

UPPER CLUTHA TRACKS TRUST

14 October 2020

CHAIR'S REPORT AGM 2020

To say that 2019/2020 has been an unusual year is an understatement of epic proportions.

Like the rest of NZ, the Trust has endured a year like no other in recent history. Despite the situation we found ourselves in, we have managed to continue our work with some success. We all experienced the novelty of virtual meetings with some interesting backdrops and variable levels of connectivity but we got through and enjoyed getting back to 'normal' once lockdown finished.

The trust did achieve one significant breakthrough during the period. This was the successful negotiation with the owner of Devon Dairies farm to grant the Trust an easement to build the long- awaited link track from Hawea Flat to the Hawea River Track. A special note of thanks must go to Erynne Fildes of Devon Dairies with the help of her lawyer Graeme Todd in progressing the agreement with the Trust. I am pleased to report that the new Devon Diaries Link will open to the public by the end of the year, providing an important addition to the active commuter network as well as an excellent new loop for recreational riders in the region.

The Trust has also faced some significant and very frustrating challenges this year. These relate mainly to the Otago Conservation Board review of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS).

We discovered earlier in the period that the new CMS (2016) differed significantly from its predecessor (2010) in one major way; it did not allow for bikes on conservation land unless they had a specific notified exemption. This meant that any track that we might want to build on the conservation estate would require a partial statutory review of the entire CMS document. Consequently, we were required to supply to the department, a list of any potential aspirational tracks that we might want to build at any time in the future. This required a huge amount of work and I want to thank John Wellington for his efforts in this regard. From the Trust perspective, this has been a total waste of time and money when the whole issue could be resolved simply by reinstating the previous CMS document which did provide for bikes in keeping with DOC's overall policy directive. We await the outcome with trepidation as it seems obvious that under the current process it could take a very long time to gain approval for new tracks.

On a more positive note, we do have some projects that should come to fruition in the next year.

Pawson's Crossing bridge ramps. Work is progressing towards replacing the steps on either side of the bridge over the Cardrona River with easily accessible ramps for the benefit of all users.

Albert Town campground link to the Hawea swing bridge. This will enable bikers and walkers to access the swing bridge without having to use the dusty road.

Peninsula Bay Link. This will connect the existing Peninsula Bay track network with the Wanaka lakeside track to the Clutha outlet. This is something that was envisaged in the original subdivision plan application but was never completed.

Charteris Track. This is a walking track at Makarora that will incorporate some private land by easement at the behest of the owner Gary Charteris and a section of DOC land that will connect to the existing nature walk.

Dublin Bay to Maungawera Road. This long-awaited link from the end of the existing Dublin Bay track to Maungawera Road is hopefully coming to fruition as a result of the lease review at Mt Burke station. Some issues are still to be resolved before work can commence.

Hawea River right bank from the Hawea dam to Camphill Road. This track is surveyed and costed but is held up by the CMS review.

Lower Cardrona River Track, negotiations are proceeding with landowners to link Ballantyne Road to The Hook and Cameron Creek by passing under the SH6 Cardrona River bridge.

Gladstone Track, Grandview Creek crossing. Trustee Tom Rowley and a couple of his mates have offered to erect a permanent crossing at Grandview Creek at their personal expense. This is a very generous offer and much appreciated by the Trust and the track users.

Upper Clutha Tracks Trust Foundation. This concept has arisen as a result of successful similar foundations set up to raise funds. It would be established to encourage private individuals who enjoy the track network to contribute to its expansion by donating cash to future projects. It is hoped that the foundation will be up and running in the coming year.

I wish to thank our voluntary trustees for their generous contribution of time and effort during this difficult year. Also, for the continued assistance of Diana Manson of QLDC as secretary and Anita Middlemiss from DOC for her valued input on DOC matters.

John Hare

Chair, Upper Clutha Tracks Trust