

Whitireia Park Recreation and Leisure Study



for Greater Wellington Regional Council

Corydon Consultants Ltd

March 2015

GW/PF-G-15/21

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
2. Methodology	1
2.1 Visitor survey.....	1
2.2 Submissions and background information	2
2.3 Focus group meetings and interviews	2
3. Background	3
4. Profile of park users	5
5. Recreational activity in the park	6
5.1 Overview.....	6
5.2 Commentary on specific activities	7
5.2.1 Dog walking.....	7
5.2.2 Hang gliding, paragliding, kite surfing and windsurfing	7
5.2.3 Rock climbing.....	8
5.2.4 Coastal activities.....	8
5.2.5 Horse riding	9
5.2.6 Model aircraft flying	9
5.3 Activities undertaken by the most regular visitors	9
6. Conflicts	10
7. Park attributes appreciated by visitors	12
8. Suggested directions for future management	14
8.1 Preserve the natural, wild, undeveloped character and open space.....	14
8.2 Additions to the track network.....	14
8.3 Improvements to existing tracks.....	18
8.4 New visitor infrastructure.....	18
8.5 Upgrades and maintenance of existing infrastructure	20
8.6 Dogs	21
8.7 Interpretation, education and signage	22
8.8 Ecological restoration	22
8.9 Marine protection and enhancement	23
8.10 Reducing fire risk	24
8.11 Controlling gorse and other weeds.....	24
8.12 Grazing.....	25
8.13 Car parking.....	25
8.14 Restriction of vehicle access on park roads.....	26
8.14.1 Kaitawa Point access.....	26
8.14.2 Access from Onepoto Road.....	27
8.14.3 Other traffic issues in the park.....	27

8.15	Changes to Whitireia Road	27
8.16	Prevention of off-road vehicle access	28
8.17	Gate closure times.....	28
8.18	Shelter and shade at popular sites	28
8.19	Coastal litter	28
8.20	Golf course expansion.....	28
8.21	Hang gliding, paragliding and kite surfing.....	30
8.22	Rock climbing.....	30
8.23	Horse riding.....	31
8.24	Model aircraft flying.....	31
8.25	Access links to the city	31
8.26	Neighbourhood park provision on the residential edge.....	31
8.27	Community partnerships.....	32
8.28	Concessions.....	32
8.29	Wording of the new management plan	32

9. Interpretation for local and overseas visitors33

10. Concluding comments34

Appendix 1: Visitor Survey Results36

Survey dates, times and weather	36
Travel mode	36
How visitors learned about Whitireia Park.....	36
Frequency of visitation.....	37
Park entry and exit points.....	37
Activities.....	38
Duration of visit.....	39
Likes	39
Suggested changes	41
Sites visited	43
Visitor demographics.....	45

Appendix 2: Map of coded sites48

Appendix 3: Whitireia Park Visitor Survey49

1. Introduction

Whitireia Park was created as a park in 1976 and a Park Board was established the following year. One of the Board's first tasks was to prepare a management plan. The plan, approved in 1978, has never been reviewed. In 2011 Greater Wellington Regional Council (GW) took over the day-to-day management of the park from the Department of Conservation. At the same time the makeup of the Board changed to include three Ngati Toa members and three councillors from GW. This Board membership reflected the intention of the Ngati Toa Treaty Settlement, confirmed in December 2013. The Board has the formal mandate under the Reserves Act and the Ngati Toa Treaty Settlement Act to govern the Park. One of its first actions is to review the management plan.

In November 2014 Corydon Consultants Ltd was contracted by Greater Wellington to undertake a recreation and leisure study of Whitireia Park. The aim of the project was:

To inform the management plan process about the current user profile, current user issues/recreation needs, and how the plan can broaden opportunities for visitors in the future.

The study was to provide an understanding of:

1. The park's user profile
2. Use of the park at various seasons (but especially during summer), the impacts of those recreating, and the extent to which facilities/infrastructure are meeting needs and where service levels need adjusting
3. Possible recreation/tourism aspects that could be developed, including ways to build a level of understanding and interest in the Ngati Toa history
4. Changes needed to help users of the park to enjoy/maximise their experience (i.e. possible areas for investment).

2. Methodology

Three main methods were used to gather information for this study: an on-site visitor survey, a review of submissions and background information, and a series of focus group meetings and interviews, discussed below.

A draft of this report was presented to and discussed at the February 2014 meeting of the Whitireia Park Board held at Te Runanga o Toa Rangatira Inc. Additional information was added in response to feedback received from Board members and the public.

2.1 Visitor survey

Two types of survey were undertaken. The first was a simple census undertaken at the two main entrances (Thornley St and Onepoto), which recorded numbers of individuals entering and leaving the park, as well as mode of travel. The aim of this was to provide data with which to calibrate data from the track counters at each of these entrances.

A more in depth questionnaire was administered face to face with visitors throughout the park, including at the Onehunga Bay car park, Kaitawa Point, on Te Onepoto Loop track, at the cliff top car park, and at various other sites around the park (done by a roving interviewer). This survey sought to build a detailed picture of visitor demographics, patterns of use, types of activities undertaken and frequency of use. Interviewees were also asked what they liked about the park and ideas for how the park experience could be improved. A total of 288 interviews were conducted, representing a total of 752 visitors (one individual was randomly selected from each group to complete the questionnaire). Some questions related to the group as a whole while others were directed only to the randomly-selected interviewee. The full results of the questionnaire survey are presented in Appendix 1 and the questionnaire form is included in Appendix 3.

The number of people interviewed was based on the number needed to achieve a representative sample with a high level of confidence that the responses would be typical of the users of Whitireia Park in general¹. The number was based on the estimated number of users in a typical week, as recorded in traffic counts undertaken at the park during the summer of 2013.

The questionnaire survey was undertaken over five days between the 14th and 24th of January 2015 (a small number were also done in late December 2014 while piloting the questionnaire). All surveyors underwent training beforehand.

2.2 Submissions and background information

Background documents including the original (1978) park management plan, the 1997 park bylaws and the draft Sustainable Land Use Plan were reviewed along with submissions received by Greater Wellington in response to public notification of the management plan review process. Some of these submissions were very detailed and have been drawn on extensively in preparing this report. The submissions were from:

- Mana Cycle Group
- Porirua Youth Advisory Group
- Titahi Golf Club
- Wellington Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club
- Whitireia Park Restoration Group
- 36 individuals (including emailed submissions and submissions posted on the *Have Your Say* section of GW's website).

2.3 Focus group meetings and interviews

Following the completion of the survey a series of focus group meetings and telephone interviews were held with various groups with an interest in the park. These included:

- Amanda Santos (who runs beginner mountain bike trips in the park)
- NZ Alpine Club

¹ The total number of interviewees provides a confidence level of 95% with a confidence interval of 5%. This means that for responses on subjective matters (such as what do you like/ how can the park be improved) we can be 95% "certain" that the true percentage of users who would have given that response is 5% either side of the percentage of responses recorded.

- Porirua City Council staff (including the Acting Manager of Leisure Assets and Recreation Services, the Porirua Harbour Strategy Co-ordinator, and a regulatory policy analyst)
- Royal Forest and Bird Protection Society (Kapiti branch)
- Tararua Tramping Club (Convenor of Alpine Instruction)
- Titahi Bay Community Group (including local horse riders and mountain bikers)
- Titahi Bay Residents Association
- Titahi Golf Club
- Wellington Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club
- Wellington Model Aeroplane Club.

3. Background

The original (1978) park management plan was developed by the Department of Lands and Survey for the Whitireia Park Board, shortly after the Crown acquired the bulk of the area from private interests and reserved it for recreation purposes.

The writers of the original plan drew on a 1973 study (by the Wellington Regional Planning Authority) of outdoor recreation in the Wellington region. That study showed that most visits to the park originated from the Porirua/Pauatahanui catchment, with lesser numbers from Wellington, the Hutt Valley and Kapiti. The Whitireia/Porirua Harbour area was identified as one of the four most significant coastal recreation areas in the region. The park was deemed to be of “regional” to “sub-regional” significance for recreation.

Until the time of the 1978 plan’s development there had been little effort made to encourage public use of the peninsula and recreational use had developed in an informal to “semi-organised” manner, with the exception of the golf course.

The 1978 plan’s objectives (besides conservation and preservation objectives) included:

Function: To preserve and manage Whitireia Park in perpetuity as a recreation reserve for the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public.

Use: To maintain, facilitate and further the generally informal passive and spontaneous recreational use of the Park.

The 1978 plan divided the park into three broad management areas:

1. The coastal edge and escarpment, to be managed for public recreation
2. An area incorporating the central valley, to be prioritised for grazing and
3. The golf course.

A “buffer” area to the west of Te Onepoto Stream was to form a barrier between the public use parts of the park and the residential area to the west. The character of the park was to remain largely unchanged, with minimal facility provision beyond toilets at Onehunga Bay and Te Onepoto Bay and some seating “*in sheltered locations close to the main car parking areas*”. At that time the land cover was mostly rough

pasture (grazed throughout the year), with some reversion in the coastal gullies and strong reversion to scrub within the western “buffer” area.

In 1978 it was envisaged that recreational activities (other than golf) would continue to be concentrated along the coastal strip. The plan stated that the public would generally be “*kept out of the central valley except for golf and for access... along a clearly defined path system*” (page 42) and that “*no recreational use other than for access and landscape interpretation about the estuary will be encouraged within the park buffer area*” (page 46). Since that time there have been changes in the nature of outdoor recreation, particularly the advent of mountain biking, which has increased demand for tracks across a wide variety of settings and track conditions. This, in particular, has led to heightened public interest in the central valley system. Recreational use has increased with the development of Te Onepoto Loop Track and there is public appetite for further track development in both the central valley area and, to a lesser extent, the “buffer” area (see section 8.2).

The golf course was developed in 1958 to replace the original Titahi Bay course, which had been taken under the Public Works Act for military purposes during WWII. The 1978 plan recognised golf as a permitted use within the park. The plan provided for future golf course expansion but stated that this must be confined to the central valley.

The 1978 plan addressed public vehicle access, stating that the park board had considered a number of road layout options and resolved to provide an access road terminating in a car park at Te Onepoto Bay and the higher level road to Onehunga Bay, with the option to link these two roads at some future time, forming a loop road around the coastal margin. Section 8.14 of this report will show that such a proposal today would be vigorously resisted by the community.

In 1997 the Whitireia Park Board revised the Whitireia Park bylaws to “*bring them in line with current terminology and appropriate activities in the Park*”. The specific amendments included:

- Restricting vehicle speed to 30km/h within the park and banning the use of vehicles off formed roads
- Allowing horse riding (but only on a signposted bridle trail)
- Allowing the use of paragliders and hang gliders
- Banning camping
- Prohibiting the lighting of fires except in fireplaces provided or in portable barbecues
- Requiring dog owners to keep dogs on leashes within the park².

² Note that the requirement to keep dogs on leashes does not apply to beaches – see section 5.
Corydon Consultants: Whitireia Park Recreation and Leisure Study

4. Profile of park users

The visitor survey (undertaken over a period of six days) recorded 749 visitors, of which 288 were interviewed. The full results of the questionnaire survey are presented in Appendix 1. This section provides a summary of the visitors' characteristics. Note that the survey recorded demographic information for all members of the groups covered by the survey, not just those interviewed.

- Most visitors travelled to the park by car (86%). The next largest group was runners (17%).
- Slightly more females than males were recorded (51% compared with 49%).
- Over half of the visitors were aged between 20 and 49 years of age.
- About half of the visitors were Pakeha, just over 20% were Maori and 10% were Pacific Islanders.
- Just over 60% of the visitors were residents of Porirua and about a quarter were from Wellington City.
- About a third visited the park alone while another third were in a family group.
- Just over 80% of those interviewed knew about the park either from local knowledge or previous experience. Seventeen percent had heard via word of mouth. Only 3% had heard about the park via the internet (including the GWRC website). Even fewer had heard via Facebook.
- Almost half of those interviewed visited the park at least once a week and a significant proportion of these said they visited daily or several times a week. A further 27% visited the park at least once every two months.
- Over 60% of those interviewed accessed the park via the Thornley Street entrance while just under 40% used the Onepoto entrance. Only one or two had entered via Richard Street, the Golf Course or Owhiti Street.
- For over a third of those interviewed, the main activity was dog-walking and just under a third came to walk without a dog. About a third went swimming during their visit – over half of these did so in conjunction with walking or dog-walking. Only 7% were picnicking. Only nine divers were recorded but it is likely these were under-represented as they were difficult for the surveyors to speak to. No horse-riders were recorded during the survey period but it is clear from the interviews with community groups that horse riders are a significant albeit small user-group in the park.
- About one third of those interviewed stayed in the park for less than an hour and most of the others stayed for between one and four hours.

5. Recreational activity in the park

5.1 Overview

A 1976 study of coastal recreational activity (undertaken by the Wellington Regional Planning Authority and referred to in the 1978 Park Management Plan) showed that despite not being open to the public as a park, considerable use was being made of the Whitireia peninsula, particularly at Onehunga Bay and Kaitawa Point but also right around the coastal margin. The 1973 study listed recreation activities pursued within the Whitireia/Porirua coastal area (in order of priority) as: trips and picnics to the beach; swimming; boating and waterskiing; fishing; and driving for pleasure. Other activities identified by the 1978 plan as taking place at Whitireia included rock climbing, hang gliding, model aircraft flying, diving, walking, and fossicking along the coast.

The 1978 management plan recognised the park as a significant site for informal recreation where people are “free to do their own thing” but also recognised its value as a site for various site-specific “semi-organised” pursuits such as rock-climbing, hang gliding and flying model aircraft. It noted the undesirability of trail bike riding, common in the area at the time, because of its negative impacts on other users and the coastal environment.

Thirty-five years later the range of recreational activities present in the park is similar to that recorded in the earlier reports. The exceptions are the arrival of new pursuits such as mountain biking, kite surfing and paragliding (yet to be invented in 1978) and a much reduced presence of trail biking within the park.

The visitor survey undertaken as part of this study (see section 2.1) recorded the following activities being undertaken by respondents (listed in descending order of frequency):

- Dog walking
- Walking (without dog)
- Swimming
- Sightseeing
- Running
- Picnicking
- Beachcombing / fossicking on the shore
- Mountain biking
- Fishing
- Diving/snorkelling (incl. spear fishing)
- Kite surfing
- Rock climbing
- Playing on the beach
- Kayaking
- Paragliding

- Flying model aircraft³.

While not included in the survey, golf is a major use of a substantial portion of the park.

The full results of the visitor survey are provided in Appendix 1.

Our impression from the survey results, discussions with user groups and on-site observations is that a diverse pattern of recreational activity has developed, largely informally over the time that the peninsula has been open to the public, and that each activity has found its own niche within the complex landscape of the park. Further, there seems to be little in the way of competition for space or sites among the various activities, and all seem to rub along pretty well with one another. There are a few exceptions to this, which are dealt with in Section 6.

5.2 Commentary on specific activities

Certain activities warrant specific mention because of special relationships between the park and those activities.

5.2.1 Dog walking

Dog walking was the activity most commonly recorded among survey participants (see Appendix 1). Thirty-six percent of all respondents were visiting the park specifically for walking (or in a few cases running or mountain biking) with their dog(s). The next most common activity was walking *without* a dog, (29% of respondents.) Forty percent of Porirua respondents were walking dogs, as were 32% of respondents from Wellington. When the highest frequency visitors are separated out, the pattern is even more dramatic (see section 5.3). Fifty percent of the 140 respondents who visited the park at least once per week were dog walkers (that is, year-round regular dog walkers made up 24% of the total survey population).

When asked to list the attributes of the park that they liked, 20% of all respondents said they liked the park as a place to spend time with their dogs. Specifically, they appreciated the opportunity to let their dog off the leash (including because of the absence of stock), and many commented that it was a “dog friendly” place that was “safe for dogs.”

See also sections 6 and 7.

5.2.2 Hang gliding, paragliding, kite surfing and windsurfing

A number of submissions were received from hang glider and paraglider pilots, including one from the Wellington Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club (WHGPC). The 1978 management plan recognised hang glider pilots as regular users of Onehunga Bay and the submissions confirmed that this site is of regional significance for these activities. Under certain weather conditions it is one of few safe sites in the Wellington Region. It is also one of very few sites in the region suitable for training new pilots. Pilots of both persuasions launch from a site atop the coastal escarpment south-east of the Onehunga Bay car park, fly above the coastal

³ Other activities undertaken by one or two respondents included: collecting puha, dog training, drawing, educational trip, exploring, jet skiing, orienteering, reading, skateboarding, sunbathing, visiting the pou, wake boarding, watching kite surfing, watching wildlife, wind surfing, taking wedding photos.

platform (taking advantage of the updraft caused by onshore winds up the cliff face), and land on the coastal terrace immediately east of the car park or else on the sandy beach further east. The submission from the WHGPC includes a map of these areas.

Onehunga Bay is also popular with kite surfers and wind surfers. Some sail across from the Plimmerton foreshore while others launch from Onehunga beach. It was noted that the grass next to the beach is ideal for laying out kites prior to launching and for dropping kites when landing.

5.2.3 Rock climbing

Rock climbing at Titahi Bay has been recorded in guide books since the late 1960s. According to the Tararua Tramping Club's (TTC's) Convenor of Alpine Instruction, "*The Titahi Bay crag [northern slopes of Whitireia peak] is the best outdoor venue for roped rock climbing in the Wellington region. Many would say that it is the only such venue in the region, with Baring Head and Turakirae head areas being more suited to bouldering (unroped climbing) and the few other known climbing crags in the region being small, less developed and distant... [The crag is also] the best outdoor location in the Wellington region for teaching beginners roped rock climbing skills. Tararua Tramping Club uses the location for its annual courses in alpine instruction (rock climbing module) and its youth development programme (for 14 to 18 year olds).*"

As well as the TTC we spoke with a rock climbing tutor from Whitireia Polytechnic, which also uses the crag for instruction, and with the NZ Alpine Club.

Besides its accessibility, rock climbers value the Titahi Bay crag because of:

- The atmosphere of the location (steep rock, proximity of the sea, surrounding flora and fauna)
- The presence of rock which is similar in nature to NZ alpine rock
- A well-developed range of documented and well-known climbing lines on diverse rock angles and aspects.
- Availability of fixed top anchors on popular climb routes
- The part played by the location in the history of Wellington climbing and development of climbing nationally (early climbers of the crag included Bill Denz and Graeme Dingle developed several routes in the area)
- The existence of some of the same environmental hazards that climbers can encounter in the mountains (rock fall, height hazards, access using paths on steep terrain, exposure to weather).

5.2.4 Coastal activities

The convoluted coastline of Whitireia means that whichever way the wind is blowing there is always a sheltered spot with calm water available. This, together with easy access to the coast via Whitireia Road⁴, makes the park a popular site for diving (two dive school groups were encountered by the surveyors), swimming, picnicking and other coastal edge activities.

⁴ Whitireia Road is the sealed access road from the end of Thornley Street to Onehunga Bay.
Corydon Consultants: Whitireia Park Recreation and Leisure Study

5.2.5 Horse riding

Informal horse riding is popular with a small number of park users. Most riding occurs along the coastal track and up over the hill from Onehunga Bay to the Thornley St entrance, riding alongside Whitireia Road on the grass. Horse riders interviewed said that they do not require formed tracks and prefer riding on grass, either across open country or alongside formed tracks or roads, provided sufficient level ground is available.

5.2.6 Model aircraft flying

The Wellington Model Aeroplane Club flies unpowered and electric-powered gliders from the cliff top area (near Whitireia peak), making use of the updraft created by onshore winds blowing up the cliffs. The site is ideal for this activity – the club president described it as “a world class slope soaring site” and said that people come from as far away as Palmerston North to fly their aircraft there. The park ranger currently maintains a strip of mown grass next to the cliff top car park for landing gliders on.

5.3 Activities undertaken by the most regular visitors

Conducting a park visitor survey during mid-summer is likely to skew the recorded activity pattern towards summer activities relative to the results that would be achieved were the survey undertaken at random times throughout the year. This potential bias was partly offset by the wide range of weather conditions encountered during the survey period, from fine and sunny to cold, overcast and windy (see Appendix 1). In addition, to help verify the validity of reported activity we separately analysed the activity data for the most frequent visitors: those who said they visited the park at least once per week. Although the survey form did not have a space for this, many of the people in this category were recorded as saying that they visited every day, or almost every day.

One hundred and forty respondents (49%) were in this highest frequency visitation category. Among this group, dog walking was still the leading activity but was even more significant than for the population as a whole (50% compared with 36%). Next came swimming (26% compared with 29% of all visitors), then walking without a dog (24% compared with 29%), running (9% compared with 7%), and mountain biking (6% compared with 5%).

6. Conflicts

Whitireia Park is highly valued by residents of Porirua and the wider Wellington area as a landscape and ecological resource as well as a recreational setting. Because it caters for such a wide range of activities, conflicts inevitably occur between different visitor groups as a result of different values and expectations. These need to be managed if the park experience is to be enjoyable for all.

Our study has identified issues arising between the following groups.

Dog walkers and other track users. Two issues stand out above all others identified:

- dog walkers failing to remove **dog droppings** from tracks and other public areas, and
- threatening or intimidating behaviour of **poorly controlled dogs off leads**.

In the first case, the park does not have rubbish bins and the implicit expectation is that owners will pick up their dogs' droppings and remove them from the park. Unfortunately this seldom happens and droppings are either left on tracks, or bagged and then left in the park (see section 8.4). An attitude seemingly common among dog walkers was expressed by one as:

“As a dog owner I am happy to take my plastic rubbish home but not my doggy doos.”

In the second case, Whitireia Park is unusual in the greater Wellington metropolitan area as being an extensive public space where people feel able to let their dogs run free off the lead. The Porirua City Council bylaws specify that dogs in public places must be on a lead, *except on beaches*. The sandy beach sections of the coastal strip at Whitireia Park are deemed “beaches” under this definition, but in the remainder of the park, including non-sandy sections of the coastal strip and all other tracks, dogs are supposed to be on leads. Dogs off leads must be under adequate control, meaning they must respond to verbal commands. It is clear from survey responses and our observations that many dog owners do not have their dogs on leads in non-beach areas, and that when off the lead many dogs are not adequately controlled. Some visitors are intimidated by free running dogs, especially poorly controlled ones. People who voiced this concern were mostly visiting (in descending order of frequency): Onehunga Bay, the Coastal Track, the Inland Track and the Wetland Track. See section 8.6.

Mountain bikers and walkers. Competition between walkers and bikers was cited by proponents of track building as a reason for expanding the track network, especially by those advocating specialised mountain bike tracks (see section 8.2). Conflict between these two groups was mentioned by very few survey respondents and our impression is that this is not highly significant at Whitireia, probably because most tracks in the park are suitable for beginner mountain bikers who tend to ride conservatively and carefully, and wide enough to comfortably accommodate both bikes and walkers.⁵

⁵ In fairness we must acknowledge the Mana Cycle Group's comment that the timing of the survey (mid-summer) coincided with a low concentration of mountain bikes in the park, because bikers tend to avoid the tracks when they are busy with other users. See section 4.3 for an analysis of activities undertaken by the most frequent visitors surveyed.

Traffic and recreational users of Whitiireia Road. Some walkers, runners and bikers currently use the road because no formed off-road alternative exists. The road is very narrow with a steep drop off in places. Section 8.2(1) details a proposed new track that would address this.

Off-road motorised recreation and other visitors. The incidence of trail bikes in the park was said to be much lower than it had been in the past. Several survey respondents and the Titahi Bay Community Group said they were grateful for this. Although the problem is reduced, trail bikes and 4WD vehicles still access off-road areas and respondents asked that more be done to stop them. See section 8.16.

Motorised water sports and other coastal users. As detailed in section 7, the most highly valued attributes of Whitiireia among survey respondents included the natural environment and peace and quiet. Jet skis and other noisy water sports are anathema to quiet contemplation of coastal scenery.

7. Park attributes appreciated by visitors

Respondents to the visitor survey were asked what they liked about Whitireia Park. They could list more than one attribute and were not prompted. Their responses were recorded in full by interviewers in the field, then analysed and grouped into common themes after the completion of the survey. The main responses are listed below (refer to Appendix 1 for a full summary).

Environmental attributes

- Views, scenery, beauty (36%)
- Peace and quiet, remoteness, absence of crowding, solitude (34%)
- The sea, coast, water, attractive beaches, rocky shore, coastline (28%)
- Sheltered places / beaches / coast in various conditions, e.g. in a southerly or other wind / safe swimming because of shelter, calm, shallow water (13%)
- Natural, unspoilt, unmodified character, absence of development, buildings (11%)
- Open space, including open grass (9%)
- Variable landscape e.g. combination of sea, coast, hills, wetland, bush, variety of settings in a small space (7%).

Recreation attributes

- Good tracks / quality of tracks, including recent upgrading, quality of maintenance, easy walking, good surface year round (23%)
- Variety of routes available – plenty of options for trips, can easily put together a trip of appropriate length and to suit weather (5%)
- Dog walking opportunities, including opportunity to run dog off leash, “dog friendly,” “safe for dogs,” freedom because of absence of stock (20%)
- Ideal setting for chosen recreational activity (17% – see Appendix 1 for details)
- Safe environment for kids and others (6%).

Convenience and park management aspects

- Close to home (11%)
- Easily accessible (6%)
- Clean and tidy, well maintained park (6%).

The features listed above were consistent with feedback from submissions and interviews.

“I like the rugged coastline. I love the hills and the tracks, the rugged terrain, and the close proximity. A touch of wilderness and it’s just in the back yard” – survey respondent.

A comment on safety

A number of survey respondents said they felt safe in the park, that the park was a safe place for children, or that the park visitor community was friendly and made them feel comfortable.

The survey identified 37 women visiting the park on their own (13% of all respondents), and a further 26 respondents (9% of the total) were from pairs of women. It is our impression that this represents an unusually high proportion of women on their own in an outdoor recreation setting, which supports the idea that Whitireia is a safe feeling place. We would suggest that one possible reason why people feel safe is the open, sparsely vegetated landscape, which means there is a high degree of mutual informal surveillance by and of other park visitors. Another possible reason why women feel safe is the park's dog-welcoming policy. Of the 37 solo women, 25 had dogs with them, as did 14 of the 26 pairs. On the other hand, some women said they felt intimidated by poorly controlled dogs so the net effect of the current dog policy on feelings of safety may actually be negative (see section 6).

8. Suggested directions for future management

This section summarises the views of people we consulted on how the park should be managed in future. Note that all suggestions made by survey respondents were unprompted: people named the issues that were foremost in their minds at the time they responded. It is likely that the number of people giving each response falls short of the number who would have supported most suggestions had they been prompted. A full list of suggestions is included in Appendix 1.

In the course of this study we gathered comments on a wide range of matters, not all of them directly related to recreation but all of which were important to users of the park. All have been included in this section.

8.1 Preserve the natural, wild, undeveloped character and open space

A strong preference was expressed through the survey, submissions and interviews for keeping the park natural and wild. This included protecting the natural character, keeping the upgrading and provision of facilities to a minimum, keeping tracks to a basic standard, and retaining plenty of scope for informal enjoyment, exploration and adventure. Fifty-six survey respondents (19%) said that the park was fine as it is and should not be changed. An additional seven specifically said that the park should be kept wild and natural. Other comments in relation to specific issues, detailed below, support this theme. Recall that, as shown in section 7, natural beauty, peace and solitude and the park's natural unspoilt character were among the attributes most highly valued by visitors.

The Titahi Bay Community Group and the Titahi Bay Residents Group both made impassioned pleas that highly visible infrastructure, such as wide gravelled tracks across the landscape, buildings and other structures, be avoided. Comments from submitters supporting this view were:

"I like that it doesn't feel like it's had anything done to it – a bit rugged" – survey respondent.

"I'd like to see the coastal frontage remain as natural as possible, with minimum buildings and improvements" – individual submitter.

"[Keep] the area as wild and beautiful as it is now!" – individual submitter.

"For me, the main thing is that it stays a wild and open place" – individual submitter.

"There is a need for open space. It is becoming increasingly important given the intensive development most people live in these days. Open space on a headland close to a city is incredibly valuable" – Forest and Bird.

8.2 Additions to the track network

It was widely acknowledged that the current situation, whereby visitors who want a longer walk, run or bike ride have to incorporate sections of road into their trip, is not desirable. Further, many users would prefer greater variety in the choice of routes. The park's track network should provide opportunities for a wide range of users, and

developing a network that provides a wide range of loop options, without the need to travel along roads, is desirable.

The Whitireia Park Restoration Group's submission supported the expansion of the track network (provided bush remnants and restoration areas are protected). The Restoration Group and Forest and Bird both acknowledged that new tracks would assist pest control. The Restoration Group supported the provision of "good coastal and inland tracks to ensure people can get to the sea or golf course in the event of a fire."

The Titahi Bay Residents Association said there are historical tracks that follow paths to the historical Maori gardens and food storage areas (identified by a DOC archaeological survey) and suggested that these should be identified and signposted.

Submitters, questionnaire respondents and interviewees proposed a range of new tracks. Three of these we have no hesitation in supporting because they would collectively add significantly to the coherence of the track network, greatly expand the range of possible loops, improve public safety, and give a wide range of visitors access to some very attractive places. We refer to these proposed tracks by the names suggested in the Mana Cycle Group submission, which contains maps showing their approximate alignments. The three proposals are listed below in order of priority, and their indicative alignments are shown on the following page.

1. A sidle track from the cliff top car park to the cattle stop at the Pou, or if possible past the Pou to Onehunga Bay (referred to in the Mana Cycle Group's submission as the *Coastal Traverse*). This would provide a safe off-road alternative for walkers, runners and bikers who currently use Whitireia Road. It would be much less steep than some sections of the road. Given the likely popularity of such a track, consideration should be given to providing separate uphill and downhill tracks, or at least making the track wide enough that users can pass each other easily and safely. It should be gently graded to make it easy to bike up and permit downhill bikers to control their speed. A side branch to Kaitawa point would be a good addition.
2. A track linking the cliff top car park with the inland section of Te Onepoto Loop via the ridge that skirts the golf course and passes the eastern radio mast, referred to in the Mana Cycle Group's submission as the *Golf Traverse*. This track would create a new loop from the Inland Track to Onehunga Bay via the Coastal Traverse (above) and could ease pressure on both the Onehunga Bay car park and Whitireia Road by encouraging some people to park in the cliff top car park instead. Golf club representatives confirmed that this would not impede use of the golf course nor interfere with the club's proposed expansion (see section 8.20) but asked that the club be consulted on development plans for such a track. Horse riders spoken to would like to use this route (riding beside rather than on a formed path) to access the route over the plateau.
3. A track across Te Onepoto plateau (*Plateau* in the MCG's submission), starting at the high point on the inland section of the loop track, climbing to the top of the hill and then following the existing fence line south past the trig before descending to Te Onepoto Bay. Various arguments were made about the grade to which such a track should be built – especially the southern section which would descend to the coast – with some arguing for a gently-graded zig-zag suitable for mountain bikes and others arguing for a basic tramping route. Given the likely popularity of this route and the wide range of

users it could serve, we suggest that it be designed to cater for both bikes and walkers. Horse riders would also like access to this route, and given the broad top of the plateau it should be possible to allow room for horses beside a formed track (keeping tall vegetation cut back from the side of the track would be necessary). It may be difficult to provide room for both horses and a formed track on the narrow spur down to the wetland. An alternative might be to provide for horse access down one of the other spurs to the coastal track (refer to section 8.23 for the requirements of horse riders).

Figure 1: Approximate alignments of the three new tracks recommended



Note: the routes shown (in orange) are indicative only.

There is debate over whether tracks should be multi-purpose or specialised for different uses. Forest and Bird said expanding the network would provide an opportunity to separate walkers and mountain bikers, thereby reducing inter-user conflict. This is in line with the thinking of some mountain bikers, who would like to see specialised mountain bike trails developed. On the other hand, what current visitors value most about Whitireia Park are the views, peace and quiet and absence of crowding, and the coastal environment. Current use is dominated by informal, low impact pursuits. Developing specialised mountain bike tracks would bring more visitors to the park, but the question of whether specialised mountain bike tracks are

appropriate at Whitireia needs to be considered in the context of the wider Porirua area. Specialised mountain bike networks are currently planned for Colonial Knob Parklands (between Colonial Knob Scenic Reserve and Elsdon Bush), and at Spicer Forest.

The Mana Cycle Group's (MCG's) submission proposes an extensive network of mountain bike tracks, including the three main routes described above as well as various other specialised tracks within the area surrounded by Te Onepoto Loop and a route traversing the faces below the residential area and above Te Onepoto Stream. The MCG's objective is a network of tracks that provide a wide choice of loops and opportunities for riders of all levels of ability (the tracks would be available for other activities). Other mountain bikers spoken to as part of the Titahi Bay Community Group supported this principle. It is interesting to note that the track network proposed by the MCG is similar to that proposed for development in the 1978 management plan.

We suggest that multi-use trails catering to a wide range of activities and abilities (including walking, running and beginner level mountain biking) should be prioritised over specialised tracks (such as technical mountain bike single track). Single-use tracks should only be provided where they don't compromise the provision of a coherent network of multi-use tracks that serve a wide range of visitors, and where the impacts on views, landscape and ecology is acceptable.

Limited expansion of mountain biking opportunities could be made at Whitireia by constructing a few sections of well-designed and well-constructed mountain bike track on the slopes between the coast and the top of the plateau. This could divert more skilled riders from the main track network and ease a source of inter-user conflict. The MCG's submission shows approximate alignments of such trails.

The enthusiasm of some groups for developing new tracks needs to be tempered by the widely held preference for the undeveloped, wild nature of the park, and the importance of protecting opportunities for exploration, adventure and informal use. The Restoration Group asked that track development be "low impact" and take account of the preference of many park users for the park's "informality". The Titahi Bay Community Group asked that new track development be low key, low cost and incremental, with the highest priority sections built first, to a modest rather than "gold plated" standard, to be upgraded later only if need be. The group said the visual impact of new tracks on the park's open landscape needs careful consideration. The Titahi Bay Residents Association said paths should be "as natural as possible," to minimise visual impact and maintenance costs.

We suggest that the mown grass walk from the cliff top car park to Whitireia peak is a good example of a track that is easy to follow, suitable for a wide range of uses, and yet has minimal visual impact. Wherever possible, new tracks on the sides of the coastal escarpment could be located within areas of woody vegetation to minimise the impact on views of the park from the other side of the harbour.

The Mana Cycle Club's submission suggests that volunteer labour be used for track construction. Using volunteer labour (with close oversight) may be a way to expand the track network at little cost to the park. The Titahi Bay Community Group and Porirua City Council urged caution in this respect, and said that the alignment and design of specialised mountain bike tracks must be done by a professional track designer (e.g. Southstar Trails), in consultation with the Mana Cycle Group and the Titahi Bay Community Group.

8.3 Improvements to existing tracks

The existing track network was mentioned by 23% of survey respondents and several submitters as a feature they liked about the park. Specific attributes mentioned included the quality of surfaces (meaning tracks are suitable for use all year round), recent upgrading work, quality of maintenance, and the easy grade of most tracks (with the notable exception of sections of the Inland Track – see below).

Amanda Santos runs trips for beginner mountain bikers from Onepoto Road to Kaitawa Point and around Te Onepoto Loop and said that these tracks are all suitable for that level of rider (again, with the exception of the steep pinch on the Inland Track).

In addition to the suggested new tracks in the previous section, a number of improvements to existing tracks were suggested:

- Re-forming steep sections of the **inland track** (part of Te Onepoto Loop), especially the section that climbs up the gully from Onehunga Bay. Many users complained that this was much too steep to ride up and dangerous to ride or walk down, and the surface has been cut up by braking mountain bikers. This was mentioned by many survey respondents, by Amanda Santos (representing beginning mountain bikers) and by the Titahi Bay Community Group.
- Improvements to the **coastal track** to make it easier for beginner mountain bikers. This could include targeted re-surfacing of problem sections and measures to make it easier to get bikes past gates. Users questioned the need for gates and fences now that the park is no longer grazed. Forest and Bird said improvements to the coastal track should start with a trial section to assess the long-term suitability of gravelled this track, rather than a wholesale upgrade.
- Improvements to the informal **cliff access tracks** used by rock climbers to descend from the cliff top car park to the beach. The need for this was debated. The Tararua Tramping Club said that the current tracks are useful for the purposes of alpine instruction but that measures to minimise fall and rock fall hazards would be welcome. Upgrading these tracks would also improve access to the northern coast for other users, a point also made by the Restoration Group. The rock climbing instructor from Whitireia Polytechnic said that the route could be made more secure for climbing training by installing waratah anchors, to which a temporary hand line could be attached during instruction, and cautioned against permanent upgrading which might encourage too many people into this sensitive and risky environment. The NZAC representative interviewed was comfortable with the idea of leaving the tracks as they are.

As noted in section 8.2, the desire of some users to see tracks widened and gravelled, for example, needs to be tempered by the high value placed on the park's natural, undeveloped, informal character. Rather than wholesale upgrading of, for example, the coastal track, we suggest an appropriate approach would be to improve specific problem areas and to retain the current soft surface where possible.

8.4 New visitor infrastructure

A range of requests regarding infrastructure development was made, summarised in the following paragraphs (see Appendix 1 for a full list of requests from survey

respondents). In reading this wish list it is important to remember the desire of many users that the park remain natural, wild and undeveloped (in keeping with the intent of the 1978 management plan that infrastructure development be minimised and the natural character be preserved).

The need for **rubbish bins** was foremost in the minds of a significant proportion of survey respondents. Fifty-nine people (21% of respondents) and three submitters asked for rubbish bins, especially at car parks. The Titahi Bay Community Group and the Titahi Bay Residents Group opposed the provision of bins for general rubbish and supported the current policy of “carry in, carry out.” We tend to agree with these groups. The Porirua City Council’s rubbish collection is done by a contractor that covers the city and driving daily out to Onehunga Bay to empty one rubbish bin would be inefficient. A separate PCC contractor maintains the toilets at Onehunga Bay but this person is not set up to collect and carry refuse.

A further 41 (15%) asked for specific **dog waste bins** at Onehunga Bay and the Onepoto entrance (this included both dog owners and non-owners). The provision of bins for dog waste was supported by the Titahi Bay Community Group, the Titahi Bay Residents Association, and Forest and Bird. A number suggested that combined tear-off bag and bin facilities, as are provided at the Hutt River Trail, would be suitable. The presence of dog waste on tracks is a major irritant for visitors. It appears that many dog walkers currently bag their dog waste but then leave it on site (either throwing it into track-side vegetation or leaving it on the side of tracks). If bins were provided at least some of these plastic bags would end up in the right place. In contrast to the request for general rubbish bins (above) we consider that the problem of dog waste is too big to ignore, and strongly suggest that the Board give consideration to installing dog waste bins at the Onepoto entrance and at Onehunga Bay. A bin at the Onepoto entrance could probably be emptied as part of the PCC contracted rubbish run. The question of who would empty a bin at Onehunga Bay remains unresolved and we suggest that the Board discuss this with the Porirua City Council.

Picnic tables at popular areas, including at Onehunga Bay, were requested by 24 survey respondents (9%) and one submitter. Picnic facilities should be in sheltered and shaded sites. The Titahi Bay Community Group and the Titahi Bay Residents Association were opposed to the provision of picnic tables, which they saw as emblematic of urban parks and out of step with the sense of wild, undeveloped coast. Both groups considered that the inevitable vandalism and graffiti that picnic tables attract would detract further from the sense of unspoilt wildness. We suggest that picnic tables be kept to a minimum, with location to be guided by the above comments.

Six survey respondents and two submitters asked that more **seating** be provided. The Titahi Bay Residents Association said that seats should be located near hilltops for views, and made out of metal rather than wood (to deter vandals). Precise locations should take account of visual impact: seats should be off ridgelines but should offer good views.

Toilets at car parks and picnic areas. This was raised by nine respondents to the survey and by several submitters. Suggested locations included at Onehunga Bay (adding more toilets at the existing provision), at Kaitawa Point, and at the cliff top car park (this last was raised by two submitters, including the Tararua Tramping Club). The Titahi Bay Community Group and the Titahi Bay Residents Association were opposed to construction of further toilet buildings, arguing that one block at the

main visitor node was sufficient, and that building new toilet blocks was not in keeping with the principle of retaining the park's natural character. The need for **drinking water supplies** at picnic areas and car parks was mentioned by two submitters and five survey respondents. The Tararua Tramping Club asked that water be provided at the cliff top car park (again, provision of visitor infrastructure at this site was opposed by the Titahi Bay Community Group). Five survey respondents also asked that **dog water** be provided (all these people were walking Te Onepoto Loop track). Others were of the opinion that carrying one's own drinking water was no great hardship.

Barbecues were suggested by 17 survey respondents and one submitter. Some suggested that providing barbecues would reduce the likelihood of people lighting poorly controlled fires on the coast. The Residents Association was absolutely opposed to installing barbecues. They said these had been installed in the 1970s and were vandalised. Some members of the Association suggested that, if the Board is satisfied that the risk of fire can be managed, then areas could be designated where gas barbecues are permitted (while remaining strictly prohibited in other areas). Others in the Association were of the view that it was better to prohibit all sources of fire throughout the park.

Six survey respondents and two submitters suggested that **camping** be provided for. The Residents Association was very opposed to this suggestion, and observed that at present freedom campers are already using the park (although locking the gate at night seemed to have reduced these incidents).

Nine survey respondents and one submitter suggested that **fresh water showers** (outdoor and cold), or at least a tap which people can use to rinse off, should be provided at Onehunga Bay. This could be provided on an outside wall of the current toilet block.

Four survey respondents (including two kite surfers) requested that **security cameras** be installed at the main car park, to deter theft from cars.

“Occasionally we are all out in the middle of the harbour [and unable to keep an eye on the car park]” – kite surfer.

One submitter suggested a **boat launching facility** at Onehunga Bay, saying that the park is one of the few local coastal areas that could provide “good deep water access, capability for boat parking and a semi-sheltered bay for launching.” This submitter acknowledged that such a development would necessitate the widening of Whitireia Road (see section 8.15). Three survey respondents asked that either a jetty or boat ramp be built. The Residents Association and Community Group were adamantly opposed, saying that it would be inappropriate and that there were plenty of nearby boat launching facilities. We consider that such development would have an inappropriate impact on the fundamental character of Whitireia and the enjoyment of park users.

8.5 Upgrades and maintenance of existing infrastructure

Nine survey respondents and the Titahi Bay Community Group said that the existing toilet block at Onehunga Bay is dark and dingy and asked that the building be upgraded. Some said it was too far from the beach and that it is undesirable that users have to cross the road to get from the beach to the building. The Titahi Bay Residents Association said the current location was fine, and observed that

vandalism of the toilet block seemed to have diminished since the park has been locked at night. Some participants at the Board reporting back meeting expressed surprise that the state of the toilet block had been criticised, saying it has recently been upgraded and is adequate.

Four survey respondents, the Titahi Bay Community Group and a dive instructor asked that the toilet block at Onehunga Bay be cleaned more frequently. A Porirua City Council contractor is contracted to clean the toilets daily at present. This may be insufficient during busy weekends.

One submission suggested that traffic control bollards could be decoratively painted by groups from the local community to brighten the park up. We suggest that this would run counter to preserving the park's natural character.

8.6 Dogs

The PCC dog control bylaws currently allow dogs to run free on beaches but require that any dog off the lead must be under the owner's control. Comments from survey respondents, submitters and meeting participants made it clear that not all owners have their dogs under sufficient control, and that many let their dogs run free in non-beach areas (where dogs should be on leads).

Instances were cited of dogs being aggressive or intimidating towards other park visitors and/or their own dogs. Eleven survey respondents and two submitters were sufficiently concerned about uncontrolled or poorly controlled dogs to request that owners be required to leash all dogs in the park (this request was made by both dog owners and non-dog owners). Many people are afraid of dogs and find any dog, kindly intentioned or not, intimidating.

"I would feel safer if all dogs were kept on a lead. Too often a dog comes bounding around a corner not on a leash. The owner always says it is OK because 'my dog is friendly.' Not good enough" – submitter.

The survey results make clear that one of the great attractions of Whitireia is the opportunity to exercise dogs off the lead in an extensive, attractive open space setting, however we acknowledge that concerns about uncontrolled dogs are legitimate. We support the suggestion that the Onehunga Bay area, including the beach, car park and surrounding amenity areas, be designated a "dog control" zone (i.e. an area where dogs must be leashed), because this is where the greatest concentration of visitors occurs and where dogs have the potential to create the greatest nuisance. We would argue that the remainder of the coastal edge should remain a place where dogs can run free.

The Board might consider erecting signs that inform dog walkers that they may let their dogs run free – but only on the coast – *provided* they have them under firm control while off the lead (which means being able to control the dog by voice under all circumstances) and that leads must be carried at all times. Further, we suggest that the Board request that the PCC's dog control officers make more frequent visits to the park to enforce the bylaws.

We note that the PCC, as the body responsible, requires evidence of nuisance before it can impose more restrictive dog control bylaws. The incidence of complaints about poorly controlled dogs should be closely monitored and recorded.

Keeping detailed records of complaints may highlight problem areas which could be brought to the attention of PCC dog control officers.

8.7 Interpretation, education and signage

There was wide support among the submissions and interviewed groups for more interpretation of the park's natural and cultural history, particularly pre-European history but also including the history of vegetation and farming, the broadcasting infrastructure etc. Twenty-two survey respondents asked for improved signage. Forest and Bird said interpretation signs drawing attention to the connections between the land and Tangata Whenua were needed.

“We would like to see the Park Management Plan enact policies to enable people to learn about the wildlife and habitat and significant heritage stories, both Maori and European” – Restoration Group.

Forest and Bird asked that the management plan include provision for environmental education projects for local schools.

Besides interpretation signage, people who contributed to this study asked for signs that provide:

- Explanations about tracks, track times, safe swimming areas and activities available in the park
- Information about water quality for swimming
- Emergency contact details (e.g. in case of people getting into difficulty in the water).

More discussion of interpretation signage is provided in section 9.

8.8 Ecological restoration

There is widespread support for the native revegetation that has been done already and for expanding revegetation to other areas, including those currently dominated by gorse. Revegetation was supported from various perspectives, including improving habitat for native wildlife and improving amenity values. Eighteen survey respondents asked that further environmental restoration be undertaken and 17 asked for greater control of weeds, particularly gorse (see section 8.11). Many submitters and interviewees also expressed support.

“The Titahi Bay Community Group supports any efforts to improve the biodiversity values of the park.”

The Whitireia Park Restoration Group's submission argued strongly for recognition of the Onepoto Stream headwater wetlands in the management plan, and asked that the plan make provision for their protection and enhancement (the Group is keen to assist with the ecological enhancement of the entire stream). Forest and Bird supports the restoration of the wetland and the stream catchment. The Golf Club's submission outlined plans for restoring the headwater wetlands as well as a corridor down the section of stream that runs through the course. Club representatives are keen to get this work underway ahead of any move to expand the golf course. We suggest that park managers, the Golf Club, the Restoration Group and Forest and Bird should work together on this, in line with the draft Sustainable Land Use Plan (see also section 8.20).

Corydon Consultants: Whitireia Park Recreation and Leisure Study

Forest and Bird said that restoration planting should include species that support birdlife, such as rata, ngaio, taupata, wineberry, karamu and kowhai, and that the wetland restoration should include flax for birds as well as toetoe.

Forest and Bird also noted the presence of pygmy button daisy or *Leptinella nana* (classed as “threatened – nationally critical”) on the northern coastal cliffs.

Other points made in relation to environmental protection included:

- The management plan should include discussion of how the local community will be engaged in environmental restoration work (two submitters)
- Support for continued animal pest control in the park (submitter)
- The pohutukawa trees should be removed and replaced with natives typical of the area (Forest and Bird and one submitter).

On this last point, we strongly recommend that the pohutukawa trees be retained, at least until such time as alternatives have reached maturity, given the unprompted request from ten survey respondents that more trees be planted for shelter and shade (section 8.18).

We suggest there are limits to the extent to which the park should be converted to native woody vegetation. Some of the main attributes valued by respondents to the survey were *views/scenery* (36% of respondents – unprompted) and *open space, including open grassland* (9% of respondents – unprompted). It will be important to preserve some areas of low vegetation, particularly along the coastal platform and in elevated areas such as the cliff top area and the ridges traversed by the proposed *Golf Traverse* and *Plateau Track* (section 8.2 (2) and (3)), in order to preserve views and a sense of space. Maintaining short vegetation on the high ridges from Whitireia peak to the Plateau and beyond would also contribute to a firebreak between the coast and the Onepoto valley (in line with the draft Sustainable Land Use Plan). (See section 8.1, *Preserving natural character and open space.*)

8.9 Marine protection and enhancement

Several survey respondents and one submitter asked that more be done to limit the gathering of seafood along the park’s coast. People were concerned about both organised poaching and over-exploitation by the public. The Porirua Harbour Strategy (PHS) Co-ordinator was of the view that this was a serious problem on the park’s rocky coast, and said that a fisheries officer he had spoken to had confirmed this part of the coast was being “ecologically stripped”. The PHS Co-ordinator suggested several options for the Board’s consideration:

- Installing signage to educate the public about the need to conserve marine resources
- Imposition by Ngati Toa of a rahui over the rocky coast
- Appointment of honorary wardens, possibly from Ngati Toa, to monitor, educate, and call the authorities when misdemeanours are observed
- Establishment of a mataitai reserve under the Fisheries Act.

We support the Co-ordinator’s suggestion that, in the long term, establishing a marine reserve around the park (or parts of the park) would be in keeping with the public’s appetite for environmental enhancement and protection. Given that the park is such a popular site for diving we suggest there would be good support for

establishing such formal protection, particularly with the experience of the Taputeranga Marine Reserve to draw on.

The Co-ordinator also raised the issue of the Mana sewer main which forms an effective causeway across the mouth of Onepoto Bay. A study by Boffa Miskell for Greater Wellington (Porirua Harbour Estuary Restoration Options – 10 July 2013) identifies that the causeway may have adverse ecological effects on the estuary. The report recommends that the PCC undertakes, as part of upgrading the sewer, an assessment of such ecological effects and designs the upgrade so as to mitigate these. We suggest the Board takes this matter up with PCC.

8.10 Reducing fire risk

While not, strictly speaking, a recreational issue, there are connections between the management of fire risk and some recreation issues. Strong concern was expressed about the potential for further fires in the park, especially by residents living near the park. Measures that could contribute to fire control, and which were advocated by people consulted for this study, include:

- Gorse control (section 8.11)
- Planting native species of low flammability in strategic locations, which would contribute to the widely held desire to see more ecological restoration (section 8.8)
- Grazing of selected areas currently under rank pasture – only in places where the negative impacts of stock on recreation and ecology can be avoided or minimised (section 8.12)
- Mowing, including for hay production (as has been done during the summer of 2014-15), although we acknowledge that some areas of rank grass are too steep to mow
- Expanding the golf course into the head of the Onepoto valley, which would have the effect of converting an area of rank grass to short mown grass and low flammability natives. A strip of suitable vegetation could be established along the north-east boundary between the golf course and the proposed *Golf Traverse* track (see section 8.20).

The Porirua Harbour Strategy Co-ordinator suggested that GW could seek advice on options for dealing with rank grass in public parks from the Auckland City Council's Hauraki Gulf Forum.

8.11 Controlling gorse and other weeds

This relates to fire risk, ecological restoration and amenity values. Many interviewees and submitters expressed concern about the ongoing spread of gorse into areas previously under pasture. They called for greater gorse control and also more native revegetation to replace gorse.

The Residents Association was very concerned about the aerial spraying of gorse in the restoration area, including near people's homes. Comments at our meeting with the Association suggest that public understanding about the long-term plan for gorse control, the reasons for aerial spraying, and the nature and effects of the chemical used have not been well communicated. Based on comments at the meeting, we suggest that more could be done to inform the community about these matters.

The Restoration Group asked that the management plan also provide for the control of other weeds such as boneseed, purple ragwort and pampas across the park, including areas outside the KNE.

The Residents Association was concerned that “exotic” natives such as pohutukawa, karo and karaka would be deemed weeds under the management plan and removed before alternatives are sufficiently established to provide food for birds and shelter and shade for people (see section 8.18).

8.12 Grazing

A return to grazing was supported by a submission from a neighbouring home owner on the basis that grazing would reduce fire risk by controlling long grass.

The Golf Club’s submission supports grazing of areas of “rough” alongside mown parts of the golf course.

Forest and Bird accepts that grazing may be necessary to control fire risk but said that stock must be kept out of sensitive such as the headwater wetlands and streams. The Titahi Bay Community Group (TBCG) was also of the opinion that grazing must be kept clear of sensitive ecological areas.

The Whitireia Park Restoration Group’s submission strongly opposed the reintroduction of grazing on the grounds that native vegetation has started to naturally recover on areas from which grazing was removed. However it was acknowledged that without active management, regeneration is likely to be limited in areas dominated by grass.

An individual submitter and the TBCG said that any future grazing should be kept separate from public tracks.⁶ Another submitter commented that grazing must be kept away from the coast. Both these points were supported by the Porirua Harbour Strategy (PHS) Co-ordinator, who said many urban people are intimidated by cattle.

The TBCG questioned whether, given the above constraints and the cost of building and maintaining fencing in an environment of salt-laden winds, grazing would be a cost effective means of controlling fire risk. The group asked that the costs of reintroducing grazing be carefully compared with those of other options before any money is spent on fencing.

8.13 Car parking

Five survey respondents asked that more car parking be provided, including at Onehunga Bay and at the Pou. The Residents Association disagreed that more parking was needed. One submitter was concerned about the possible expansion of car parking at Onehunga Bay because of possible impacts on the natural character of the coastal edge.

Creating the *Golf Traverse* track (section 8.2 (2)) could reduce pressure on the Onehunga Bay car park by encouraging some people to park at the cliff top car park instead.

⁶ This included the ridgeline from the Pou corner to the eastern radio mast, which is used by horse riders as part of a loop from the coastal track to the Thornley Street exit and, in future, to the Onepoto Plateau.

One submitter asked that the cliff top car park be upgraded. Two requested that permitted parking areas be “better defined” by marking parking spaces on the ground. We would suggest that, rather than painting allocated car parking areas, bollards and other landscaping be used to prevent parking in undesirable areas.

8.14 Restriction of vehicle access on park roads

Submitters, survey respondents and the Residents Association requested that vehicle access be restricted within the park, including:

- Prevention of vehicle access beyond the car park on Onepoto Road (because of concerns about intimidating driving, dumping of rubbish, environmental damage and parked vehicles impeding access to the coast for launching water craft)
- Installation of a locked gate on the road between Onehunga Bay car park and the first corner on the road to Kaitawa Point, and limiting future use of the Kaitawa Point road to non-motorised transport. The Whitireia Park Restoration Group’s submission said preventing vehicle access to Kaitawa Point would help to address fire lighting and garden waste dumping, and help protect an area of sensitive ecology. (The Restoration Group said an alternative would be to develop a formal car park at Kaitawa Point and place bollards along the roadsides, thereby restricting vehicles to approved parking areas.)

In both cases it was suggested that keys could be issued for certain uses and special events, for example boating events at Onepoto, and diving schools using Kaitawa Point.

8.14.1 Kaitawa Point access

Several people interviewed were very opposed to the suggestion that vehicle access to Kaitawa Point be closed. The Point is the most popular area for diving in the park and is used regularly by recreational divers as well as dive schools (see section 5.2.4). When the southerly is blowing, the point is the only road-accessible section of the park’s coast that is sheltered. A dive instructor we spoke to was of the view that having to carry heavy dive gear from Onehunga Bay to the point would put a lot of people off going. The car park at the Point is also used by families for access to the beaches either side of the Point, and for access to fishing. The dive instructor (who had visited the area regularly for almost 40 years) said that in his view the incidence of antisocial behaviour at the Point was very low, partly because the area was used by so many diverse groups.

“If you close off the road you will deny access to a group of people who regularly use the park” – dive instructor.

We suggest that the situation be monitored to get a clearer picture of exactly how problematic vehicle access to this part of the coast is. We strongly recommend that no gate be installed at this stage, and that if the decision is made to restrict access in future, a way to mitigate the impact on recreational divers will need to be found. Adequate car parking outside the gate would also be needed should a gate be installed.

8.14.2 Access from Onepoto Road

The Onepoto Road situation is complicated by the fact that the formed road and the walking track as far as the entrance to Onepoto Bay lie along a paper road. Preventing vehicle access would necessitate first closing the public road by a statutory process, to be undertaken by the Porirua City Council. We note that discussions have been held between the Board and PCC on this matter but to date there has been little progress. We recommend that the Board makes a formal request to PCC to begin the process of stopping the road.

8.14.3 Other traffic issues in the park

Several submitters (including the Youth Advisory Group) and several survey respondents said better control of vehicle speed within the park is needed. Suggestions including clearer signage of speed limits, more speed humps, and sharper speed humps on the road to Kaitawa Point (assuming that road remains open to traffic).

The Whitireia Park Restoration Group's submission said that groups of "modified cars and motorbikes often access the park after 5pm" and engage in anti-social behaviour. The Group called for a greater presence by rangers or security after normal office hours to help address this problem.

8.15 Changes to Whitireia Road

Whitireia Road is the main access road from the end of Thornley Street to the Onehunga Bay car park. The steep narrow road is unnerving for some people. Six survey respondents and three submitters suggested that the road be widened. Other submitters recognised that the current situation provides a degree of traffic calming and that widening it would encourage faster driving.

Rather than widen the whole road, some people suggested that more passing bays be installed. The Residents Association supported provision of "a small number" of additional passing bays, or else leaving the road as it is. We believe that passing bays would be preferable to widening the whole road because the current narrow road encourages people to drive slowly and carefully (with some noted exceptions, such as people failing to give way to uphill traffic). "Passing bays" need only be a small area of seal on one or more of the small grassed areas currently used by cars to squeeze past one another.

Other options suggested, which could be done in conjunction with passing bays, were:

- Installing a sign at the top of the hill reminding downhill drivers of their obligation to give way (we acknowledge, however, the practical difficulties of maintaining signs at such an exposed site)
- Installing a safety barrier on the edge of the big drop (this was opposed by community representatives at the Board meeting however, who were of the view that such a barrier could encourage people to drive faster).

There was wide support for developing a good foot and cycle track (the *Coastal Traverse*) to bypass the road between Onehunga Bay and the cliff top car park (see section 8.2 (1)). Creating the *Golf Traverse* track (section 8.2 (2)) could reduce traffic on Whitireia Road by encouraging some people to park at the cliff top car park instead of driving down to Onehunga Bay.

8.16 Prevention of off-road vehicle access

Restricting motor vehicles to formed roads and preventing access to off-road areas was supported by submitters and survey respondents. The Porirua Harbour Strategy Co-ordinator said that quads and trail bikes continue to be a problem on the coast and pointed out that in addition to the obvious recreational conflicts, such vehicles pose a fire risk.

Fencing alongside Whitireia Road for grazing (see section 8.12) could contribute to the objective of controlling vehicle access to off-road areas.

One survey respondent said that 4WD access to off-road areas should be permitted.

8.17 Gate closure times

A small number of people (three survey respondents and two submitters, including the Tararua Tramping Club) suggested that the closure of the Thornley St gate be delayed beyond 9 pm during summer. Rock climbers often use the park after work during the week and completing a climb in time to pack up and be out the gate by 9 pm can be difficult. Rock climbers said that delaying the closure until 10pm during summer would be helpful.

8.18 Shelter and shade at popular sites

A number of submitters and the Titahi Bay Community Group raised the need for more shelter from sun and wind at the most populated areas, especially at Onehunga Bay. Most suggested clumps of trees and shrubs (one imagines planted copses typical of Kaitoke Regional Park campground, but using naturally-occurring coastal species). Note that such planting must take account of the requirements of hang gliders and paragliders, for whom the escarpment and flat ground immediately east of the Onehunga Bay car park represent a regionally significant site (see section 8.21).

8.19 Coastal litter

Fourteen survey respondents asked that more effort be made to clean up litter, particularly along the coast. Litter is harmful to the coastal ecology and detracts from people's enjoyment of the environment, and glass can ignite fires in summer. The Porirua Harbour Strategy Co-ordinator agreed that this needs more attention and suggested education (signage) as well as beach cleanups. We suggest that this is an area where park management and the Porirua City Council (which has a network of coastal cleanup volunteers) could usefully collaborate.

8.20 Golf course expansion

The 1978 management plan recognised the likely future desire to expand the golf course beyond its current nine holes, and included a requirement that such expansion be confined to the central valley system. The golf club's submission requests that provision be made in the new management plan for such expansion within the head of the main valley to the north and west of the existing golf course.

The proposal is for an extended nine-hole course complemented by an internal six-hole par 3 course⁷.

Included as part of the golf club's submission is an *Ecological Enhancement and Mitigation Strategy*, prepared by Sports Surface Design and Management (SSDM). This proposes that the golf course expansion include enhancement of riparian habitat in the headwaters (which include some small wetlands) and the planting of areas of native bush (including replacement of existing pine trees with native). The SSDM document notes that, "*the establishment of a sympathetically designed and constructed golf course extension... has the potential to align with a number of key areas identified for 'Action' within the draft Whitireia Park Sustainable Land Use Plan*".

The Residents Association questioned whether the number of people using the golf course was sufficient to justify alienating more public open space. The Association was of the view that expansion of the golf course should be contingent on proof of sufficient demand. The Association was also concerned about the impact on Te Onepoto Stream of chemicals used by the club to maintain turf, and the possibility that expanding the course would increase this impact.

One survey respondent expressed the view that a golf course was an inappropriate use of public land and said it would be more appropriate if the upper valley was made available instead for public recreation and nature conservation purposes.

We suggest that, given the long-standing presence of the golf course and the fact that it precedes the existence of the park by about 20 years, it would be appropriate that the new management plan provides for its continuation. Further, given that the proposed expansion was signalled in the 1978 management plan, that it involves an area not currently used for other recreation, and that it would see the long-term maintenance of low flammability vegetation between part of the coast and the western residential area at no cost to GW, we see no reason why this should not be supported.

Expansion of the golf course should provide for the development of a track between the cliff-top car park area and the inland section of the Loop Track (referred to by the Mana Cycle Group as the proposed *Golf Traverse*), as well as ecological restoration of Te Onepoto Stream (including within the existing golf course area), its tributaries and headwater wetlands, in line with the draft Sustainable Land Use Plan. Detailed design of ecological restoration work should involve park managers, the Restoration Group and Forest and Bird. Golf course plantings should be of low flammability native vegetation. Earthworks should be kept to a minimum and managed so as to avoid sedimentation of Te Onepoto Stream and its headwater wetlands. (See also section 8.8).

A major impediment to the club's expansion plans is the uncertainty over the future of its lease. The club's current lease is with BCNZ which has control of the land until 2027, at which point it could decide to retain or relinquish its interest. The club, therefore, cannot guarantee that it will have tenure after 2027. The proposed expansion will rely on donated funds and the club cannot approach prospective funders until the lease situation is resolved. The club asks that the management plan makes provision to keep the upper valley area free for future golf course

⁷ The club's stated long-term vision is for "an international-standard 18-hole golf course", however this would necessitate expansion across Whitireia Road and over the ridge above Onehunga Bay. The club acknowledges that this is unlikely to be feasible in the foreseeable future.

expansion, or at least signals that development that would preclude future expansion will not be undertaken.

8.21 Hang gliding, paragliding and kite surfing

Submissions from hang gliders and paragliders asked that the management plan continue to recognise these as “permitted activities” in the park, and that future planting, vegetation management and facilities development take account of the areas used for these activities. To ensure pilot and public safety they require a clear 10m by 10m launch pad, a clear flight path from the launch pad to the beach, and short vegetation on the sections of the coastal terrace used for landing. A map of the areas currently used for these activities was provided as part of the Wellington Hang Gliding and Paragliding Club’s submission and such a map could be included in the management plan.

The WHGPC submission suggested that the plan should include a rule to the following effect:

To permit the use of the park for Hang Gliding and Paragliding with prior approval of the Ranger. This activity may be restricted for management purposes.

Such restrictions could be applied, for example, during bird nesting or during organised events at Onehunga Bay.

Eight kite surfers were interviewed as part of the visitor survey. They noted that the grassed area beside the beach at Onehunga Bay was a suitable place to raise and drop their kites. Therefore maintaining the area’s suitability for hang gliding and paragliding will also serve the needs of this increasingly popular sport.

8.22 Rock climbing

The provisions that Tararua Tramping Club (TTC) would like included in the new management plan (that relate directly to rock climbing) are as follows.⁸

1. Continued access to the Titahi Bay cliffs (including provision of car parking at the cliff top) and access to the climbing site on foot using the two informal and steep tracks. TTC acknowledges that these tracks are hazardous and are unlikely to be developed for general public use but the tracks are necessary for access to the climbing areas.
2. Renewal / upgrade of fixed anchors and protection bolts at the crag. (The Wellington Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club has traditionally coordinated this work and it is appropriate that it continues to do so.) In addition, TTC said that safety in the “Pinnacle” area would be enhanced and access promoted by placing bolts to help protect a high traverse when lower routes are cut off by the sea (access to climbs can be difficult when the tide is in). Again, the NZAC could co-ordinate this work to ensure it is done to an acceptable safety standard.

The NZAC and the Whitireia Polytechnic rock-climbing instructor supported both of these recommendations.

⁸ Other requests from the club are addressed in other sections of this report as appropriate.
Corydon Consultants: Whitireia Park Recreation and Leisure Study

8.23 Horse riding

The Reserves Act prohibits horses in reserves unless specifically provided for.

Horse riders spoken to as part of the Titahi Bay Community Group were clear that they don't require tracks to ride on, and that they prefer to ride on open grassland. They asked that if possible, a strip of open space be maintained beside tracks on key routes (e.g. the proposed new track across the plateau) for them to ride on.

The Restoration Group asked that horses continue to be excluded from formed tracks to avoid damage to track surfaces. This is consistent with the feedback from horse riders themselves.

We suggest that the management plan should continue to allow for the informal use of Whitireia Park for horse riding, but that horses be restricted to the coastal platform, open grassland and, where appropriate, routes alongside formed tracks, and not be permitted to use formed (gravelled) tracks.

8.24 Model aircraft flying

The Wellington Model Aircraft Club asked that the management plan continue to allow for the use of non-internal combustion engine model aircraft in the park, and for the ongoing maintenance of a landing strip (short mown grass) next to the cliff top car park. We support these suggestions.

8.25 Access links to the city

Three submitters asked that consideration be given to developing off-road biking and walking links to the park from Porirua City.

"Link the park to a better walkway along the harbour, all the way from Porirua."

A small number of people asked that consideration be given to providing public transport to the park, as a way of reducing traffic and making the park accessible to those who don't have access to private transport.

8.26 Neighbourhood park provision on the residential edge

One submission asked that more "resident friendly" use be made of parts of the park that border the residential area to the west, e.g. providing play equipment, seating, picnic tables. Two sites stand out as likely contenders:

- The flat grassed area that abuts Gloaming Hill near the top of the road, and
- Owhiti Park off Shelly Street (currently owned by PCC but to all intents and purposes a part of the park's residential edge).

We suggest that the Board discusses the adequacy of neighbourhood park provision in the east of the Titahi Bay suburb, and the potential to provide such facilities at these specific sites, with the Porirua City Council, since such facilities are a local council responsibility.

8.27 Community partnerships

The Titahi Bay Community Group suggested there might be scope to develop partnerships between park managers and community groups that have access to funding such as community grants, thereby expanding the resources available for park improvements. The Group noted that since the Park Board became a statutory authority there is no longer formal community representation in the park's management structure.

We note that the Whitireia Park Restoration Group is already very active in the park.

As discussed in section 8.2, the Mana Cycle Group has expressed interest in being involved in new track development.

8.28 Concessions

The Titahi Bay Residents Association questioned how applications for concessions to use the park for specific activities and events will be considered and what criteria will be used to guide the process of considering and granting concessions. They considered that the question of what types of concessions would be considered appropriate should be publically debated, with criteria for acceptable uses set out in the management plan.

8.29 Wording of the new management plan

The Residents Association asked that the wording of the management plan be kept clear and unambiguous. They said that the 1978 management plan was very clearly worded and that it had been used to head off several inappropriate proposals, including for a hotel and a jetty. The Association said it was critical that the new plan clearly spell out objectives and policies that will "set the boundaries and bottom lines" regarding future development and management. The Association requested that the new management plan retains the objectives listed on page 35 of the 1978 management plan.

We consider that the wording of the 1978 objectives would be supported by the bulk of the submitters, survey respondents and interviewees who have contributed to this leisure and recreation study.

9. Interpretation for local and overseas visitors

Background information we reviewed, together with information shared by people we interviewed, reveal that the Whitiareia peninsula has a rich natural and cultural history. The geological processes that created the land are fascinating. The dynamics of the Porirua Harbour system and its relationships to human activity are important and (arguably) poorly understood. Changes in land cover and land use since human (particularly European) arrival have been dramatic. Ecology has been greatly disrupted and is slowly healing itself with help from dedicated volunteers. There has been a long history of human occupation and use, illustrated, for example, by the presence of traditional Maori paths and food storage pits, farming infrastructure, and the broadcasting installations.

Signs of some of this history are obvious, most notably the farming and broadcasting activities, while pre-European natural and cultural history is not self-evident. Visitors, both local and from further afield, are eager to learn about the park's heritage. Many of the submitters, interviewed groups and survey respondents asked that more interpretation signage be provided.

“The Park is important to Maori, specifically Ngati Toa. This is not apparent to Park users and the WPRG would like to see this developed in ways that are respectful of this history. We would like to see the history of the area be made to come alive for Park users” – Restoration Group submission.

An installation at the site of the Pou seems an obvious choice and we support the proposal that upgrading of this area includes interpretation signage. Another place where interpretation signage would be helpful is at the cliff top car park (we note in both of these cases the practical difficulties of maintaining signage at very exposed sites). Provided Ngati Toa is agreeable, we suggest there would be great public interest in having traditional Maori trails, food storage pits and other sites such as sites of Maori settlement identified.

People who contributed to this study requested interpretation signage on the following topics. We support all of these suggestions.

- Cultural history (including pre-European history, to be provided by Ngati Toa, and the history of farming and broadcasting)
- The importance of protecting marine resources from over-exploitation (and what people can do if they see problematic behaviour)
- An explanation of the requirements to leash dogs and keep them under control
- Messages about taking rubbish home and dog waste etiquette
- Warnings for dog owners about the threats posed by dogs to wildlife
- An explanation of the 2010 fire (at the Onehunga Bay car park)
- An explanation, at the golf course, of the restoration of the headwater wetlands and Onepoto Stream, to encourage future club members to care for the catchment.

10. Concluding comments

The 1978 management plan described Whitireia as a setting for informal to “semi-organised” recreation and listed a wide range of activities present at that time. The information we have gathered in the course of this study suggests that, 35 years later, the patterns of use remain broadly similar. The complex landscape of the park, together with a relative absence of formal structure, has allowed the development of a complex pattern of different activities, each fitting its own niche, with apparently little in the way of conflict or competition between uses.

We ask that those preparing the new management plan give careful consideration to the detail of section 8 of this report, which lists suggestions and requests regarding future management from the people who contributed to this recreation and leisure study. In some cases we received contrasting views from different perspectives and we have tried to give our assessment of where the balance of opinion lies.

In some cases we feel unable to make conclusive recommendations because of contrasting views and/or the small number of people who raised particular issues. In these cases we suggest that the Park Board considers the various arguments presented, makes a determination one way or the other, and uses the process of public consultation on the draft management plan to gauge the public’s response.

However a number of recommendations stand out as being, in our view, to the advantage of the park user community as a whole, and we have no hesitation in recommending these (more detail of each is provided in section 8):

- Installing bins for dog waste at Onepoto Road and Onehunga Bay. Arrangements for emptying these will need to be negotiated with the PCC
- Construction of three new multi-use tracks, the *Coastal Traverse*, the *Golf Traverse*, and the *Plateau Track*
- Re-routing the steep section of the inland section of Te Onepoto Loop track
- Removing or otherwise making it easier for bikers to pass gates on the coastal track
- Continuing with ecological restoration, with a high priority being the headwater wetlands and the entire length of Te Onepoto Stream
- Planting trees for shelter and shade at Onehunga Bay, taking account of the requirements of hang gliders and paragliders
- Making provision for hang gliders, paragliders, rock climbers, horse riders and model aircraft operators as per the requests from these groups
- Making provision for the possible future expansion of the golf course into the upper Onepoto valley
- Investigating options for protecting the marine ecology from over-exploitation, including, in the longer term, some form of formal reserve status
- Providing more signage, particularly interpretation material that explains the park’s natural and cultural heritage.

On the matter of dogs, we support the idea of making the immediate environs of Onehunga Bay a dog-controlled zone. We also suggest that signage be installed to clarify the requirement that dogs must be on leads in areas other than on the coastal edge. Complaints about unleashed dogs should be closely monitored and the PCC dog control officers should be asked to make more frequent visits to encourage compliance.

Above all the feedback from those surveyed and interviewed strongly supports the view that Whitireia Park should remain a wild and rugged place where people feel free to roam and explore and make their own adventures, a place of big skies where the ocean wind blows clean over smooth grass hilltops and the views are unimpeded. Keep it wild. Keep it natural. Don't build structures or, if they must be built, site them and design them so they blend into the landscape. Keep tracks modest in scale and where possible natural in appearance. And keep the ridges and coastal edge clear to preserve the views and the all-important sense of vast, empty space.

Appendix 1: Visitor Survey Results

Survey dates, times and weather

Interviews were conducted on six separate days. Survey dates, times and weather conditions are summarised in the following table.

Day	Times	Weather conditions	Number completed
Sat 20 Dec 2014	15.00 – 17.00	Cold southerly, overcast	9
Wed 14 Jan 2015	13.00 – 19.00	Fine, warm, cloudy periods	63
Sat 17 Jan 2015	11.00 – 17.00	Warm, strong northerly, fine and cloudy periods, showers for a time	54
Sun 18 Jan 2015	11.00 – 17.00	Overcast, strong northerly	47
Weds 21 Jan 2015	10.00 – 18.00	Fine and cloudy periods, light southerly	63
Sat 24 Jan	11.00 – 17.00	Fine, light winds, hot	52
Total			288

Travel mode

The modes of transport by which interviewees and the groups they were part of had used to travel to the park were as follows. Note that the surveyors interviewed only one individual from each group surveyed. The total number of people in each group was also recorded. Larger groups tended to travel by car whereas most of those travelling on foot or cycle were alone or in pairs.

Mode	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid responses	Number of total visitors	Proportion of total visitors
Car	217	80%	613	86%
Walk/run	45	17%	72	10%
Bicycle	8	3%	11	2%
Coach/bus	2	1%	16	2%
No response*	16		40	
Total	288		752**	

* Mode of transport was not recorded in the case of 16 respondents, representing 40 visitors in total.

**The total number of visitors was 749. In the case of three groups, two modes of transport were recorded (e.g. one person cycled while another ran).

How visitors learned about Whitireia Park

Respondents were asked how they learned about Whitireia Park. Their responses are summarised in the following table. Previous experience, local knowledge, and recommendations from friends, family and other associates was how 98% of respondents knew about the park. A small proportion of respondents gave more than one answer, hence the percentages add to slightly more than 100%.

Information source	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid respondents
Previous experience / local knowledge*	232	81%
Word of mouth	48	17%
Internet other than facebook**	9	3%
Brochure	3	1%
Guide book	2	1%
Facebook	1	-
Council I-site	1	-
No response	1	
Total (valid)	287	

* This included people who had seen the park from a distance, either on land or sea, and found their way to it, or who had stumbled across it while sightseeing. It also included people who had previously been to the park on instruction courses, e.g. diving, rock climbing. ** Including GW site.

Frequency of visitation

Respondents were asked how often they personally visited Whitireia Park. Their responses are summarised in the following table. Regular visitors (those visiting at least once per month) made up nearly 70% of the total, which partly reflects the high proportion of visitors from the local area. Those who visited at least once per week included quite a number who said they visited several times per week or even every day.

It is interesting to note that one in ten visitors had never been to the park before the day they were interviewed.

Frequency of visitation	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid respondents
At least once per week	140	49%
At least once per month	56	20%
At least once every two months	20	7%
At least once a year	29	10%
Less often than once a year	13	5%
This is my first time	29	10%
No response	1	
Total (valid)	287	

Park entry and exit points

Respondents were asked which park entrance they had come in and which they would leave by. Almost all entered and left by the same entrance (reflecting, at least in part, the dominance of private car transport among the surveyed population).

The exceptions – those who entered and left by different points – were all travelling on foot or bicycle and included:

- Four who entered Thornley St and left by Onepoto Rd
- Eight who entered Onepoto Rd and left by Thornley St (6), Richard St (1) or the golf course (1)
- One who entered at Richard St and was unsure where he or she would exit.

Entrance	Number of respondents in	Number of respondents out	Proportion of respondents in	Proportion of respondents out
Thornley Street	176	179	62%	63%
Onepoto Road	107	103	37%	36%
Richard Street	1	1	-	-
Golf Course	1	2	-	1%
Owhiti Street	1	1	-	-
No response / DK	2	2		
Total (valid)	286	286		

Activities

Respondents were asked to list the activities their parties would do/had done during their visit. Respondents were asked to list all that applied. A few points are worth noting:

- Just over half of the people who mentioned “swimming” did so in conjunction with walking or dog walking, while 40 out of 83 had come to the beach for a swim and were not engaging in other forms of active recreation
- “Sightseeing” refers to those exploring by car
- The rock climbers covered by the survey included only people bouldering around Onehunga Bay, and no-one on the northern coastal crags.

Activity	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid respondents
Dog walking	104	36%
Walking (without dog)	84	29%
Swimming	83	29%
Sightseeing	26	9%
Running	20	7%
Picnicking	19	7%
Beachcombing / fossicking on the shore	14	5%
Mountain biking	14	5%
Fishing	9	3%
Diving/snorkelling (incl. spear fishing)**	9	3%
Kite surfing	8	3%
Rock climbing	5	2%

Playing on the beach	5	2%
Kayaking	4	1%
Paragliding	2	1%
Flying model aircraft	2	1%
Other*	20	
No response	1	
Total (valid)	287	

* Other includes: collecting puha (1), dog training (1), drawing (1), educational trip (1), exploring (1), jet skiing (1), orienteering (1), reading (2), skateboarding (1), sunbathing (1), visiting the pou (2), wake boarding (1), watching kite surfing (2), watching wildlife (1), wind surfing (1), wedding photos (2).

** This group is likely to be under-represented in the survey due to the fact they are more difficult for the surveyors to access as most of their time is spent in the water.

No horse riders were recorded during the survey period but they are known to be regular, intermittent users.

Duration of visit

Respondents were asked how long they had spent or would spend in the park. As shown in the table, just over a third were visiting for less than one hour, just under two thirds visiting for between one and four hours, and only 4% visiting for more than four hours.

Duration	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid respondents
Less than one hour	100	35%
One to four hours	175	61%
More than four hours	12	4%
No response	1	
Total (valid)	287	

Likes

Factors visitors said they liked about Whitireia	No. (proportion) of valid respondents
Environmental attributes	
Views, scenery, beauty	102 (36%)
Peace and quiet, solitude, remoteness, absence of crowding, solitude	97 (34%)
The sea, coast, water, attractive beaches, rocky shore, interesting coastline	79 (28%)
Sheltered places / beaches / coast in various conditions, e.g. in a southerly or other wind / safe swimming because of sheltered coast, calm, shallow water	38 (13%)

Natural, unspoilt, unmodified character, absence of development, buildings	32 (11%)
Open space, including open grassed areas	25 (9%)
Variable landscape e.g. combination of sea, coast, hills, wetland, bush, variety of settings in a small space	21 (7%)
Natural vegetation (including shade on hot days)	8 (3%)
Wildlife (birds, rocky shore life)	7 (2%)
Clean water	5 (2%)
Recreation attributes	
Good tracks / quality of tracks, including recent upgrading, quality of maintenance, easy walking, good surface all year round	65 (23%)
Variety of routes available – plenty of options for trips, can easily put together a trip of appropriate length and to suit weather	13 (5%)
Dog walking opportunities, including opportunity to run dog off leash, “dog friendly,” “safe for dogs,” freedom because of absence of stock	57 (20%)
Ideal setting for chosen recreational activity*	50 (17%)
Safe environment for kids and others	17 (6%)
Variety of activities available	11 (4%)
Walking / biking opportunities off road, away from traffic	9 (3%)
Absence of motorised vehicles in off road / coastal areas	3 (1%)
Friendly people, nice “community feel,” people respect one-another	5 (2%)
Opportunities to explore, go where you want, wilderness, unstructured adventure (including rock pool fossicking, exploration)	7 (2%)
Grassed area beside water suitable for landing kite (for kite surfers)	3 (1%)
Historical interest	1
Nostalgic connection	1
Convenience	
Close to home	31 (11%)
Easily accessible	17 (6%)
Park management aspects	
Clean and tidy, well maintained park	16 (6%)
Revegetation planting, including coast, wetland	7 (2%)
Good toilets provided	5 (2%)
Good parking provided	5 (2%)
Picnic sites	4 (1%)

New signage / good signage	2 (1%)
Termination of grazing	1
No response	1
Total respondents (valid)	287

* This includes activities undertaken on the survey day as well as others undertaken by respondents at other times. Specific activities mentioned included: beachcombing (2), dog walking (7), diving (7), fishing (6), hang gliding (1), mountain biking (3), photography (1), picnicking (2), rock climbing/abseiling (2), running (5), skating (1), swimming (10), walking (5), walking with a pram (1), wind surfing (1).

Suggested changes

Respondents were asked how they thought the park experience could be improved for visitors. Their responses are summarised in the table below. Note that 56 people (19% of all those interviewed) said that the park was fine as it was and needed no change. In the case of an additional 7 respondents, no response was recorded for this question. Some or all of these people may also have been of the view that no changes were needed.

How the visitor experience could be improved	No. (proportion) of valid respondents
Environmental management	
More environmental restoration, planting of native vegetation (while retaining views), pest control	18 (6%)
Control gorse and, to a lesser extent, other weeds	17 (6%)
Clean up litter, including along beaches/coast – including concerns about people dumping rubbish <i>“There is too much rubbish on the ground in areas that are used most”</i>	14 (5%)
Plant more trees for shelter, shade general, including more clumps of trees around popular areas such as Onehunga Beach	10 (4%)
Keep the park wild, natural	7 (2%)
Cut long grass, including to reduce fire risk	4 (1%)
Marine protection – control poaching / over-exploitation of kai moana	4 (1%)
Recreational facilities and management	
Build more tracks / upgrade tracks, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upgrade sections of coastal track (8), including get rid of stiles, fences / making fence crossings easier for bikers and prams Build specialised mountain bike tracks around the hills (4) New track over the Plateau and down to Onepoto Bay Formalise Coastal Traverse Track Onepoto entrance track – upgrade 	38 (14%)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair steep section of Loop Track • Trim vegetation alongside tracks • Widen Loop Track in narrow places • Upgrade walk track to KB • Create track from Kaitawa Point to Titahi Bay • Improve access to north coast beaches <p><i>“The coastal track is a bit rough in places, a bit gravelly in places”</i></p>	
Improve dog control / concern regarding threatening or poorly-controlled dogs not on leashes, including concerns about dogs killing wildlife	11 (4%)
Extend closing time in summer	3 (1%)
Improve control of the use of jet skis	2 (1%)
Visitor infrastructure	
Rubbish bins (general), especially at car parks, but also distributed around park	59 (21%)
Bins for dog droppings (specifically), bag and bin facilities such as those provided at the Hutt River Trail <i>“There are full bags of dog poo left everywhere”</i>	41 (15%)
Picnic tables at popular areas, especially Onehunga Bay, also at Kaitawa Point, including with shade	24 (9%)
Barbecue facilities	17 (6%)
More, better signage needed, (see sections 8.7 and 9 for details)	22 (8%)
Upgrade existing toilets, change sheds at Onehunga Bay	9 (3%)
More toilets, including at Onehunga Bay (recorded on a very busy day), at cliff top car park, and at Kaitawa Point	9 (3%)
Improve maintenance of toilets – clean more frequently	4 (1%)
Install changing shed at Kaitawa point	2 (1%)
Fresh water shower, or at least washing tap (could be cold) at Onehunga Bay	9 (3%)
Provide more seating	6 (2%)
Allow camping and/or camper vans	6 (2%)
Drinking water supply for people (fountains?)	5 (2%)
Children’s playground	5 (2%)
Provide dog water	5 (2%)
Install security cameras and associated signs to deter theft from cars	4 (1%)
Facilities and amenities needed in the cliff top area	2 (1%)
Exercise station / confidence course	3 (1%)
Coffee cart / cafe	4 (1%)
Roads and parking	
Improve road safety / install traffic calming*, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On road to Kaitawa Point e.g. install decent speed humps 	29 (10%)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On Whitireia Road – downhill travelling cars failing to give way, install give-way signs on Whitireia Rd, install safety barriers on sections of Whitireia Road Widen Whitireia Road, or create more passing bays (6) Prevent vehicles using Onepoto Road track (1) 	
Improve road between Onehunga Bay and Kaitawa Point – fix up surface	3 (1%)
Upgrade Onepoto Road – surface	1
More parking, including at Thornley Road End (by turning circle), at the Pou, at Onehunga Bay	5 (2%)
Upgrade cliff top car park	1
Clarify parking areas	2 (1%)
No response	7
Total (valid)	281

* Just over a third of those who asked for changes to roads were interviewed on the last, very busy, interview day, when 18% of survey respondents were interviewed.

Other suggestions, each of which were made by only one respondent, included the following: allow access at night for fishing; allow fires; build a wharf; build a jetty; build changing sheds closer to the water at Onehunga Bay; cut down the pohutukawas; provide an emergency kit for swimmers; install a floating pontoon for swimmers in Onehunga Bay; install a live webcam on Onehunga Bay so people can check weather/water conditions; public transport to Onehunga Bay; make the gate closure times more consistent; allow off-road 4WD access; restrict horse riding to specific areas or times so that people can avoid them (e.g. conflict with dogs); make golf course available for general public recreation and/or nature conservation; remove speed humps; install skateboard furniture; build a theme park with water slides; install boat ramps; designate a dedicated dog-run area, with leashes required elsewhere.

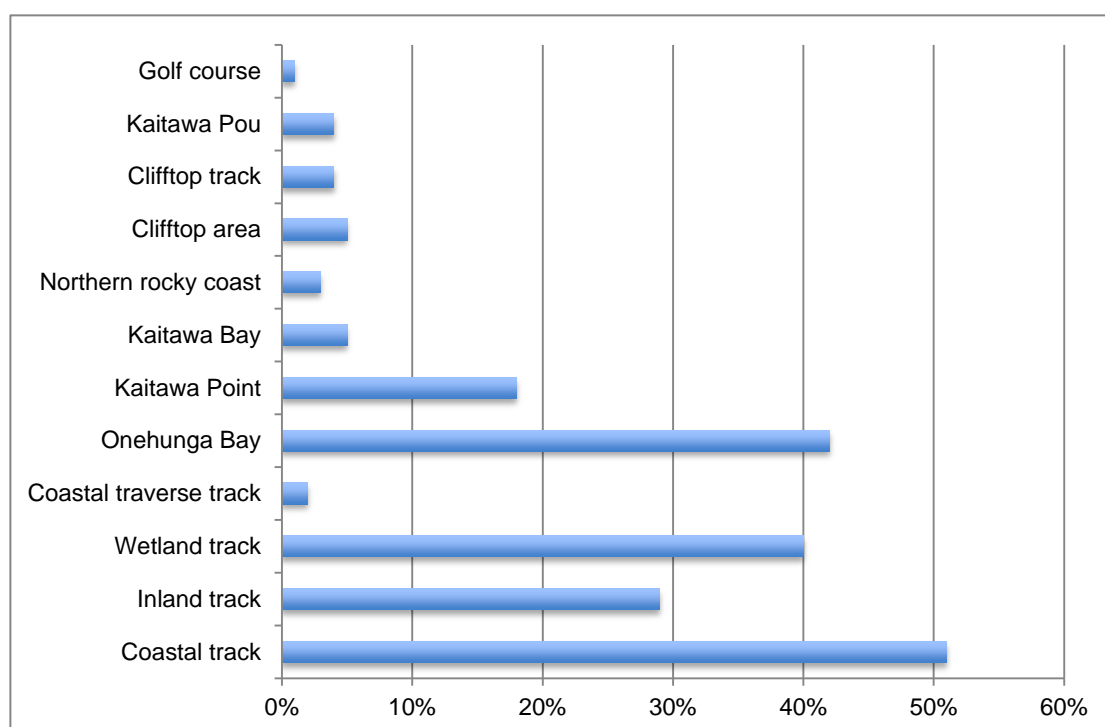
Sites visited

Respondents were asked to list the sites they had visited or would visit during their time in the park. The parts of the park listed in the following table were assigned codes prior to the survey for ease of recording (Appendix 2 shows the map used by interviewers). The sites visited by survey respondents are shown below. As expected the most popular sites were Te Onepoto Loop (including the coastal and inland sections of track as well as the wetland track used by those entering at Onepoto Road), and the road-accessible coastal attractions of Onehunga Bay and the rocky shore out to Kaitawa Point.

Site	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid respondents
Coastal track (coastal section of loop track)	144	51%
Inland track (inland section of loop track)	81	29%
Wetland track (from Onepoto Road to 3 way junction)	112	40%
Coastal traverse track (informal) from Pou cattle stop to hilltop car park, parallel to Whitireia Road	5	2%
Onehunga Bay / Shelly Bay (sandy beach)	118	42%
Kaitawa Point (rocky coast from Onehunga Bay to the point)	50	18%

Kaitawa Bay (little beach west of Kaitawa Point)	15	5%
Northern rocky coast between Kaitawa Bay and Richard St	7	3%
Cliff top area beside Whitireia Road	13	5%
Cliff top walkway from Richard St over Whitireia hilltop	10	4%
Kaitawa Pou	11	4%
Golf course	3	1%
No response	8	
Total (valid)	280	

Figure 2: Proportion of respondents visiting each site



Visitor demographics

Sex

Slightly more females than males were recorded: 384 as opposed to 362 (sex was not recorded on two returns, representing a total of three individuals). This equates to 51% and 49%.

Age

The age profile of visitors is shown in the following table.

Age bracket	Number of total visitors	Proportion of total visitors
0 – 15	139	19%
16 – 19	37	5%
20 – 29	166	23%
30 – 49	240	33%
50 – 69	122	17%
70+	18	2%
Total (valid)*	722	

* Age was not recorded in the case of eight returns, representing 27 total visitors.

Ethnicity

The ethnicity of visitors was as follows.

Ethnic group	Number of total visitors	Proportion of total visitors
Pakeha	393	55%
NZ Maori	152	21%
Pacific Islander	72	10%
Other European	55	8%
Indian	13	2%
Chinese	7	1%
Other Asian	16	2%
South American	7	1%
North American	1	-
African	1	-
Total (valid)*	710	

* Ethnicity was not recorded in the case of eight returns, representing 39 total visitors.

Note that some individuals specified a mix of ethnicities, notably pakeha/Maori and Maori/Pacific Islander, which accounts for the categories adding 101%.

Place of residence

The residential distribution of visitors was as follows. The results are similar to those from the 1973 study by the Wellington Regional Planning Authority, which showed that most visits to the park originated from Porirua City, with lesser numbers from Wellington, the Hutt Valley and Kapiti, and deemed the park to be of “regional” to “sub-regional” significance for recreation (see section 3).

Residential location	Number of total visitors	Proportion of total visitors
Porirua	446	62%
Wellington	168	23%
Lower Hutt	25	3%
Upper Hutt	3	-
Kapiti Coast	10	1%
Wairarapa	0	-
Other parts of NZ	26	4%
Overseas	38	5%
Total (valid)*	716	

* Place of residence was not recorded in the case of seven returns, representing 33 total visitors.

Note that the percentages add to less than 100% due to rounding errors.

Group composition

The makeup of groups covered by the survey was as follows. Note that a small proportion of groups included more than one category (e.g. groups combining family and friends).

Category	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid responses
Alone	89	31%
Family	106	37%
Community / school / church group	3	1%
With partner / spouse	45	16%
Friends	52	18%
Other	5	2%
No response	1	
Total (valid)	287	

Household income

Respondents were asked into which income bracket their own household fell. Note that over one third of all respondents answered that they didn't know or did not want to answer. It is highly likely that people who are unwilling to reveal their income level would be disproportionately distributed across the range of income brackets. Therefore the percentages in the following table are highly unlikely to be representative of the overall population of Whitireia Park visitors.

Annual household income bracket	Number of respondents	Proportion of valid responses
Up to \$30,000	18	10%
\$30,001 to \$50,000	16	9%
\$50,001 to \$70,000	38	21%
\$70,001 to \$100,000	46	25%
More than \$100,000	65	36%
Don't know / don't want to answer	100	
No response	5	
Total (valid)	183	

Appendix 2: Map of coded sites





Survey No.	Date	2015
	Time	
	Entrance	
	Weather	

Mode of transport into park 1 Car 2 Cycle 3 Coach/bus 4 Walked 5 Other

No. of people in group No. of each Gender in group Male Female

Dogs present Yes No Refusal? Yes (specify reason)

Appendix 3: Whitireia Park Visitor Survey

1. **Who decided to come here today? [Ask that person:] How did you find out about Whitireia Park [X Tick]**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Previous experience | <input type="checkbox"/> | Word of mouth - family, friends, colleagues | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Newspaper articles/advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> | Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Brochures | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other internet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Guide books | <input type="checkbox"/> | Events | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | Describe: | |

2. **How often do you personally visit Whitireia Park? [X Tick]**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| At least once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> | At least once a year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At least once a month | <input type="checkbox"/> | Less often than once a year | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| At least once every two months | <input type="checkbox"/> | This is my first time | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. **Which entrance did you come in by? [Do not prompt. X Tick]**

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Thornley Street | <input type="checkbox"/> | Golf Course | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Onepoto Road | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Richard Street | <input type="checkbox"/> | Describe: | |

4. **Which entrance will you leave by? [Do not prompt. X Tick]**

- | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Thornley Street | <input type="checkbox"/> | Golf Course | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Onepoto Road | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Richard Street | <input type="checkbox"/> | Describe: | |

5. **What activities have you done / will you do here today? [X Tick all that apply]**

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Walking [wearing shoes] | <input type="checkbox"/> | Running | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Tramping [wearing boots] | <input type="checkbox"/> | Horse riding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mountain biking | <input type="checkbox"/> | Picnicking/barbecue | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Rock Climbing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Swimming | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Dog walking | <input type="checkbox"/> | Watching wildlife | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fishing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Beachcombing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Sightseeing | <input type="checkbox"/> | Diving | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other

Specify:

6. **How long will you spend in the park today?**

Less than 1 hour

1 to 4 hours

More than 4 hours

7. **What do you like about Whitireia Park?** [Do not prompt]

.....
.....
.....

8. **How do you think the park experience could be improved for visitors?** [Do not prompt]

.....
.....
.....

9. **What is your preferred source of information about parks?**

Word of mouth

Newspaper

Text message

Brochure

Internet

Facebook

Email

Newsletter

Other Specify.....

10. **Where do the people in your group live?** [number in each category, including yourself]

Wellington

Lower Hutt

Upper Hutt

Porirua*

Kapiti Coast*

Wairarapa

Other NZ

Overseas

* Porirua includes Whitby, Pauatahanui, Plimmerton and Pukerua Bay. Kapiti Coast includes Otaki.

11. **What are the ages of the people in your group?** [number in each category, including yourself]

0-15

16-19

20-29

30-49

50-69.....

70+

12. **To which ethnic group/s do you belong?** [number in each category, including yourself]

NZ European

NZ Maori

Other European

Pacific Island

Chinese

Indian

Other Asian

Other (Specify):

13. **Who are you at Whitireia Park with?** Tick all that apply

Alone

Community/school/church group

Friends

Family

With partner/spouse

Other (Specify):

14. **Into which of the following income brackets would your total annual household income fall before taxation?** Tick

Up to \$30,000

\$50,001 to \$70,000

More than \$100,000

\$30,001 to \$50,000

\$70 to \$100,000

Don't know / don't want to answer

15. **Where in the park did you go / will you go today?** [Interviewer: use map to help as needed]

CT

IT

WT

LT

WR

OB

KP

KB

NRC

CA

CW

POU

GC

16. Are you interested in receiving "Our Parks' electronic newsletter? No Yes E mail