

Toitū Te Whenua Parks Network Plan 2020-30

E tūhonohono ana ngā mea katoa
Everything is connected



*Restoring healthy ecosystems for the
benefit of nature and people*

*He waka eke noa
We're all in this together, moving forward*

Toitū te whenua

Toitū te mana

Toitū te taiao

Toitū te mauri ora

Hold fast to the land

Hold fast to our pride

Hold fast to our environment

Hold fast to all living things

Toitū is also a reminder that not only is our vision enduring, but that as people, we too must persevere in our pursuits. Toitū calls upon us all to do our part in the protection of whenua, the health of the waterways and to collectively work to uplift the mauri of the Taiao.



Foreword

Toitū Te Whenua, this Parks Network Plan presents a long term vision for regional parks – *Restoring healthy ecosystems for the benefit of nature and people.*

Parks are at the heart of communities; they are places people love and spend time recharging in nature and significant for mana whenua. Healthy park environments help ensure we have fresh clean water and air and provide important habitat for birds and animals to thrive. They nurture life through recreation activities, mahinga kai, natural materials and connections with places.

He waka eke noa, we're all in this together, moving forward.



To develop this Plan we sought feedback from the people of Wellington, organisations and groups with interests in parks. In 2018 the feedback we heard provided a clear view about the importance of having a wide range of landscape settings to recreate in, the need to support the natural environment and restore its health and reduce pest plants and animals. Improving public access to and within parks and enhancing recreation experiences were other key themes.

We heard wide ranging support for the core directions of the Plan, feedback about ways to strengthen it, and felt the huge amount of passion people have for parks and activities. The key feedback themes remained strong, along with significant support for climate change action. In 2020 we received 390 submissions on the draft Plan.

Six core goals set the overall directions for the parks in this Plan. Three are core goals and ongoing; managing natural values, recreation experiences, heritage and landscape. The other three are for particular focus over the next ten years to help achieve significant step-change; working with mana whenua, climate change and sustainability and 'the way we work'.

Planning for and adapting to the effects of climate change overarches all Greater Wellington's work. This means building response to climate change action into everything we do, minimising emissions and making sure our environment and built assets are as resilient as possible. The 'way we work' goal focuses on supporting and enabling collaboration in conservation and recreation work, noting that mana whenua partner and community support is integral to the success of our parks. A mahi tahi, working together, adaptable and responsive approach is essential.

We believe this Plan provides the road map to the future states that you, the people of the Wellington region, have asked Greater Wellington to facilitate for your parks. We thank all of the people and organisations who contributed to the development of the Plan - ka pai! Your perceptive inputs, questions about the way we work and generosity of feedback have created these long term directions for kaitiakitanga of papatūānuku, the land of parks.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Daran Ponter'.

Daran Ponter
Chair Greater Wellington Regional Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Penny Gaylor'.

Penny Gaylor
Chair Environment Committee

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1 INTRODUCTION

Conservation and recreation activities are at the heart of Greater Wellington’s parks; places where native flora and fauna are protected and conserved and people are free to enjoy a wide range of activities in a diverse range of landscape settings. People and natural systems are interconnected. This is reflected in the sub-title and theme for the Plan – everything is connected / e tūhonohono ana ngā mea katoa.

Toitū te whenua/Parks Network Plan (the Plan) is a composite statutory management plan for eight Regional Parks totalling approximately 33,000 hectares of public land:

Akatarawa Forest

Battle Hill Farm Forest Park

Belmont Regional Park

East Harbour Regional Park
(Northern Forest, Parangarahu Lakes, Baring Head / Ōrua-pouanui)

Kaitoke Regional Park

Pakuratahi Forest

Queen Elizabeth Park (QEP)

Wainuiomata Recreation Area

The Plan is for all of Greater Wellington, mana whenua partners and community. It’s about managing interactions people have caring for the whenua (the land mother earth, Papatūānuku).

New challenges have emerged. The climate is changing more rapidly than predicted and severe weather events have periodically impacted parks. Recreation activities have diversified and some have become more popular. All types of cycling activities have surged in popularity, along with trail running and walking. Conservation and restoration work are growing recreation activities.

Increasing levels of awareness of environmental issues and challenges is good for parks. Conservation and recreation volunteers are helping reduce pest plants and animals to support biodiversity. Activities such as trail maintenance are becoming increasingly part of many people’s everyday lives in the region too. People are passionate about parks and getting involved where they can. Volunteering in conservation and recreation has become an everyday activity. These positive shifts have created some challenges but also greatly increased opportunities for Greater Wellington’s management of parks.



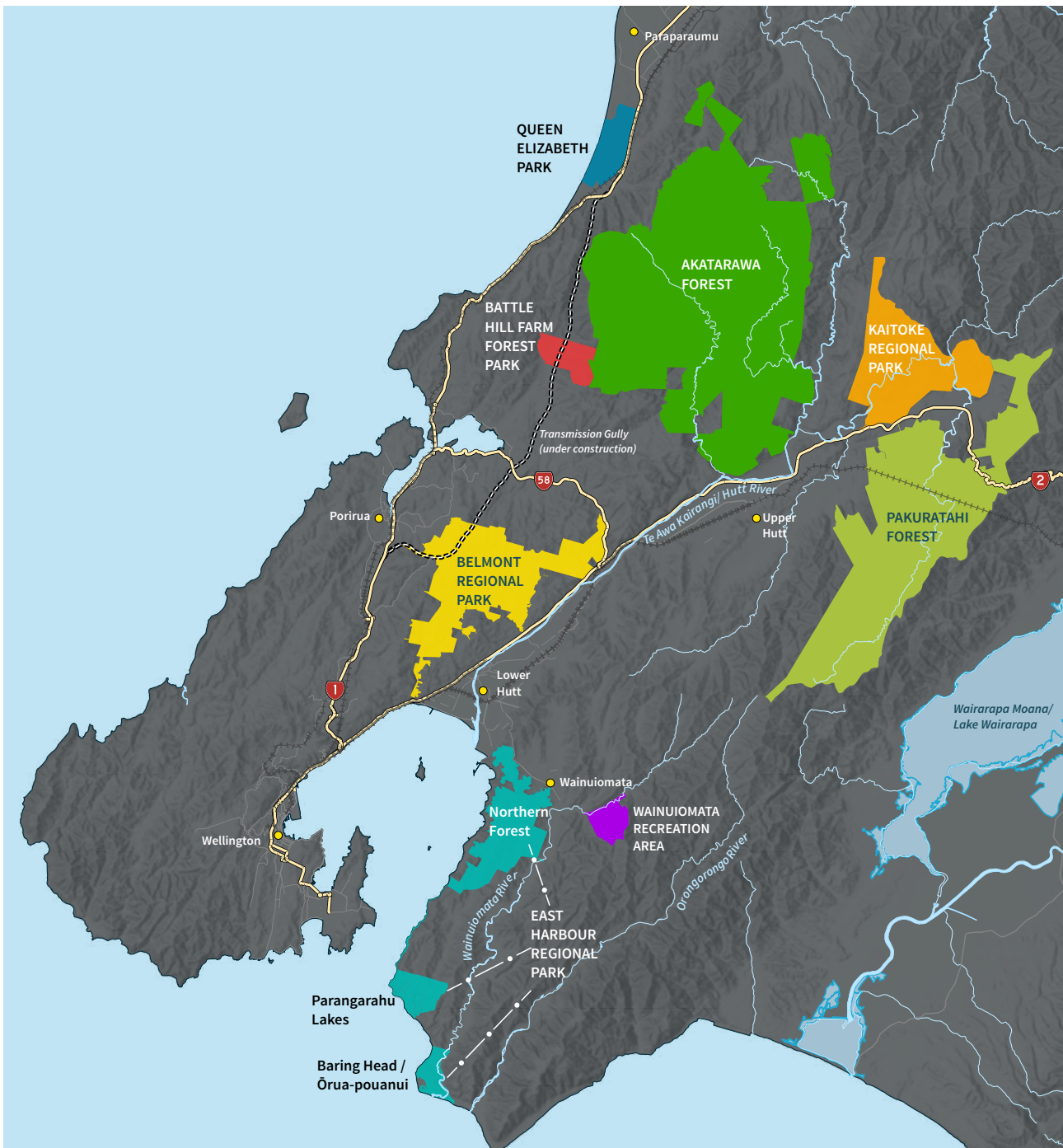
Conservation, recreation and community are the heart of parks. He waka eke no, we’re all in this together.

1.1 Regional parks

What are regional parks and how are they different to other parks? The purpose of individual parks is enshrined in their governing legislation (refer Appendix 6.). Most parks in the regional network are classified as recreation or scenic reserves for the purposes of recreation activities and conservation and enhancement of natural and cultural heritage values. A number of parks have water collection as part of their primary purpose, for example Kaitoke, Pakuratahi and Akatarawa parks are managed for recreation and future conservation of high-quality drinking water. Forestry also has a role in Pakuratahi and Akatarawa and Battle Hill is the only farm park in the network. Greater

Wellington's parks tend to be bigger than most city parks and sporting reserves and smaller than national and forest parks. Preserving and enhancing core values of parks is core to management and custodianship of parks for future generations. This Plan identifies core values for management, defines appropriate activities in the Rule for use and development section (Refer section 8.) and processes to help ensure protection and enhancement of core values such as Assessment of Environmental Effects (Refer Appendix 2).

Map 1 Regional parks map



1.2 Preparing the Plan

In 2018 public feedback was sought to inform development of this new plan. To explore issues and opportunities and prompt feedback, Greater Wellington asked the people of the Wellington region about the most significant issues facing regional parks, what people valued most and what could be done to improve

parks. A discussion document and two supporting documents provided commentary about known issues and opportunities. After two months of consultation, involving a range of engagement activities across the region, hundreds of responses were received from the general public and stakeholders.

1.3 Looking back

Between 2011 and 2020 when this new Plan was developed a lot changed.

There was a steady growth in numbers of people visiting parks from the region and further afield. Camping destinations were upgraded in response to demand.

Working with community volunteers in conservation and recreation such as Million Metres at Baring Head / Ōrua-pouanui where the Friends group contributed enormously to restoration work.

Native vegetation restoration work was undertaken across parks, protecting high value ecological areas and supporting downstream water quality. Private benefactors supported wetland and general native vegetation restoration work with generous donations. Weed removal and stream health improvements took place including removal of fish passage barriers and extensive planting of riparian areas to enhance habitat and aquatic ecosystem health.

The nationally significant Transmission Gully Motorway project commenced and off sets included restoration plantings, wilding pine removal and trail development in parks is passes; QEP, Battle Hill and Belmont. The visibility the new motorway provides for these parks and associated signs, art or sculpture will help them become better known.

A wide range of works to support historic heritage assets took place. This included track and dam works in Belmont Park's Korokoro Valley, Birchville Dam, Akatarawa Forest access improvements, stream bank stabilisation work to protect at risk high value assets (the Pakuratahi Forks Truss Bridge and the main camping area at Kaitoke Regional Park, Perhams Road vehicle bridge at Akatarawa Forest, and the Plateau Road entrance area at Tunnel Gully) and replacement vehicle bridge over the Wainuiomata River located at Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui (East Harbour Regional Park). A new 'history of drinking water' museum was opened in the Wainuiomata Recreation Area helping

make the Lower Dam area a key destination. Other works in Belmont Regional Park involved safety work on some of the 62 historic Belmont munitions bunkers. Along the historic Remutaka rail formation, Victorian-era culverts were preserved and native fish passage assistance installed. The Remutaka Rail Trail became part of one of New Zealand's national cycle ways.

Climate change has impacted parks and changes have had to be made as a result. At QEP a Coastal Erosion Plan was developed to manage coastal retreat in conjunction with mana whenua partners and others. Tracks are being relocated inland and other facilities moved. The six-kilometre Te Ara o Whareroa walking and cycling path was also opened here, extending from Paekākāriki to Raumati South. Approximately 60 children a day now use the path for their daily 'school commute' and the trail is estimated to be used by over 100,000 people a year. In other parks tracks have been developed and realigned for environmental protection. The Kārearea Track was constructed, linking Muritai Park to the Main Ridge in the East Harbour Regional Park Northern Forest and a programme of track improvement was undertaken.

At Battle Hill, the Wellington branch of the Riding for Disabled Association moved into the park and built a large indoor arena offering therapeutic riding activities for their clients. Having RDA in the park supports strong community connections. To draw people to parks the Greater Wellington Great Outdoors Programme offers events such as Movies on the Parks and Battle Hill Farm Day attracting crowds of families during the summer months. The first "Dark Sky" event was held at the Wainuiomata Recreation Area, heralding a new connection with the astronomical community and raising awareness of the effects of light pollution on our natural environment.

Park rangers supported events, provided guided tours, compliance activities and a huge amount of maintenance to ensure that parks remain safe and accessible for many people.

Ramaroa, meaning eternal flame or guiding light, is the new community facility in QEP at Mackays Crossing. Ramaroa offers the community a large meeting room and new amenities. Naming the building Ramaroa reaffirms the significance of an ancestral connection for the local iwi, Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Haumia and Te Ātiawa ki Whakarongotai who helped plan the centre, designed the kowhaiwhai panels and whakairo (carving), and led the dawn opening ceremony. Working closely with mana whenua partners is integral to everyone's success.

Park information and storytelling is planned here.



1.4 What we heard in public feedback

- People value having regional parks and a variety of recreation opportunities and landscape experiences
- People are passionate about trails, walking, horse riding, biking, hunting, camping and many other activities in parks. Improved trail connections to parks and varying trail experiences were suggested
- The places people visit regularly are valued highly, but a greater diversity of recreation experiences to attract repeat visits was sought. For example, suggestions were made for more shorter walks to viewpoints, play opportunities, storytelling, overnight stay experiences and improved accessibility of parks and facilities
- Members of the community expressed concerns about impacts from grazing activities on the environment, public access, soil and freshwater water quality and recreation experiences and restrictions
- People were interested in working more on pest animals, barriers to fish passage, gaps in biodiversity habitat. More restoration work was identified as a priority
- A more visible mana whenua presence in parks through storytelling or other activities was suggested as being valuable. Earlier in the consultation process, mana whenua in the region provided feedback about their values and aspirations for parks

Following initial public consultation a report was presented to Council in August 2018. Greater Wellington officers then discussed issues and opportunities raised through a series of workshops and prepared preliminary directions for the new plan which Council endorsed in December 2018. Council subsequently endorsed the Strategic Directions in April 2020, then the draft Plan for consultation in late June 2020.

After two months consultation 390 submissions were received. Following Council hearings and deliberations more information about recreation activities was added, restoration fact sheet information was brought forward into the Plan a number of other minor adjustments to policies, actions and rules were made. The summary of submissions report is available on www.gw.govt.nz



QEP workshop exploring issues and opportunities with mana whenua partners and park stakeholders



Many of Greater Wellington's parks have facilities or attractions that serve the region, such as the Wellington Tramway Museum and Eventing Wellington at QEP. Photo: Wellington Tramway Museum

1.5 Key shifts

A renewed focus on conservation, recreation, community and climate change

Based on public and Council feedback and directions, key shifts signalled in this Plan focus on conservation and recreation and the way we work with mana whenua partners and community. Overarching all park work is a focus on planning for and adapting to the effects of changing climate. Six key goals are identified in the Strategic Directions part of the Plan and provide focal points for collaborative work.

Key shifts reflected through goals and actions include:

Phasing out most livestock grazing activities to enable a concerted *focus on restoring natural values* across the park network including wetlands. This is long-term work which will deliver many benefits including reduced carbon emissions (from drained peat wetlands) improved water quality, biodiversity, habitat connections as well as a more natural experiences of these places for people.

Improving access to, within and across parks. This emerged as a key theme in initial public feedback. A range of actions identify possible improvements to make it easier for people to access and enjoy parks.

Developing key destinations in parks to focus work efforts to support high-quality and memorable recreation experiences. This includes more storytelling, nature play, and improved accessibility of facilities, new or upgraded trails or adaptive reuse of park buildings for recreation or conservation purposes. Developing rich and interesting destinations will help make different places in parks more of a destination for more people. They will be places people want to go back to and take family and friends to see. Developing key destinations will provide opportunities for community groups and others to work alongside Greater Wellington and combine resources and efforts.

Building on collaborative work with mana whenua partners and community conservation and recreation groups so that we can achieve greater benefits from parks together.

Building our response to climate change into more of the things we do in parks. This means minimising emissions,

focusing on highly sustainable solutions, to build more resilient places and utilising education opportunities to raise awareness of important environmental issues.

In a rapidly changing environment, higher degrees of agility and adaptiveness to change are required. The 'way we work' goal focuses efforts on collaboration and working more with others in this Plan. 'State of the parks' type monitoring and reporting is identified as an action so we can track progress towards achieving the goals outlined in this plan. In the spirit of mahi tahi this will include opportunities for citizen science monitoring wherever possible.

Greater Wellington's purpose is '**Working together for the greater good**' and vision for the region is '**An extraordinary region, thriving, connected and resilient**'. Parks of all sizes and purposes are an integral part of the greater good, delivering a wide range of benefits for the region; environmental, social and economic.

Greater Wellington's Long Term Plan outlines Council's activities and the outcomes it aims to achieve by coordinating future resources, including park operations. In 2020, the parks operating budget represents approximately 4 percent of the total annual Greater Wellington budget. A lot is achieved with this and the addition of 'community capital' through volunteer group collaboration in conservation and recreation makes a big difference. This includes the national 'Billion Trees' programme, Million Metres programme, carbon neutrality acceleration funds, local philanthropy, the efforts of local conservation and recreation groups, corporate supporters and others. The Way we work goal of this plan outlines a range of opportunities for working more with community so that we can achieve more together.

2 KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES - CONSERVATION, RECREATION AND COMMUNITY

Greater Wellington's parks operate within the context of their purposes as defined by legislation, mana whenua, Council and community needs and wants, national and

regional policy and broader social economic health and wellbeing. This section explores the recreation, conservation and community context for parks.

2.1 Purposes and benefits of parks

Parks conserve important natural areas of biodiversity and a variety of ecosystems such as lowland forests, wetlands and dunes, streams and rivers which are home to a rich variety of plants and animals. They provide important green links between urban areas and small parks and the large Taranaki and Remutaka Forest Parks.

Cultural features and historic sites in parks have special significance for mana whenua and represent the living history of our relationships with the land, or sense of place for residents of the Wellington region. Park landscapes form much of the scenic backdrops to Wellington city, the Hutt Valley, Porirua and Kāpiti Coast. For park visitors the park network offers a diversity of landscapes from lush bush to open areas, hill top views and coastal scenery. Cultural values relating to the appropriateness of discretionary public land uses such as grazing activities change over time. The directions of this plan will see some landscape change over time with a renewed focus on restoration activities and restoration of wetlands.

Biophilia, our inherent human need to connect with land, papatūānuku, and nature is also known as wairuatanga; the spiritual connection between people and their environments. Going into green spaces, 'nature bathing', as well as simply knowing there

are places where nature is preserved, is good for us. Absence is a condition called 'nature deficit disorder'.

The eight regional parks provide opportunities for a range of fun adventures. With approximately 500 kilometres of tracks for walking, running and riding there are lots of options and settings. Many parks have recreation club bases for activities such as horse riding, model aeroplanes, kart and gun clubs and mountain biking hubs. Overnight stays, such as camping, are an important part of experiencing the joy of parks. Activities such as markets, festivals, music events, guided tours attract local and regional visitors and support the regional economy. Conservation activities and recreation facility development work are increasingly part of recreation experiences and a number of parks have plant nurseries to support restoration activities managed by volunteers. Activities such as these provide important opportunities for social connection and low-cost, purposeful engagement, which can have significant flow-on benefits for individual mental health. This Plan identifies a number of opportunities for growing the connectedness between communities and parks to work towards shared goals together.



Ka ora te wai

Ka ora te whenua

Ka ora te whenua

Ka ora te tangata

If the water is healthy

The land will be nourished

If the land is nourished

The people will be provided for

2.2 Recreation opportunities

2.2.1 Access

To be able to optimise full health and wellbeing benefits for people from investment in parks, good access to within, and across them and an equitable distribution of facilities appropriate to the place are required. Equity of access is identified as a core value for parks in this Plan. This means providing opportunities for everyone regardless of abilities, gender or ethnicity. Across Greater Wellington's network of regional parks and their neighbouring communities there are key opportunities to improve equity of access and recreation facilities, particularly for the people of East Porirua, Kelson and Raumati South where park access has been constrained, recreation facilities are limited and natural values require restoration.

Improving access and amenity across parks is a key

2.2.2 Master planning

Master planning, also called landscape master planning, is a spatial planning process for parks to resolve site issues considering a range of values and interests and producing a detailed map or series of maps. It is more detailed planning and different to management planning which outlines policies, rules and higher level directions. Good master planning process involves community input to identify needs and draws on science and heritage research. Masterplan maps are usually supported by a report which outlines rationale and details.

This Plan has actions to develop master plans for a number of parks in the network but not all. Master plans are proposed for parks where there will be significant land use change (Belmont and QEP) or where detailed

focus area of this Plan. Minimising barriers to access and participation to help ensure parks are well used by local communities and others deliver multiple and significant benefits.

The development and enhancement of 'key destination' experiences as focus points for parks is also proposed. This includes adaptive reuse of buildings such as cottages and sheds in parks. Park agencies throughout New Zealand and the world offer interesting places to stay in parks, and these places are often a destination and draw card for visits. For some parks, such as Belmont and QEP master planning processes, undertaken in liaison with community, will explore and map possible improvements in more detail.

guiding directions are required for amenity enhancements (Battle Hill, Pakuratahi and Wainuiomata). A restoration plan is proposed for Baring Head / Ōrua-pouanui to guide restoration work across the park as stock grazing is phased out, in conjunction with the Key Native Ecosystem plan. Updating the existing Kaitoke master plan is proposed.

Adopting a 'multi-benefit focused approach' helps address equity issues through master planning processes to ensure positive changes for the environment for nature and people and communities. It also helps gain support from external stakeholders and demonstrate that parks are a vital community and economic infrastructure.



Access to the tracks around Lake Kōhanga-piripiri, Parangarahu Lakes (East Harbour Regional Park) is easy now with this new barrier that stops vehicles but easily allows cyclists with heavy e-bikes. Simple changes such as this make a big difference to people's experiences of parks.



The Huharua Harbour Park, Tauranga special masterplan was created with the input from mana whenua, community and stakeholders. Case study image courtesy of Geoff Canham consulting.

A multi-benefit approach means consideration of changes which positively influence health, economy, active transport and climate resilience. It can be used to help determine the highest priorities for investment planning.

Development and implementation of park master plans with mana whenua and community can be transformational and deliver multiple benefits:

Health and wellbeing, community connections.

The process of master planning brings people together to explore options and opportunities for parks and allows collaborative shared visions to emerge. It's a placemaking process and ensures that new or adapted park facilities and works are highly relevant to people's current needs. It makes sense to have facilities shaped by the people who use them. Local people know their parks well, use them more than others, are often the park volunteers and can be great at drawing resources to deliver masterplan works.

Restoring degraded environments to deliver strong ecosystem service outputs such as high-quality freshwater, thriving biodiversity and activities such as

nature-based tourism requires a lot of focused effort.

High level science-led restoration priority maps identify the most important areas of initial restoration in the parks with stock grazed areas in this plan. Master planning processes will further identify and inform restoration work and support strategic and well-informed restoration planning. Restoring and supporting environmental health in parks provides flow-on benefits for people. Healthy park environments are more resilient to natural disasters and the effects of climate change.

Economic benefits. Park master planning processes can identify opportunities for local businesses in parks and park developments support the local economy. For example adaptive reuse of park cottages is proposed in this Plan along with the development of key destinations, both offering possible significant economic and community benefits. Great park amenity can increase local property values.

Master planning processes, placemaking

Active transport and trail experiences. Enhancing access and trail connections are key actions in this plan. In parks such as Belmont, master planning processes will help identify a trail network encompassing a range of experiences through the grazed areas where current roads or stock tracks are steep and often in exposed places. Identifying a new trail network before broad scale active and passive restoration commences is important so that regenerating bush doesn't have to be removed later.

In Belmont improving public access is critical to facilitate more use and enjoyment by the community, particularly in the areas which have been grazed by stock for many years.

Land uses and facility developments must consider climate change and resilience. Doing work which builds resilience of park infrastructure and the natural environment is a key component of addressing the effects of climate change and reducing carbon costs. Sustainability, climate change response, education opportunities and community collaborations are key considerations in master planning.

Placemaking – Placemaking is both an overarching idea and a hands-on approach for improving a public place. It can be used as a guiding method for masterplanning. The Project for Public Spaces, www.pps.org identifies a range of other attributes for places or areas of parks which support health and wellbeing and build communities. This includes:

Accessibility – enhancing access to, within and across parks with trail and public transport connections. Promotion and good consistent and comprehensive recreation information. Designing facilities following universal access and safety by design principles to reduce barriers to participation.

Mix it up and embrace unique character – providing a variety of places which are different or unusual. Places with interesting character may have local mana whenua identity, be heritage buildings or land forms, public art works, museums or storytelling walks. Fun nature play spaces can be a primary attraction to parks for families and carers.

Energised shared spaces or 'sweets spots' – focal points where people come together for events, volunteering, growing plants, heritage restoration works, overnight stays or use recreation hub facilities. In this Plan we are calling these 'key destinations'.

Empowering champions for health – supporting and enabling volunteer and community group activities in parks has flow-on effects for people and mental health including shared purpose and happiness.

Supporting economic values - parks can directly and indirectly support local businesses via concessionaire services, recreation club activities, events which require equipment sourced from other businesses in the local economy.

Processes such as Investment Logic Mapping (ILM) can be used to prioritise works based on benefits supporting core park recreation, conservation and community values. Key significant investments identified in this Plan may be funded through Greater Wellington's long-term planning process. Proposed enhancements may also be funded through a range of external funding sources, to be explored in liaison with park interest groups and others. The development of key destinations provides opportunities for community groups and others to assist through investment, expertise and on-site efforts.

Opening this lush green main entry will transform easy access to the at Waihora Crescent Belmont Park in East Porirua and the cross-park route to the Hutt Valley. There is a large gravel car park just a bit further up the hill.



2.2.3 Key destinations

The development and enhancement of a variety of key destinations across the park network is proposed. ‘Key destinations’ are unique and interesting experiences in regional parks. Some already exist and can be enhanced whilst others require more design and development. They are:

- ‘Must see’ places which draw people to parks
- Unique experiences
- Offer insight, depth of experience or opportunities for learning, including storytelling
- Have high-quality facilities and services encompassing the whole experience from entry place to destination
- May be quirky, creative, fun or unexpected features, such as sculptures, play experiences or events
- Landscapes or heritage features such as wetlands, forest types, view points
- Long distance trails, short discovery trails, mountain bike trail hubs
- Places to stay, learning hub, recreation activity or significant events

Many key destinations already exist but could be enhanced with facility or service improvements such as trail upgrades or storytelling.

Key destination development will help Greater Wellington prioritise and focus resource investment to places where more health and wellbeing benefits can be derived and better ensure places are more evenly utilised. Key destinations will help draw more people to great places in parks and support richer experiences.

The different types of key destination are identified as follows:

Table 1: Key destination types

Type	Description	Examples – current and proposed future
Recreation hub	Places with a focus on a particular recreation activity. Includes concession and licenced activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stratton Street Belmont mountain bike trails hub • Horse riding hubs Maymorn, Pakuratahi, QEP
Activity space	Places with a particular purpose or focus for recreation, conservation or community activities, museums, concession experiences, adaptively re-used park buildings, camping areas, nature play spaces, river swimming holes, plant nurseries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Battle Hill, Kaitoke, Dry Creek campgrounds • Ken Gray Education Centre, Battle Hill • Cottage stays, ‘green hubs’ (future) e.g. Light keepers cottages Baring Head / Ōrua-pouanui, adaptively reused buildings e.g. woolsheds, Belmont
Journey	Trails including heritage routes, long distance journeys, short story telling trails, children’s discovery trails, trail events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remutaka Rail Trail • ‘Akatarawa Traverse’ (future) • Puke Ariki Traverse/ Belmont cross-park route
Landscape	Locally or regionally significant natural features, geology, viewpoints, wetlands, dark sky viewing, vegetation types, exotic plantings, fauna	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beech forest walks, East Harbour Northern Forest • ‘Great Raumati wetland’, QEP (future) • Wainuiomata dark skies and museum (future)
Heritage	Built and cultural heritage places or features, Māori heritage features, historic structures, sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Coach Road, Belmont (NZ Heritage List) • Baring Head/ Ōrua-pouanui light house complex • Birchville Dam, Akatarawa

The interesting and unique Belmont bunkers have the potential to be a significant regional destination, achieved simply by opening access to the large car park at the top of Hill Road from where an easy flat 2km circuit track takes in 17 bunkers and the row of eight 'magazines' with stunning views.



2.2.4 Storytelling

Storytelling is important. Without it, understanding, appreciation and depth of meaning about our cultural and natural heritage and place can easily be missed. There are many opportunities to improve our storytelling in parks and support mana whenua partners in revealing their stories and connections to whenua. Much is hidden in the environment; storytelling reveals it. Species of skink amongst boulder

fields, peat wetlands and climate change, the life of former lightkeepers, heritage buildings, funny stories. Storytelling can educate, entertain and excite a visitor enough to return or to explore more of the parks. People of all ages can learn and enjoy well-designed park storytelling. See the recreation experience and Park Focus sections for details about new proposals.

2.2.5 Trails

“Trails are integral to the enjoyment and protection of our landscape and environmental assets and maintaining our connections with nature. Well-designed and maintained trails provide sustainable access to our special places.”
Wellington Regional Trails Framework (2018)

The park network has approximately 500km of trails and internal park roads offering people access to diverse landscapes and a wide variety of experiences. Some trails are the key attraction such as hand built mountain bike tracks.

To minimise environmental impacts and maintenance shared use tracks are preferred by Greater Wellington to single use. However for enjoyment and safety single use tracks are appropriate in some areas and for some activities such as mountain biking. In some parks separating use time or types of uses is critical for safety, such as roads in parks where plantation forest harvesting is in progress. Greater Wellington aims to support a track network appropriate to the place, community and user group needs.

A connected regional trail network

At the regional level, Greater Wellington is a key agency for the Regional Trails Framework (2018). This means working collectively with mana whenua partners, territorial authorities, communities and stakeholders to promote trails regionally, have seamless well-connected trails, barrier-free access and trails that contribute to

Parks and areas of park which are destinations for trail related activities are:

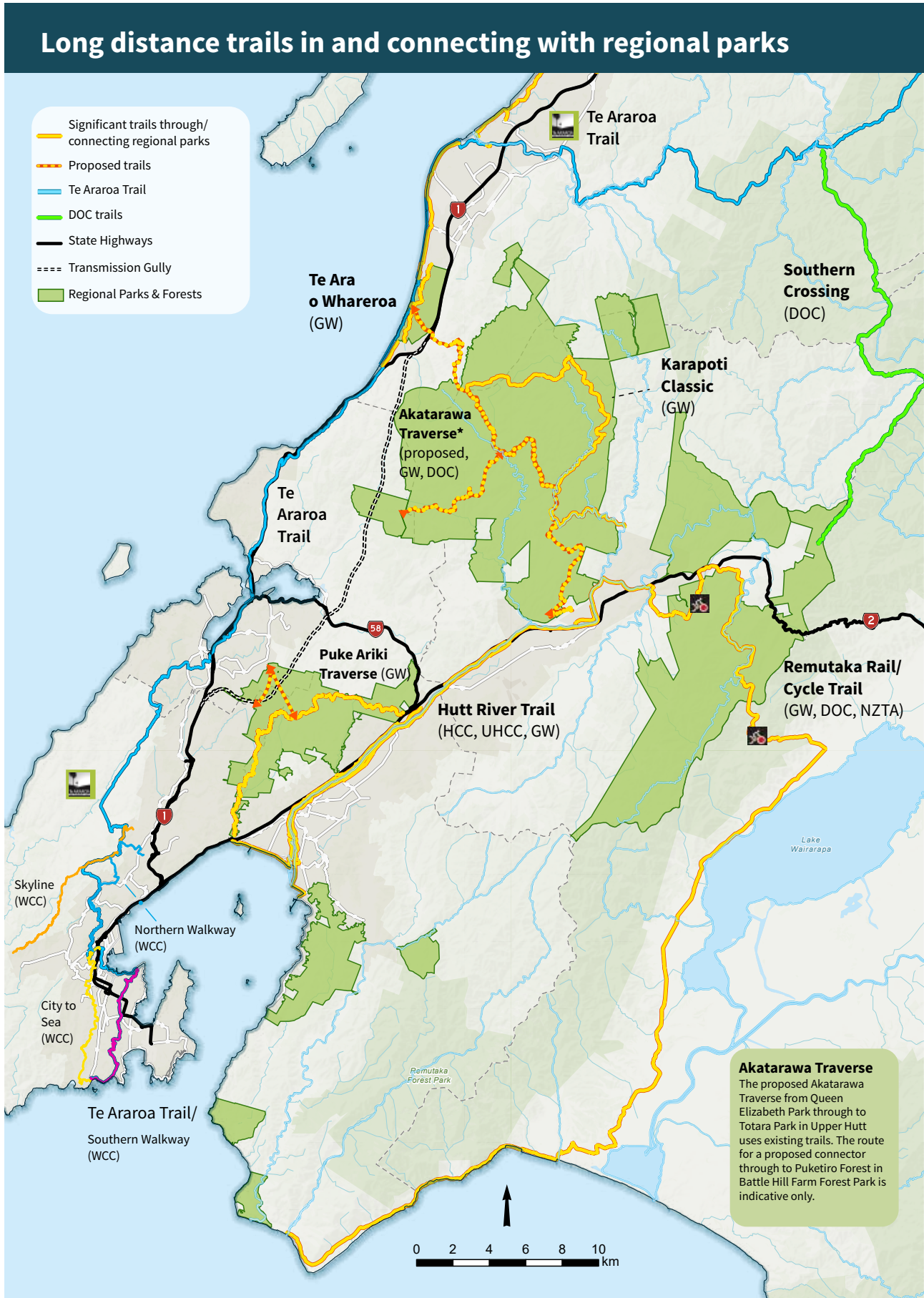
- Four wheel driving and motorcycling in Akatarawa
- Horse riding in Battle Hill, QEP, Belmont, and Pakuratahi
- Mountain biking in Belmont and Pakuratahi
- Easy cycling on undulating and flat trails in QEP, Wainuiomata and along the Remutaka Rail Trail, wide open hilly trails with broad vistas at Parangarahu Lakes, East Harbour
- Walking and tramping in mature forest in East Harbour, Northern Forest and Kaitoke
- Walking and tramping in regenerating forest in the eastern slopes of Belmont and the Battle Hill bush
- Accessible trails and visitor facilities at Wainuiomata for wheel chairs and mountain buggies

the regional economy. Key works for Greater Wellington arising from the Framework action plan are carried forward into this Plan. For example, developing the trail user experience on the Remutaka Rail Trail (part of the longer Remutaka Cycle Trail) with renewed storytelling and additional facilities.



Storytelling in many ways reveals the interesting and special things about parks, people and heritage

Map 2 Existing and proposed long distance trails map



2.2.6 Play in nature and time in the wild

Being in natural places is good for everyone. Nature is an important place for children to grow and learn and is a great basis for imaginary play which helps develop social, cognitive and physical skills. Unstructured outdoor activities challenge children in very different ways to indoor settings and formal learning activities. This is well documented in research relating to the world healthy parks, healthy people global movement.

Popular informal nature play areas in regional parks include river swimming holes, good climbing trees and places where there are lots of natural materials to build play houses such as sticks on the beach or tree bark. At Battle Hill there is a swing in the campground and an old red tractor to climb on. In Belmont Regional Park a mountain bike skills track has been developed. Greater

Wellington's events programme also offers a variety of activities to attract families to visit new places and try new activities. Purpose built or enhanced nature play spaces are currently limited across the network.

Public feedback to develop this Plan indicated that Greater Wellington could do more to attract and support family visits to parks. In response, the Park Focus part of this plan identifies a number of opportunities for developing and enhancing places for fun and enjoyable activities for children and adults. Possibilities can be explored with community and others through master planning and other processes to determine the best fit for the park and help develop endorsed proposals.



The fairy door trail in Karori Park is a popular walk. Creating and installing them (in appropriate places) can be a fun activity. Check in with park rangers first though.



The red tractor at Battle Hill. Swings such as this one can use local natural materials and are 'inclusive', allowing many children to play together. Simple logs can become local favourite imaginative play spaces.

2.2.7 Walking / tramping, dog walking

Greater Wellington's park network has over 230 kilometres of tracks for walking and 230 kilometres of roads; in total approximately 460 kilometres of road and trail available for recreation activities. Many parks have areas where walking activities are the focus such as much of the Northern Forest in East Harbour, Wainuiomata parks and the native bush area of Battle Hill.

Greater Wellington's research consistently identifies walking (encompassing dog walking) as the most popular recreation activity in parks (followed by cycling/ mountain biking, jogging/ running and tramping).

Feedback to develop the Plan identified a number of opportunities to better support walking / tramping activities including improved signage, information about opportunities, more access and accessible facilities and in some parks, development of new track connections to create easier walks. Key actions in the Plan relate to improving accessibility, signage, more story telling of interesting features and development of 'key destinations' to support walking / tramping experiences. Dog walking areas are not defined in the Plan or on and off-leash areas which are managed on a park by park basis.



There are over thirty walking and tramping clubs in the Wellington region, reflecting the huge popularity of exploring parks and other open space areas. Photos: Kaumatua Ridge and Coral Track, Pakuratahi Forest, supplied by Anne Caton, Forest & Bird Wellington Region Tramping Club.

Cycling/ Mountain biking (MTB)

The park network offers a variety of cycling and mountain biking opportunities including dedicated mountain bike trails in Belmont and Pakuratahi parks. Across parks there are over 350 kilometres of track and road available for cycling activities.

E-bikes have transformed and supported the significant growth in cycling. They help reduce barriers to participation such as steep, hilly trails. Cross-park routes such as 'Te Ara O Whareroa' through Queen Elizabeth Park sustainably connect communities and are hugely popular. A proposed cycling route through Belmont Regional Park from the Waihora Crescent park entry in Waitangirua to Hill Road, Belmont will connect

Porirua with the Hutt Valley and support recreation and commuter cycling. The Remutaka Cycle Trail, encompassing the rail trail in Pakuratahi, is part of the NZ Great Rides network and will be further enhanced. The proposed 'Akatarawa Traverse' from the Queen Elizabeth Park Kāpiti coast through Akatarawa forest to the Hutt Valley will be a draw card for the region.

There are a range of actions in the Plan to support mountain bike network enhancements including a number of new trails and facility improvements such as updating access barriers to make access easier. Appendix One outlines principles for trail development and a 'Track assessment criteria' for consideration of changes including environmental impact assessment process.



MTB tracks in Belmont and Pakuratahi parks offer recreation and club competition riding. Photos: Belmont Regional Park, visualsby.me

Horse riding

Horse trail riding in parks is a long standing tradition along with pony club and competitive eventing activities. There are pony clubs in QEP, Battle Hill, Belmont and Kaitoke parks and trail riding opportunities in Akatarawa, Pakuratahi and Baring Head parks. A number of clubs are based within parks. Horse riders can enjoy a variety of short and long rides through a



variety of landscapes with over 160 kilometres of horse riding trails available.

Multi-day trail riding is increasingly popular. Long rides are possible through Akatarawa, Belmont and Pakuratahi parks. Facilities for horse riding vary across parks. Actions in this Plan include improving float parking areas, providing more mounting blocks and supporting overnight stays.



Riding at Battle Hill Farm Forest Park where there is easy float parking and a network of trails. Photos Ruth Halliday

Hunting

Reducing the impacts of introduced pest animals (also referred to as game animals) such as goats, pigs, and deer on the environment through hunting for recreation purposes can be beneficial in some parks.

Deer, tahr, chamois and wild pigs, are legally Wild Animals under the Wild Animal Control Act or Game Animals under the Game Animal Council Act. Collectively with other species such as trout, salmon, ducks, pheasants, quail are considered by hunters to be species of recreation hunting value.

Hunting organisations identify that the activity can be a gateway to encourage people to contribute to protection

of the habitat through other activities such as predator trapping.

Recreational hunting provides an important connection to nature, known as biophilia, encouraging people to engage with the outdoors and learn back country skills.

In regional parks the pest/ game species harvested for recreation and food and can provide benefits for broader pest animal control objectives. Hunting activities are managed via permit systems. Public safety is the overarching priority. Safety considerations include public perceptions of safety, proximity to population, recreation trails and activities. Hunting activity areas and periods are defined via the permit system and revised periodically as circumstances change.



Recreation hunting for pigs, deer, goats and other introduced species helps to reduce pest animal numbers and their impacts on native species, soils and freshwater. Photos: Robin Doyle and James Graham

2.3 Conservation and restoration opportunities and challenges

Improving the ecosystem health of parks is a core goal of this Plan. Across the parks network there are opportunities to support biodiversity, improve freshwater quality and minimise the activities causing impacts. Greater Wellington is prepared to phase out stock grazing and invest in restoration of park land.

The Strategic Directions of this Plan signals a shift away from reserve land management by stock grazing and a focus on restoration. Greater Wellington will progressively restore approximately the 2000 hectares grazed by stock largely with vegetation and consider recreation facilities and needs through master planning. This is a significant milestone in the management of parks and strongly supports Council's important climate change emergency response.

Phasing out stock grazing and non-recreation related horse grazing in parks (except Battle Hill) is proposed unless conservation and recreation benefits can be demonstrated through environmental impact assessment processes. There may be small areas where it is beneficial for the activity to continue, provided impacts can be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Stock grazing has been used historically as a land management tool in (via commercial licences) in Belmont, QEP, East Harbour Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui and Kaitoke parks. Restoration work in these parks will be a long-term project, delivering huge benefits for nature and people.

To help guide priorities, Greater Wellington scientists have identified and mapped high level overarching restoration priorities.

There are multiple benefits of ceasing stock grazing activities. These include:

- Expanding habitat for native species. To enable native birds and other species to survive and thrive they need somewhere to live and breed. Park land mostly devoid of vegetation offers little habitat value and tends to favour introduced species which are more adapted to these altered environments.
- Bringing back the bush for native birds, insects and other species supports biodiversity and over time, strengthens the resilience of natural ecosystems. Connecting areas of remnant habitat both within parks and beyond park boundaries provides essential corridors, allowing birds and other species to move between areas for feeding and breeding.
- Reduction in carbon emissions (grazing activities are estimated at 20 percent of total Greater Wellington emissions)

- The opportunity for passive restoration to get underway immediately, supported by park fire threat management plans and hazard reduction work
- Use of publicly owned buildings for conservation, recreation and community benefit purposes
- Financial savings from costs associated with grazing licence activities such as fences, stock water provision, ranger time and maintenance of infrastructure (which offers little public benefit)
- The ability to realise recreation use benefits from full recreation access to park land
- Freshwater quality. Restoring park land grazed by stock offers the benefit of increasing the health and quality of freshwater streams, wetlands, rivers and inlets. Farming activities make ongoing contributions to the sediment load in water catchments, especially on steeper slopes. Stock access to any waterway and overland flow path through grazed paddocks is one of the main routes for E. coli (from stock dung) to enter waterways. Macroalgae blooms occur when there is excess phosphorus and nitrogen in waterways. Macroalgae blooms have a range of adverse effects including, reducing light for desirable species, smothering shellfish beds and other desirable species, and depleting sediment oxygen.
- Restoring headwaters of streams, such as much of Belmont Regional Park has downstream benefits across large catchments, local streams through residential areas and ultimately our harbours.
- A lack of vegetation, particularly streamside (riparian) can reduce fish spawning habitat, and cause streambank erosion resulting in increased sedimentation of waterways and affect the functioning of aquatic species. Riparian planting is an effective method to mitigate sediment, pathogens and excess nutrients. Actions in the draft parks management plan support Greater Wellington's Whaitua programme, see www.gw.govt.nz
- Social benefits associated with involvement in conservation and recreation in parks for health and wellbeing and community led pest control initiatives.

Land and water quality impacts can also be reduced particularly in priority whaitua catchments. In the short term, significant public access benefits can be realised from opening areas of park closed to the public. For example, QEP at the Raumati South and the direct park entry point into western Belmont Park in Cannons Creek/Waitangirua.

It is important that restoration work takes place within Greater Wellington's strategic and policy framework. Detail of individual restoration processes in parks will be determined through master planning and site specific restoration plans where appropriate. These planning processes will involve mana whenua, partner and community engagement, consider park recreation use needs and be led by science and Mātauranga Māori knowledge. High level priorities for restoration of these parks have been identified by Greater Wellington environmental scientists and are mapped in this Plan.

Landscapes for restoration include a wide variety of wetland types including QEP's peat wetlands, small seepage wetlands, dune lakes and ephemeral wetlands and river flat areas. Original vegetation types will be restored wherever possible and include some unique vegetation. For example much of the headland of Baring Head/Ōrua-pouanui was once covered with grey scrub, a species well adapted to strong salt laden winds. Restoration work provides the opportunity to bring back forest and shrub lands, rare and threatened ecosystems.

At a region-wide landscape scale, the Wellington Regional Growth Framework identifies the importance of the 'blue-green' network of parks, vegetation and waterways.

There is a wealth of existing information to inform restoration planning, in particular Resource Statements for parks, Key Native Ecosystem Plans, information about original vegetation and research collated via Whaitua and other programme work.

In some areas of park restoration plans have been developed for sub-catchments such as Hill Road, Belmont. Within the Porirua Whaitua catchments priorities for restoration are based on waterway sediment and E.coli reduction and expansion of existing areas of native vegetation. These areas provide important seed source for spreading by the wind and birds. Master plans and restoration plans are proposed to guide restoration efforts.



Gollans Stream, East Harbour Northern Forest. Photo: Linda Mead

2.3.1 Biodiversity and freshwater strategic directions

Greater Wellington’s Biodiversity Strategy 2011-2022

This Strategy guides Greater Wellington in protecting and managing biodiversity in the Region. The overarching vision “healthy ecosystems thrive in the Wellington Region and provide habitat for native biodiversity” applies to the full range of ecosystem types in the region, from remnants of original (pre-human) ecosystems to modified environments such as plantation forest and farmed land. The vision is underpinned by four principles to guide how Greater Wellington’s biodiversity-related activities are conducted; using best practice, working with others, leading by example, and partnering with mana whenua.

The Strategy has three goals which encompass the range of work undertaken by Greater Wellington to fulfil responsibilities for biodiversity in the Wellington Region (Figure 2). Maintaining and restoring ecosystem functioning and habitats includes providing habitat for native species and benefiting people by providing ecosystem services.

Goal three underpins the other two and focuses on fostering understanding about biodiversity and the value of it to people. This goal recognises that Greater Wellington cannot achieve its vision for biodiversity without the support of others.



Figure 1: Greater Wellington’s strategic approach to biodiversity

Proposed Natural Resources Plan (PNRP)

The PNRP looks at the environment as a whole and combines five previously separate plans for fresh and coastal water, air and soil and regulation of discharges onto land. Māori values for water are an important part of the PNRP. The plan is an expression of the partnership relationship Greater Wellington has with mana whenua at the regional level. It provides the mana whenua voice in the area of resource management particularly as it relates to their sites of significance.

The PNRP has emphasis on the importance on the mauri, or life-giving properties of fresh and coastal waters and the individual and shared roles of the people of the region in taking care of the environment. The goals and actions of this Plan reflect the policies and rules of the PNRP because regional parks to help ensure good care for land, fresh water and cultural values. Regional parks are Greater Wellington’s opportunity to show best practices and leading by example.



Vegetation monitoring plots indicate native species recovery is occurring throughout the park. Passive restoration in progress in East Harbour Regional Park. Developing a short section of new track to create an easier lower level route around Lake Kohangapiriri is proposed. This will enable more people to enjoy the park.

2.3.2 Reducing pest plant and animal threats

Plan policies identify the primacy of achieving conservation and recreation benefits for parks over other land uses which have fewer benefits. Actions in this Plan identify works to restore and support ecosystem health across parks.

Reducing threats is a critical part of this work. The Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programme of work reduces the prevalence of pest plants and animals in areas of all parks. In areas outside defined KNE area boundaries community conservation efforts are important. Greater Wellington supports the national Predator Free 2050 programme objectives and work, Predator Free Wellington project, Capital Kiwi and many other groups and organisations supporting predator free work to reduce impacts of introduced species.

Key Native Ecosystems

The purpose of this Greater Wellington programme is to protect and restore representative examples of original indigenous ecosystem types of high value in the Wellington Region. The Key Native Ecosystem (KNE) programme is a non-regulatory voluntary programme that seeks to protect some of the best examples of original (pre-human) ecosystem types in the Wellington Region. It does this by managing, reducing or removing threats to their ecological values.

Sites on both private, territorial authority and Greater Wellington-managed land with the highest biodiversity values have been selected for management. Staff in the Biodiversity Management team prepare and implement operational plans for managing each KNE site. These plans are reviewed every five years and operational works are reviewed annually.

The KNE programme covers all of some parks and parts of others. KNE area boundaries are identified on maps in this Plan. There many other KNE areas outside and over lapping with regional parks. Other KNE Plans can be found on Greater Wellington's website www.gw.govt.nz

Working with others

In consultation to develop this Plan we heard that restoring native biodiversity is very important to the people of Wellington and that the impacts of pest animals such as deer, pigs, rabbits and goats on biodiversity and restoration plantings, gaps in fish passage and terrestrial habitat for native species were a significant concern. Many submitters asked Greater Wellington to prioritise and extend pest animal reduction work and offered assistance. Plan policies and actions were updated to reflect this feedback.

Doing more pest animal work requires resources, adaptations and sometimes step-changes to how we work. The 'Way we work' Plan goal signals Greater

Wellington's intentions in supporting and enabling more community conservation work in parks. There are many different ways to manage park land and undertake restoration work in parks. Working together, drawing on the wealth of knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm of mana whenua partners, predator free groups, community and park groups, schools and others to grow and focus efforts makes good sense. From our own experience and that of others we know that this works well. The Plan identifies a range of actions to support restoration and pest plant and animal reduction work.

Greater Wellington's Regional Pest Management Plan (RPMP) 2019-2039

The RPMP provides a framework for managing or eradicating specified pest organisms in the region and contributes to achieving the vision and goals of the Biodiversity Strategy. Pest management in the region over the last 20 years has achieved significant improvements to the native biodiversity. With almost 200,000 hectares under long-term pest animal control (including parks), the impacts of damaging species such as possums, mustelids, feral goats, deer and pigs have been reduced, particularly in KNE areas. Extensive pest management has resulted in the recovery of large areas of native bush and native bird species. Flowering rata is common again along with native mistletoe. The Plan identifies species classified as pests in Biosecurity Act 1993 and meeting prerequisite criteria for intervention. It aims to minimise the actual or potential adverse or unintended effects associated with these organisms, maximise the effectiveness of individual actions in managing pests through a regionally coordinated approach, reverse loss of biodiversity in managed high-value biodiversity areas in the region over the next 20 years and achieve pest-free status for a considerable area of the region.

2.3.3 Fire threat management activities

Modern landscapes, like those in our regional parks, that are still in native bush do not readily burn. However, there are also extensive areas of regional parks that have been transformed through logging and clearance for agriculture. These areas tend to be more open and drier, with an abundance of fine fuels (like grasses and exotic shrubs) that can support the ignition of fires. Sources of ignition are also far more abundant as a result of human activity in the parks. Overall fire threat for the region is predicted to increase in some areas and periods of drought become more frequent and longer. In other areas rainfall is predicted to be higher, but overall rainfall patterns are changing, resulting in drier climates.

Fire threat can be actively managed to protect lives, property and maturing native vegetation. The development of fire 'tactical response plans' is proposed. The most effective way to reduce fire threat is to restore native vegetation. This takes generations so other measures are required to mitigate the fire threat. Speeding up the natural recovery of forests through restoration plantings, or most commonly, a combination of natural regeneration and restoration plantings reduces fire threat.

The other main measure is fuel reduction, particularly through the control of highly inflammable vegetation. This can be achieved by speeding up the natural recovery of forests by re-planting taller canopy tree species that will shade the highly flammable vegetation out. Where there is a desire to maintain open landscapes, highly flammable vegetation can be kept under control through other means. Exotic vegetation such as gorse and native vegetation such as manuka and kanuka are highly flammable species.

In addition to regulation (e.g. park rules) and education activities (e.g. signage), Greater Wellington, park neighbours and others need to prepare for unplanned fires. This requires a network of firebreaks and 'defensible spaces' to reduce the risks of unchecked spread of fire to neighbouring properties, and help to protect infrastructure, from which fire can be fought. This Plan presents a long term goal of native vegetation restoration as the best long term solution to reducing seasonal fire threat, and minimising fear associated with the possibility of future fires.



Restoring native vegetation offers the best medium-long term defense against fire. Planting 'green fire breaks', restoring wetlands and maintaining mown perimeter fire breaks are other common ways of managing seasonal fire threat, along with park rules about no lighting of fires. Education activities and science based facts minimise fear of possible future fires.

Restoring healthy environments for nature and people

This illustration reflects land use change over time. Work is continuous to restore healthy ecosystems



Highly natural environments Untouched (relatively) by humans

Some parks have largely self-sustaining ecosystems with pockets of old growth forest which are supported with pest plant and animal reduction work.

Healthy ecosystems support a diversity of flora and fauna species and are the most resilient in the face of climate change, fire threat, periods of drought. They deliver high quality freshwater, air and support mahinga kai.

Healthy natural ecosystems

Modified landscapes Human impacts

Native vegetation restoration is needed to progressively improve mauri, ecosystem health and services

Plantation forests (with recreation value)

Biodiversity values are heavily impacted

Drained, grazing or forestry impacted wetlands and waterways

Highly-altered ecosystems are less resilient to climate changes. Recreation amenity values and benefits are reduced.



Highly-modified ecosystems



Restoration in progress

Most Greater Wellington park landscapes are in state of emerging restoration. Community and mana whenua partners are helping with or leading restoration. Pest plant and animal control is required to support restoration efforts.

Ecosystems are becoming more resilient, biodiversity values are increasing, species are returning and becoming more abundant, mahinga kai values are supported.

Restoring ecosystems

Figure 2

2.4 Community collaboration opportunities

Supporting and enabling communities in parks

Public feedback to develop Toitū te whenua, this plan indicated that there is a desire from many to have a greater level of participation in park conservation and recreation work. According to a key note speaker at the World Urban Parks Congress in Melbourne (October 2018) “park management paradigms have changed. Successful parks now are about management through collaboration which must be early and meaningful with the community”. Conservation and recreation groups are already highly active in most parks. At Parangarahu Lakes, a co management plan with Taranaki Whānui mana whenua has been in place since 2014.

Wherever Greater Wellington works in highly collaborative ways the benefits are apparent. Community groups are helping to manage recreation activities and resourcing and undertaking natural and historic heritage restoration work.

Supporting, recognising and rewarding the efforts of volunteers so that they can be successful in park recreation and conservation work is critical to Greater Wellington’s success. Working collaboratively and transparently as land and people manager and custodian of parks for future generations is essential. Supporting people to work in parks supports community health and wellbeing and the regional economy. Together a lot can be achieved. ‘The way we work’ is identified as a goal in this Plan to enable us to focus our efforts on collaborative ways of working. It supports Greater Wellington in enabling and empowering mana whenua partners, volunteers, and others across parks in conservation and recreation work. More benefits from parks (healthy parks, healthy people) can be realised with enhanced connections with our communities and an approach that supports and enables participation.



The Friends of Baring Head / Ōrua-pouanui are highly active leading native vegetation restoration work along the Wainuiomata River and coastal areas and heritage restoration works at the light house complex. Work is in progress on the ‘Power House’ as a story telling centre and the two former lightkeepers cottages are being restored for overnight park stays.

2.5 Climate change and sustainability

2.5.1 Climate change

Climate change is arguably the biggest environmental challenge of our time and it affects everyone in the region. It impacts the region’s indigenous biodiversity, primary industries, biosecurity, fresh water security, economy and population health and wellbeing. Climate change brings with it increased occurrence of flooding, storm surge and inundation from rising ground water levels and greater wildfire threat. Coastal, low-lying and flood-prone communities and infrastructure

are already being impacted and other communities and the economy are vulnerable. Communities and the economy will be progressively affected with the majority of the population living on the coast or on the floodplains of major rivers.

Transformational change must take place to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, while also adapting to the impacts of climate change. Greater Wellington declared a climate emergency in 2019 and adopted a Corporate

Carbon Neutrality Action Plan and a Regional Climate Emergency Action Plan. These are collectively referred to as the Greater Wellington Climate Emergency Response. These plans include a target to reduce corporate carbon emissions to net zero by 2030, and improve infrastructure and environmental resilience.

Climate change presents opportunities to deliver a cleaner and more resilient environment while ensuring solutions are fair and equitable, particularly for disadvantaged communities. Greater Wellington has a leadership role in parks as part of the regional transition to a low emissions economy. Guided by mātauranga Māori in our work natural solutions can be advanced. Plan proposals for land use change from farming activities to restoration of indigenous vegetation support this transition process as do plan proposals for increased access to the parks for local

communities providing increased opportunities for low-carbon recreation.. Restoring and enhancing wetlands is also important. With less than three percent of original wetlands left in the region, restoring and enhancing wetlands in parks is important as they make a significant contribution to increasing sequestration rates.

Climate change impacts for parks include stronger and more frequent storms, higher rainfall levels and intensity, longer periods of drought and potentially more frequent and severe impacts on the natural environment and park infrastructure. Natural environments and plantation forests contribute to capturing and storing carbon. Parks with healthy ecosystems act as natural buffers and carbon stores and have an important role in helping to minimise the effects of climate change.



The QEP peat wetlands in their drained state are a significant source of carbon emissions. Restoring them is a priority for Greater Wellington, mana whenua and partners, community groups and others.

2.5.2 Sustainability

In line with becoming more resilient and adaptive to mitigating the effects of climate change is the need to be increasingly sustainable. A sustainable park is managed to preserve natural resources and promote a higher quality of life (Health and Wellbeing) for communities around them. To achieve sustainability and resilient outcomes for the region, it will require us to be more innovative. For example, relying on business as usual efficiencies will not enable us to limit our carbon to appropriate levels in order to mitigate climate change.

Outlined in section 6 of Greater Wellington’s procurement policy, at Greater Wellington, one of the key objectives in all procurement is to “Get the best results from our spending, including sustainable (social, environmental and economic) value-for-money over the lifetime of the goods, services, or works we buy (noting that best value is not always the cheapest price).”

Parks have the opportunity to create additional value using sustainability as part of the overall outcome, investing in well-designed and appropriately sourced materials, demonstrating a commitment to reduce all forms of waste, and to reuse or recycle materials, facilities or infrastructure wherever possible.

Environmental sustainability is when all actions enhance and protect environmental health upon which human health and the economy depend. Examples include remnant vegetation protection, pest control, developing renewable resources, reducing pollution and reducing the carbon footprint in our environment. This applies particularly in the domains of sustainable land use, green economies, safeguarding ecosystem services, energy efficiency and the use of renewable energies.

A healthy and satisfied population creates not only a more productive community, which in turn improves the economic growth, but also an enhanced quality of life leading to more sustainable development. By supporting local livelihoods we help create a vibrant economy and foster a long-term sustainable economy for the region. Promotion of the use of resources in an efficient and responsible way provides long-term benefits.

Social aspect of sustainability focuses on balancing the needs of the individual with the needs of others in a sustainable way. This means healthy family, community and individual inner-life over the long term; and preserving our rich and diverse cultural heritage, while fostering an atmosphere that encourages expression, communication and interaction in the arts, recreation and wellbeing of our residents and visitors.

2.6 Social change

Across the region, in times of health and climate crisis and prosperity, collaborative relationships are integral to achieving shared goals and sustaining wellbeing. The Covid19 pandemic has seen significantly increased park use in parks easily assessable from residential areas with most parks seeing a quadrupling of use. Parks across the region, New Zealand and the world, have become highly-valued as places of physical and mental health, refuge, respite as well as social connection (at an appropriate physical distance).

Feedback indicated many people were visiting some parks for the first time during the ‘lockdown’ period and discovered their local parks and trails. For a short period, streets and roads became safe shared paths. Bike use has grown further. There was an unprecedented opportunity to enjoy a period of ‘natural quiet’ and stillness when the hum of traffic and commerce was temporarily hushed. For many people recycling services were not been available and there was a significant focus on food supply. This has created heightened awareness of waste and food security and resulted in an upsurge in vegetable gardening and interest in growing food locally.



Keep your passing distance in times of pandemic. In 2020 parks became very important places for many people.

Post 'lockdown' parks also have a significant role in recovery. Supporting social health and wellbeing, local business, sustainability and resilience. It remains to be seen if there are significant social, economic and sustainability paradigm shifts resulting from the pandemic, but 'localism' appears to be an immediate focus. The ability of parks to provide sustainable benefits for people, communities and the environment of the region are profound, particularly where local communities are supported and enabled in parks.

The role of parks in health has become more significant; *"Now, more than ever, Regional parks must be understood as essential public infrastructure. Not unlike essential workers, their contributions during a pandemic should be celebrated, protected, and ultimately leveraged to support public health. We must shift our thinking to repurpose public spaces during times of crisis, restore their ecologies when the crisis abates, and adapt Regional parks to better accommodate urban populations (especially those who have been historically underserved) for the future"* <https://www.bostonglobe.com/2020/05/05/opinion/parks-are-essential-especially-during-coronavirus-pandemic/>

Other social changes include increased use of technological devices (e.g. drones), 'Instagrammability' of picturesque locations, social media driving visits to particular places and bringing together people across a range of physical locations and around particular causes. Population demographic changes and road developments such as Transmission Gully also influence park awareness and uses.

3 VISION FOR PARKS

The theme and sub-title for this management plan is '*E tūhonohono ana ngā mea katoa/ Everything is connected*' reflecting the place of parks within broader ecological systems (ecosystems) and communities. Ecosystems services include water, air and food and inputs and outputs are interconnected. From this comes the concept of **hauora pāka, hauora hunga / healthy parks, healthy people**

Restoring healthy natural environments for multiple benefits, including recreation activities and cultural heritage, is the focus for this management plan over the next 10 years from 2020 to 2030, recognising that restoration work has a much longer term and that recreation needs, activities and social values can change in the short term. This vision summarise the key aspirations for parks over the next 10 years.

Conservation, restoration, kaitiakitanga

Managing threats and reducing impacts, working together to restore and protect healthy ecosystems for nature and mauri life force.

Recreation, experiences, hapori

Highly accessible places to enjoy a variety of activities, refresh and connect. Creating and maintaining rich recreation experiences.

Restoring healthy ecosystems for the benefit of nature and people

He waka eke noa – we're all in this together, moving forward

Community

People are at the heart of our parks, protecting, enhancing and enjoying recreation and conservation experiences for health and wellbeing of all and nature.

Climate change

Healthy park ecosystems are a natural solution, carbon sinks, resilient and reducing the effects of climate changes.

Working collaboratively

Supporting and enabling others to lead and help reach shared goals. Learning, experimenting, aiming high for conservation, recreation and community.

4 CORE VALUES FOR PARKS

Regional parks are places where particular values are protected and enhanced. Many values are identified in governing legislation including the four aspects of community wellbeing – social, economic, environmental and cultural.

Fundamentally parks protect intrinsic and non-intrinsic values relating to the whenua, nature and culture (history, people, recreation, community). Identifying core values in this Plan identifies common ground in conservation, recreation and community and helps provide a filter for compatibility of uses and activities in planning, managing and using parks. Identifying compatibility with core values can assist in prioritising uses and work. For example, if preserving and improving the natural environment is a core value for parks, then activities which contribute impacts must be minimised due to incompatibility.

Social values evolve with society over time. Some values can become stronger and more important over time. For example, improving resilience in the natural environment has become critical as the earth faces the consequences of human-induced climatic changes. Refer to the glossary section for definition of values.

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

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

We value the protection and enhancement of the environment of parks and forests for future generations

- We support strong mauri; the fundamental essential life force of all that exists, and foster growth and health of living things
- We maintain a diversity of landscape types for people to enjoy
- Where the environment is degraded, we focus on restoration, prioritising high quality freshwater, protection of wetlands and rare ecosystems and work to minimise threats and impacts

- We prioritise achieving high-quality freshwater and work to minimise threats and impacts
- In the face of ongoing climate change, we work to build ecosystem health and support resilience
- We support natural and /or community-led opportunities to reduce impacts of climate change and support public learning and engagement

We value high quality and diverse recreation experiences for health and wellbeing

- Regional parks are easily accessible and we provide for people of all abilities
- Park experiences are simple, yet high-quality experiences and are memorable
- Information about park experiences is readily available and highly useable for visitors
- Parks feel safe for people to visit and enjoy
- Spirit of place; the uniqueness is recognised and celebrated
- We provide storytelling, events and other engagement activities to enable visitors to learn about what is special about places and features within parks
- We support the economy of parks and beneficial concession/ business activities
- In the face of ongoing climate change, we plan and manage our facilities for future resilience
- We support recreation and conservation clubs and groups to be successful in their activities

We value our cultural heritage and working alongside mana whenua / mātauranga

- Ngā kaupapa; the earth is nourished for life and mahinga kai is plentiful
- Māramatanga; knowledge and understanding grows and adapts to environmental and social changes
- Mana is enhanced where outcomes are shared and decisions are made in true partnerships, enabling park communities to prosper
- Wairua, the spiritual health and safety of people, is supported through healthy natural systems and activities in parks
- We consider, protect and where appropriate enhance cultural values through activities such as interpretation/ storytelling
- We work together collaboratively to shape and create future states of parks for conservation, recreation and community benefits

We value collaboration and empowerment in the way we work

- We follow a benefits-based approach with investment decisions prioritising natural and cultural values, and health and wellbeing through recreation experiences and community connections
- We work in a collaborative manner, based on our core values, optimising benefits for the environment and park visitors
- Respecting mana whenua and community we engage early in planning for parks
- We freely share and utilise the knowledge and expertise which ensures our approach is well informed
- Creativity is fostered and not feared
- Research and an evidence-based approach is core to our work. Innovative ways of working are supported wherever possible
- We consider and draw on local and international best practice for innovating our approach
- Our relationships are built on honesty, trust and transparency
- Safety is at the forefront of our work
- We monitor and measure our performance and strive to continuously improve by learning and improving from our challenges
- We plan strategically with an evidence-based and adaptive approach
- We recognise contributions to conservation and recreation and demonstrably support our volunteers



'No one will protect what they don't care about; and no one will care about what they have never experienced'. David Attenborough. Learning opportunities and outdoor adventures in parks are important. Time in nature reduces public health costs associated with illness, inactivity, stress and anxiety. Wainuiomata history of drinking water museum.

5 PARTNERSHIPS MAHI TAHI AND COMMUNITY HAPORI

Ma te kōrero ka mōhio, Ma te mōhio ka mārama, Ma te mārama ka mātau, ma te mātau ka ora ai tātou

Through discussion comes awareness, through awareness comes, understanding, through understanding comes wisdom, through wisdom comes wellbeing for all

Mana whenua of the region have rich and significant historical and present day connections to land now managed as parks. Parks have highly valued taonga, archaeological sites, land and waterways that continue to provide mahinga kai sustenance for people. Kaitiaki custodianship practices such as pa harakeke, rāhui and science monitoring support natural values and their restoration. Iwi values associated with park land, the whenua and wider environment, include Mauri, Te Ao Tūroa, Mana, Māramatanga, Wairua and Whakapapa.

Good partnerships involve goodwill, consideration, time and work and are highly rewarding for all. This Plan outlines a range of actions to support kaitiaki partnerships across parks working on shared values and goals. Actions include supporting more mana whenua presence in the parks in a range of ways, making sure that all parks also have a Te reo Māori name and updating key signage to be bi-lingual. Greater Wellington’s mana whenua partners with interests in parks are:

Mana whenua	Represented by	Area of interest	Regional Park
Ngāti Toa Rangatira	Te Rūnanga o Toa Rangātira Incorporated	Porirua, Wellington, Hutt Valley	Battle Hill, Belmont, Akatarawa, Queen Elizabeth, Kaitoke, Pakuratahi
Taranaki Whānui ki te Upoko o te Ika a Maui	Port Nicholson Block Settlement Trust (PNBST)	Wellington and Hutt Valley	Belmont, Kaitoke, Pakuratahi, East Harbour, Akatarawa, Wainuiomata
Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai	Te Āti Awa ki Whakarongotai Charitable Trust	Waikanae	Queen Elizabeth
Ngāti Raukawa ki te Tonga	Ngā Hapū o Ōtaki	Ōtaki	Interest in region wide kaitiaki matters
Rangitāne o Wairarapa	Rangitāne o Wairarapa Incorporated	Wairarapa	Interest in Kaitoke and Pakuratahi
Ngāti Kahungunu ki Wairarapa	Ngāti Kahungunu ki, Wairarapa Trust	Wairarapa	Interest in Kaitoke and Pakuratahi