



# Wellington Regional Trails for the future

July 2023

An updated strategic framework for trails in the Wellington Region



porirua**city**



SOUTH WAIRARAPA  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
*Kia Reretahi Tātau*



Absolutely Positively  
**Wellington** City Council  
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

**WellingtonNZ**



# Introduction

The Wellington Region contains some exceptional trail-based experiences and has the potential to significantly grow the use of outdoor trails. Wellington is home to New Zealand's capital city and has an appealing mix of creativity, culture, events, award-winning eateries, wine and craft beer. The region's multi-use trails and easy access to nature are another strong drawcard to visit the region and city.

In 2017 the *Wellington Regional Trails for The Future Framework* was created to bring together the Government entities of the region and initiated a collaborative approach to develop the trail network and lift the standards for users. In the six years since the Framework was created, great progress has been made possible through this collaboration. A review of progress across the trail network has been completed and now looks to the future to reset the goals for the next five years.



Photo credit: Jay French

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# 1. Background (2017-2023)

In 2017 the Wellington region's local government entities - WellingtonNZ, Department of Conservation and Wellington Trails – co-funded the development of a Regional Trails Framework.

*'Trails for the future, A strategic framework for trails in the Wellington Region'*, looked at available trail usage data, tourism statistics and other popular trail destinations both in New Zealand and around the world. The outcome of the Framework document is a list of priority actions which can be defined under six themes.

1. Effective coordination
2. Consistent and collaborative planning
3. Delivering trail experiences
4. Sustainable management
5. Supporting trail use and community involvement
6. Marketing and communication

The Full document can be found [here](#).

During the development of the Framework, it became evident that the ongoing funding for this regional initiative would be key to its implementation and success. The project sponsors (Wellington City Council, Greater Wellington and WellingtonNZ) obtained support for the initiative through both the Mayoral and CE Forums, which locked in multiyear funding for the project (see Appendix for the breakdown of funding by partner).

The Wellington Regional Trails Committee (WRT) was established in 2018 following the completion of the Framework document. The Committee was established with the intention to guide a collaborative and coordinated approach to regional trail planning, development and promotion of the regions' trail offering.

The Wellington region covers eight local government authorities, the Regional Council and Department of Conservation:

1. Kapiti Coast District Council
2. Porirua City Council
3. Wellington City Council
4. Hutt City Council
5. Upper Hutt City Council
6. Carterton District Council
7. Masterton City Council
8. South Wairarapa District Council

The *Trails for the Future* document (2017) has served the project well over the last six years. Whilst there have been annual plans and tweaks in direction over the last six years, the process of a full review of the Framework has been a worthwhile activity. The process in developing this document has provided the opportunity to revisit, re-test and refresh our approach for the next two to three years.





Photo credit: Jay French



## 2. Vision

The vision for the future of the Wellington Regions trail network remains unchanged.

### ***“Connecting our people with inspiring adventures”***

The vision will build on the Wellington region’s strengths:

- a strong mix of trails and experiences within easy access of the regions’ cities and towns
- trails that enable residents and visitors to explore the broader region, including outer urban areas and regional destinations
- easy access (by air, sea and car) and options for connecting trail experiences by road, rail and water
- offering a range of accessible experiences across the region at varying levels of difficulty. Providing clear information on [WellingtonRegionalTrails.com](http://WellingtonRegionalTrails.com) on existing trail barriers, trail surface and condition.

## 3. Benefits of a coordinated trail network

The Wellington region is already experiencing lifestyle, social and economic benefits from the trail network. The region’s residents have high rates of participation in outdoor recreation and exercise and use walking and bike trails at a higher rate than the New Zealand average. By further improving the trail network, we expect to see:

- Improved health and wellbeing of residents by offering a ready means for healthy outdoor activity.
- Offering of a ‘green’ transport alternative for everyday and leisure purposes
- Attracting people to live and work in the Wellington region, providing employment and economic outcomes.
- increased opportunities for community participation in trail development and management, improved social connections, a ‘sense of place’ and the quality of the local environment.
- Increased sustainable ways to access and experience natural areas and protect natural and cultural assets.

## 4. Key User Markets and Cycle Tourism

The regions’ residents are the major users of trails which are an important feature in the lifestyle choice of locals. The Committee aims to attract more domestic and international trail users and believes that by creating high quality, reliable and consistent trail experiences for locals, the visitors will follow.

Tourism to Wellington is growing. Research shows that over 25% of visitors actively

seek walking opportunities and over 4% are seeking mountain biking as an activity. Providing a well-defined set of experiences and product offering and continuing to work together on the marketing and promotion of available experiences would continue to reach and grow these markets.

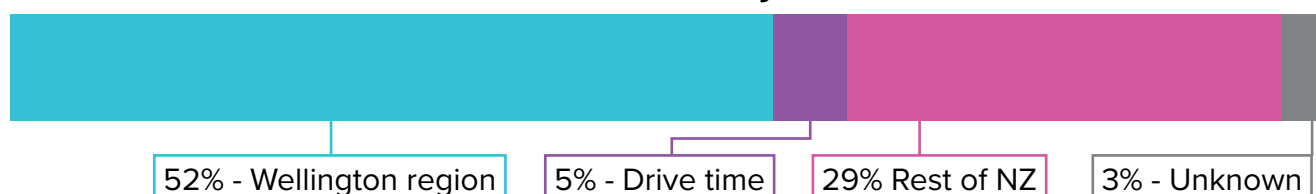
## 4.1 WellingtonRegionalTrails.com Audience Breakdown (Jan 2020 to May 2023)

The Find Your Wild website use and search results over the last three years illustrates the local use of the website for trails information. However, there is also significant use from other major cities, particularly Auckland at 20%. The age of website users is very evenly spread across age brackets from 25 to 65+, however nearly two-thirds of all website users are women.

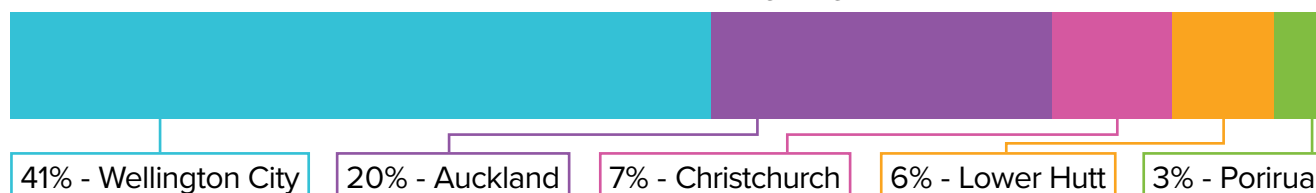
**% of total users by country**



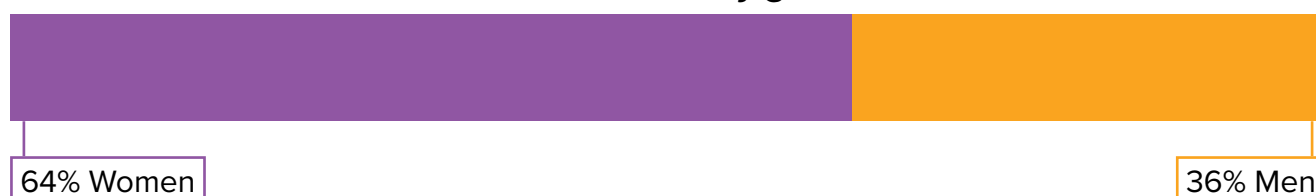
**% of total users by area**



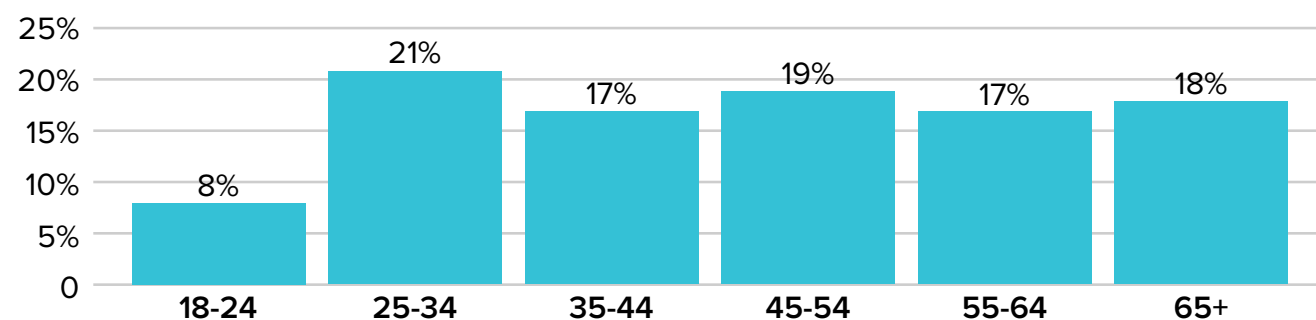
**% of total users by city**



**% of total users by gender**



**% of total users by age**





## 4.2 Growth in Cycle Tourism

Cycle tourism is a key market, and an opportunity that we can leverage in the Wellington region. Not only does it have a growing mountain bike population with wealth of quality bike trails scattered throughout the region, but it is also home to the Remutaka Cycle Trail, one of the Ngā Haerenga 22 Great Rides.

The Remutaka Cycle Trail had **316,905 trail users in 2021**, a 45% increase from 218,000 users in 2020. Note these numbers will be driven by high day use of sections like the Hutt River Trail and Rail Trail.

Approximately 30% of these users were visiting from out of the region and of those, each trail user generates approximately \$300 average expenditure per person while in the area.

This is a significant economic contribution to the region. The Remutaka Cycle Trail has potential to be further developed with supporting infrastructure such as food,

beverage and accommodation services along the trail an opportunity yet to be fully realised.

Nationally, New Zealand's cycle trails are experiencing a boom in popularity and new research shows they are driving economic activity in the regions as well as benefits for health and wellbeing.

- Over the 12 months from 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, almost 2.19 million trips were taken across the New Zealand Cycle Trail Great Rides network and generated \$951 million of economic contribution
- 98.5% were Domestic users
- 27% of the New Zealand adult population has participated in a cycle tourism activity in the past year
- Estimated health benefits of \$11 million resulting from trail use for cycling, such as improved sense of wellbeing and mental health; an increased appreciation of the natural environment; and physical fitness improvements<sup>1</sup>
- Also of note was the general increase in cycling as an activity over and post-lockdown<sup>2</sup>.

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1 <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-projects/nga-haerenga-the-new-zealand-cycle-trail/evaluation-of-the-new-zealand-cycle-ride-trails>

2 <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/415435/cycling-popularity-changes-gear-during-lockdown-and-supporters-look-to-capitalise>





Photo credit: Jay French



# 5. Creation of the Find your Wild brand

## 5.1 Brand Creation and marketing approach

One of the biggest successes has been the co-ordinated and well-funded marketing approach which delivers successful seasonal and regional campaigns. This is led by WellingtonNZ with funding and support from around the region.

The Find your Wild brand and marketing approach is built around a core set of principles that are simple, inspiring, emotive and fun. Work is planned to make these brand principles more reflective of the region as a whole.

### The Wellington Regional Trails Story

#### BRAND PRINCIPLES

Simple | Easy to navigate | Inspiring | Emotive | Sense of fun | Engaging with wide appeal

Key Brand Pillars	Key Messages	Sample copy
<p><b>Active Nature</b> – nestled between harbour and hills, nature is on our doorstep. Often wild, sometimes calm, Wellington's an adventure lover's paradise and place to explore, play and thrive.</p> <p><b>Concentrated Awesomeness</b> – Wellington is compact, connected and human-sized. A lot of awesome is packed into the region, and in the city everything you need is a short walk away.</p> <p><b>Absolutely Positive People</b> – It's easy to feel like you belong in Wellington even if you only arrived today. Wellingtonians are friendly, celebrate diversity and care about others, the environment and fairness.</p>	<p><b>Active Nature</b> – Nestled between hills and a sparkling harbour, Wellington is an adventure lover's paradise; with trails for walking, running or biking all a stone's throw from the city.</p> <p><b>Compact</b> – Fun and easy to get around, Wellington boasts a myriad of hidden gems from laneways to boutique shopping streets to beaches, all connected by a accessible and picturesque waterfront.</p> <p><b>World's Best Life</b> – The number one city in the world to live, Wellington offers an enviable lifestyle with arts, culture, cuisine and nature all at our doorstep.</p> <p><b>Vibrant City</b> – Wellington, the world's coolest little capital, is one of the world's best cities to live, packed with restaurants, cafes, boutiques, awesome events and something new to discover around every corner.</p> <p><b>Wellington Weekends/Short Breaks</b> – Perfect city for a short break with always stuff going on and something new to discover around every corner.</p>	<p><b>Locals</b> - Just beyond your backyard, waiting to be explored, lays a trail of hundreds of hikes, bikes, horse riding and walking tracks. Take a step into nature and be rewarded with epic views and wild landscapes. Find your Wild: <a href="http://WellingtonRegionalTrails.com">WellingtonRegionalTrails.com</a></p> <p><b>All</b> - On Wellington's doorstep, waiting to be explored, lays a trail of hundreds of hikes, bikes, horse riding and walking tracks. Take a step into nature and be rewarded with epic views and wild landscapes. Find your Wild: <a href="http://WellingtonRegionalTrails.com">WellingtonRegionalTrails.com</a></p>

## 5.2 Creation of Find Your Wild Brand

The Find Your Wild brand was developed for Wellington Regional Trails to provide a cohesive overarching brand for all types of trail users across the Wellington region. It is rolled out across marketing collateral and trail signage, so information is consistent, accessible and predictable for the public and to demonstrate our high quality and variety of trails.





### 5.3 Example 2022 seasonal campaign



#### Creation of WellingtonRegionalTrails.com website

The website [WellingtonRegionalTrails.com](https://WellingtonRegionalTrails.com) is managed by WellingtonNZ and has grown to attract over 230,000 users per year. It aims to provide one single source of truth for trails in the Wellington region.

User numbers are projected to significantly increase from July 2023 when WellingtonRegionalTrails.com is moved to a new platform leveraging the full WellingtonNZ site audience; this receives over 1.7 million users per year.

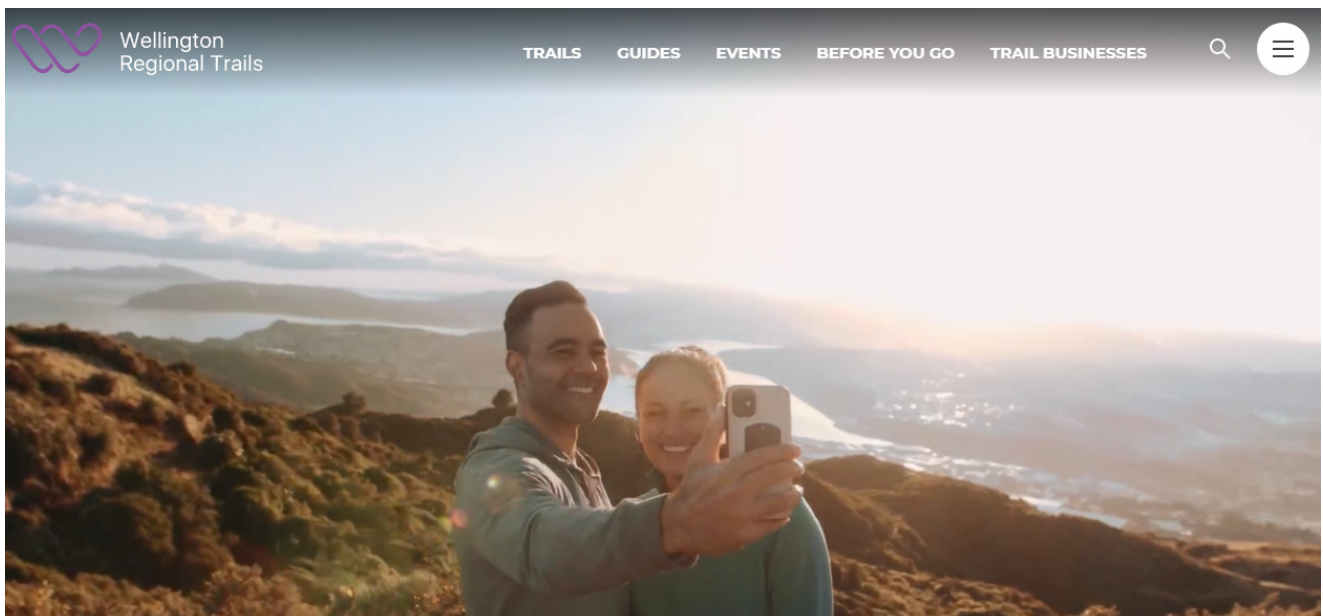






Photo credit: Jay French



## 6. Setting Our New Direction

Over the last six years there have been a number of significant achievements that can be attributed to the Regional Trails Framework and Committee.

- 1) Strong collaboration and collective approach which has positive ripple effects in other areas
- 2) Creation of a robust strategy and framework which has enabled multiple government authorities to work together and advocate for funding to grow the trails network
- 3) Leadership and political buy-in has been a key contributor to success
- 4) Consistency and a shared focus resulting in a cohesive experience for trail users
- 5) Dedicated resourcing and coordination
- 6) Creation of a strong brand.

### 6.1 Review of the existing Framework

In March 2023, the Wellington Regional Trails Committee came together for a hui to review the 2017 Framework and the priority actions that had been set at that time. The hui provided the format and gave members time to reflect on achievements to date and define the current and future priorities of the trail network.

A follow up hui two months later enabled the Committee to digest and reflect with the outcome being a more detailed set of priority actions which fall under three themes;

1. Strong coordination
2. Providing quality trail experiences and a customer focus
3. Communication and marketing



Photo credit: Jay French







## 7. Priority Actions areas for 2023-2025

The priority areas are built around product development, marketing and how we work as a collective to achieve our vision of “connecting people with inspiring adventures.” The Committee also acknowledges the need for these priorities and actions to be targeted and manageable.

### 7.1 Strong Coordination

- The Committee provides a format for regional representatives to bring issues and the user/trail groups’ voice to the table.
- Continue to share and build the knowledge of the Committee.
- The Committee needs to fully support the Regional Trails Coordinator to deliver effective outcomes. This means, at times, that Committee members need to prioritise Regional Trails actions to enable work to progress.

Action	Description: Strong Coordination	Lead	Priority
1	Elect new Committee Chair	GW	Very high
2	Review of the Terms of Reference for the Regional Committee and review of membership representatives to make sure the right people are around the table	Chair & WNZ	Very high
3	Confirm Committee members and advocate for DoC Wairarapa to join	Trails Coordinator/ committee	Very high
4	Provide current budget summary for the committee for 2022/23 financial year	Trails coordinator/ WNZ	Very high
5	Draft budget for 2023/24 including resourcing Trails Coordinator role for Committee to discuss	Trails Coordinator	Very high
6	Consider merging or aligning quarterly hui with Remutaka Cycle Trail, as there is a large cross over of members	WNZ	Med
7	Committee members to actively engage with their community and trail groups and bring their issues and opportunities to the table	All	Ongoing
8	Continue with quarterly in-person meetings to get the most out of the group. Look to host these meetings at various locations in the region.	WNZ	Ongoing
9	Prepare a short Annual Report (to justify return on investment) that summarizes the achievements over the last 12 months. The report would be shared with decision-makers at respective partner agencies.	Trails Coordinator	High

## 7.2 Quality Trail Experiences and Customer Focus

- Regional residents will continue to be the major users. The region provides a strong trails product offering that will also encourage domestic and international visitors to the region.

Action	Quality trail experience and customer focus	Lead	Priority
10	<b>WellingtonRegionalTrails.com (WRT) website</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review trail classification against criteria (Signature, Regional, Local)</li> <li>Review imagery and identify trails needing new/updated images</li> <li>Review content and add new tracks that meet criteria</li> <li>Develop trail user experience. Stitching individual tracks together to create complete trail experiences</li> <li>Consider potential to add commercial experiences that meet criteria to WellingtonRegionalTrails.com</li> <li>Review DoC offering and consider adding experiences that meet regional trails criteria (i.e. Tararua day hikes, overnight experiences)</li> </ul>	Trails Coordinator/All Land managers  DoC, WNZ	Very high (30 june)  Med
11	<b>GAP Analysis</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A review of all trail experiences on website. Are all regions, user types and experience levels catered for?</li> <li>What is missing? Potential to add overnight tramping experience in the Tararuas. (DoC)</li> <li>Committee to consider the benefit of adding commercial trail experiences (i.e. Tora)</li> </ul>	Trails Coordinator/ Committee	Med



Action	Quality trail experience and customer focus	Lead	Priority
12	<b>Accessibility</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather data and increase online information available on accessibility of trails in their current state</li> <li>Improve accessibility of trails, remove barriers.</li> <li>Examine how to better build accessibility into the trail audit process</li> <li>Participate in Recreation Aotearoa's development of Accessible Outdoors guidelines</li> </ul>	Trails Coordinator/ Committee	High
13	<b>Te ao Māori</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leverage Remutaka Cycle Trail work with mana whenua around partnerships and storytelling opportunities.</li> <li>Also look at the potential for Māori businesses associated with trails.</li> </ul>	Trails Coordinator/ Committee	Med
14	<b>Trail Audits</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a process for auditing trails</li> <li>Create mechanism for upgrading/ downgrading trail status (Regional/ Signature) based on outcome of audit recommendations</li> <li>Set a time frame for recommendations to be actioned</li> </ul>	Trails Coordinator/ Land Managers	Med
15	<b>Business development</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support trail experience by working with nearby local businesses</li> <li>Identify opportunities for value-add experiences (e.g. guiding, transport, F&amp;B, accommodation etc.)</li> </ul>	WNZ, TA's	Med

### 7.3 Communications & Marketing

- Continue to build exposure for the Find Your Wild brand and leverage the websites' position on the WellingtonNZ platform.
- Continue to promote the region as a whole and look for opportunities for storytelling across the region

Action	Communication and marketing	Lead	Priority
16	Form a Marketing sub-group for Regional Trails	WNZ	Very high (30 June)
17	Develop draft Marketing Plan in collaboration with trail partners (TAs) for Regional Trails for 2023/24	WNZ	Very high (30 June)
18	Provide regular marketing and campaign updates to the Trails Committee to enable partners to leverage opportunities	WNZ	Ongoing
19	WellingtonNZ Marketing to seek additional exposure through their channels for work done regionally	WNZ	Ongoing
20	Establish clear process for updating and adding new trails to the Find Your Wild website: criteria, content, GIS, imagery	Trail Coordinator	High
21	Develop the dashboard for collating regional counter data	Trail Coordinator	Ongoing
22	Investigate the use of Strava Metro data for trails	Trail Coordinator/ KCDC	Med
23	Investigate potential for aligning market research across agencies. Use of Net Promotor Score methodology	Trail Coordinator/ GW	Med
24	Update the Brand Principles to be more reflective of the region as a whole	WNZ	High



## Appendix - Funding

The current funding commitment has remained unchanged for the last 6 years. The exception is the Department of Conservation funding, which is unconfirmed for 2023/24, so has been omitted.

	% split	21/22	22/23	23/24
<b>UHCC</b>	7%	\$10,343	\$10,343	\$10,343
<b>HCC</b>	15%	\$22,163	\$22,163	\$22,163
<b>GW</b>	10%	\$14,775	\$14,775	\$14,775
<b>WCC</b>	31%	\$45,803	\$45,803	\$45,803
<b>PCC</b>	8%	\$11,820	\$11,820	\$11,820
<b>KCDC</b>	8%	\$11,820	\$11,820	\$11,820
<b>SWDC</b>	2%	\$2,955	\$2,955	\$2,955
<b>MDC</b>	4%	\$5,910	\$5,910	\$5,910
<b>CDC</b>	1%	\$1,478	\$1,478	\$1,478
<b>WNZ</b>	10%	\$14,775	\$14,775	\$14,775
<b>DOC</b>	4%	\$5,910	\$6,000	\$0
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$147,752</b>	<b>\$147,842</b>	<b>\$141,842</b>