is varied across different sections. The trails audit identified that the southern end of the trail just north of Pokolbin Mountains Road) is does not meet required safety standards for a trail or shared use path. The trail ends abruptly, merging onto McDonalds Road in an unsafe manner. There is no clear, safe route identified for walkers and cyclists are forced onto the road in close proximity to a corner.

The rest stops at Pokolbin Park and Pokolbin Rest Area are key destinations along the trail with various amenities, however the only trail signage evident relates to the Great North Walk. There is likely to be opportunity to enhance this trail and integrate it into a wider network of trails across Pokolbin and the wider Vineyards District (marketed as Hunter Valley Wine Country). There may also be opportunity to link this trail into the network of bike-ways/shared use paths across the Cessnock and Singleton LGAs.

As key features along this trail are local businesses (e.g. Cellar Doors), it is suggested that initiatives and plans to develop this trail should be in consultation with local representatives.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|------------|
| B9.1 Determine the consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Maintain the name Wine Country Stroll. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B9.2 Determine the most appropriate start/end locations for the Wine Country Stroll. Ensure that these locations have adequate car parking and support facilities, and space for trailhead signage. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B9.3 Undertake a Road Safety Audit of the intersection of the shared-use path/bikeway with McDonalds Road, to ensure connectivity and adherence to safety standards for all road/path users, and address improvements accordingly. | Short | CCC, RMS | Medium |
| B9.4 Establish new trailhead signage at the identified appropriate locations [refer Action B9.2] outlining key trail information (including map, distance, difficulty etc.). | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B9.5 Review the location of existing waymarker signage and install upgraded/new waymarkers where required. Consult with Crown Lands to determine opportunities to integrate with new waymarkers for the Great North Walk. | Short | CCC, TRG, Crown Lands | Low |
| B9.6 Explore options and establish a wider network of recreational trails across Pokolbin, and more broadly across the Wine Country region, which integrates with Wine Country Stroll and the key trail information point at the Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre. [Refer also Actions B1.1 and B12.1]. | Short | CCC, TRG, VIC, SCC, RMS | Medium |
| B9.7 Through upgrades and maintenance, ensure provision of infrastructure in line with the <i>Recreation and Open Space Strategy</i> at Pokolbin Park and the Pokolbin Rest Area. | Short | CCC, TRG | Medium |

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Hunter River Nature Walk (Wine Country Zone)

Strategy B10: Enhance and develop the trail and support infrastructure along the Hunter River Nature Walk and promote as an integral part of a wider trail network.

Rationale: The Hunter River Nature Walk provides a trail with scenic views and access to the Hunter River. The site, and the trail, has an interesting history associated with work camps in the valley. The existing trail is not well defined and the current trailhead and waymarking signage is in poor condition, with low functionality. There is no trail information provided and there are informal tracks to the side of the trail alignment. The environment surrounding the trail requires environmental works including weed and rubbish management. There is evidence of some maintenance work adjacent to the trail, such as erosion control blankets.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|-------------------------------|------------|
| B10.1 Determine the consistent, relevant and representative name for this trail. Suggested: Maintain the name "Hunter River Nature Walk". | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B10.2 Work with the local community/organisations, including the recently established Landcare group, to clear rubbish from the Hunter River Nature Reserve. [Refer also Action B13.3]. | Short | CCC, Landcare, TRG, Community | Low |
| B10.3 Decommission the network of unauthorised tracks adjacent to the Hunter River Nature Walk with the objective of enhancing the trail experience and protecting the natural environment. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B10.4 Improve the trail surface through landscaping and design to mitigate the effects of gully erosion along the trail. | Short | CCC, Landcare | Low |
| B10.5 Install new trailhead signage at the car park where the trail starts/ends outlining key trail information (including map, distance, difficulty etc.). | Short | CCC | Low |
| B10.6 Install directional signage at the alternative car park to direct trail users to the trailhead. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B10.7 Remove existing waymarker signage along the Hunter River Nature Walk and replace with modern waymarkers ensuring that trail alignment is clearly articulated. | Short | CCC | Low |
| B10.8 Develop and install interpretation signage along the trail to integrate the site's interesting historical context. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Cross-Regional Trails and Vehicle Touring Routes

Strategy B11: Enhance, extend and integrate cross-regional trails and vehicle touring routes/drive trails.

Rationale:

Great North Walk

The Great North Walk northern extension currently extends to Pokolbin, however there is no distinct trailhead (start/end point) for the trail of regional significance. There is a need to review the current alignment and determine where the appropriate location for the trailhead is. Currently, the trail extends north up McDonalds Road, past Pokolbin Park and Rest Area, almost to Broke Road. There is no signage or infrastructure to attract potential users to the trail. The trailhead should include an informative sign (including map etc), car parking and amenities.

Route 33 / The Convict Trail

Route 33 is the tourist drive route which brings users from Sydney to the Hunter Valley Wine Country, as far as Branxton. There is significant promotion of this route and some on-ground signage for drivers. The next review of this route presents a great opportunity to link trail users between key trail destinations, via car. Current promotion of Route 33 is closely linked with 'the Convict Trail'. While these routes share their heritage features, the alignments are not exactly the same. There may be significant opportunities to further integrate these experiences with the recreational trails network, particularly where the themes are aligned.

Potential Drive Trails

Some of the region's key natural and heritage features are integrated into the recreational trails network, and there is significant opportunity to link these experiences through the identification, development and promotion of themed vehicle touring routes. Such themes may include:

- **Indigenous Heritage:** For example, Yengo is of great significance to local Aboriginal People, it is known to be as important and significant a site as Uluru is to Central Australia Aboriginal culture. There are also existing acknowledgments of Aboriginal heritage values at places such as the Wollombi Brook Nature Walk and Bimbadeen Lookout. Songlines may also provide an opportunity for promotion of the Songlines across the region.
- **European Heritage:** For example, there are numerous sites across the LGA with remnants from the region's historic collieries, railways and convict histories.
- **Biodiversity Features / Bird Watching:** For example, Cessnock is known among bird enthusiasts and conservation groups for its critical importance as a nesting ground for the Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater. Existing Birding Routes are promoted and are likely to require ongoing support from Council, particularly regarding access to public land for birdwatching.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|------------|
| B11.1 Encourage Crown Lands to resolve issues with land ownership and agreements to enable improvements to the Great North Walk, particularly across the Pokolbin Spur section. | Short | CCC, Crown Lands, TRG | Low |
| B11.2* Enhance the connectivity and consistency of the Great North Walk experience, infrastructure and information across the Cessnock LGA, with an initial focus on the Pokolbin Spur section. | Short | CCC, Crown Lands, TRG | Medium |
| B11.3* Determine the appropriate northern trailhead location for the Great North Walk, with consideration of: Hunter Valley Gardens (close to existing start/end point); Pokolbin Park; Pokolbin Rest Area; Pokolbin Mountains Road; Hunter Valley Visitor Information Centre [Refer also Action B9.2]. | Short | CCC, Crown Lands, TRG | Low |
| B11.4 Review and update existing cross-regional vehicle touring routes (e.g. Route 33, Convict Trail) to provide clear information and to integrate with the recreational trails network where possible, particularly where themes are aligned. | Short | CCC, TRG, DNSW | Medium |
| B11.5 Support the promotion of the Cessnock Birding Routes and advocate for access to bird watching sites where appropriate. | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG, HBOC | Low |
| B11.6 Develop a series of vehicle touring routes which showcase the region and are integrated with the recreational trails network, linking key trail activity areas based upon common themes such as Indigenous heritage, European heritage and biodiversity features. | Short | CCC, TRG, DNSW | Medium |
| B11.7 Support concepts and embrace opportunities to link the Cessnock LGA to the Blue Mountains via a long-distance trail (or series of trails) through the Blue Mountains World Heritage Wilderness Area. | Longer | CCC, NPWS, TRG, DNSW, Crown Lands | High |

*Subject to the outcomes of Action B11.1

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Key Trail Activity Areas (Informal/Unauthorised)

Strategy B12: Formalise existing informal trail networks where there is community support these provide benefit to the community.

Rationale:

The Hunter Valley Wine Region attracts vast amounts of domestic and international visitors each year. It is Australia's oldest wine region, and also the closest to Sydney. Many other world-class wine destinations across Australia have embraced cycle tourism in their wine regions and are investing in cycle trails showcasing the region with stops at various cellar doors and cafes. This is a key opportunity for the Cessnock LGA, particularly around Pokolbin where the landscape is ideal for cycling and there is a high density of picturesque and diverse destinations to showcase. Cessnock City Council is currently working with the Pokolbin/Wine Country community to develop a Land Use Strategy/Plan which will also consider opportunities for trails and associated infrastructure. The development of a cycle trail network should be developed in alignment with the outcomes of the Land Use project.

In addition to the formal trails network across the Cessnock LGA, there are also a number of 'key activity areas' where trail activities are occurring in an informal manner, often unauthorised and not managed by the land owner. Some of this is occurring on Council managed land (e.g. Pit Horse Paddock, or informal routes around Abernethy), while other key trail activity areas exist on private land (e.g. the Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ), land designated under Native Title).

It is noted that the Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement is investigating and reviewing the land uses and zoning of the HEZ and this may have implications upon the future trail opportunities in this area.

While Pit Horse Paddock contains an informal/unauthorised network of mountain bike trails, this network is well established and has a demonstrated user base. This provides a key opportunity for the region to cater for beginner/intermediate mountain bike riders in a designated area, and to co-locate this with complementary uses and activities (e.g. showcasing historical and environmental values).

Informal trail systems are frequently poorly designed, including "shortest distance" routing with steep grades and alignments parallel to the slope. Such routes are rarely sustainable under heavy traffic and subsequent resource degradation can be severe. Creation of multiple routes to common destinations is another frequent problem, resulting in "avoidable" impacts such as unnecessary vegetation/soil loss and fragmentation of flora/fauna habitats.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|-----------|-----------------------|------------|
| B12.1 In alignment with the Land Use Strategy/Plan for the Pokolbin/Wine Country area, formalise a network of cycle trails to showcase the region to tourists via bike, and to drive economic benefit to the region. Consider opportunities to collaborate with the Singleton City Council to establish this as a cross-border cycle network. | Medium | CCC, TRG, SCC | Medium |
| B12.2 Subject to the outcomes of investigations through the Cessnock Local Strategic Planning Statement, support the use of the privately-owned Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ) for authorised recreational uses, including events such as the Mountain Bike Orienteering National Championship event, cycling club-use and recreational mountain bike riding. [Refer also Strategy C1]. | Ongoing | CCC, Private | Low |
| B12.3 Undertake an audit of the informal trails network at Pit Horse Paddock (Richmond Main Precinct) in consultation with Crown Lands, to identify future trail opportunities. [Refer also Action A4.3]. | Medium | CCC, TRG, Crown Lands | Low |
| B12.4 Determine the most appropriate and complementary uses (e.g. horse riding, bike riding, walking, camping, historical display/s) for the area surrounding the Abernethy Poppet Head and Dam, and formalise the trails network accordingly. | Medium | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B12.5 Support the continued conservation of bushland areas which have high conservation value (e.g. Kurri Kurri Bushland with Regent Honeyeater Nesting Sites) and consider opportunities to establish recreational trails which showcase these features in a sensitive manner. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, MLALC, TO | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Provision of Positive Trail Experiences

Strategy B13: Provide positive trail experiences across the Cessnock LGA.

Rationale: Not all trails across the Cessnock LGA provide the desired positive, natural trail experience desired. Many of the bushland areas incorporating trails are used for unauthorised dumping of rubbish. This creates an unpleasant environment and does not reflect positively on the region. While it is acknowledged that this is a multi-faceted and widespread issue, there is a need to address this to enable the Cessnock LGA Trails Network to be appealing and attract use by residents and visitors. The NSW Police's *Guidelines for Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design* (CPTED) provide a range of measures available to support this. One important consideration is limited vehicular access into bushland areas.

There is a strong history and culture associated with trail bike riding and four wheel driving in the Cessnock LGA, including high-profile success of local people in such sports. There is extensive unauthorised use of trail bikes and four wheel drive vehicles in many of the bushland areas across the Cessnock LGA. This causes degradation of environmental values and recreational trail experiences for legitimate trail users. There is a need to address this issue through provision of opportunities to participate in these activities on authorised and dedicated trails. It is acknowledged that the process of determining suitable sites for such activities can be a complex process. This will likely be a project for Council to undertake with its partners in consultation with stakeholders and the community.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-------------------|---|------------|
| B13.1 Ensure that trail experiences are safe and shared-use zones are created through signage where recreational users are in close proximity to roads. In particular, use safety signage on verges where horse riders are known to travel on informal routes, to raise driver awareness of this occurring. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B13.2 Develop and promote a trail-user code of conduct for the trails network to ensure that users are informed about their expected behaviour and trail etiquette. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| B13.3 Collaborate with local trail enthusiasts and user groups to develop a program for removal of rubbish from bushland areas. [Refer also Actions B6.3 and B10.2] and work collaboratively with various sectors to address illegal rubbish dumping across the LGA. | Short/ Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Landcare, Crown Lands, Private, Police | Low |
| B13.4 Undertake a study for the provision of suitable areas to cater for the demand of noisy and hard-to-locate activities, such as trail bike riding and four wheel driving, with the objective to authorise & clearly define areas for these activities in appropriate areas. | Medium | CCC, TRG, Crown Lands | Low |
| B13.5 Promote authorised areas for trail bike riding and four wheel driving to clearly demonstrate where these activities are supported within the LGA (e.g. Yengo National Park & Watagans Nation Park). This promotion could occur through the development of a designated map/brochure specifically designed for these users. | Short | CCC, TRG, NPWS | Low |
| B13.6 Integrate the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design into trail development projects to reduce the occurrence of anti-social activity. | Ongoing | CCC | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Local Trails

Strategy B14: Support trail projects for towns/communities where there is demonstrated community support for such a concept, benefits to be leveraged and where Council resources are available.

Rationale: In addition to the trail development initiatives outlined in the Strategy and Action Plan, there are likely to be additional requests from the community for Council to support various trail initiatives across the LGA. Where there is demonstrated community support and potential benefit to the region, these requests should be considered in the context of their alignment with the Principles of this Strategy.

The Wollombi has recently established new trails within the village to showcase key features. It is important that these trails are integrated into the wider trails network of the LGA and that the community is supported to continue to offer this local trail.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-----------|------------------------------|------------|
| 14.1 Continue to support the concept of a mountain bike park within the LGA (e.g. 'The Precinct' at Aberdare/Neath). | Short | CCC, Police, MLALC, NSW Gov. | High |
| B14.2* In addition to the priorities outlined in the Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan, enhance trail linkages in Branxton, utilising the existing pedestrian underpass, which showcase Anvil Creek & the adjacent sports precinct (i.e. Miller Park), facilitating active lifestyles. (See location map on following page). | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.3* Formalise a recreational trail through Stanford Merthyr (near the off-leash dog park & adjacent bushland). (See location map on following page). | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.4* Formalise a recreational trail, utilising the Bushfire Asset Protection Zone and informal trails, from Log of Knowledge Park to Stanford Merthyr. (See location map on following page). | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.5* Formalise an off-road cycling trail utilising the existing informal trail adjacent to Kearsley Road, from Lake Road to Abernethy, (See location map on following page). | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.6* Create a loop trail utilising available corridors along creeks in urban areas, such as Black Creek & Bellbird Creek (Cessnock). (See location map on following page). | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.7* Develop a local heritage trail in Cessnock if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.8* Develop a local heritage trail in Kurri Kurri if there is sufficient heritage information available. Consider opportunity to integrate with the existing Kurri Kurri Mural Walk. | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.9 Continue to support the Wollombi community with management and promotion of the "Wollombi Village Heritage Walk". | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.10* Develop a local heritage trail in Greta if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| B14.11* Develop a local heritage trail in Branxton if there is sufficient heritage information available. | Longer | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |

*Subject to demonstrated community support and initiative

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Location Maps

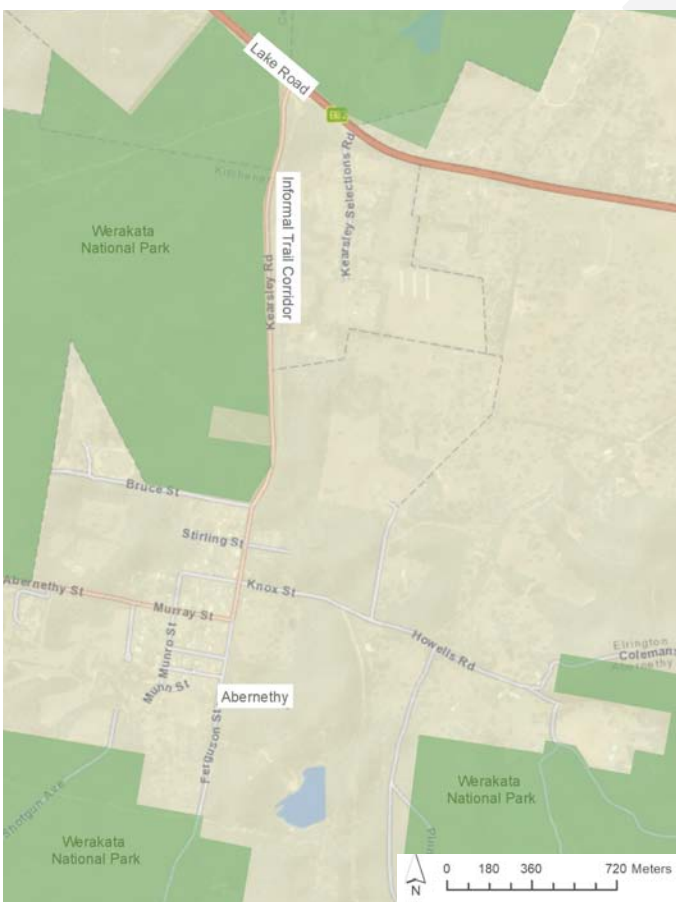
B14.2: Branxton



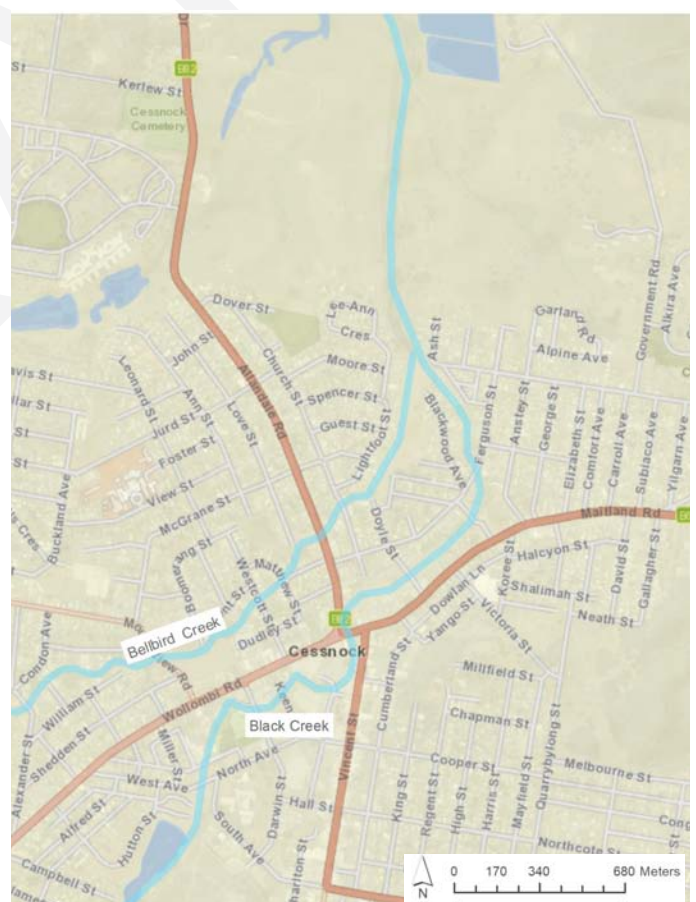
B14.3 & 14.4: Stanford Merthyr



B14.5: Abernethy to Lake Road



B14.6: Cessnock: Black Creek & Bellbird Creek



10 Strategy & Action Plan

Strategic Outcome C: Participation, Promotion and Marketing

| Programs & Events | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------|------------|
| Strategy C1: Improve health and wellbeing across the LGA through programs and events which promote regular physical activity and active lifestyles. | | | |
| <p>Rationale: Cessnock City Council is home to trail-related programs and events, such as the weekly parkrun at Nukulba, the annual Wollombi Wild Ride and in September 2020 the region will host the Australian Mountain Bike Orienteering Championship. There are also programs hosted within the LGA to promote awareness and appreciation of the natural environment, such as BioBlitz.</p> <p>Programs and events play an important role in promoting trail activities to residents and visitors. It is important that events and programs which encourage physical activity/healthy lifestyles and appreciation of the natural environment are supported and promoted.</p> <p>The Cessnock LGA's population has high rates of physical inactivity, overweight/obesity and preventable mortality compared to the average across the State. There is increasing need to provide and promote accessible and affordable physical activity opportunities to encourage regular exercise and healthy lifestyle habits.</p> <p>There is a need to continue to raise awareness in the community about the conservation value of the bushland area's across the LGA, and address broader societal issues which contribute to the rate of illegal rubbish dumping.</p> <p>The rate of volunteerism in the Cessnock LGA has increased between the past two Census surveys. Many trail projects are dependent on local community leadership & volunteer efforts which are recognised as invaluable resources. It is imperative that volunteers and community groups are effectively supported, recognised & valued in their roles so that they can continually contribute to the trails network across the LGA.</p> <p>A number of existing organisations offer low-cost, regular physical activity programs which could be introduced into Cessnock LGA communities, with Council and community support. For example the Heart Foundation Walking Groups, or the establishment of more parkrun events across the LGA. Such programs are designed to be implemented by proactive community members/volunteers, and local government can support and facilitate this through providing the required infrastructure (e.g. trails) and promoting participation.</p> <p>There are also a number of online platforms/apps which are increasingly promoting physical activity programs, setting physical challenges for users and offering a level of virtual competition.</p> | | | |
| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
| C1.1 Provide a supportive framework for new and existing trail-related programs and events to grow and diversify, promoting healthy lifestyle choices and appreciation of the natural environment. | Ongoing | CCC | Low |
| C1.2 Work with organisations and local communities to establish regular & free fitness groups/programs (e.g. Heart Foundation Walking Group, parkrun) utilising trails in the region. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| C1.3 Host a calendar of events which encourages local residents to live active lifestyles and utilise trails. This may involve existing and new events/programs such as fun runs, virtual races (i.e. via apps), triathlons or guided group walking programs. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| C1.4 Encourage and promote the use of virtual challenges utilising apps/online platforms. These technologies may also be integrated with community events, fun runs and regular fitness groups. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| C1.5 Support healthy workplace programs which reduce sedentary behaviour and promote active lifestyles. | Ongoing | CCC | Low |
| C1.6 Embracing the LGA's increasing rate of volunteerism, investigate opportunities to expand current volunteer programs to promote local community involvement in trail maintenance, management and events - ensuring that volunteers are effectively supported, recognised and valued in their roles. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| C1.7 Establish and maintain partnerships with neighbouring Councils and event organisers to link compatible destinations via cross-border programs and events (e.g. events utilising the Great North Walk, the future Richmond Vale Rail Trail). | Ongoing | Hunter Region LGAs | Low |
| C1.8 Work with event organisers to ensure the ongoing sustainability of programs & events occurring in the LGA (e.g. Wollombi Wild Ride, parkrun) and to consider opportunities to host more programs & events more frequently. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Signage, Mapping & Information

Strategy C2: Improve the provision of mapping and trail information across the Cessnock LGA.

Rationale: The availability and quality of trail-related information is highly variable across the region, and the information that is available is not always complete/current, nor does it always reflect existing conditions on the ground. There is no single, comprehensive source that provides a consistent level of information suitable to inform prospective trail users and promote the existing trails network to residents or visitors.

Through the development of Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy, existing Council-controlled trails have been audited, including GPS mapping of trail alignments. This spatial information can now be maintained as a database using geographic information systems (GIS) and used to reliably develop trail maps. Such maps can be distributed through printed copies as well as online interactive platforms. Maps are an integral element of trail promotion to ensure that trails can be easily identified/located and that trail users are aware of the trail features.

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|---|----------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| C2.1 Identify suitable trails managed by other agencies to be promoted in Council's suite of trail information. Ensure that Council is informed of any changes requiring updates to trail information. | Ongoing | CCC, NPWS, Crown Lands, Private | Low |
| C2.2 Ensure that all trail information sources use the correct Trail Classification System (i.e. Australian Walking Track Grading System; the IMBA Trail Difficulty Rating System; The Horse Trail Difficulty Rating System) to inform prospective users about the trail's level of difficulty and key features. | Ongoing | CCC, DNSW, VIC, Trail Promoters | Low |
| C2.3 Maintain the ground-truthed GIS data prepared as part of this Strategy to ensure that accurate GIS files remain available for the preparation of trail maps, and for use in management/ planning. Advocate for the sharing of such information so that other organisations/community members can also reliably promote the region's trails. | Ongoing | CCC | Low |
| C2.4 Develop and maintain a website (or webpage hosted by Council) that provides comprehensive details of all trail opportunities within the region, to include interactive mapping and downloadable resources with links to other websites where relevant (e.g. NPWS trail information). This could be integrated into existing Council and/ or regional tourism websites. | Short/ Ongoing | CCC, DNSW, VIC, Trail Promoters, TRG | Low |
| C2.5 Develop a contemporary resource (i.e. booklet/brochure also available online) which details the best trails from around the region with supporting photographs and clearly articulated maps. This may be integrated into the existing Official Visitor Guide and associated maps. | Short | CCC, DNSW, VIC, Trail Promoters, TRG | Low |
| C2.6 Advocate for the appropriate budget/resources to update trail information maps/brochures and information sources on a regular basis (i.e. every 3 years or as required). [Refer also Strategy B1] | Ongoing | CCC | Low |
| C2.7 In line with the relevant signage strategies, update and enhance visitor information signage at key points across the LGA to include information about the region's Trails Network and other recreational opportunities. [Refer also Strategy B1]. | Ongoing | CCC, DNSW, RMS | Low |
| C2.8 Ensure Visitor Information Centre staff are comprehensively informed and regularly updated to provide accurate and updated trail information to visitors. | Ongoing | CCC, VIC | Low |
| C2.9 Investigate opportunities for the inclusion of Aboriginal language and histories in signage. | Short | CCC, TO | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Promotion & Marketing

Strategy C3: Improve the promotion and marketing of trail opportunities across the Cessnock LGA

Rationale: The development of a co-ordinated approach to marketing of the region's trail network will greatly assist promotion - clearly conveying information to the local community and visitors. Consistent branding across the trails network is recommended, with consideration given to the development of a trail logo that could be included on promotional material, signage and provide a consistent image that is recognisable across the region. It is important that all signage aligns with Council's Signage Strategies (2015).

| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
|--|-----------|---------------------------|------------|
| C3.1 Develop a coordinated approach to marketing Council's trails network through the development of a Trails Marketing Strategy, this could also be integrated into a Council or region-wide tourism strategy. | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| C3.2 Ensure that all trail signage is designed in alignment with the Council's Signage Strategies (2015). | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| C3.3 Develop a Trails Network logo for inclusion on all future trail signage of Council-managed trails. | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| C3.4 Ensure that appropriate trail information signage is placed at strategic locations to ensure locals and visitors are aware of the trail experiences offered across the LGA. [Refer also Strategy B1]. | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| C3.5 Remove dysfunctional, damaged and illegible trail signage and replace with contemporary and appropriate signage. | Short | CCC | Low |
| C3.6 Integrate the region's best and most distinct trail opportunities into packaged tours / day trips bringing visitors into the Cessnock LGA (e.g. Pokolbin Spur section of the Great North Walk, subject to outcomes of Action A1.4). | Short | CCC, DNSW, TRG | Low |
| C3.7 Encourage use of online interactive platforms for trail-related activities on formalised trails, contributing to user-generated information and online databases of trails (e.g. Strava, Trailforks, MapMyFitness, Maps.ME). | Ongoing | CCC, DNSW, TRG, Community | Low |
| C3.8 Update and maintain information about existing trails within the Cessnock LGA on key third-party interactive online platforms (e.g. WildWalks, TrailForks). Continually assess relevance and reliability of information provided by users, and engage with new and emerging platforms as appropriate. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Trail Promoters | Low |

10 Strategy & Action Plan

Strategic Outcome D: Development, Management & Maintenance

| Management Structures | | | |
|--|-----------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Strategy D1: Ensure the management structures for all current and future trails are clearly defined. | | | |
| Rationale: To ensure that all trails are managed appropriately, management responsibilities must be clearly identified alongside the development of maintenance schedules. Where trails cross multiple land tenures it is essential that trail management & maintenance responsibilities are assigned to a designated body, which may be a government agency (local or state) or an established community group with the necessary resources and expertise. | | | |
| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
| D1.1 Establish a Cessnock LGA Trails Reference Group which may comprise of representatives from Council and community groups, with relevant stakeholder groups invited to attend as and when relevant (e.g. NPWS, peak trail bodies, neighbouring Councils). [Refer also Action A2.1]. | Short | CCC, User Groups, TO, DNSW, Community | Low |
| D1.2 Prepare a Trail Management Plan for each of Council's trails to ensure that all trail management roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. Encourage other trail managers to prepare such Plans for their trails, particularly where Council has a role. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| D1.3 Based upon the roles outlined in Trail Management Plans [Action D1.2], ensure adequate trail maintenance schedules and procedures are defined, resourced and adhered to. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| D1.4 Develop a Management and Maintenance Manual as a guide for all trail managers, community and volunteer groups. | Short | CCC, TRG | Low |
| D1.5 Engage proactively and collaboratively with partners in key trail development projects (e.g. Richmond Vale Rail Trail) to ensure that the roles and responsibilities of all partners are clearly defined, and that effective and sustainable governance structures are established. | Short | CCC, TRG, NCC, LMCC, NPWS | Low |

Strategic Outcome E: Community, Tourism & Economic Development

| Community & Economic Development | | | |
|--|-----------|--------------------------------|------------|
| Strategy E1: Use trail development and provision as an economic and community development tool. | | | |
| Rationale: Established trail networks and their associated activities can provide significant benefits to local communities, particularly from an economic and tourism perspective. Hosting of special events that utilise trail networks should be supported to assist in raising the profile of the existing and future trail networks and to provide sustained economic benefits to local communities. There is opportunity to create vibrant recreational trail precincts across the LGA, which over the long-term could provide significant economic and tourism benefits to the region. | | | |
| Action | Timeframe | Key Partners | Cost Range |
| E1.1 Support the development of trail-related special events in the LGA, such as mountain bike racing, orienteering, trail rides, walks, rogaining and other appropriate activities. [Refer also Strategy C1]. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| E1.2 Encourage communities, townships and businesses connected to the existing/future trails network to become 'walker, bicycle and/or horse rider friendly'. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| E1.3 Encourage businesses (e.g. tour operators, associated retail outlets, hospitality venues, accommodation providers) to promote, utilise and enhance trails and associated visitor experiences. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| E1.4 Encourage trail managers and interest groups to share trail information, such as GIS data, trail and asset management resource. [Refer also Action C2.3]. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| E1.5 Support initiatives which accommodate cycle tourists on train and bus transport across the wider region. | Ongoing | CCC, NSW Gov., DNSW | Low |
| E1.6 Support and encourage initiatives which promote both conservation and appreciation of the region's distinct natural landscapes, flora, fauna and environmental value. | Ongoing | CCC, TRG, Community | Low |
| E1.7 Promote Aboriginal Tourism to people who live in and visit the Cessnock LGA, in line with the <i>Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 - 2020</i> . | Ongoing | CCC, LALC, TO, TRG, Community. | Low |

11

Implementation & Review



Totem Poles, Wollombi

11 Implementation & Review

Resourcing

An ongoing commitment of funds and resources will be required to achieve the objectives of the Strategy. A range of funding options will need to be considered, together with the sourcing of potential grant programs.

Opportunities to form partnerships with other potential stakeholders will need to be sought where this would deliver synergies and successful outcomes assisting in the completion of the Action Plan.

Potential external funding sources are available through federal and state government programs which could support the development of trail projects. In addition to government funding programs, private and commercial sector opportunities may also be available. Government funding programs continually change so it is recommended that the relevant websites are frequently reviewed.

Australian Government

Building Better Regions Fund

Supports the Australian Government's commitment to create jobs, drive economic growth and build stronger regional communities into the future.

Refer www.business.gov.au/Assistance/Building-Better-Regions-Fund

Infrastructure Stream

The Infrastructure Projects Stream supports projects which involve the construction of new infrastructure, or the upgrade or extension of existing infrastructure that provide economic and social benefits to regional and remote areas.

Community Investments Stream

The Community Investments Stream funds the following community activities: new or expanded local events, strategic regional plans, and leadership and capability strengthening activities. These projects will deliver economic and social benefits to regional and remote communities.

Stronger Communities Programme

Provides each of the 151 federal electorates with up to \$150,000 to fund small capital projects that improve local community participation and contribute to vibrant and viable communities.

Refer www.business.gov.au/assistance/stronger-communities-programme

Incubator Event Fund NSW

Provides organisers of events in regional NSW with seed funding to support their first or second years of activity. Seed funding is offered for activities that are likely to establish the event as a driver of visitation.

<https://www.business.gov.au/assistance/incubator-event-fund-nsw>

Move It AUS - Participation Grant Program

Provides support to help organisations get Australians moving and to support the aspiration to make Australia the world's most active and healthy nation.

Refer www.sportaus.gov.au/grants_and_funding/participation

Volunteer Grants

Support the efforts of volunteers - can be used towards the cost of essential items that help make the work of volunteers easier, safer, and more enjoyable, such as equipment, training, transport and background screening.

Refer www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/volunteer-grants-2018

NSW Government

Resources for Regions

Aims to deliver improved local infrastructure to mining-related communities and improve economic growth and productivity in NSW.

Refer: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-growth-fund/resources-for-regions/>

Growing Local Economies Fund

Invests in the crucial projects needed to support job creation and economic growth in regional NSW.

Refer: www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-growth-fund/growing-local-economies/

Regional Growth Environment & Tourism Fund

To increase tourist visitation by investing in regional environment and tourism infrastructure, particularly focusing on assets that will grow and further diversify NSW regional economies.

Refer www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-growth-environment-and-tourism-fund/

11 Implementation & Review

NSW Government (continued)

Community Building Partnership Program

Grants for community infrastructure projects that:

- Deliver positive social, environmental and recreational outcomes
- Promote community participation, inclusion and cohesion

Refer www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/projects-and-initiatives/community-building-partnership/

Stronger Country Communities Fund

Investment in infrastructure projects in regional NSW communities to improve the lives of residents and enhance the attractiveness of these areas as vibrant places to live and work.

Refer www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/regional-nsw/regional-growth-fund/stronger-country-communities/

Local Sport Grant Program

To increase regular and on-going participation opportunities in sport and active recreation, address barriers to participation and assist sport clubs provide quality service to their members, with four project types; Sport development; Community sports events; Sport access; Facility development.

Refer <https://sport.nsw.gov.au/clubs/grants/localsport>

Flagship Event Fund

Supports events held in Regional NSW that have been running for more than two years and offers grants specifically to support marketing activities aimed at increasing visibility and attracting visitation to the event from outside its local area.

Refer www.destinationnsw.com.au/tourism/business-development-resources/funding-and-grants/regional-flagshipevents-program

My Community Project

All about local ideas, local projects and local decisions. Projects must align with one or more of the following program categories: Accessible, Cultural, Healthy, Liveable, Revitalising or Safe communities.

Refer www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/projects-and-initiatives/my-community-project

Commercial and Private Sector

Commercial and private sector funding is often used by organisations to assist with facility developments and ongoing operations. Opportunities such as facility naming rights and in-kind donations of labour and materials are a potential resource for new facility developments and upgrades.

Yancoal's Community Support Program

Invests in community groups working in the areas of:

- Health
- Social and community
- Environment
- Education and training.

In 2018, the Yancoal Community Support Program invested more than \$1 million into local initiatives across Australia. Applications submitted in January are considered annually.

Refer <https://www.yancoal.com.au/page/en/sustainability/community/>

Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC) Community Partnerships

Provides support to initiatives that fit into the following focus areas:

- Rail Safety
- Mental Health/Wellbeing
- Environment

Refer <https://www.artc.com.au/community/community-investment/>

Jetstar's Flying Start Program

Provides grants of up to \$30,000 to support community groups and organisations to fund a project that will enrich their local community.

Refer www.jetstar.com/au/en/flyingstart

Sunsuper's Community Grants Program

Assist not-for-profit organisations or community group dreams of helping to create brighter futures for Australians or a more active community or support others to live better.

Refer <https://dreamsforabetterworld.com.au/community-grants>

11 Implementation & Review

Strategy Review, Evaluation & Update

This Strategy will need to be adequately resourced, to deliver identified strategies and actions, ultimately delivering the overall vision for the Cessnock LGA Trails Network.

The implementation of the Strategy and Action Plan should be continually monitored by Council staff, in collaboration with the Trails Reference Group, with annual reports to Council. The overall progress should be evaluated after five years, with amendments to the strategies, actions and supporting information as required.

Trails Reference Group

The establishment of a Trail Reference Group [Refer Action A2.5] will significantly support the successful implementation of the Strategy and ensure that initiatives are reflective of evolving Council, community and user group needs and aspirations.

Not-For-Profit Organisations

Australian Sports Foundation - The foundation operates the Fundraising4Sport Program to increase opportunities for Australians to participate in sport or excel in sport performance.

Refer www.asf.org.au

Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal – provides grant funding for charitable purposes that benefits the residents of Australia’s rural, regional or remote communities.

Refer www.frrr.org.au/cb_pages/grants.php

Trusts and Foundations - There are numerous trusts and foundations established in Australia and a number provide funding for projects such as this. Often they are established by large corporations.

Refer www.philanthropy.org.au

Peak Bodies, Associations and Clubs - Contributions from clubs and associations developing facilities and other initiatives is common. This may include funds generated through fundraising efforts, loans and savings. Peak bodies and associations may also have funds which could be contributed towards the projects.

Other Trails Resourcing Mechanisms

There are other not for profit organisations that provide on the ground support in relation to trail maintenance and development, such as:

- Green Corps
- Conservation Volunteers Australia
- “Friends of” Groups

Appendices



Hunter Valley Wine Country, Pokolbin

Appendices

List of Appendices

- A: Literature Review
- B: Trail Names & Signage
- C: Consultation Outcomes

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Appendix A

Appendix A: Literature Review

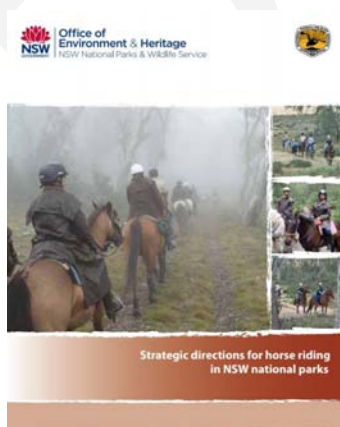
State Plan - NSW 2021



Key goals supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 3. Drive economic growth in regional NSW
- 11. Keep people healthy and out of hospital
- 14. Opportunities for people with a disability
- 20. Build liveable centres
- 22. Protect our natural environment
- 23. Increase opportunities for people to look after their own neighbourhoods and environments
- 24. Make it easier for people to be involved in their communities
- 25. Increase opportunities for seniors
- 26. Foster partnerships with Aboriginal people
- 27. Enhance recreation opportunities
- 32. Involve the community in decision making

Strategic Directions for Horse Riding in NSW National Parks (2012)



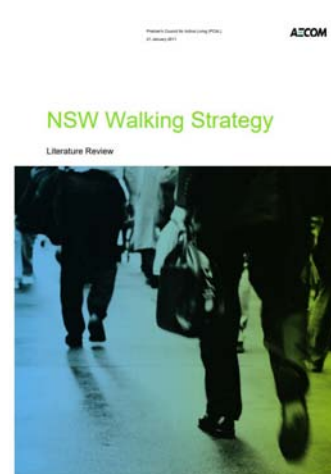
This Strategy provides a framework to improve horse riding opportunities over the short, medium and longer term in the National Parks across NSW.

NSW Sustainable Mountain Bike Strategy (2011)



Vision: Excellence in mountain biking is a normal part of recreation management in NSW national parks and reserves, where high quality experiences are provided in a sustainable manner, and where riders are advocates for parks.

NSW Walking Strategy Literature Review (2011)



This report gathers evidence about opportunities to enhance walking across NSW, across varying demographics and geographies.

Appendix A

Hunter Regional Plan 2016 - 2036



This Plan provides a framework to guide land use plans, development proposals and infrastructure funding decisions across the Hunter Region to 2036.

Vision: The leading regional economy in Australia with a vibrant new metropolitan city at its heart.

Key directions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 9: Grow tourism in the region
- 14: Protect and connect natural areas
- 17: Create healthy built environments
- 18: Enhance access to recreational facilities and connect open spaces
 - 18.1 Facilitate more recreational walking and cycling paths including planning for the Richmond Vale Rail Trail.
 - 18.2 Deliver connected biodiversity-rich corridors & open spaces for community
 - 18.3 Enhance public access to natural areas
 - 18.4 Assist councils to develop open space and recreation strategies that identify a range of accessible open space and recreation opportunities; and integrate open space, active transport and recreation networks
- 19: Identify and protect the region's heritage
- 20: Revitalise existing communities
- 26: Deliver infrastructure to support growth and communities

Hunter Valley Visitor Economy Destination Management Plan (2013)

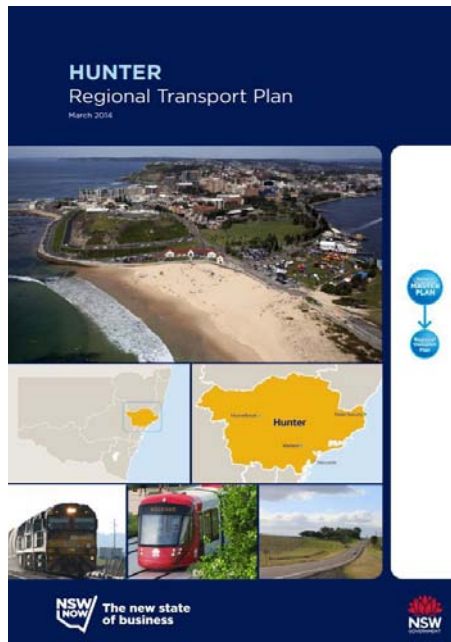


This Plan represents the outcome of destination management planning for the Wine Country Tourism region which incorporates Singleton and Cessnock LGAs. The cornerstone of this program is the Council's commitment to a destination approach to the development, marketing and visitor services of the region.

Key actions/tasks supported by the Trails Strategy:

- Deepen the Hunter Valley Destination Appeal by building on the experience and themes of: Food/ Wine; Nature; Heritage ; Culture ; Golf/Sports
- Undertake eMapping integration: e.g. Google Maps etc. Contact appropriate mapping management companies to ensure all geographical relevant information is supplied and correct for products, services and points of interest in the region.
- Work with mapping companies to develop travel/ tour itineraries and themed touring guidance throughout the region
- Develop and implement a Bicycle/walking trails/ paths network across the Hunter Valley region.

Hunter Regional Transport Plan (2014)



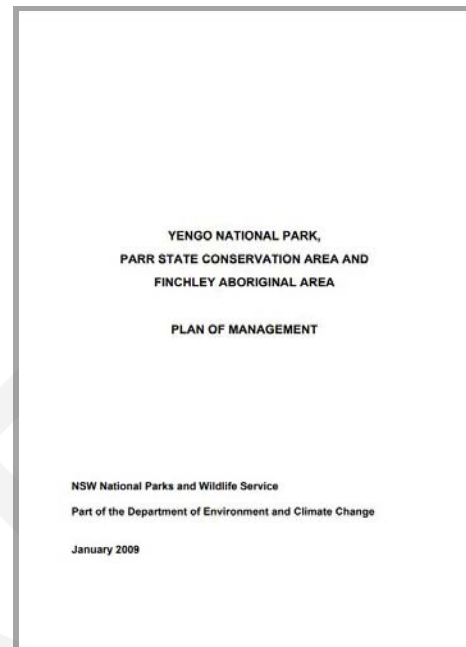
This Plan outlines specific actions to address the unique transport challenges of the Hunter region and considers the anticipated population changes into the future.

Key actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- Roll out the Walking Communities Program
- Connecting Centres Cycling Program
- Roll-out the Cycling Towns Program
- Improve information about walking and cycling routes and facilities

It is noted within this Plan that Cessnock has a network of disused rail lines which could provide opportunities for regional active transport links. It is outlined that the NSW Government had established a review process to evaluate the potential use of disused rail lines for walk and cycle trails.

Plans of Management: Parks & Protected Areas



Plans of management (PoM) are legal documents developed and maintained to guide how a National Park or Protected Area will be sustainably managed. They contain information about the natural environment, Aboriginal heritage, history, and recreational opportunities in a park, and are a requirement under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

PoM help guide the conservation of biodiversity, rehabilitation of landscapes and the protection of natural and cultural heritage, including protection of World Heritage values and management of World Heritage properties. They also include management principles for use of a park by Aboriginal people for cultural purposes, sustainable visitor or tourist use, natural resource management and land management practices.

Example PoM: Yengo National Park, Parr State Conservation Area and Finchley Aboriginal Area Plan of Management

Examples of policies:

- All horse riding activities in the parks will require consent and may be subject to fees.
- Horse riding, with permits, will only be on the designated management trails.
- The track and trail network will be managed for sustainable use with minimal impact.

Appendix A

Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036



This Plan sets out strategies and actions that will drive sustainable growth across Cessnock City, Lake Macquarie City, Maitland City, Newcastle City and Port Stephens communities, which together make up Greater Newcastle.

Vision: Australia's newest and emerging economic and lifestyle city, connected with northern NSW and acknowledged globally as:

- Dynamic and entrepreneurial, with a globally competitive economy and the excitement of the inner city and green suburban communities
- Offering great lifestyles minutes from beaches or bushland, the airport or universities, and from the port to the lake
- A national leader in the new economy, with smarter cities and carbon neutral initiatives, and with collaborative governance that makes it a model to others in creating & adapting to change.

Recreation opportunities such as the Great North Walk, Richmond Vale Rail Trail, and lookouts in the Watagan and Yengo National Parks are important assets and form part of the Blue and Green Grid.

Action 20.1: Identify improvements to active transport networks, and provide unobstructed well-connected pedestrian paths and a network of off-road separated cycleways to key destinations, including schools, employment hubs, shops and services.

Community Strategic Plan 2017 to 2027



The *Community Strategic Plan* is Council's highest level plan. The purpose is to identify the community's main priorities and aspirations for the future and to identify strategies for achieving these goals.

Vision:

Cessnock - thriving, attractive and welcoming.

Key objectives supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 1.1 Promoting social connections
- 1.2 Strengthening community culture
- 1.3 Promoting safe communities
- 2.1 Diversifying local business options
- 2.3 Increasing tourism opportunities & visitation
- 3.1 Protecting & enhancing the natural environment & the rural character of the area
- 3.2 Better utilisation of existing open space
- 4.1 Better transport links
- 5.2 Encouraging more community participation in decision making
- 5.3 Making Council more responsive to the community.

Recreation & Open Space Strategic Plan (2018)



The *Recreation and Open Space Strategic Plan* provides long term strategic direction for the future provision and management of recreation facilities, programs and services in the Cessnock LGA. It aims to identify the recreational needs of the community, the opportunities which currently exist and appropriate actions to meet identified gaps and improve current provision.

Vision: A diverse and enticing network of accessible and inclusive recreation and open space areas that integrate with the built and natural environment and provide for the active and passive recreational needs of the local and regional community now and into the future.

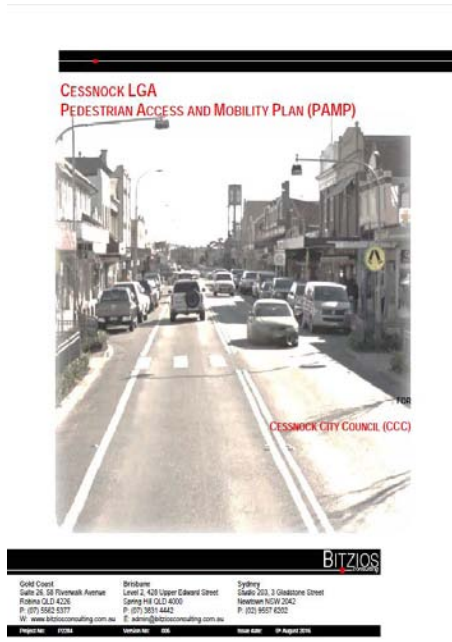
Strategic Objectives:

1. Create a recreation and open space network that is connected and accessible.
2. Provide recreation and open space facilities that are well utilised and inclusive.
3. Maximise the social, economic and environmental benefits derived from recreation and open space areas.
4. Take a leading role in the governance, leadership and advocacy of recreation and open space facilities and services.

Key actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 1.1.1 Develop and install consistent and visible directional signage for Council parks and reserves, consistent with Council's Signage Strategy.
- 1.1.3 Set aside lineal tracts of open space when planning Urban Release Areas to link key trip generators such as district and regional recreation facilities, schools & commercial areas.
- 1.1.4 Identify opportunities to preserve green corridors linking key regional and district recreation and open space areas.
- 1.3.1 Develop cycleways and end of trip facilities at parks and sports grounds in accordance with the Cessnock Cycling Strategy.
- 1.3.2. Continue to collaborate with stakeholders regarding the Richmond Vale Rail Trail.
- 2.3.3 Engage and collaborate with key external stakeholders early in the planning process of recreation and open space facilities.
- 2.4.1 Incorporate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles in Council's Guidelines for recreation & open space.
- 2.5.2 Continue to collaborate with community services that provide employment opportunities for isolated and vulnerable people (such as Work for the Dole and Caloola Vocational Services) in the maintenance and improvement of recreation and open space areas.
- 3.1.1 Activate spaces through participating in/ hosting programs and events such as parkrun.
- 3.4.4 Collaborate with NSW National Parks & Wildlife Services, Forestry Corporation of NSW and NSW Department of Lands to identify & promote recreational opportunities in National Parks, Conservation Areas & Crown Reserves.
- 3.6.1 Prepare a Conservation Management Strategy for open space areas containing areas and items of historical significance.
- 3.7.1 Incorporate Ecologically Sustainable Development and Water Sensitive Urban Design principles into Council's Engineering Guidelines for recreation and open space areas.
- 4.1.2 Complete the development of Plans of Management for Community and Crown Land under the care and control of Council.

Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan (2016)



The *Pedestrian Access & Mobility Plan* provide CCC with a long term strategy for the development of pedestrian routes and facilities with a focus on encouraging and increasing localised pedestrian activity within Cessnock.

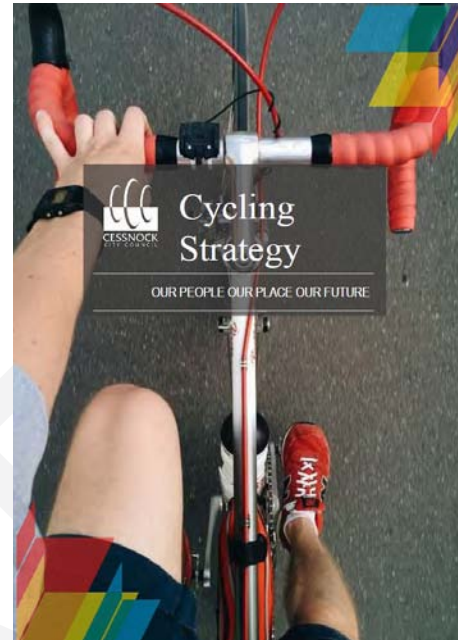
This report presents a plan to improve pedestrian safety and encourage more walking within the Cessnock LGA. Major pedestrian issues identified through discussions with community groups and residents were:

- Lack of connectivity of some footpaths
- Complete lack of footpaths in some locations
- Poor surface and sub-standard kerb ramps, sign posting and road marking.

A number of recommended works are proposed to improve pedestrian safety and amenity across the LGA and encourage residents and employees to undertake walking trips for shopping, work and leisure.

The Plan has a focus on urban areas, within the localities of Branxton, Cessnock, Greta, Bellbird, Kurri Kurri, Weston - providing mapping for these areas which outlines high, medium and low priority connectivity enhancements. This is a consideration for future trail plans to ensure that connectivity is provided beyond trails in natural areas and/or paths in urban areas.

Cycling Strategy (2016)



The *Cycling Strategy* sets Council's direction and framework to establish a bicycle friendly environment within the Local Government Area (LGA) over the next 20 years.

Vision: Create a safe, attractive and accessible cycleway network that improves the community's connections with key destinations and each other and encourages residents of all ages to use their bicycle for recreation and everyday transport.

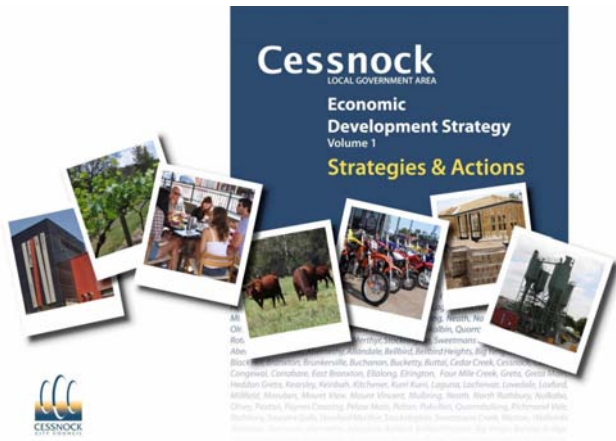
The vision is supported by four strategic objectives:

- Provide a cycling environment that is safe, secure and encourages residents to cycle without fear of accident or injury.
- Provide a cohesive and integrated bicycle network that is easy for cyclists to use.
- Integrate cycling into Council's planning processes.
- Promote awareness of cycling amongst the community and road and path user groups.

The Cessnock City Council Cycling Strategy and the Trails Strategy are integrally linked. While the Cycling Strategy has considered both on and off-road cycling opportunities, the Trails Strategy builds upon the opportunities identified for off-road cycling developments, such as mountain biking and the support for initiatives contributing to the development of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail.

Appendix A

Economic Development Strategy (2014)



This Strategy provides direction and framework for encouragement & facilitation of economic development within the Cessnock LGA

Key actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 5.2 Build community pride in, ownership of and respect for bushland areas within the LGA.
- 5.3 Integrate the National Parks, State Conservation Areas (SCAs) and State Forests into the recreation and tourism base of the LGA.
- 5.3.1 Encourage the NPWS and Forestry Corporation to identify local 'gems' and explore opportunities to increase access, establish walking trails and visitor facilities and information.
- 5.3.3 Improve the presentation of the National Parks, SCAs & State Forests, primarily through access points, signage, rubbish & weed removal.
- 5.6 Extend the cycling infrastructure
- 5.6.1 Continue to develop recreational and commuter cycleways throughout the LGA and provide support infrastructure in key locations.
- 5.6.2 Explore options for developing a network of mountain bike trails in the Werakata SCA and/or in the State Forests located in close proximity to rural villages, for recreation and as the basis for mountain bike tourism and possibly events.

Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2018 - 2020



This Plan provides opportunities for Council to demonstrate its ongoing commitment to reconciliation at a local level.

Vision: Build unity and respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians.... By walking together along our two paths, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other community members will work with Council to build a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 2.7. Promote cultural learning throughout the Cessnock LGA
- 2.8 Promote Aboriginal Tourism to people who live and visit the Cessnock LGA
- 3.5 Ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consulted when developing Plans of Management for community facilities and parks situated on community land and have a link to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures/heritage.

Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2017 - 2021



This Plan demonstrates Council's commitment to improving access and inclusion.

Goal four: Create liveable communities

Actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 4.4 The works required for existing community facilities to be compliant with the Australian Standard for Access and Mobility (AS 1428) is understood.
- 4.5 Council has a capital works program in place for its community and recreation facilities to improve access and inclusion.

Health & Wellbeing Plan 2017 - 2021



The Health and Well-being Plan provides Council with strategic direction for how it can play its part in improving the health status of residents living within the LGA. The aim of the Plan is to provide Council with localised actions that encourage healthy environments, liveable communities and well-being.

Key actions supported by the Trails Strategy:

- 1.1b The Cessnock local government area is an engaging and safe place to cycle.
- 1.1c) People are provided with an opportunity to engage and participate in physical activity programs as part of Council community events.
- 1.1d) Residents and visitors are provided with opportunity to engage in active living with a wide range of recreation and sporting facilities.
- 1.1e) All populations have opportunities to engage in healthy activities.
- 1.11c) Council facilities & events are inclusive of all people, including people who have physical, intellectual, cognitive, sensory disabilities and people with mental health conditions.
- 2.3b) Localities are designed to enable participation in active transport.
- 2.3c) Cultural and tourism opportunities that encourage participation in recreation activities are available to residents and visitors.

Appendix B: Trail Names & Signage

Defining Trail Names

The following definitions will assist in determining trail names which are consistent, relevant and representative to support trail promotion.

Circuit/loop trail: A trail which starts and ends at the same location. This can be communicated through the trail name and/or a corresponding symbol.

Linear trail: A trail which starts and ends at different locations. This can be communicated through a corresponding symbol.

Walking trail: A trail which permits the use of people on foot (walkers or runners).

Bridle trail or horse trail: A trail which permits the use of mountain bike riders

Mountain bike trail: A trail which permits the use of mountain bike riders, and usually requires a specialised mountain bike

Cycle trail: A trail which permits the use of bike riders, and does not require a specialised bike

Universal access trail: A trail which is accessible for persons with a disability with assistance. (I.e. Grade One in the Australian Walking Track Grading System)

Single-use trail: A trail which permits only one user type (e.g. walk, bike, horse ride).

Shared-use trail: A trail which permits use by any combination of trail users (e.g. walk, bike, horse ride)

Signage Types

There are a range of different types of recreational trail signage. These can be classified into the following:

1. Trailhead
2. Waymarking
3. Directional
4. Interpretive
5. Management/warning

The requirements of each type of sign are outlined on the following pages.

Note: These signage types are specific to recreational trails. It is important for the design and content of trail signage to also align with Council's Signage Strategies (2015).

1. Trailhead Signs

A trailhead sign is the primary sign at the location where a user can access a trail and/or a network of trails. A trailhead is an important point of reference and is the appropriate location for associated trail infrastructure such as amenities, car parking and picnic facilities.

As outlined in the best practice example below, It is important that trailhead signs are professionally displayed, simple to comprehend & include:

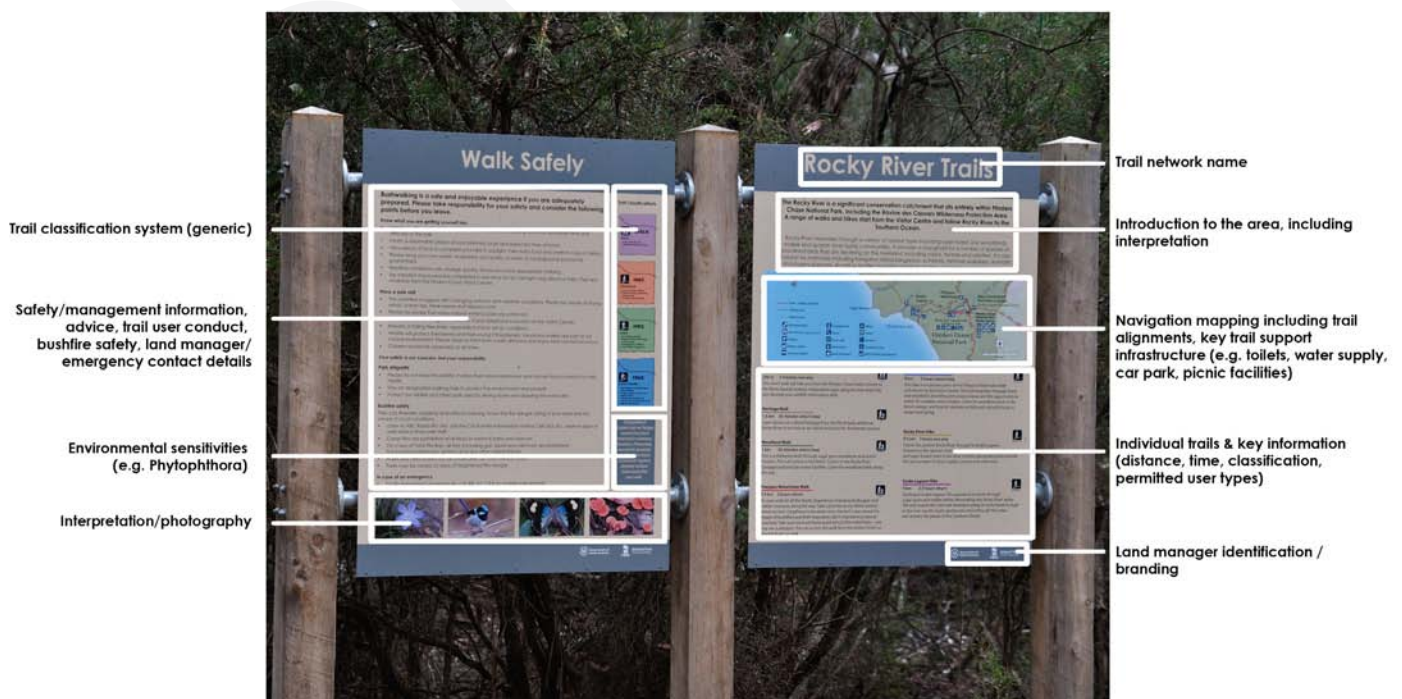
- Trail network name & map (if applicable)
- Trail name
- Trail map
- Trail grade/classification
- Trail distance & estimated time
- Trail type (loop, linear)
- Permitted trail user type/s (e.g. walk, bike, horse)
- Safety information (e.g. code of conduct, emergency contact information)
- Trail manager
- Website and/or QR code with further information

In addition, trailhead signs can be used to enhance the trail experience through providing specific historical, cultural, geological and/or environmental features that can be found along a trail as well as to promote other recreational trails in the region.

Many trail users take digital photographs of the trailhead sign to refer to whilst using the trail or scan a QR code which provides the trail map on a smart phone (appropriate only where mobile network coverage is available).



Trailhead Sign, Blue Mountains, NSW



Trailhead Sign, Rocky River Trails, SA

2. Waymarking Signs

Waymarking signs provide trail users with reassurance that they are following the correct alignment. The amount of waymarking necessary is dependent on the type of trail and the target user group; difficult trails designed for experienced users often require less waymarking signage although these users tend to rely more on detailed signage at the trailhead. Waymarking signs are required at the beginning of a trail and at regular intervals along the route as well as at trail intersections. Where one section of alignment is used for multiple trails, all trails should be waymarked on the same signpost with corresponding colours or symbols, as shown in the following figure.



Waymarking Signs, Bungendore Park, WA

3. Directional Signs

Directional signage is for directing users to or from the trailhead and other features, such as a nearby town, road or car park facility. These signs are particularly relevant at intersections where users are required to choose between a number of routes. It is usually appropriate to indicate the distance to/from the identified feature/s. Directional signage from a trail to a town can have positive economic impacts as users are more likely to impulsively visit the town if they are aware of its close proximity.



Directional Sign, Bright VIC

4. Interpretive Signs

Interpretive signage conveys educational material about the natural and/or cultural heritage features along a trail. This signage is designed to attract more users to the trail, engage trail users and provide for a well-rounded trail experience. Interpretive information can be provided at a trailhead and at points of interest along a trail.



Interpretive Signs, Bungendore Park, WA

5. Management/Warning Signs

Management/warning signage is used to advise trail users of dangers, risks or management policies such as trail user conduct, the temporary closure of a trail, bushfire threats or change of land management. The sign should clearly inform users of the risk and advise a precautionary action. These signs play an important role for both users and land managers in the risk and safety management of a recreational trail.



Management Sign, Kinchela Conservation Park, SA

Appendix C

Appendix C: Consultation Outcomes

Internal Stakeholder Meeting

The Internal Stakeholder Meeting was held on the 16th July at 1pm at the Cessnock City Council Depot. Delegates from varying departments attended. (E.g. Works & Infrastructure, HR, Health & Building, Strategic Planning, Finance, Community & Culture, Economic Development, Traffic). Key discussion points are noted in the following table.

| Topic | Discussion |
|--|--|
| Great North Walk | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Land tenure challenges around the Pokolbin Spur.• Council has decided to not promote in its current state.• Potential to be a high value trail experience if improved. |
| Rail Corridors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential key opportunity for trail corridors.• Many share corridors of Indigenous Song Lines. |
| Richmond Vale Rail Trail | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supporting documentation is at draft stage.• Currently undergoing technical surveys, Aboriginal heritage, environmental approvals etc. |
| 'The Precinct' Mountain Bike Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliant on external funding• Masterplan has been developed. |
| Pit-horse Paddock | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing informal trails on Council managed land.• Potential for formalisation of recreational trail activities. |
| Unauthorised Trail Use | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trail bike riding & 4WD impact safety/enjoyment of legitimate trail users. Need to cater for these activities elsewhere.• Rubbish dumping is a wide-spread issue. |
| Liability | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirement for liability to be managed for trail users, particularly on Council land. |
| Cycleways | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need improved connectivity. |
| Wine Country | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Key attraction to the region. |

Key External Stakeholder Meeting

The Key Stakeholder Meeting was held on the 17th of July at the Wine Country Motor Inn, Cessnock at 6 - 7.30pm. The meeting was attended by key stakeholders such as representatives from the Heart Foundation, Cessnock Chamber of Commerce, Kurri Kurri Rotary, Richmond Vale Rail Trail, Rail Trails Australia, Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council, Kurri Mongrels Mountain Bikers, Abernethy Healthy Lifestyles, TAFE NSW (Cessnock).

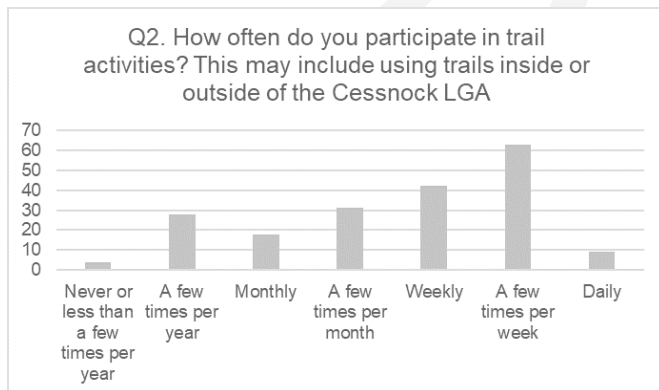
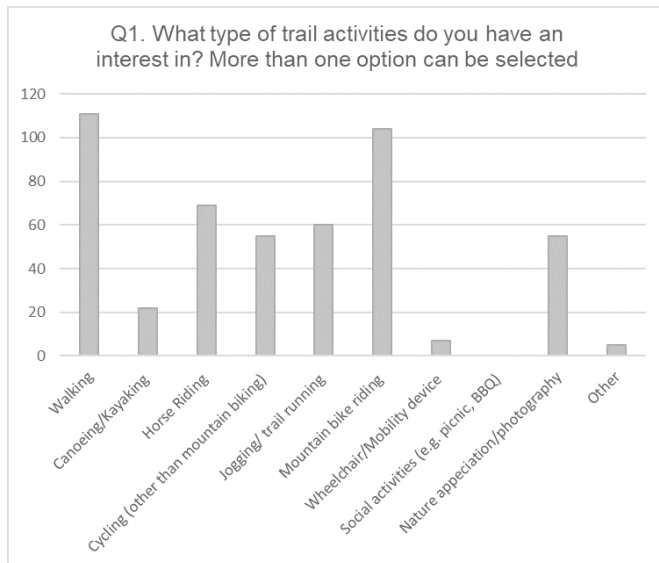
A brainstorming session was conducted at the inception of the meeting regarding additional stakeholders (e.g. rail corridor owners, Motorcycle & 4WD clubs, bushwalking club, Hunter Valley Trail Riding, Richmond Vale Rail Museum, parkrun, local police. Key discussion points are noted in the following table.

| Topic | Discussion |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Native Title Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vacant Crown land can be subject to Land Claim. If successful, land can be utilised for various purposes (e.g. housing estates) |
| Richmond Vale Rail Trail | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Essential for the region.• Key transport route to Newcastle.• Kurri Kurri Trailhead (Log of Knowledge Park) needs to improve (e.g. Kookaburra Trail). |
| Important Corridors | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Townships are connected via rail lines (many dis-used). Key opportunity to 'reconnect'.• Preserving rail corridors for future trail developments. Need for Council to have a 'Rail Corridor Preservation Policy'.• Song Lines – many significant song lines in the LGA. |
| Connected Network | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Make it easy to lead active life-styles (e.g. trails to town centre).• Quality, connected trails network, rather than quantity. |
| Trails Network Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Active lifestyle changes.• Trail projects are prioritised.• Positive health, tourism outcomes.• Economic transition (away from coal mining towards tourism).• Displays the region's Indigenous & European heritage. |

Community Survey Results

The community survey was available online via SurveyMonkey. A total of 195 community members responded to the survey. Key findings are noted over the following pages.

Trail Usage



Most Widely Known & Used Trails

The following questions aimed to gain insight into which trails are being used the most and what trail users like or dislike about these trails.

Q4. Please indicate which of the following trails/ areas you have used for trail-based activities (i.e. walking, mountain biking, horse riding, trail running). Where applicable, please provide a rating of the trail experience on offer.

Respondents were asked to rate the trail experience on offer as excellent, good, satisfactory, poor, very poor or not applicable. Of interest is that the rate for the not applicable category are considerably high for most trails listed, which may indicate that the respondents were not familiar with the location/trail offerings. The table below lists the trails in descending order based on the combined percentage score of the excellent & good rating.

| Trail/Area | User Rating | |
|--|-----------------|----------------|
| | Excellent/ Good | Not Applicable |
| Peace Park/Chinaman's Hollow Walking Trail | 40% | 40% |
| Werakata SCA | 36% | 23% |
| Watagans National Park | 36% | 30% |
| Heaton State Forest | 35% | 30% |
| The Great North Walk | 34% | 27% |
| Poppet Head Park | 33% | 30% |
| Yengo National Park | 29% | 40% |
| Olney State Forest | 23% | 51% |
| Pokolbin State Forest | 22% | 41% |
| Kurri Kurri Mural Walk | 21% | 65% |
| Kookaburra Trail | 19% | 40% |
| Convent Hill | 18% | 59% |
| Kurri Kurri Heritage & Nature Walk | 17% | 63% |
| Cessnock History Walk | 11% | 73% |

Note: The trails referenced in this question vary from the complete list identified in the trails audit. This is due to the preliminary (desktop) audit being used to inform the survey questions.

Other Trails Known/Used

Q5. Please provide the name and location of other trail(s) within the Cessnock LGA which are not listed above. This will assist us in creating a comprehensive trails inventory.

This process informed the trails inventory by identifying the following trails/areas for further investigation:

- Cessnock/ Kurri Kurri & surrounds (HEZ, Hospital)
- Richmond Main – Pit Horse Paddock
- Mt Bright
- Bellbird Heights / Bimbadeen Lookout
- Abernethy informal trails
- Congewai Valley
- Hebburn Dam, Weston
- Hunter River Reserve, Greta
- Mt Sugarloaf
- Rail Corridors (used and disused)
- Fire tracks, unsealed roads & unmade roads

Key Issues

Q6. Please list three trails which you have used within the last 12 months and identify what you like or dislike about them.

This process helped to identify the key issues with the existing trail network. These included:

- Rubbish dumping
- Unauthorised trail use (i.e. trail bikes, 4WD)
- Unclear about where trail activities are permitted
- Lack of trail support facilities
- Lack of connectivity between trails
- Unmaintained trails (e.g. infrastructure, weeds)
- Lack of clear signage
- Lack of up-to-date trail information/maps
- Lack of safe places for horse riding (danger riding next to roads, low levels of driver awareness)
- Not feeling safe in bushland areas

Desired Trail Experiences & Ideas

Q7. What type of trail experiences would you like to see offered in the Cessnock LGA in the future?

This process supported the identification of opportunities for trails and the trails network vision. Key respondent desires & ideas were:

- Trails in rail corridors (including progress with the Richmond Vale Rail Trail development)
- Formalised, well maintained trails with clear information, signage and promotion
- Improved connectivity between trails
- More options for active transport (e.g. link trails with the bikeway network)
- Development of a mountain bike park/precinct
- Shared use trails (walk, horse, bike)
- Cyclo-cross circuits
- Bike-packing options (long-distance)
- Horse riding loops with required camping & support facilities (e.g. yards, troughs etc.)
- Trails displaying cultural heritage (Indigenous and European)
- Dedicated areas for trail bikes and 4WD
- Opportunities for trail-related businesses (e.g. tours, camping, bike hire)

Respondent Profile

- **Gender:** (46 did not disclose)
75 female;
74 male;
- **Age:** (46 did not disclose)
35-50 years - 66;
51-64 years - 53
65 years+ - 17
25 - 34 years - 11;
19 - 24 years - 2.
- **Location:** (49 did not disclose)
Cessnock - 19;
Kurri Kurri - 9;
Heddon Greta - 8;
Mt Vincent - 7;
Congewai - 6;
Pokolbin - 5.

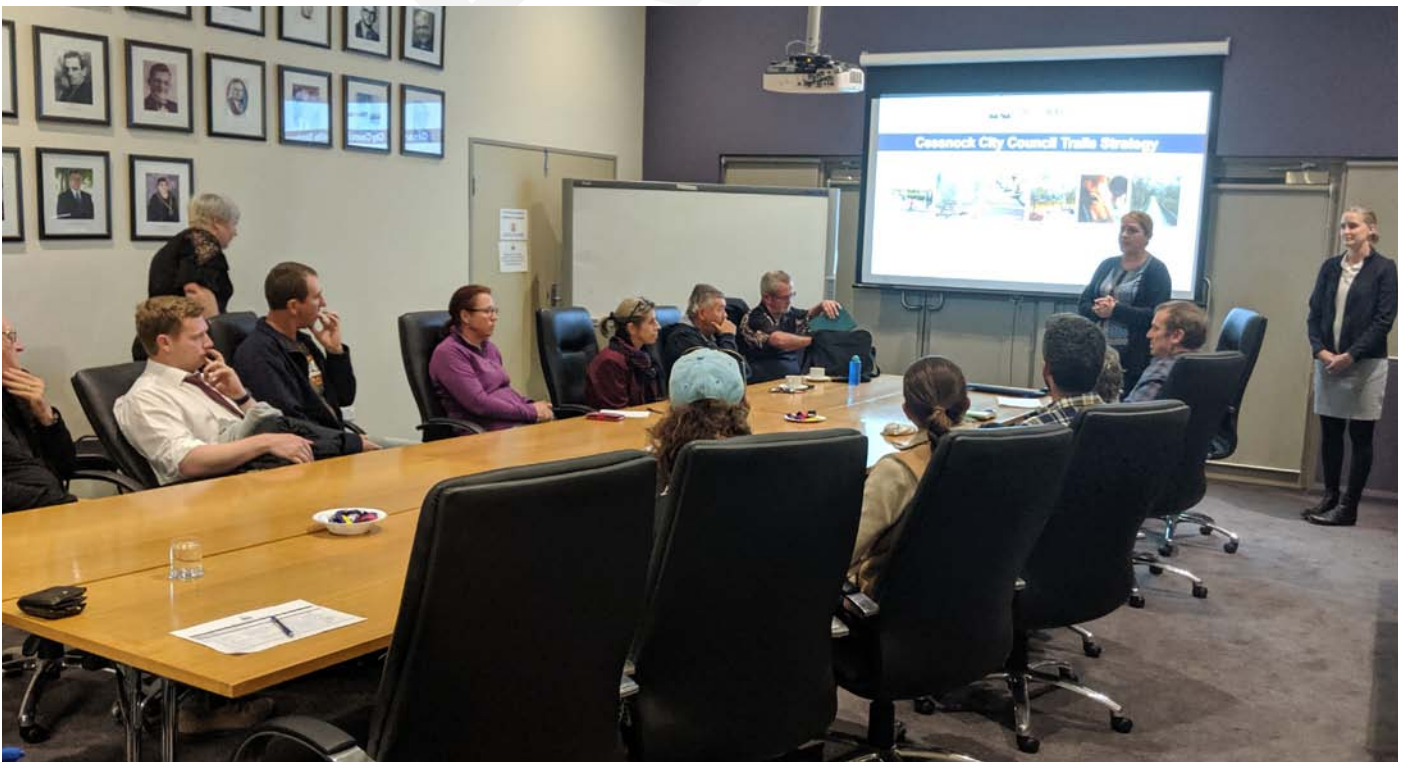
Appendix C

Community Workshop

The community workshop was held on the 18th July at 6 - 7.30pm at the Cessnock City Council offices. Over twenty people attended and contributed to small group and large group discussion topics. Attendees were also encouraged to draw on maps to indicate their current trail usage and ideas for future improvements to the trails network. Key discussion points are noted in the following table.

| Topic | Discussion |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Key Trails/ Areas Used | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kurri Kurri: Kookaburra Walk; Kurri Heritage Walk; Western Kurri, Aberdare; Hunter Economic Zone (HEZ); Pit Horse Paddock. • National Parks/Conservation Areas: Gibson Loop (Werakata SCA); Watagans Track (in disrepair); Werakata Bridle Trail (only marked Bridle Trail); Horse riding in various National Parks; Watagans Track & Great North Walk (parts for horse riding). • Verges/roads (horse riding). • Informal trails around Abernethy. |

| Topic | Discussion |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Key Issues | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubbish dumping in bushland • Unauthorised use (e.g. trail-bikes) • Uncertainty about where walking, horse/bike riding is permitted • Land tenure (e.g. Watagans Track/Great North Walk on easements through private land). |
| Trail Network Vision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preservation of culture & nature • Designated and regulated trails • Shared resources across LGAs (e.g. regional trail officer) • Using trails as a vehicle for social change (e.g. obesity, anti-social behaviour, education) • High quality trail information • Consistent information sources • Sharing of information between user groups • Richmond Vale Rail Trail well designed, promoted & used • Sign posting and mapping • Trails with disability access |



Community Workshop, Cessnock City Council Administration Centre, 18 July 2019

Additional Community Submissions

| Submission Topic | Key Points |
|---|---|
| 'Dreaming to Steaming' Rail Trail' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposal for a walking and cycling trail network on disused colliery rail corridors in the Cessnock LGA. • A rail trail to reconnect, activate & re-energise our communities, and bring visitors to the Hunter to experience our historical heritage, hear our stories & support our economy. • Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To protect the abandoned railway infrastructure easements from rezoning and loss to development and to 'bank' them for the benefit of future generations • To achieve adoption by the Cessnock City Council of the proposal outlined here, and to integrate it into their relevant Strategies, Planning & Funding processes. • To convince stakeholders to embrace this proposal and to support its integration into Council Strategies and Plans. • To engender support from community groups. |

| Submission Topic | Key Points |
|--|--|
| Wonnarua Mappagery Trails Base Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This project aims to strengthen tourism use of protected areas through a number of pilot overnight camping facilities supported by marketing processes. • The proposal was developed within an application for funds through the NSW Government's Regional Growth – Environment & Tourism Fund. • So far, the project has not attracted funding. |
| Wonnarua Pit2Pit Pilot Shared Trail Project | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This proposed project presents as a "taster" of the Wonnarua Trails eco-culture experience (cafe, info-bay). • An all-weather trail branch north carries wheelchairs, prams, bikes, and walkers along a secret creek that crosses under the roadway. 30 metres further is the pedestrian gateway to Werakata SCA for birdwatching. The southern route follows an old rail alignment gently rising past embankments able to double as outdoor art space, skirting the village of Abernethy, to reach the mine ruins and dam. • Visitors would be able to hire a "comfy-campsite", latest in eco-accommodation, gathering two small families of birdwatchers, adventure cyclists or friends enjoying a weekend outdoors. |

Stakeholder Interviews

The following key stakeholders were invited to contribute to the development of the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy:

- NSW Government Agencies:
 - Crown Lands, Department of Planning, Industry & Environment
 - Department of Premier & Cabinet
- Hunter Region Local Governments:
 - Newcastle City Council
 - Singleton City Council
 - Port Stephens Council
 - Dungog Shire Council
 - Upper Hunter Council
 - Maitland City Council
 - MidCoast Council
 - Lake Macquarie City Council
 - Muswellbrook Shire Council

Representatives of these key stakeholder organisations were contacted via email, and asked to be in contact to identify their three top priorities for consideration in the Cessnock City Council Trails Strategy, particularly in regards to cross-regional connections. The following tables outline the findings.

Key Priorities

Department of Planning, Industry & Environment - Regions, Industry, Agriculture & Resources

- Development of The Precinct Mountain Bike Park, embracing the opportunity to cater for Adaptive Mountain Biking.
- Integrating needs of all trail-user groups to maximise benefits of assets, minimise trail use conflicts & manage environmental impact.
- Linking to tourism existing opportunities & infrastructure while providing a recreational resource for the community of Cessnock & the Hunter.
- Potential to cater for gravel riding as a growing activity in the Hunter - develop gravel riding trails that could link local villages or loop back to Cessnock / Pokolbin / Lovedale / Kurri / Broke.

Department of Planning, Industry & Environment - Crown Lands

- From a bush fire management perspective: the use of fire trails may assist with having more of a site presence to deter unauthorised activities. Would need to be mindful of opening areas up to vehicles, maintenance considerations, fitting in with trail features such as roll over banks and locked gates.
- From our State Recreational Trail Coordinator's perspective: effective governance; consistent and collaborative planning; sustainable design and maintenance; community engagement; investment and financing.
- From a land administration perspective: reserve purpose (and consistency); native title considerations; Aboriginal land claim considerations; management structure (who will manage/fund/maintain the trails).
- Some trails that may have merit in including in the strategy:
 - Cessnock Mountain Bike Park proposal
 - Great North Walk – the Pokolbin Spur;
 - Kookaburra Walk (Cessnock City Council hold under Crown license 336093) – no current proposals for this land, constrained by Aboriginal Land Claims

Newcastle City Council

- Progress the Richmond Vale Rail Trail project
- Council's will soon be reviewing the Cycling Strategy and preparing a Pedestrian Strategy.
- There is likely intention to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Richmond Vale Rail Trail and to establish a Working Party with Terms of Reference.
- Council's Legal and Risk Team will be developing the MoU.

Port Stephens Council

- Deliver the Port Stephens Council Pathway Plan
- Continue to actively advocate with NSW Government for a regional link connecting LGAs - especially from the Richmond Vale Rail Trail trailhead in Tarro to Raymond Terrace in the proposed M1 bypass.
- Continue to support cycling tourism/events and proposals such as Gan Gan Lookout mountain bike trail proposal (Council not land owner).

Maitland City Council

- Review of Council's Open Space Plan, providing guidance on passages of movement including pedestrian walkways, cycleways, other bike riding opportunities (e.g. BMX, mountain bike trails) and horse trails
- Review and implement the Maitland Bike Plan, with a focus on on-road and off-road cycling. Including:
 - Construction of the Gillieston Heights to Maitland Cycleway, along Cessnock Rd
 - Cessnock Road to Maitland Park Cycleway;
 - Maitland to Morpeth Cycleway;
 - Maitland to Walka Water Works Cycleway.

Upper Hunter Shire Council

- Interested to see which trails extend into the Upper Hunter and can therefore provide users with access to our LGA.
- We are also interested to learn how other Councils manage multi-use of trails – particularly where bikes will be travelling at a speed that potentially is not conducive to sharing the trail with horses and walkers.

Muswellbrook Shire Council

- Providing tourist access to Wollemi National Park (forming part of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area).
- Connect Wollemi NP with the Greater Blue Mountains National Landscape.
- Promote Muswellbrook as the 'next frontier', an alternative or extension of the Blue Mountains for nature enthusiasts who are looking for a new area to explore.
- Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Councils have a joint tourism strategy and promote local attractions in a coordinated effort.

The following Hunter region Councils were contacted but have not provided trail priorities:

- Singleton City Council
- Dungog Shire Council
- Mid Coast Council

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) have provide comment regarding:

- Kitchener Dam Loop Trail, noting that they would be happy to work with CCC in the upgrade/maintenance of infrastructure that is on park. Considerable lead times required to be able to contribute meaningfully and to ensure it is possible in works schedules.
- RVRT, traverses 5 park reserves (2 in CCC) any activity or works that occur in the reserves will require NPWS consent. NPWS support the project, but will not be taking active roles in the construction or operational phase except as an 'over-seers' role. NPSW will be involved in someway in the management committee/trust.