

Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board

16 December 2025

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [8]

Department: Community Services

Title | Taitara: Stage 1 Mountain Bike Trails in the Mount Iron Reserve

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

The purpose of this report is for the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board to consider whether to approve in principle Stage 1 mountain bike trails on Mount Iron Recreation Reserve, ahead of the wider Mount Iron Trail Plan.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

That the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board:

1. **Note** the contents of this report; and
2. **Approve** in principle Stage 1 mountain bike trails on the Mount Iron Recreation Reserve, subject to approval of the wider Mount Iron Trail Plan.

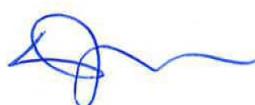
Prepared by:



Name: Kat Banyard
Title: Senior Parks Advisor

25 November 2025

Endorsed by:



Name: Dave Winterburn
Title: Parks Manager

27 November 2025

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Kenneth Bailey
Title: GM Community Services
4 December 2025

Context | Horopaki

1. The Mount Iron Reserve Management Plan (Mount Iron RMP) was adopted in April 2025 following extensive engagement with the Upper Clutha community. The introduction of mountain biking in the reserve is supported by the Mount Iron RMP.
2. During engagement on the draft Mount Iron RMP in September-November 2024, there was strong support for a network of mountain biking trails within the reserve.
3. Council is facilitating the development of a Mount Iron Trail Plan (Trail Plan) to outline what a future integrated network of walking, biking and horse-riding trails would look like in the reserve. Work is underway with Bike Wānaka, the Upper Clutha Tracks Trust (UCTT) and the Upper Clutha Lakes Equestrian Access Group (UCLEAG) to develop this. The Trail Plan will be brought to the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board (WUCCB) for approval in early 2026.
4. Council has commissioned an ecological report to support the ongoing management of the reserve, including the development of the Trail Plan.
5. The WUCCB holds the delegation to make decisions on 'footpaths, walkways, shared pathways and tracks' in the Upper Clutha.
6. Bike Wānaka are requesting that some mountain bike trails (Stage 1) be approved ahead of an overall Trail Plan. Early approval is requested to allow time for resource consenting and trail building work to enable mountain biking to begin in summer 2026/2027.

Stage 1 Mountain Bike Trails

7. The proposed Stage 1 mountain bike trails (proposed trails) are shown in Attachment 1 and are accessed from the reserve entrance at Hidden Hills Drive. The proposal looks to create one shared use uphill track (blue and purple lines on the map in Attachment A) and a network of downhill mountain biking trails (red and yellow on the map in Attachment A).
8. Bike Wānaka will fund and build the proposed trails and be responsible for ongoing maintenance, discouraging informal trail building and rehabilitating any unauthorised trails. This will be finalised into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Council prior to any work happening in the reserve.
9. The proposed trail locations have been informed by Bike Wānaka's independent ecological and landscape assessments.
10. The proposed trails will be suitable for intermediate and advanced riders. The uphill trail will be grade 3 and the downhill trails will be grade 4 and 5.

11. The uphill trail will be shared use between mountain bikers and existing users (walkers, dog walkers and runners). The downhill trails will be for mountain biking only due to the higher speeds.
12. The proposed trails are all located on Council land in the Mount Iron Recreation Reserve. The proposed trails are located within the Significant Natural Area (SNA) and within the area identified as an Outstanding Natural Feature.
13. The proposed trail area runs through a variety of ecological habitats including kānuka, herbfield and seepage (wet) areas. On Mount Iron, kānuka habitats are quite abundant habitat types. The herbfields and seepages are more rare habitats that include threatened and at risk plants.
14. In the area where the trails are proposed, there is an existing network of informal, unmaintained trails. Some trails were built prior to Council's ownership for mountain biking, horse riding or farming purposes. Since the land was designated a recreation reserve, these trails have been 'kept open' and new ones created through use by walkers, dog walkers and runners. There has also been a very small amount of informal bike trail building.
15. Access to the proposed trails is from the reserve entrance at Hidden Hills Drive. There is no specific reserve parking at this entrance.

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

16. The Trail Plan will be workshopped with the WUCCB in early 2026 for direction on priorities of use and the appropriate level of future trail development. A final Trail Plan will then be brought to the WUCCB for approval in March/April 2026.
17. Development of the Trail Plan includes bringing together the groups that want to build trails to develop a draft integrated Trail Plan and assessing alignment with the Mount Iron RMP objectives and policies (including ecological and landscape considerations and the cumulative effects of development).
18. Engagement with groups that currently operate on Mount Iron will be undertaken to ensure the trail design considers the effects on these group's activities as required by the Mount Iron RMP.
19. Approving in principle the proposed trails prior to completion of the Trail Plan prioritises the use of these trails for mountain biking. It will remove the opportunity for other recreation groups wanting to build and use trails to engage on the use of these trails (excluding the shared use uphill trail).
20. Existing walkers and runners use the informal, unmaintained trail network in this area. This group's priorities for trails are yet to be understood and will be inputted into the Trail Plan process by the UCTT.

21. The UCLEAG has identified some of the proposed trails as trails they would like to use for horse riding. This group approached Council in November 2025 to create a network of horse riding trails on Mount Iron. Horse riding and downhill mountain biking are not compatible for shared use trails.
22. The proposed trails have been reviewed against the Mount Iron RMP objectives and policies relevant to trail building and mountain biking in the reserve. The proposed trails largely align and the exact trail alignment (e.g. informed by the completed ecological report) and any mitigations can be part of ongoing discussions between Bike Wānaka and Council.
23. If the proposed trails are approved in principle, Bike Wānaka intend to apply for resource consent.
24. This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002.
25. **Option 1** Approve in principle Stage 1 mountain bike trails, subject to the approval of the Mount Iron Trail Plan.

Advantages:

- Provides clear direction that mountain biking is the primary use for trails in the proposed trail area (which provides direction to the overall Trail Plan).
- Provides Bike Wānaka with more certainty to apply for resource consent, supporting mountain biking beginning in the reserve next summer.
- Approval in principle allows the exact trail alignment to be informed by the completed ecological report.

Disadvantages:

- Supports one group's aspirations for trails on Mount Iron ahead of consideration and the input of other users. This could impact on meaningful engagement with other groups or reserve users in the Trail Plan discussions.
- Potential for a less integrated trail network to be developed by confirming the trail network in one part of the reserve ahead of the wider Trail Plan.

26. **Option 2** Decline the early approval in principle of Stage 1 mountain bike trails and consider approval of all trails as part of the Mount Iron Trail Plan.

Advantages:

- Supports equitable input from all groups to happen simultaneously to contribute to an integrated Trail Plan for a highly valued reserve. The Trail Plan is expected to come to the Wānaka Upper Clutha Community Board for discussion and approval in early 2026.
- Continues to support mountain biking in the Mount Iron Reserve but reduces the possibility of trails being ready for the beginning of summer 2026/27.
- The Trail Plan can be informed by the ecological report currently being developed for Mount Iron.

Disadvantages:

- Mountain biking on Mount Iron won't happen until several months later which is not aligned with the wishes of the mountain biking community.
- Potential for more informal trail building in the short term as a result of having no authorised mountain biking trails.

27. This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because it provides direction on priority trail use in this area of the reserve. This allows Bike Wānaka to progress towards mountain biking on Mount Iron next summer while also informing the overall direction in the Trail Plan.

Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

28. This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significant and Engagement Policy 2024 because of the high level of community interest in the development of trails in a highly valued reserve.

29. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are current and future users of the Mount Iron reserve, mountain bikers, recreation and conservation groups operating in the reserve and nearby residents.

30. As part of the development of the Mount Iron RMP, extensive engagement was undertaken to understand what the community wanted for the future of the reserve. Therefore wider community engagement won't be undertaken on the proposed trails or the Trail Plan.

31. Development of the Trail Plan is happening with recreation groups looking to build trails on Mount Iron. Engagement with reserve stakeholders on the effects of trail design on their activities will be undertaken in line with the Mount Iron RMP.

Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

32. Council has consulted with Aukaha and Te Ao Marama Incorporated (TAMI) on the proposed trails. TAMI's initial recommendations in relation to the impact on cultural values is being incorporated into development of the proposed trails and the Trail Plan. Aukaha has been unable to provide feedback due to capacity issues.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

33. This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK10005 Ineffective planning for community services or facilities within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a high residual risk rating.

34. The approval of the recommended option will allow Council to implement additional controls for this risk. This will be achieved by setting out how an integrated Trail Plan for Mount Iron will be developed.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

35. There are no costs to Council of approving the proposed trails now or as part of a Trail Plan. Bike Wānaka will be funding the build of the proposed trails, ongoing maintenance and remediation of unauthorised trails.

Council Effects and Views | Kā Whakaaweawe me kā Tirohaka a te Kaunihera

36. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- Reserves Act 1977
- Significance and engagement policy 2024
- Mount Iron Reserve Management Plan

37. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policies.

38. This matter is not included in the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan. No Council funding is required.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions | Te Whakatureture 2002 o te Kāwanataka ā-Kīaka

39. Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. This decision will support future access to trails in the Upper Clutha by setting out how an integrated Trail Plan for Mount Iron will be developed. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.

40. The recommended option:

- Can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

[Attachments | Kā Tāpirihaka](#)

A	Map of Stage 1 Mountain Biking Trails
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Attachment A: Map of Stage 1 Mountain Biking Trails

