



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

File Ref:

22 December 2016

9(2)(a)

Director
World Heritage Centre
UNESCO
Paris

9(2)(a)

Dear 9(2)(a)

Tongariro National Park Management Plan Partial Review – Tongariro World Heritage Area

The purpose of this letter is to advise you that the Department of Conservation in consultation with the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board has initiated a partial review of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan.

The Tongariro National Park was first inscribed with World Heritage status in 1990 for natural values, and in 1993 it was also inscribed for its cultural values. The dual status recognises the park's important Maori cultural and spiritual associations as well as its outstanding volcanic features.

A framework of legislation, policies and plans guides the management of the Tongariro National Park. The framework includes the National Parks Act, the General Policy for National Parks, the Tongariro/Taupo Conservation Management Strategy 2002 – 2012 and the Tongariro National Park Management Plan 2006 - 2016 (TNPMP). The retrospective Statement of Outstanding Universal Value for the Tongariro World Heritage Area is still under development.

Recently our Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism John Key announced the intention to develop new shared walking/ cycling tracks within the Tongariro National Park. To enable this project a partial review of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan is required so the planning framework may provide for the construction of the proposed new tracks, and to use existing and historic tracks for a shared walking and cycle tracks in three specific locations, subject to public consultation.

The TNPMP is due for a full review within the next few years pending the settlement of outstanding Treaty of Waitangi claims by the New Zealand Government.

The final scope of this partial review is yet to be determined and will be influenced by a public submission process that closed on the 16th of December. After the 16th of December analysis of the submissions will be undertaken and the final decision on whether to proceed with this partial review and if so, what the scope of the review will be, will be made by our Director of Operations for the region. Prior to the initiation of this project the Department has undertaken a range of informal consultation.

The Department and the Tongariro Taupo Conservation Board both have formal roles in preparing, supporting and making recommendations on the partial review. The formal process for undertaking the partial review will include engagement and input from our Treaty partners as well as the public through a further public submission process. Decision making for this partial review sits with New Zealand Conservation Authority. Due to the World Heritage status of the Tongariro National Park we are also advising you that we are undertaking this process.

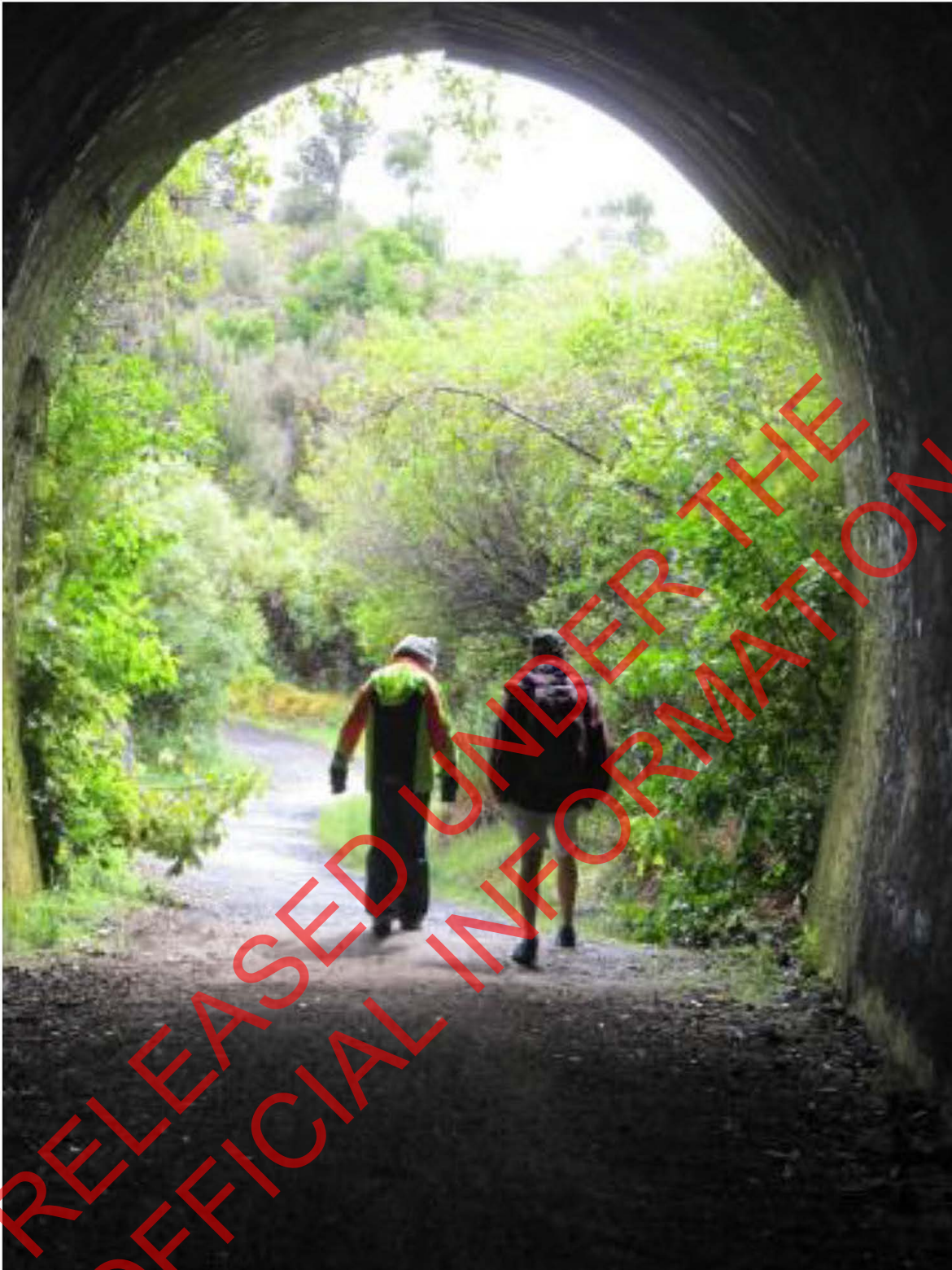
The Department will advise you in early February the final scope of the partial review. In late February, we will also advise you of the proposed policy changes to the TNPMP. We anticipate that should the partial review proceed that a decision will be made by the New Zealand Conservation Authority in October of 2017.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours Sincerely



Andrew Bignell
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Department of Conservation
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Summary of monitoring of the
Ohakune Old Coach Road shared
walking and cycle track – Tongariro
District

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Ohakune Old Coach Road is managed as a Heritage Icon site. It provides an opportunity for people to visit the historic Hapuawhenua and Taonui viaducts and enjoy stunning scenery.

The Old Coach Road has been established as a Grade 2/3, shared cycle / walking trail since 2010. The 14km Old Coach Road forms the second leg of the Mountain to the Sea Cycle Trail.

Under section 4.3.2.12, policies 6-12 of the Tongariro Management Plan (management plan), the Department of Conservation (DOC) is required to monitor and report on the environmental, social and heritage effects from use of the trail. DOC has accordingly completed 14 monitoring reports to adhere to the management plan.

The monitoring has:

- provided a baseline environmental conditions (2005)
- completed an environmental assessment at the 3-year trial period
- concluded that the effects of mountain biking were localised to 0.04%
- identified that these minor effects could be minimised through surface maintenance, and recommended that impact monitoring is targeted to be cost-effective and specific
- resulted in the implementation of track maintenance to reduce minor effects of mountain biking
- focused on specific concession monitoring, which demonstrates general compliance with conditions
- confirmed that interpretation panels are valuable, and that Old Coach Road is one of the most popular heritage icons in New Zealand
- identified that more work can be done to share the planning phase for visitors,
- confirmed that DOC provides notification of the shared use status on their website and on the signage.



1. PURPOSE

This report reviews the range of monitoring reports completed by DOC staff, and summarises their findings, in accordance with the requirements of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan.

The following types of monitoring report have been identified for review:

- archaeological assessments
- assessment of Environmental Effects (AEE)
- compliance and event monitoring
- conservation plans
- operations and maintenance plans
- site visit plans
- visitor use surveys.

This report also provides evidence for future policy decision-making on the environmental, social and cultural effects of mountain biking in the Tongariro National Park. The report focuses on the Ohakune Old Coach Road (OOCR) only. A separate review of monitoring and management of mountain biking on the Pillars of Hercules/Tree Trunk Gorge has been commissioned by the Turangi/Taupo District.

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2. BACKGROUND

The Ohakune Old Coach Road (OOCR) formed an integral link between 1906 and 1908, connecting the two rail heads of Ohakune and Horopito to enable through journeys by horse and coach before the railway was completed. The Hapuawhenua Viaduct was one of the final components of the North Island's main trunk railway.

In 1987 a major deviation of the main trunk line, including the construction of a new Hapuawhenua Viaduct, was completed. As part of this work, a large cutting near the Taonui Viaduct cut the coach road in two places. Much fill from this cutting was dumped on the road and the area began to be reclaimed by native vegetation.

The old road was never forgotten by locals, hunters and hikers. In the early 2000s, Errol Vincent led a group of local businessmen and enthusiasts to promote the idea of re-opening the road as a walking/cycle trail, to provide a tourist destination and recreational opportunity. DOC worked with community groups to progress the idea, which led to a partial review of the management plan in 2006. The review provided for mountain biking in two locations, The Old Coach Road and the Pillars of Hercules, Tree Trunk Gorge.

Once this public process was completed and policies were in place, DOC worked with the community from 2004 to 2010 to restore remaining sections of historic track and link them with sections of new track. These were built to a suitable standard for day walkers and as a grade 2/3 mountain bike track. This work included significant capital investment of new bridges and track surface and restoration of the Hapuawhenua Viaduct, and installation of multiple historic and interpretation panels.

Today, heritage features on the trail include the unique cobbled road, massive steel viaducts, a curved tunnel, railway bridge remains and old campsites. The journey also takes visitors through beautiful stands of native forest with sweeping views across the district and towards Mt Ruapehu.

2.1. New monitoring requirements

Another outcome of this review process was the evaluation of seven policies within Tongariro National Park Management Plan (section 4.3.2.12) to determine the environment, social and cultural effects of mountain biking in the locations above. The policies include the following monitoring requirements:

- undertake baseline monitoring of the environmental condition and historic fabric of the Old Coach Road (Policy 6)
- conduct a 3-year trial of the mountain biking that includes monitoring of social and environmental effects within that period (Policy 7)
- review of the effects and recommendations (Policies 8 and 9)
- concession and event monitoring (Policies 10 and 11)
- provision of public information to promote safe sharing of the track (Policy 12).

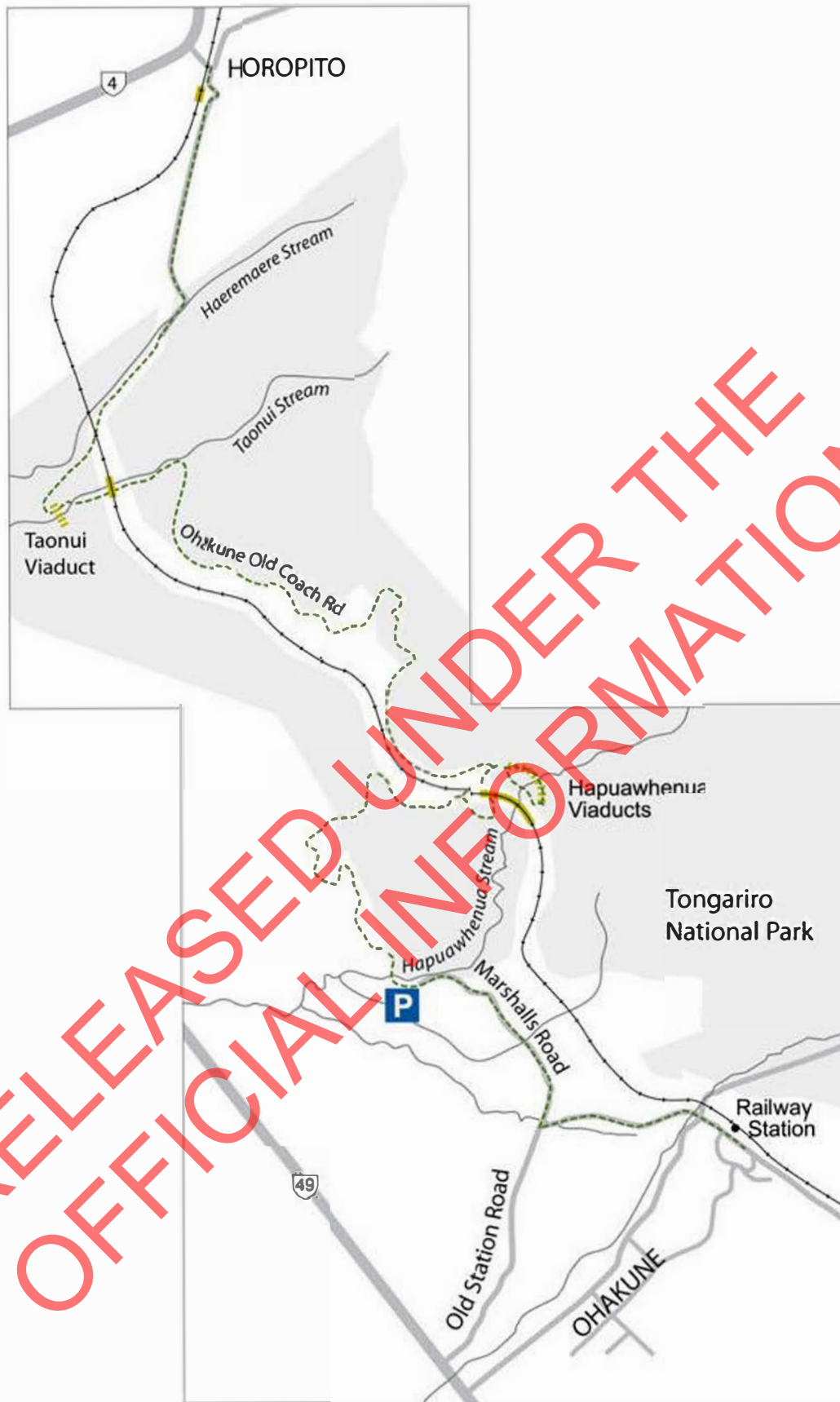


Figure 1: Map of the Old Coach Road.

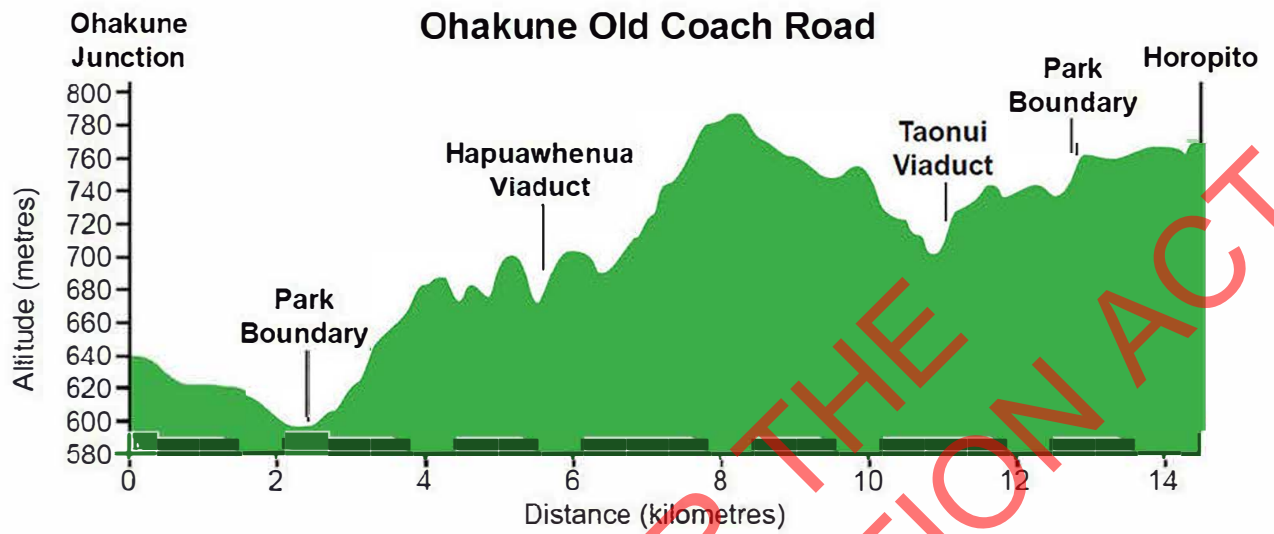


Figure 2: Old Coach Road topography elevation.



Figure 3: Cyclists on the Ohakune Old Coach Road.



3. MONITORING RECORDS OF THE OHAKUNE OLD COACH ROAD

This section describes the major components of the monitoring programme and discusses the results.

A timetable of the monitoring completed for the Old Coach Road provides a record of the number and types of reports (Table 1). In summary, DOC has completed a total of 14 monitoring reports; 6 environmental, 6 cultural heritage and 2 social. Two site-visit reports were not filed.

Table 1: Timeline of monitoring by type and year.

Report	Type of Monitoring	Year
Assessment of Environmental Effects and a Conservation Management Plan completed.	Environmental and cultural heritage	2005
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Large-scale washout reported, sweeping away 8 m section, blocking drains and culverts.Report on Archaeological Monitoring and Excavations.	Archaeological	2006
Consultation with Historic Places Trust to identify monitoring sites completed.	Archaeological	2007
Registration Report for a historic place – Taonui Viaduct.	Archaeological and cultural heritage	2009
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Restoration of drains and culverts, removal of trees that were either blocking sunlight or where roots were lifting historic paved stones.A 3-year trial began using fine scoria in accordance with historical preservation best practice and with ICOMOS principles.	Environmental	2009–2011
Historical subsidence and water damage observed recorded.	Environmental	2009–2011
Conservation Management Strategy Update – Historic Heritage Taupo-Tongariro Conservancy.	Cultural heritage	2010
Entire Old Coach Road opened		2011
Two site visit monitoring (unrecorded) <i>P. Mahoney, personal communication.</i>	Environmental	2011
Monitoring of social use – estimated numbers 8,000 on visitors' counters	Social	2012
3-year review of use – monitoring of the heritage condition of the road and cycle effects (21 February and 4 March 2012)	Environmental and cultural heritage	2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Maintenance plans/operational plans adhered to.Responded to windfall events to ensure the track was open and safe for the public.	Environmental	2013–2016
Visitor assessment of heritage interpretation (draft).	Social	2017

The monitoring results are described in four parts; social monitoring and engagement; historical and cultural heritage; environmental monitoring and concession monitoring.

3.1. Social monitoring and engagement



Consultation with the community has occurred since the Old Coach Road was first proposed to be restored into a recreational opportunity. Over time the process has expanded to include considering the historical case for the track, and to decide on its future use.

Key engagement and social monitoring includes:

- report of support from Ngāti Rangi (2005)
- record of support from adjacent landowners (2005)
- public support via submissions on a Recreational Opportunity Review (2005)
- a Memorandum of Understanding with Ohakune 2000, a community business group, for the joint development and promotion of the Old Coach Road (2006)
- facilitation by DOC of bi-annual meetings with the Mountains to Sea Trail (2015 to 2017 so far)
- introduction of track counters to record numbers of visitors (2010 – present)
- completion of a visitor experience survey in 2017
- feedback received on DOC tracks through the DOC website, TripAdvisor, the i-Site in Ohakune and the Visitor Centre in Whakapapa Village.

3.2. Visitor numbers

DOC has been monitoring visitor numbers since the opening of the trail in 2010. As anticipated the trail generated significant interest in the first 3 years and has continued to build in numbers, with a trend in recent years of 16,000 visitors using the trail each year, on average. Track counter information is only indicative of usage – counters cannot record direction of travel and are prone to malfunction in the damp environment.

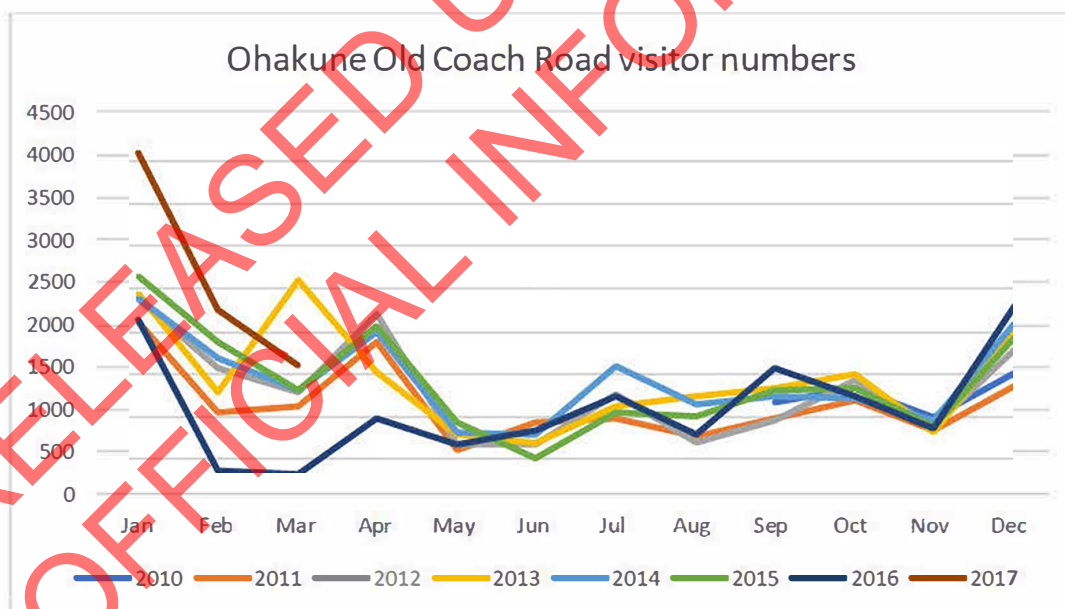


Figure 4: Old Coach Road visitor numbers per month, recorded by track counters.

Table 2: Track visitor numbers per annum

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Jan		2,104	2,372	2,432	2,381	2,641	2,121	4,084

Feb		1,042	1,575	1,273	1,678	1,867	372	2,237
Mar		1,117	1,274	2,595	1,299	1,300	323	1,600
Apr		1,876	2,195	1,510	1,990	2,051	986	
May		604	672	792	804	931	668	
Jun		930	681	686	784	508	843	
Jul		966	1,270	1,110	1,579	1,040	1,243	
Aug		753	701	1,246	1,133	1,004	799	
Sep	1,157	971	959	1,322	1,233	1,297	1,562	
Oct	1,335	1,180	1,416	1,497	1,207	1,336	1,238	
Nov	989	834	874	812	962	892	867	
Dec	1,504	1,363	1,769	1,993	2,077	1,920	2,284	
Total	4,985	13,740	15,758	17,268	17,127	16,787	13,306	7,921

3.3. Visitor feedback

DOC has completed few visitor feedback surveys of the Old Coach Road. However, a review in 2017 by DOC's national heritage team on visitor interaction with interpretation signs and on social media channels highlighted:

"Of all the Heritage Icon sites investigated, OOCR probably has the most significant and self-sustaining online presence for potential visitors to learn about it when researching experiences available to them in NZ. This is largely because of its connection to Ngā Haaraenga, The New Zealand Cycle Trail and promotion by travel bloggers and journalists promoting mountain biking experiences."

The research completed in 2017 provided the visitors with GPS trackers to monitor their time spent on the track in relation to historic sites and interpretation panels (Figure 6). This work demonstrated that visitors spend time with the interactive signage to learn and play while on their journey. Most of the visitors rate this experience as 'amazing' and the report describes the trail as a 'trifecta of history, scenery and activity'. (DOC 2017 visitor survey).

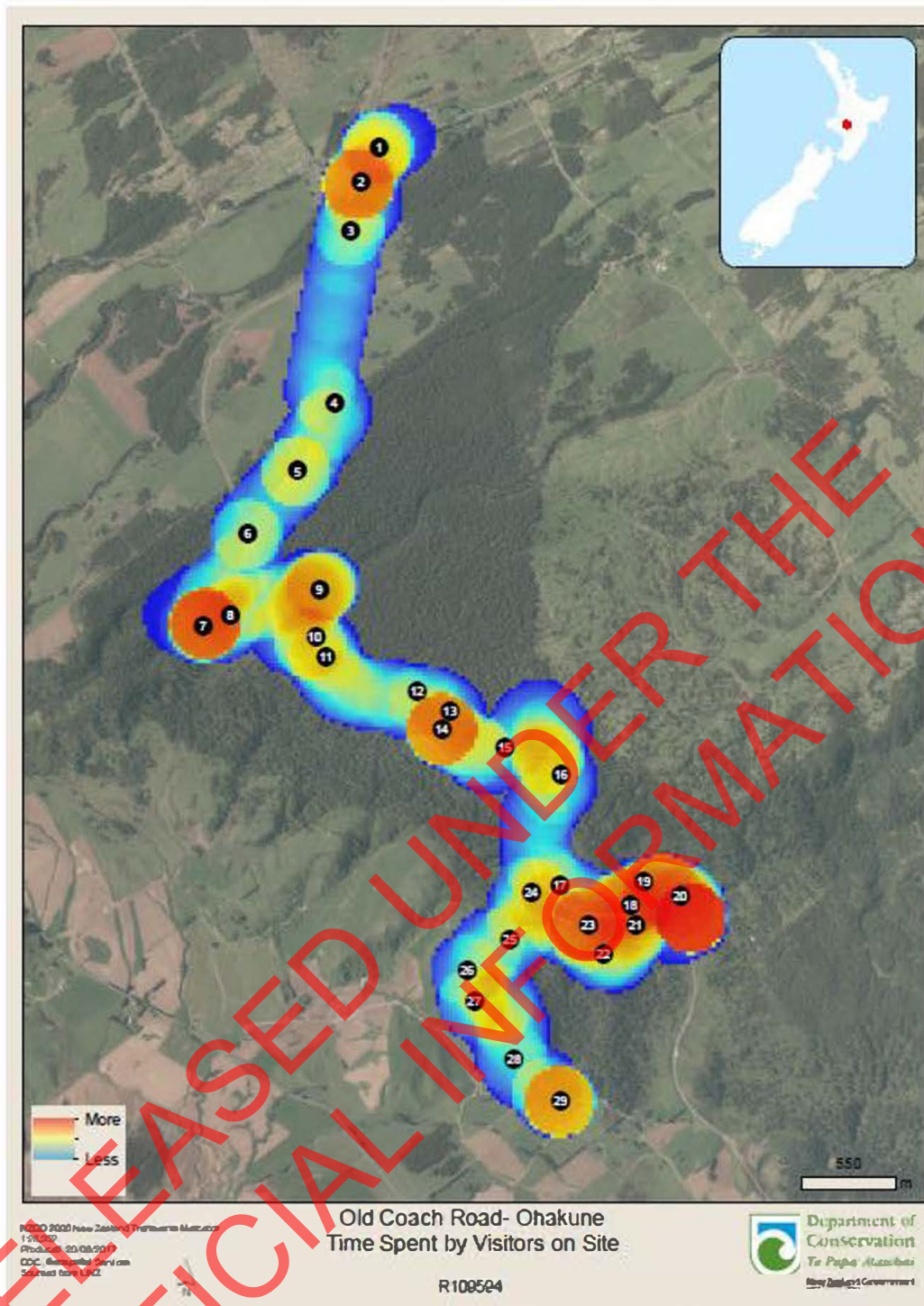


Figure 5: Old Coach Road – time spent by visitors on interpretation signage.

3.4. Public information – media and social media

There have been many media articles and stories profiling mountain biking on the OOCR, leading to increased awareness of its historical value, and of the benefits of its conservation.

The OOCR is regularly featured in articles profiling the Ruapehu region and is often cited as a 'must-do' activity. It has featured in *Wilderness Magazine*, the *New Zealand Herald* and on Stuff.co.nz. These articles showcase DOC's ability to work with partners in the community to achieve conservation outcomes.

For example, a 2015 episode of *Country Calendar* featured the OOCR, showcasing the work contributed by the local community to fund its restoration.¹

The 2017 visitor survey reviewed the online/social media presence of the Old Coach Road on Twitter, Facebook (Connect and Dream), Pinterest and Instagram. Five websites/travel bloggers have the trail on their sites, and 56% of those surveyed indicated that they would likely post about their visit to OOCR on Instagram (2017 Visitor Survey).

3.5. OOCR as a shared-use trail

DOC, Mountain Bike New Zealand, and other stakeholders developed and promote a Mountain Biker Code with three key messages to respect others, the rules and the track.

In regards to shared use the interpretation signs at both the start and finish of the Old Coach Road include the mountain biker's code and DOC's website also includes that the trail is a shared use trail. The 2017 visitor survey collated anecdotal evidence that further work on shared use should be explored; one group of walkers and a local business commented about the importance of a shared-use track. In comparison, DOC has collected visitor comments from the website since 2014, which has no record of any conflicts between walkers and cyclists.

The Mountain Bikers Code requests that bikers reduce conflict with other users by:

- Stay in control, so you can safely avoid others and keep yourself intact.
- Give way to others.
- Use a bell or greeting when approaching others.
- Ride shared use tracks in small groups. A bike train with a dozen riders displaces other users.

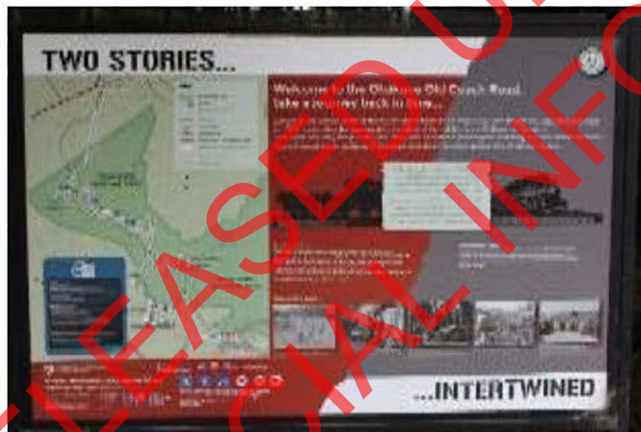


Figure 6: Historical Interpretation and Mountain Bikers Code, Ohakune end

3.6. Historical and cultural heritage monitoring

There are nine regular historical and cultural heritage assessments of the Old Coach Road recorded (see Appendix 1). These records provide the baseline of the historical story and an update of the effects of mountain biking and walking on the track. The main findings concluded that the track:

- was in good condition
- drainage has improved (although drains from 1908 were blocked)

¹. See <http://www.hyundai.co.nz/hyundai-country/over-the-fence/episode-18/>

- included old building hut sites, the documentation of Hut Sites recorded that artefacts were found on site and maps record their locations. Their overall condition was good, with little or no loss/modification, rate of deterioration; slow. Walkers were seen to be a potential threat to the hut site. Subsequently, none of the maps include the hut sites
- earthworks associated with reinstating draining channels have been completed in a way that is sympathetic to the site's heritage values, and with minimal disturbance to any built historical features, and
- identified that further targeted archaeological monitoring and investigation on evidence of pre-1900 evidence would add to assist with building the story.

In 2006, the Archaeological Monitoring Report concluded that monitoring of archaeological values has already provided enough information, and further monitoring at the current frequency would add little further value.

As part of the Conservation Plan for the Old Coach Road (2005), DOC completed a Conservation Management Strategy Review in 2010, which concluded that DOC has:

- registered the OOCR and Hapauwhenua Viaduct as Category 1 historic places
- registered the Taonui Viaduct as a Category 1 historic place
- completed an archaeological investigation of the section of the OOCR
- restored part of the original cobbled road between Ohakune and Horopito
- rediscovered two additional worker campsites.

As part of the restoration project interpretation signs, explaining historical values, have been installed along the track. These have been installed imaginatively, and include a range of different structures such as fire buckets, wheels, spades and sculptures (see Figure 6). The social monitoring and engagement quantifies high visitor interest at these interpretation structures.





Figure 7: Old Coach Road interpretation.

3.7. Environmental monitoring

DOC completed baseline environmental monitoring and assessment of the historic story in 2005. DOC concluded that the track had high cultural and historical values, and medium natural values. This section of the report summaries key findings from the baseline report and subsequent monitoring reports.

3.8. Physical effects on the track

Physical impact monitoring on the OOCR was undertaken as part of the baseline monitoring report and as part of a 3-year review. The 2013 review concluded that:

- localised effects of cycling occurred on 0.04% of the heritage fabric of the stone-paved surface
- it is technically possible to redress those effects using a surface maintenance regime that will also improve the quality of the surface for cyclists
- it is not reasonable to expect heritage to be managed to eliminate all effects: the cost of eliminating the final 0.01% is likely to be excessive, and small effects should be accepted
- impact monitoring of the OOCR should continue, but it must be cost-effective and targeted at specific effects
- a 3-year trial of an historical method of repair worked well.

The review also made recommendations for repair work and methodology.

District operations plans demonstrate that the recommendations outline in the 2013 reviewing report were completed to the level required.

3.9. Riding off the track

The Old Coach Road track has a well-defined track corridor and there have been no reports or observations of mountain bikers riding off the track. Track maintenance workers and commercial operators also report they have not seen anything to suggest this is occurring (J. Tovey and B.Guy, pers.com).

3.10. Native plants and weeds

The 2005 baseline environmental monitoring report identified that the track had no threatened plants, and that forest vegetation adjacent to the OOCR is healthy and natural with few effects of animal pests. The area had a record of pest management and no stock had access to the track.

DOC has completed the vegetation management as part of regular maintenance to retain the medium values identified in the 2005 report.

3.11. Track side vegetation

The OOCR has a well-defined track corridor, and there has been no evidence of damage to track-side vegetation.

3.12. Birdlife

In 2005 the baseline report recorded native wood pigeon, falcon and other species associated with the type of forest. No further specific monitoring reports have provided any updates of birdlife within the Old Coach Road.

3.13. Concession monitoring

DOC has granted concessions for the following activities:

- Transport operators
- Guiding groups
- Education groups
- Walking and mountain biking event organisers

Concession monitoring, by DOC, has not reported damage to the OOCR as a result of approved activities.

4. CONCLUSION

DOC has completed 14 monitoring reports to adhere to Section 4.3.2.12, policies 6-12 of the Tongariro National Park Management Plan.

The monitoring has:

- provided a record of the baseline environmental conditions (2005)
- conducted environmental assessment throughout the 3-year trial period
- concluded the effects of mountain biking were localised to 0.04%, and that they could be minimised through surface maintenance
- recommended that impact monitoring is targeted to be cost-effective and specific.

This approach was adopted within maintenance and operation plans. Conservation plans were developed and have been reviewed as per the requirements. These are useful documents and have served the operational staff well.

Monitoring of concessions and events has demonstrated general compliance with conditions.

Social monitoring has concluded that the interpretation panels are interactive and encourage visitors to learn history through play and storytelling. Community engagement with the Old Coach Road has been high from its inception and maintained as part of the New Zealand Cycle Trail annual meetings.

The public information provided on DOCs website and on the interpretation panels at the start and finish of the Old Coach Road include the mountain bikers safety code, which encourages cyclists to share the trail. There have been no recorded conflicts between walkers and cyclists.

APPENDIX 1: MONITORING REPORTS – SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 2005 Department of Conservation/ Michael Kelly, Ohakune Old Coach Road Conservation Plan [DOCDM-319998](#)

Key findings:

- Maintenance plan is prepared and adopted.
- Adapt and to respond to feedback to improve the visitor experience.
- Statutory requirements (under the Historic Places Act 1993 and Resource Management Act 1991) are adhered to.
- Public consultation and involvement is undertaken to ensure community support.
- Historical knowledge regarding interpretation should be investigated and undertaken.
- Road funding is increased to enable suitable use of the track.
- Conservation plan is updated in 5 years, then at 10-year intervals.

2. 2005 Assessment of Environment Effects for Historical Track reformation on the Ohakune Old Coach Road, Tongariro National Park. Visitor Asset Management [DOC-3096249](#)

Key findings:

- Public submissions received in response to the latest Recreational Opportunity Review on the development of the OCR demonstrated 100% support for restoration of the track.
- Adjacent land owners adjacent to the track have been consulted, and are supportive of the restoration of the track.
- Ngāti Rangi is part of the community project.
- Area has high cultural, historical and medium natural values; therefore all efforts shall be made to follow the guidelines in the AEE, and to follow the Operations Plan.
- Post-construction monitoring of the track should be completed.
- Native wood pigeon, falcon and other species associated with the forest type are present. Avoid removing nesting trees.
- Electric fishing of the Hapuwhenua stream has occurred in the past, and no species were located.
- No threatened plants were found. Forest vegetation adjacent to the OCR is healthy and natural, with few signs of animal pest damage. Possum control has been carried out for over 10 years, stock have no access and deer appear to be absent. Young podocarp trees (20–30 years) including rimu, miro and mataī.
- Weeding is required (for Chilean flame creeper, barberry, buddleia, Himalayan honeysuckle).

3. 2005 New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Record Form, NZAA Metric Site Number S20/29. Ariel SN 260 6.4.1943.

[DOC-3096256](#)

Key findings:

- The track is generally in good condition
- Kerbstones had broken away and, in an area fenced into farmland cattle, had eroded away part of the road, exposing the coarse metalised substrate.

4. 2006 Report on Archaeological Monitoring and Excavations Ohakune – Horopito “Old Coach Road” NZHPT Authority 2006/299.

[DOCDM-949882](#)

Key findings:

- Monitoring archaeological values has already provided enough information and further work will add little extra information or value.
- Earthworks associated with re-instating draining channels has been completed in a way that is sympathetic to the heritage values, and with minimal disturbance to features.
- The report recommends targeted archaeological monitoring and investigation on evidence of pre-1900 presence and includes specifics to be recorded.
- The report emphasises the importance of following the Conservation Plan.

5. 2007 New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Record Form, NZAA Metric Site Number S20/29. Ariel SN 260 6.4.1943

[DOC-3096260](#)

Key findings:

- Vegetation cleared and drainage improved.
- Fence posts running along the centre of the road have been removed. Part of the site is now a DOC walking track; there are plans to upgrade the rest of the road to the same standard.

6. 2009 Department of Conservation Historic Heritage – Site Recording Form. Hut Sites – Taonui Viaduct.

Key findings:

- Documentation of Hut Sites – Old Taonui Viaduct (artefacts found on site and maps illustrating hut locations).
- Overall condition is good, little or no loss/modification, and the rate of deterioration is slow.
- Threats and impacts listed were erosion, rain, subsidence and mass-movement slips.
- Concern about visitors from the proposed cycle track (not a feature of the OOCR at present).

7. 2010 Conservation Management Strategy Update – Historic Heritage Taupo – Tongariro Conservancy
[DOCDM-586455](#)

Key findings:

- Implementation of strategic directions outlined in the Historical Strategy and CMS has helped define work plans.
- registered the OOCR and Hapauwhenua Viaduct as Category 1 historic places
- registered the Taonui Viaduct as a Category 1 historic place
- completed an archaeological investigation of the section of the OOCR
- restored part of the original cobbled road between Ohakune and Horopito
- rediscovered two additional worker campsites.
- Completion and update of approved conservation plans for all three sites

8. 2011 Department of Conservation Archaeological Monitoring Form
[DOCDM-798697](#)

Key findings:

- Minor erosion, drainage to be cleared, overhanging vegetation in boggy patches in skyline to be removed to create more light to dry out the track.
- Pumice may be laid down in boggier parts of the track to enhance soil drainage.
- Stone sets to be regularly monitored down the cycleway; a plan for more monitoring is required.
- The report includes photos.

9. 2012 Guiding Monitoring Report – Concession Report
[DOCDM-920676](#)

Key findings:

- Motutapu Outdoor Education Camp Trust concession monitoring. Full compliance with numbers, no environmental damage, consulted with Historic Place Trust.

10. 2013 Department Conservation Ohakune Old Coach Road, 1906; Heritage Management Advice
[DOCDM – 1178647](#)

Key findings:

- Identified historical subsidence and acknowledge historical water damage.

11. 2013 Ohakune Old Coach Road 1906: Heritage Management Advice

[DOC-3096938](#)

Key findings:

- Inspection showed localised effects of cycling on 0.04% of the heritage fabric of the stone paved surface.
- It is technically possible to redress those effects using a surface maintenance regime, which will also improve the quality of the surface for cyclists.
- It is not reasonable to expect heritage to be managed to eliminate all effects: the cost of eliminating the final 0.01% is likely to be excessive, and small effects should be accepted.
- Impact monitoring of the OOCR should continue, but it must be cost-effective and targeted at specific effects.
- The report describes on 3 years of trialling a historical method of repair that is effective.
- Refer to the report for details of the repair works and methodology.

Ohakune Coach Road

Heritage Inspection Report 2019

Paul Mahoney 11 Nov 2019

DOC-6752842

This report recommends

- Some urgent surface protection work, to be completed by 20 Dec 2019
- Develop a Project Plan by 01 Nov 2020 to guide longer-term surface protection work
- See Appendix 3 for illustrated recommendations

Context:

- The 12 km length of stone cobble surface of the 1906 Ohakune Old Coach Road is protected from harm by archaeological site legislation.
- DOC periodically monitors this road surface and takes action to remedy adverse impacts from cyclists.
- DOC has had great success trialling a protective stone surface approach agreed with Heritage NZ.

Ohakune Coach Road management chronology:

- 2006: Heritage tourism project proposed by Ohakune locals
- 2007: DOC designates road as Heritage Icon site
- 2009: HN2 designates road legally as an archaeological site
- 2009: Work begins to restore road 12km section of an 18km journey
- 2011: Restored road opened by John Key Prime Minister
- 2011: Regular heritage monitoring inspections begin
- 2014: Trial section of protective surfacing 1.5km is installed
- 2014: Weed spraying commences to protect heritage surface
- 2019: Monitoring recommends immediate and longer term remedial work

Monitoring program summary 2011-2019:

2011	Angela Scott	<p>Checked impact of cycles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minor impact: < 5 loose cobbles observed • Protective surfacing mooted using hydro tunnel grit • Discussed on phone with Paul Mahoney • Met on site with HNZ Regional Manager Anne Neil to discuss surfacing
2013 May	Paul Mahoney & Paul Carr	<p>Checked impact of cycles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact remained minor: < 5 loose cobbles observed
2014 Apr	Paul Mahoney & Harvey Steeds	<p>Checked impact of cycles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of loosened stones is increasing >20 cobbles on one section as mud washes away and visitor numbers increase • Weed growth will also disturb cobbles <p><i>Recommend:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trial protective surfacing on affected section as discussed with HNZ • Weed spray to full 4.0 metre width including drains <p>This recommendation was implemented immediately from Dec 2014 to Mar 2015</p>
2014 Dec	Paul Mahoney	<p>Checked up on impact of protective surfacing work in progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to install protective surface is progressing to plan • No adverse impacts observed from this work
2017	9(2)(a)	<p>Checked impact of cycles</p> <p>Find this report.</p>
2019 Nov	Paul Mahoney & Neil Wood	<p>Checked impact of cycles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The trial protective surfacing is a great success • The weed spray to full 4.0 metre width is a great success • Noted severe recent damage >100 loosened cobbles beyond the trial section • This damage is localised in two zones ~100m total <p><i>Recommend:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate protective surfacing in two active damage areas • Review management documentation & scheduling • Plan and bid for capex to extend protective surfacing to most of the road

Assessment of Monitoring Observations

Paul Mahoney, senior heritage advisor

1. I have a relatively deep knowledge of the heritage fabric of this road. I was involved in its development from the outset in 2005 and understand its previous overgrown condition, the work done to bring it back to life in 2009, and the heartening growth of visitor use since.

2. Legal requirements:

- The road is legally designated as an archaeological site by Heritage NZ
- DOC has an archaeological authority to restore the road and use it as a cycleway
- DOC is required to monitor impacts and protect the surface
- It is a criminal offence to damage an archaeological site without authority

3. The trials section of protective surfacing is a great success. We inspected it by foot to maximise the scrutiny. The surfacing is tunnel grit produced by the Tongariro hydro scheme ~1970. Around 2000m³ is available. It is a mixture of ignimbrite rock chips and a stiff clay. It was applied thinly (5cm) to the road and mechanically compacted. After five years we found:

- Not one loose cobble was observed.
- The appearance as a heritage road is great.
- Cyclists find it a great surface and have complimented DOC on this improvement.
- The improved weed control to 4.0 m width is exemplary
- A few isolated zones now need additional surfacing added, for example where cyclists brake

4. We observed that over time the impacts on the road have evolved:

- Much heavier use by cyclists and walkers – a success
- With the drains restored the road has dried out – which is good
- The mud and moss on the surface has largely gone fully exposing the cobbles
- The exposed surface tree roots have largely died and gone

These changes have combined to alter the impacts and potentially loosen the cobbles in places

5. Two sections of road at the start of the skyline section are now badly impacted:

- Each road section is about 50 m long
- In each >100 cobbles are loosened and will be lost; more will be loosened soon
- This change is recent, with the factors described in the report section above
- Both road sections are sloped downhill from Horopito and are subject to speeding
- The archaeological authority requires DOC to monitor and protect the surface
- An urgent response is required before the 2019-2020 summer peak
- Sufficient surfacing material for this work is still stockpiled on the site
- This work once completed will fully address the immediate adverse impacts

6. Further work is recommended

- The entire coach road should have protective surfacing applied
- This will protect the archaeology, improve the appearance and the visitor experience
- A protect plan and costings for his work should be produced by Nov 2020
- The work could be implemented in stages over 3-5 years
- One 100m road section will be designated to have no surfacing and be interpreted to visitors
- Can a sponsor be found?

- This work does not apply to the new sections of track constructed in 2012
- At the same time add storytelling about the road construction and coach journey

Recommendations

① Immediate action by 20 Dec 2019

- Apply protective surfacing to two sections of road, each around 50 m long, have started showing severe impact that is not acceptable for a registered archaeological site.
- On the section of road already with protective surfacing (~1.5km), repair the surfacing at stress points

② Develop project plan by 20 Nov 2020:

- Protective surface on the entire cobblestone road section (~10 km additional): specification and cost estimate
- Associated with this review the management documentation and procedures in place
- Improve storytelling on road construction and the coach journey: concept and cost estimate
- Other work needed to bring it to standard as a Tohu Whenua site

Appendix 1: Key Management Documentation

Document	Comments
Heritage Value Assessment	M Kelly
Archaeological Authority	
Conservation Plan 2008 428877	M Kelly
Heritage NZ surfacing agreement 2013 1196119	P Mahoney
Protective surface specification	N Wood to find or do this.
Long Term Management Plan to 2040	P Mahoney to do this; due 20 Apr 2020
Project Plan: Full Protective Surfacing	P Mahoney to do this; due 20 Nov 2020 Will require HNZ concurrence
798697	
1165006	

Appendix 2: Improvement Tasks

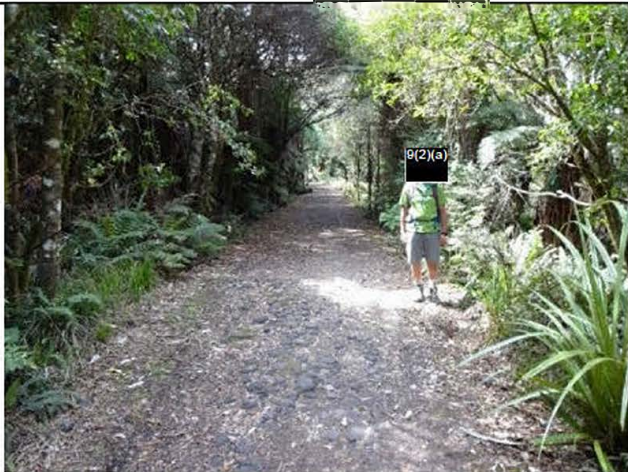
Task	Comments
Map out and GPS the protected sections of road	Richard Nester or student project
Set up annual monitoring as AMIS task for October	

Appendix 3: Illustrated feedback and action points.

Ohakune Coach Road archaeology monitoring

November 2019 P Mahoney & N Wood.

Success in preserving integrity



Future showcase section.

This 100m level section of road south of Taonui is proposed as the best candidate to designate to showcase the original cobble surface, bumpy and uncomfortable as it is. The section shows no sign of impact as cyclists move slowly along here, recovering from hill climbs.



Success of protective surface

The 1.5km long trial of protective surface is a great success tested over its first five years. In a careful inspection by foot not one loose cobble was found. This surface also maintains the heritage character of the road. It should now be progressively applied to the whole road.

Serious impacts to remedy immediately



Large scale of impacts

This is a section of road that does not yet have protective surfacing. Cobblestones are being dislodged by cyclists: an example of the active damage that has started in two zones totalling 100m and involving hundreds of stones being loosened. Even from a track asset viewpoint, DOC should protect this original a high-quality track base.



Irreversible nature of impacts

The archaeological agreement with Heritage NZ requires DOC to monitor road user impacts and to remedy them swiftly. Stones once loosened are not able to be replaced and are quickly swept to the side and lost. Adjacent stones then become weakened and soon pop out. DOC must stop this damage happening, but it is not a big job and the surface protection material is available.

Manage minor impacts observed on trial stabilised section



Example of where surfacing top-up is required.

The protective surfacing trial has been a great success. After 4 years less than 1% of the length treated requires attention. In a few places like this, apply and compact a "25mm surface top up" to ensure these exposed cobbles are not loosened and lost.



Example where braking impacts are evident.

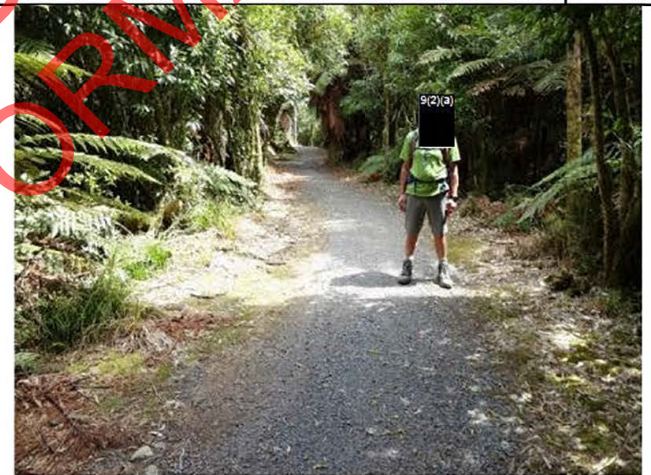
My recommendation for these locations is a proactive response (1) GPS each an "impact spot" (2) apply and compact "25mm surface top up" that (3) check on annual monitoring inspections that this remedy is effective.

Evolving conditions



Example of roots & drainage

The physical character of the road continues to evolve 12 years after it was rescued from oblivion. The roots that crisscrossed the surface are going, surface mud has washed away, and with drains restored, the base is much drier. These changes have transformed the journey, but one down side is loose cobbles.



Example of weed control

Weed control is practised over the full 4.6-meter width reflecting 2014 monitoring recommendations. This practice (1) protects the cobbles from damage from re-growth and (2) helps maintain the heritage character of the road. Many visitors really enjoy the sections where they can cycle two abreast.

ENDS

Ohakune Old Coach Road Heritage Maintenance

Resurfacing July 2021

Introduction / Summary:

Annually the Ohakune Old Coach Road (OOCR) is inspected by heritage specialist. One of the key reasons is to identify during this inspection is damage to the heritage fabric of the OOCR, such as dislodged or damaged cobbles. This in line with approved heritage management by Heritage NZ, and in line with the Tongariro National Park Management plan.

Following the inspection and reported concerns, the Department of Conservation (DOC) will complete work to stop the identified issue, this document is to serve as a record of the work completed as per requirements of heritage work.

Inspection Email:

Paul Mahoney – Department of Conservation, completed inspection and provided email around work required. Future intent is to provide an inspection report of sorts.

Email:

From: Paul Mahoney <pmahoney@doc.govt.nz>

Sent: Thursday, 17 December 2020 4:08 pm

To: Kieran Brocklehurst <kbrock@doc.govt.nz>; Toby O'Hara <tohara@doc.govt.nz>

Cc: Jared Perry <japerry@doc.govt.nz>; 9(2)(a)

9(2)(a) Ray Bond <rbond@doc.govt.nz>; Neil

Ranford <ranford@doc.govt.nz>

Subject: Ohakune Coach Road inspection & archaeology

Hello all

I had hope to write this report up yesterday – but got back on Wednesday to alerts on two archaeological breaches on a rail trail. All very messy.

Setting up the investigations into these has taken most of my time to now. So my OCR report will be next week now hopefully, I only have two days then.

It good to stay in the clear on the archaeology!

To recap on what we did on Tuesday so we can all relax a bit:

[1] Heritage inspection (Paul)

- No urgent archaeology impact issues to address immediately.
- There are two sections with “on-going minor” impacts that we cant roll over year after year – minor aggregates into major.
- These stabilisation items do require a work plan and then we can then seek funding

[2] Trail markers (9(2)(a))

- Locations of all km markers were identified and marked so they don't compromise the archaeology
- Neville Ritchie will confirm this situation by letter
- Hope these can go in asap before our markers become obscured

[3] AMIS data improvement (Paul + others)

- Substantial progress was made to gather data to improve AMIS data
- Four heritage sections are better identified. Neil Ranford has done some great work on this too that we will use.
- This aims to make track management simpler

Paul Mahoney

Senior Heritage Advisor

Department of Conservation

9(2)(a)

Resurfacing Work:

Jared Perry, Heritage and Visitor Ranger, Tongariro led this work and captured information throughout.

Date start 05/07/2021

Date finish 08/07/2021

Staff involved – Jared Perry (Team Lead), Brian Mason, Sam Hightet, Michael Kinsella, Rhys Lewis, Tim Hall.

Document written – Kieran Brocklehurst

Functional location:

DN-20-110-6288 Ohakune Old Coach Road (Historic Site)

DOC staff resurfaced the remaining unmetalled section at the bottom of skyline, as well as re-surfacing a short piece from the end of the unmetalled section to the bush section (Hapuawhenua North link) which was still historic and had metal on it previously, but had worn out from bicycles over time going around the corner.

Length of previously unmetalled section done – 145.1m

Length of existing metalled section that got re-surfaced- 26.6m

Total length done – 171.7m

GPS start point - E1805930 N5638202

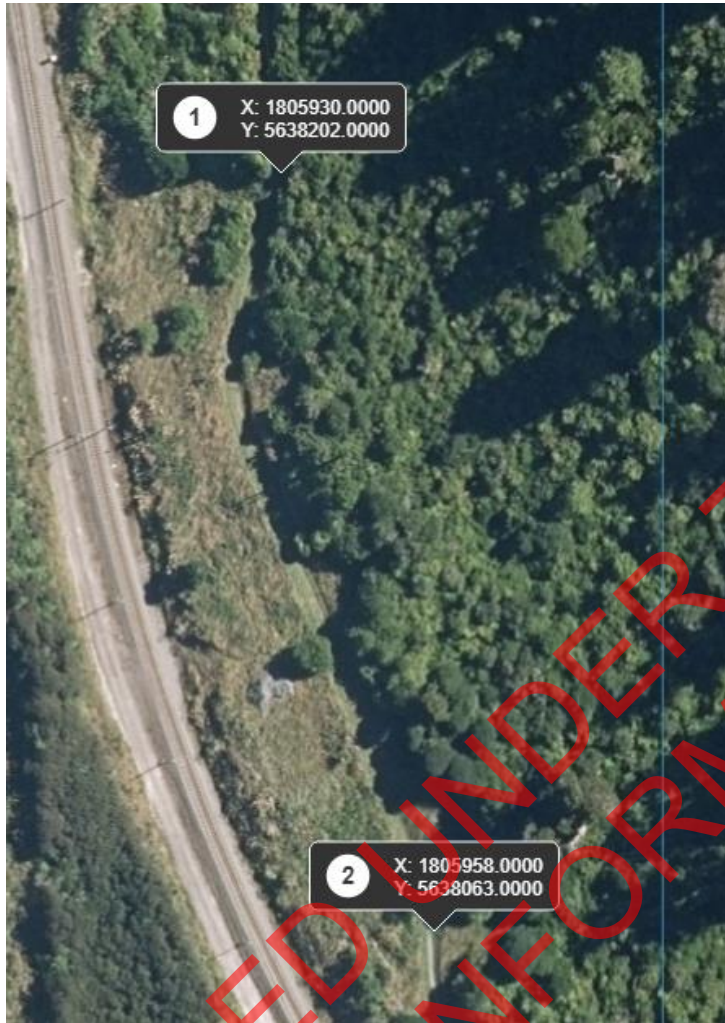
GPS end point for unsealed section - E1805958 N5638063

GPS end point for total length done – E1805968 N5638041

Equipment – 100085792 – OCR Skyline Section(historic)

145.1m – new surface





Equipment - 100085744 -Hapuawhenua North Link section
26.6m - resurface



Photos of completed resurface:





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