

# Proposed Mountain Bike Trails, Moewai Road

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<b>TO</b>	Mercury Bay Community Board
<b>FROM</b>	Heather Bruce - Community Manager, Mercury Bay
<b>DATE</b>	11 July 2018
<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>Proposed Mountain Bike Trails, Moewai Road</b>

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## 1 Purpose of Report

To seek approval for Council staff to work with Bike Mercury Bay on the appropriate processes and arrangements to facilitate the development and maintenance of mountain bike trails on Council owned property at 93A and 172 Moewai Road, Whitianga.

## 2 Background

Bike Mercury Bay tabled a proposal at the 7 March 2018 Mercury Bay Community Board Meeting requesting use of the former water catchment land in Moewai Road to establish mountain bike trails.

A more detailed proposal has been received from Bike Mercury Bay (**Attachment A**). This sets out detail in relation to the nature of the development, users, support received, staging, funding and development methodology. The plan is for a network of hand built narrow 'single-track' riding trails to be formed and maintained through the two adjoining Council properties at 93A & 172 Moewai Road and adjacent Department of Conservation and Land Information New Zealand (Ernslaw One) properties.

The Council properties which cover an area of 286.06 hectares, have regenerating native bush and the proposal is to construct the tracks to flow through the natural landscape and preserve natural features, whilst giving riders a genuine Coromandel bush-riding experience.

Bike Mercury Bay proposes to form a charitable trust for the purposes of developing and promoting recreational cycling in the Mercury Bay area, with a mountain biking sub-committee established to manage the development, operation and maintenance of the mountain bike trail network.

This is a community led initiative to provide mountain biking facilities for residents and visitors to Mercury Bay, with the expectation that the number of users will increase over the long term as the track network is developed.

## 3 Issue

The Board is asked to consider and provide approval for Council staff to work with Bike Mercury Bay on the appropriate processes and arrangements to facilitate the development and maintenance of mountain bike trails on Council owned property at 93A and 172 Moewai Road, Whitianga.

## 4 Discussion

The District Plan shows an underlying zone of Recreation Passive and an Outstanding Natural Features & Landscapes Overlay on both properties. Initial discussion with Council planners indicates that resource consent may be required for any earthworks and vegetation clearance.

Council's Property team have investigated the land status. Both blocks are held in fee simple. While not express in the land transfer documentation it is likely the land was purchased for water catchment. This is premised on the former owner, The Mercury Bay Co-Operative Dairy Company Ltd being a supplier of water to local farmers. Council has since constructed a water reservoir on the larger parcel. An interim use of the land for biking purposes is not incompatible with water catchment provided public access is contained to defined trails.

Bike Mercury Bay are not seeking exclusive rights and are willing to enter into whatever form of agreement is required by Council. This could be a formal lease or a Memorandum of Understanding.

Further discussion with Bike Mercury Bay indicates that the group are not seeking to limit or prohibit other public users and they understand that creating tracks will open the area to increased use by hikers/day walkers. Bike Mercury Bay plan to manage shared use with signage encouraging walkers to utilise the uphill sections of the trails. The stated intent of Bike Mercury Bay is for the trails to be "low-speed" bike trails, which will further mitigate any health & safety issues arising from both cyclists and walkers using shared routes.

Council's Community Facilities Manager noted that well designed tracks allow riders to exceed moderate speeds and there could be pressure in future, for tracks that cater for mountain bikers who like to ride at extreme speeds.

Bike Mercury Bay proposes to work with the existing Whitianga Bike Park to share resources, particularly in respect of toilet facilities and car parking. This will lessen impact on the access to the trails from Moewai Road, which has limited parking past the Whitianga Bike Park location.

The proposal is supported by letters from Whitianga Bike Park, Ernslaw One Ltd, Mercury Bay Area School, Whitianga Waterways and the Mercury Bay Business Association.  
**(Attachment B)**

Bike Mercury Bay is currently in discussion with key stakeholders including Department of Conservation, Keep Kauri Standing (Kauri Dieback) and Kauri 2000 to investigate best practice options for ensuring the use of the trails does not contribute to the spread of Kauri Dieback disease.

Where trails cross into adjacent Department of Conservation and Land Information New Zealand land, Bike Mercury Bay will liaise directly with the appropriate landowner for approval.

The proposal outlines an opportunity for a dedicated group to develop a quality mountain bike park in close proximity to Whitianga Township, providing an opportunity to develop a recreational facility that will be an asset to the Mercury Bay community and will also support and grow the local and regional tourist economy.

Tourism New Zealand statistics show that 138,000 visitors to New Zealand noted that they participated in some form of cycling. Statistics also show cycling tourists on average stay longer and spend more than other tourists.

Tourism New Zealand are currently targeting mountain biking enthusiasts aged 25-40 from Australia who are looking for new challenges and thrills. These visitors generally travel in groups and may seek extra adrenaline filled, competitive activities to complement their mountain biking experience.

Cycling visitors to NZ want a real, honest and close experience with the country they visit. NZ has accessibility to natural environments, diversity of trails and landscape, proximity to other activities, towns and cities and friendly locals.

<https://www.tourismnewzealand.com/markets-stats/sectors/special-interest/cycling-and-mountain-biking/>

## **5 Suggested Resolution(s)**

That the Mercury Bay Community Board:

1. Receives the 'Proposed Mountain Bike Trails, Moewai Road' report dated 11 July 2018.
2. Approve Council staff to work with Bike Mercury Bay on the appropriate processes and arrangements to facilitate the development and maintenance of mountain bike trails at Council owned property at 93A and 172 Moewai Road, Whitianga and report back to the Community Board.

## **References-Tabled/Agenda Attachments**

**Attachment A** *Proposal to Establish Mountain Bike Trails, Moewai Road Whitianga*

**Attachment B** *Letters of Support for Proposed Mountain Bike Trails*

**Attachment A**

**Attachment A - Proposal to Establish Mountain Bike Trails, Moewai Road...**

**Attachment B**  
**Attachment B - Letters of Support for Proposed Mountain Bike Trails ...**