

Anstey Hill Recreation Park

Management Plan Amendment 2017



Government
of South Australia
Department of Environment,
Water and Natural Resources



National
Parks
South
Australia

Minister's Foreword

South Australia has wonderful parklands and open spaces including a network of 29 parks that surround Adelaide. These areas are essential for the conservation of South Australia's unique natural environment. They are also valuable community assets, providing places for nature-based tourism, recreation, exercise, learning, relaxation and recuperation.

In 2015, the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) invited people to participate in a series of community engagement events – focusing on Adelaide's national parks. During these events, South Australians identified an opportunity to increase the use, appreciation and enjoyment of Anstey Hill Recreation Park by enabling people to enjoy a broader range of activities including cycling and camping.

Park management plans may be revised and amended as our knowledge of the park grows, and to reflect the community's aspirations. In 2016, Government commenced a process to seek the community's views on these ideas by releasing a draft amendment to the Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006 for public consultation. This draft amendment proposed to alter the management plan so that camping and cycling could occur in this park.

After careful consideration of all submissions received, Government concluded that the proposed amendments to the Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006 would further the objectives of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* by providing for greater use, appreciation and enjoyment of this park.

I thank all those that made a submission.

I am pleased to formally adopt the Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan Amendment 2017 under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



The Hon Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation

Establishing the Mount Lofty Ranges as an international mountain biking destination

Mountain biking is a wonderful way to exercise and enjoy parks. South Australia is set to capitalise on a worldwide boom in the popularity of this activity by establishing the Mount Lofty Ranges as an international mountain biking destination. The 2006 management plan prohibited cycling in the conservation zone of the park. Enabling cycling on designated trails throughout Anstey Hill Recreation Park will contribute to the South Australian Government's vision of "a sustainable trails network to engage people in the parks of the Mount Lofty Ranges". Realising this vision requires an amendment to the Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006.

The draft amendment proposed to allow cycling trails to be designated throughout the park. A range of views about cycling in this park were expressed in submissions received on the draft amendment. All submissions have been reviewed and considered. The two main concerns in regards to the use of bikes in parks relate to potential damage to the environment through erosion and spread of weeds, and risk of collision with walkers. Both of these concerns can be managed through smart and sustainable track design.

Since the development of the park management plan in 2006, several pilot projects were undertaken in parks across the Mount Lofty Ranges to test alternative approaches to the management of cycling in parks. These projects showed that the spread of weeds and soil borne pathogens could be prevented by developing a carefully planned and constructed network of trails and promoting

responsible behaviour. As part of the implementation process, illegal tracks with unsustainable or unsafe alignments will be closed and rehabilitated. Experience has shown that cyclists will remain on trails that provide them with the experience they seek. An environmental risk assessment will be conducted before the designation of any trails, paying particular attention to the values of the conservation zone.

Collisions between walkers and cyclists can be prevented through trail design that encompasses safe lines of sight and signage. The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources has also commenced a program called 'I Share My Trail' which promotes guidelines for safe trail use such as keeping to the left of the trail whilst walking and providing adequate warning when approaching other park users.

The Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006 has now been amended (see amendments 1, 2, 3 & 4 below).

Creating bush camping areas in national parks close to Adelaide

There is an opportunity to make camping in national parks more accessible to people of Adelaide and visitors to South Australia. Where compatible with environmental values, areas for camping may be designated within parks.

There are areas that are suitable for camping in Anstey Hill Recreation Park, however the 2006 Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan did not provide scope for camping areas to be designated.

To address this, a draft amendment to the Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006 was released for public consultation in 2016. The draft amendment proposed to enable areas for camping within the park. All submissions on the draft amendment have been reviewed and considered.

Some people raised concerns that camping would cause environmental impacts, increase the risk of bushfire and create waste management issues. In this park, the establishment of a permit system for camping by school groups and not for profit organisations such as Scouts will be a cost effective approach to the management of these risks. Groups will be required to camp in a designated area and abide by permit conditions to ensure that any impacts on the park and nearby communities are minimised and effectively managed.

The Anstey Hill Recreation Park Management Plan 2006 has now been amended (see amendment 2 below).

Amendment 1 Section 4 Zoning (page 7)

The following text is omitted from Section 4 Zoning (page 7)

Conservation Zone

This zone will be managed to conserve the value of native vegetation, wildlife habitat and geological monuments with minimal disturbance. Passive recreation using existing management access tracks will be permitted, whilst existing tracks and trails that are not shown on Figure 2 will not be maintained, and may be closed and rehabilitated. Cycling will not be permitted within this zone. Modifications to existing management access tracks, proposals for new tracks and associated infrastructure, or proposals for off track activities, must have regard to a vegetation management plan (see Section 5.3 Native Vegetation). Modification will only be considered if an existing track disturbs native vegetation, or a management issue demonstrates that a new track is required.

Orienteering in the northern part of this zone will be allowed providing course setters consult with DEH regarding the position of any track markers, and receive approval to undertake the activity. This activity will generally be limited to a strip of approximately 500 metres wide from the North East Road park boundary.

The following text replaces the omitted text above

Conservation Zone

This zone will be managed to conserve the value of native vegetation, wildlife habitat and geological monuments with minimal disturbance. Tracks and trails that are not shown on Figure 2 may be closed and rehabilitated or, where appropriate and sustainable, designated for use. Cycling on designated tracks and trails, modifications to existing management access tracks, proposals for new tracks and associated infrastructure, or proposals for off track activities, may be authorised within this zone after an assessment of environmental and visitor risks.

Orienteering in the northern part of this zone will be allowed providing course setters consult with DEWNR regarding the position of any track markers, and receive approval to undertake the activity. This activity will generally be limited to a strip of approximately 500 metres wide from the North East Road park boundary.

Amendment 2: Section 8.1 Visitor Use and Access, Paragraphs 3 & 4 (page 18)

The following text is omitted from Section 4 Zoning (page 13)

Illegal, use of the park, including damage to park property, unauthorised vehicle entry, mountain bike riding, rubbish dumping and littering, occurs. Management strategies, based on available resources, will be implemented to address these matters.

The main visitor facilities include tracks, lookouts and basic signage. In addition to scenic views and bushwalking opportunities, visitors also enjoy other aspects of the natural environment. The park is an important educational resource used by local schools. No provision is made for camping within the park and horse riding is not permitted. It should also be noted that there are already adequate conventional sporting facilities such as ovals and tennis courts in areas surrounding the park. However, it is recognised that the development of facilities for suitable recreation activities within the park is required. The type and extent of any development will depend on:

- how well it accommodates or enhances biodiversity conservation;
- how the activity complements existing regional facilities;
- the ability of the activity to be independently self-sustaining in terms of ongoing management and maintenance; and
- how urgently development is required.

The following text replaces the omitted text above

Illegal use of the park - including damage to park property, unauthorised vehicle entry, mountain bike riding on unauthorised tracks and trails, rubbish dumping and littering - has occurred. Management strategies will be implemented to address these matters, based on available resources.

The main visitor facilities include tracks, lookouts and basic signage. In addition to scenic views and bushwalking opportunities, visitors also enjoy other aspects of the natural environment.

The park is an important educational resource used by local schools. As such, a suitable area for organised group camping may be designated in the future. Horse riding is not permitted.

It should also be noted that there are already adequate conventional sporting facilities such as ovals and tennis courts in areas surrounding the park. However, it is recognised that the development of facilities for suitable recreation activities within the park is required. The type and extent of any development will depend on:

- how well it accommodates or enhances biodiversity conservation;
- how the activity complements existing regional facilities;
- the ability of the activity to be independently self-sustaining in terms of ongoing management and maintenance; and
- how urgently development is required.

Amendment 3: Section 8.2 Cycling (page 19-20)

The following text is omitted from Section 8.2 Cycling (page 19-20)

8.2 Cycling

With the rise in popularity of mountain bikes, there is an increasing demand for cycling areas in public open space and natural areas, particularly those areas close to population centres. Mountain bike riding has not been permitted within Anstey Hill Recreation Park. However, cycling on fire tracks, walking tracks and illegally constructed tracks in areas of high biodiversity value occurs on a regular basis. The appeal of Anstey Hill Recreation Park to mountain bikers is primarily due to:

- the lack of legal mountain bike opportunities in the region;
- the park's close proximity to residential areas;
- the extensive network of existing tracks; and
- the park's topography.

There are two main forms of mountain bike riding, cross-country and downhill, both of which are currently undertaken illegally in Anstey Hill Recreation Park. Cycling on existing tracks can compromise user safety whilst the development of illegal trails has caused identifiable erosion and vegetation loss in areas of the park with high biodiversity values, and has the potential to transport *Phytophthora* from where it has been identified down-slope to other areas of the park.

DEH has previously focused on prosecuting those caught undertaking illegal mountain bike riding within the park, and utilising the presence of staff as a deterrent. Although some control is possible via staff patrols, comprehensive enforcement of the current regulations throughout the whole park is unlikely given current staffing resources.

In developing this management plan, a number of options have been considered to address the future management of mountain bike riding in Anstey Hill Recreation Park. It is proposed to permit cycling in a designated zone on purpose-built tracks and on certain management tracks. This approach is most likely to satisfy both biodiversity and recreation objectives, whilst reducing the incidence of illegal mountain bike riding within the park. The State Mountain Bike Plan for South Australia 2001-2005 (Office for Recreation and Sport, and Bicycle SA, 2001) endorses this approach in Action 1.F "Assess and determine areas within parks (managed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*) that are appropriate for mountain biking to contribute to an integrated trail network."

Managed Recreation Zone B in the south of the park has been identified as suitable for this purpose (Figure 2). The area is highly modified, was previously cleared, and the vegetation is now comprised mainly of introduced species. The topography and soil in this area are suitable for the development of several tracks of varying steepness and difficulty for both downhill riding and cross-country riding, whilst avoiding excessive erosion. Tracks would be built according to current best practice to ensure sustainability and safety (International Mountain Bike Association – IMBA Standards), and signage will be provided to direct riders and other park users. This area also has the potential to be revegetated to improve the site's natural values. Bike tracks will provide access for vegetation and weed management activities.

Access could be obtained via gates 11 and 12 along Lower North East Road, and via the established management track in Managed Recreation Zone A, running from the Ellis Cottage and Bakehouse along the western boundary of the park. This track is considered to be suitable for safe usage by both bike riders and park users on foot, although appropriate signage will be installed to ensure that all users are aware of the multiple use of this track.

Potential exists to upgrade car parking facilities in suitable areas, such as Gates 11 and 12 to cater for the expected increase in use of this area. As the area is directly adjacent to land owned and managed by United Water, DEH will liaise with United Water to develop adequate fencing arrangements (see Section 12.1 Public Utilities).

In the event of cycling being permitted in the park, a partnership agreement will be developed between the involved mountain bike organisations and DEH. This will detail the level of input into track maintenance and environmental rehabilitation expected of the mountain bike community, and options for DEH action should such external input into the facility not be sustained. It is envisaged that with the development of a high standard facility, the site may be used for organised competitions. This presents an opportunity for a portion of competition entry fees to be directed back into the site to contribute to maintenance costs. Additional funding sources will be investigated, to ensure that bicycle trails development and management costs do not affect the management of the conservation values of the park, and other parks in the region.

Mountain bike riding is a widely recognised and appreciated recreational pursuit, and as a Recreation Park, Anstey Hill is well positioned to provide facilities for such use. It is recognised that the development of tracks within the park will require initial expenditure and ongoing maintenance. However, as the majority of mountain bike riding currently occurs in areas of high biodiversity value, the diversion of these activities to an area of lower biodiversity value is seen as a positive outcome. The creation of distinct zones in this area of the park will also benefit other park users, as riding will be restricted to an area that is not usually utilised by walkers. Signage will also provide guidelines for the use of these zones.

Additionally, the development of facilities for mountain bike riding will enable DEH to develop constructive relationships with the mountain bike riding community, who will be required to contribute to track maintenance and revegetation activities in what is currently a degraded and highly modified area. With the development of such a relationship between bike riders and DEH, it is envisaged that, through peer pressure, the riding community will itself discourage illegal use of the rest of the park, and further develop a culture of respect towards the biodiversity values of the park.

A bicycle trails management plan will be developed for Anstey Hill Recreation Park. This will provide details on topics including track placement and alignment, safety, revegetation strategies, provision of upgraded car parking facilities and signage. The bicycle trails management plan will be guided by the provisions of the vegetation management plan and Section 4 Zoning, to ensure that strategies are developed with regard to the biodiversity values of the entire park and the threats to biodiversity, such as *Phytophthora*. This plan will be developed in consultation with the cycling community and other relevant stakeholders. Bicycle trails will not be developed until the completion of the bicycle trails management plan.

Objective

Without compromising park values or visitor safety, accommodate legitimate, sustainable cycling opportunities in the park within an agreed code of conduct and management framework.

Strategies

- Close and rehabilitate informal tracks used by downhill and cross-country mountain bike riders.
- In consultation with relevant stakeholders, develop and implement a bicycle trails management plan for Anstey Hill Recreation Park.
- Review the access of mountain bikes and the implementation of the bicycle trails management plan within three years of the start of the bicycle trails plan, to ensure mountain bike riding does not have unacceptable impacts on the conservation values and public access and enjoyment of the park.
- Develop a partnership agreement between DEH and cycling organisations.
- Develop and implement a code of practice for bicycle riders that addresses visitor safety and environmental protection, in consultation with relevant cycling organisations and riders.
- Continue to enforce the prohibition of bicycle riding in areas of the park that are not designated to allow for this use, according to Section 4 Zoning, and the bicycle trails management plan when developed.

The following text replaces the omitted text above

8.2 Cycling

Off-track activities have the potential to cause erosion and can spread weeds and soil borne pathogens such as phytophthora. In addition, some of the illegally constructed trails in Anstey Hill Recreation Park are unsustainable due to the incorrect siting or inadequate construction.

Pilot projects in parks elsewhere in the Mount Lofty Ranges have shown that the development of a carefully designed and constructed shared use trail network, in tandem with the education of trail users, can have positive environmental outcomes. The development of sustainable alternatives will reduce or eliminate illegal off-track use by providing properly planned and constructed trail alternatives.

The development of a shared-use trail network in Anstey Hill Recreation Park has potential to help establish the Mount Lofty Ranges as an international mountain biking destination. It can also encourage people to enjoy a healthy, outdoors lifestyle, gain a greater appreciation of the park and become involved in the care and protection of the park.

Objective

Enable cycling on designated trails where this is environmentally sustainable and compatible with other recreational activities.

Strategies

- Following an assessment of environmental and visitor risks, identify and designate trails and tracks that are appropriate for cycling.
- Close and rehabilitate areas that have been used illegally and that are not appropriate for retention.
- Encourage trails users to adopt and promote an agreed code of conduct for track and trail use.

Amendment 4: Section 5.3 Native Vegetation (Page 11)

The following text is omitted from 5.3 Native Vegetation, paragraph 5 (Page 11)

Phytophthora is the generic name for a group of parasitic soil-borne root-rot fungi (most commonly *Phytophthora cinnamomi*), which affects many native plant species and was confirmed in Anstey Hill Recreation Park in July 2001. The park is traversed by various power, water and communications easements as well as park management and fire access tracks and shared use trails. There is a risk of further introduction and spread of *Phytophthora* from soil adhering to vehicles, equipment and shoes of people who enter the park, including maintenance workers, contractors and sub-contractors employed to control vegetation along easements, legitimate park visitors and those who use the park illegally (eg mountain bike riders)

The following text replaces the omitted text above

Phytophthora is the generic name for a group of parasitic soil-borne root-rot fungi (most commonly *Phytophthora cinnamomi*), which affects many native plant species and was confirmed in Anstey Hill Recreation Park in July 2001. The park is traversed by various power, water and communications easements as well as park management and fire access tracks and walking trails. There is a risk of further introduction and spread of *Phytophthora* from soil adhering to vehicle, (including bicycles), equipment and shoes of people who enter the park, including maintenance workers, contractors and sub-contractors employed to control vegetation along easements.

For further information please contact

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources phone information line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resource office.



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