

3.3 Off road cycling analysis

Summary

Off road cycling is a popular recreation activity on the Northern Beaches with an experienced riding community. Residents and visitors participate in a variety of riding styles including but not limited to cross country, gravity, dirt jumping and BMX. However, riders have access to relatively few authorised trails and bike park facilities catering to limited skill levels.

Managing the proliferation of unauthorised bike trails over the years, and even more so since COVID-19, is an ongoing challenge for Council. Closing and rehabilitating unauthorised trails is costly and often unsuccessful, with trails often reinstated or new trails emerging. This causes significant damage to the sensitive natural environment through tree and vegetation removal, erosion and increasing fragmentation of bushland.

A key part of preparing this Strategy has involved a targeted analysis of off road cycling facilities. The aim is twofold, to better meet the needs of riders and to identify ways to reduce unauthorised trail building.

This section summarises the outcomes of community engagement specific to off road cycling, reviews the current provision of facilities across the LGA and in each of the planning catchments, and outlines how Council will respond to gaps in provision and opportunities for improvement. The opportunities are detailed further in the Action Plan.

Community engagement

In addition to the broader project community consultation (outlined in section 3.4 and Appendix C e.g. the telephone survey), targeted stakeholder engagement included an Off Road Cycling Rider Survey and the establishment of an Off Road Cycling Stakeholder Group made up of representative from riding clubs, stakeholder groups and interested individuals. Ongoing meetings were held with interested parties throughout the project.

By engaging through various methods we were able to receive input from riders with varied interests and abilities as well as differences gauged through employing different consultation methods. For example, for the opt-in Off Road Cycling Rider Survey 89% of respondents (n=1,770) were male and 11% female. In comparison, through the random stratified telephone survey (n=403) it was revealed that the gender difference was a lot narrower, with 26% of male residents over 15 years old participating in off road cycling within the last 12 months, compared to 17% of females. In the Off Road Cycling Rider Survey many of the cross tabulation results were similar for males and females, although female respondents were more likely to rate themselves as beginners for all riding styles (e.g. 25% compared to males and 4% for cross country riding).

In the children's consultation activities at Vacation Care (6-12 years) and Pre-School (3-5 years), many children voted 'bike park' to be the recreation activity that appealed most to them, narrowly ahead of skate/scooter park.

Variations in participation in off road cycling were also revealed in each of the planning catchments. Those in the Frenchs Forest/Terrey Hills catchments combined had the highest participation, with 42% of residents over 15 years old participating, compared to the Mona Vale, Manly and Brookvale-Dee Why catchments having 24%, 18%, 13% respectively. These figures likely represent access to opportunity to ride off road, with the Frenchs Forest/Terrey Hills catchments having more facilities available which is consistent with also having more suitable bushland landscapes.

Consultation revealed overall that riders want new and improved off road cycling facilities that cater to a range of riding styles and skill levels. The detailed survey results can be found in Appendix C and are also integrated into the broader Consultation Outcomes summary in section 3.4.

Current provision

An analysis was undertaken of off road cycling facility provision across the Northern Beaches and in each planning catchment as well as regionally accessible facilities in other Northern Sydney Council areas and adjoining National Parks.

Table 1 and Figure 5 illustrate the existing off road cycling facilities in each of the planning catchments as well as committed projects. The analysis highlights a specific lack of authorised off road cycling facilities in the Mona Vale and Brookvale-Dee Why catchments. This is consistent with an increase in unauthorised trails and dirt jumps being constructed in these areas where local riders do not have any authorised facilities available.

The current state of existing facilities is variable. An audit of the Manly Dam mountain bike trail was undertaken, with improvements being planned and implemented in consultation with key rider stakeholders and additional maintenance works are ongoing.

An upgrade to the junior level Grove Bike Park at Seaforth was recently completed and initial planning is underway for an intermediate to advanced bike park at Seaforth Oval. New bike parks will also be constructed in the near future at Wyatt Avenue in Belrose and Lynne Czimmer Park in Warriewood. The Wyatt Avenue Bike Park will provide a junior facility that will facilitate progression to the nearby Bare Creek Bike Park.

Given the high participation rates and range of riding styles and skill levels, the current provision of off road cycling facilities on the Northern Beaches falls well short of meeting current and future demand for this growing activity. Pending works will go some way towards addressing this gap. However, more facilities are needed to adequately meet rider needs.

Unauthorised trail review

Prior to commencing the development of this Strategy, Council had agreed to consider formalising a small number of unauthorised trails following ongoing consultation with riders. This included one trail at Ingleside Chase Reserve (known as Mona Vale Downhill) as well as two trails that connect Forestville Park to Garigal National Park (Daisy Duke and Missys). In each case formalising the trails required confirmation of any necessary environmental considerations and how they could be addressed. Trail audits and environmental reviews have been undertaken and trail and environmental improvements are pending.

Since commencing work for this Strategy, Council has undertaken further auditing of unauthorised trails in order to determine which, if any, may be suitable for formalising and which should be removed and revegetated. Areas where trail audits have been performed include Deep Creek, JJ Melbourne Hills Memorial Reserve, Manly Dam and further trails at Forestville Park. The outcomes of these audits have been discussed with key rider representatives and other relevant stakeholders. Some trails are proposed to be closed and revegetated, others are proposed to be retained and improved. These are detailed in the Action Plan. At Deep Creek an environmental review is underway in partnership with the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E) / National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) due to the unauthorised trail network straddling both Council and NPWS land. The environmental review and further community consultation is required prior to making a recommendation on these trails.

The locations of many unauthorised local dirt jumps have also been reviewed. These dirt jumps develop regularly in bushland and parks and are often closed and signage erected to inform and educate regarding the prohibition of unauthorised trail building and tree and vegetation removal. Reasons for closure include safety, environmental incompatibility or unsuitable location, e.g. too close to residences or poor passive surveillance. However, the Action Plan in this Strategy identifies locations where it is proposed to provide opportunities for bike play across the Northern Beaches. Depending on the location this could range from dirt jumps or asphalt pump track.

Compliance is an ongoing challenge in terms of educating unauthorised trail builders on the legislative frameworks in place to protect parks and bushland from illegal tree and vegetation removal and subsequent environmental degradation caused by erosion and fragmentation. Council will continue to work with riders to explore opportunities for new and improved off road cycling facilities with a view to decreasing the prevalence of unauthorised trail building.

Opportunities for new and improved off road cycling facilities

Following the review of current off road cycling facilities, unauthorised trails and seeking input from riders, Council is proposing a number of new and improved trails and bike parks to address the gaps in provision. The opportunities are summarised in Table 1 and indicative locations are mapped in Figure 5. Further detail is provided in the Action Plan.

Strategically Council intends to:

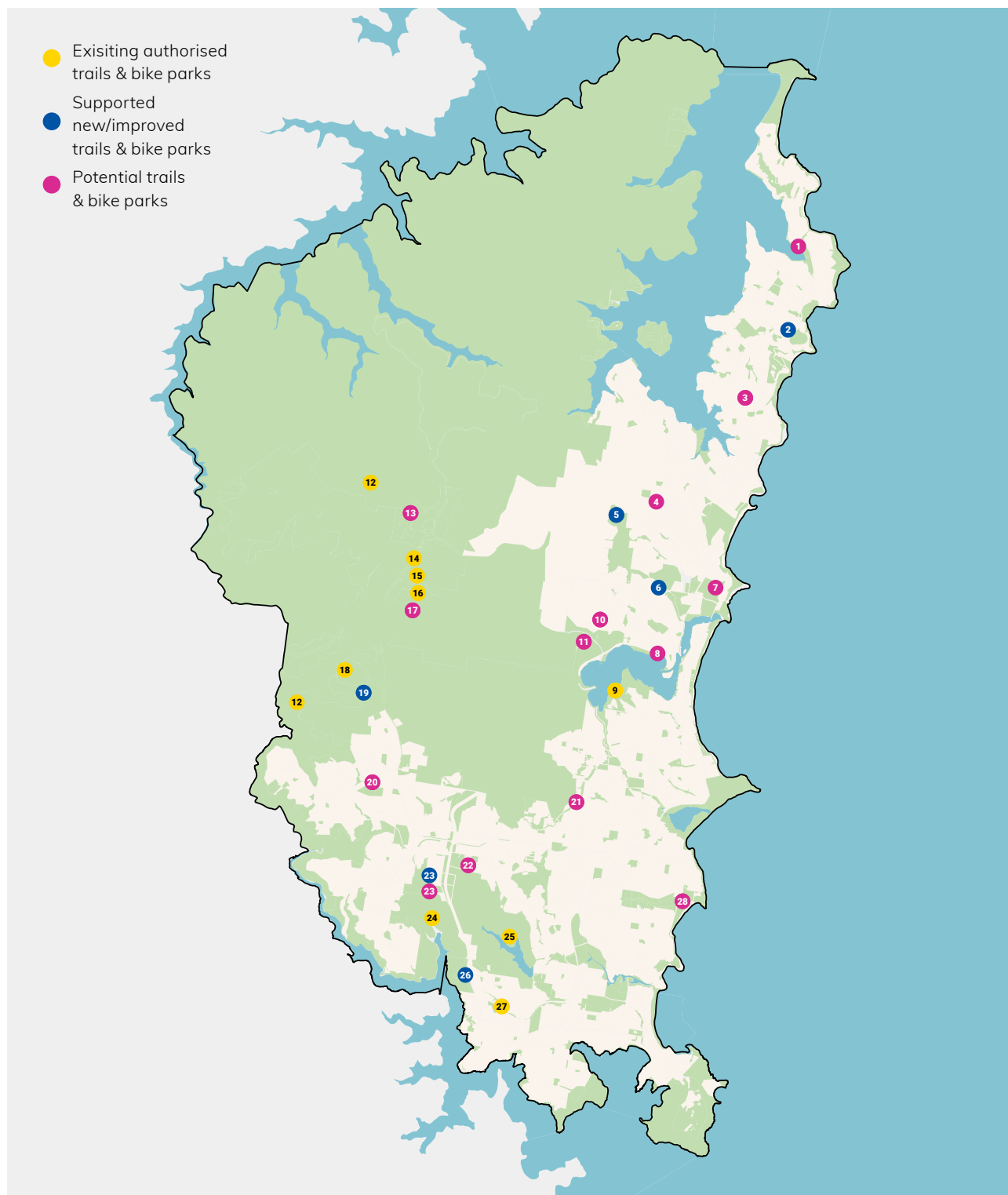
- provide new and improved off road cycling trails and bike parks where appropriate catering to a range of riding styles and skill levels
- provide bike parks in each of the planning catchments. Advanced facilities are more likely to attract users from outside the immediate local area and should be located in areas that can accommodate visitation including access to car parking and amenities and good passive surveillance, and not unreasonably impact on residents and other users
- formalise some unauthorised off road cycling trails following consideration of feedback from relevant stakeholders and appropriate environmental reviews and planning approvals
- close unauthorised trails and bike parks that are not suitable to formalise. Reasons may include environmental concerns, conflict with other uses, inappropriate location, e.g. proximity to residences, supporting facilities and amenities
- strengthen compliance initiatives to minimise unauthorised trail building, through signage, ranger visibility, education and ongoing engagement with riders
- partner with other land owners for cross tenure opportunities, in particular State Government agencies such as National Parks and Wildlife Service, Crown Lands and Department of Education
- continue to liaise with other regional land managers in Sydney north to share information and explore regional scale opportunities.

Table 2

Northern Beaches Off Road Cycling: Existing, Supported and Potential Facilities. Further details are provided in the Action Plan.

Planning catchment	Trail/Facility - existing	Supported New/Improved	Potential New/Improved*
Manly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manly Dam mountain bike trail The Grove Bike Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manly Dam mountain bike trail improvements New intermediate to advanced bike park at Seaforth Oval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manly Dam - formalise Nemesis and Quarry mountain bike trails Continue to work with Transport for NSW regarding trails interfacing with the Beaches Tunnel project and linkages between Manly Dam and Garigal National Park mountain bike trails, including Possums trail
Frenchs Forest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bare Creek Bike Park Gahnia and Serrata mountain bike trails (NPWS) Garigal National Park fire trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wyatt Ave, Belrose - Junior/Beginner Bike Park Forestville Park - formalise Daisy Duke and Missys trails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forestville Park - investigate formalising Dirty Schnitty trail and links to Garigal National Park Lionel Watts - formalise bike dirt jumps
Terrey Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JJ Melbourne Hills Memorial Reserve - BMX track, pump track, dirt jump track, dual slalom track Terrey Hills fire trails (NPWS) 	Nil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> JJ Melbourne Hills Memorial Reserve - formalise Guggenheim, Pony Express and Kamber Climb trails pending Council being appointed manager of Kamber Crown Road Reserve Terrey Hills Oval - formalise bike dirt jumps
Mona Vale	Nil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bike park (junior) opposite Avalon public school Ingleside Chase Reserve - formalise Mona Vale Downhill trail Bike park in Warriewood at Lynne Czinner Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide bike parks in Avalon (Careel Bay), Newport (Trafalgar Park), Mona Vale (Whitney Reserve - formalise dirt jumps), North Narrabeen (North Narrabeen Reserve and Bilarong Reserve) and Elanora Heights (Koorangi Reserve - formalise dirt jumps) Continue to work with NPWS regarding potential to formalise some mountain bike trails at Deep Creek
Brookvale - Dee Why	Nil	Nil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John Fisher Park - formalise dirt bike jumps near the netball courts Maybrook Avenue, Cromer - formalise dirt bike jumps

* Potential opportunities may require further feasibility work, including environmental studies, community engagement and planning approvals prior to approving for implementation.



- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| 1. Careel Bay Bike Park (Int-Adv) | 11. Deep Creek/Mt Narra Trails | 20. Lionel Watts Reserve Bike Park |
| 2. Avalon Bike Park (Junior) | 12. National Parks and Wildlife Service Fire Trails | 21. Maybrook Ave Bike Park |
| 3. Trafalgar Park Bike Park | 13. Terrey Hills Oval Bike Park | 22. Pipeline Regional Trail |
| 4. Whitney Reserve Bike Park | 14. Terrey Hills Pump Track | 23. Forestville Park Trails and Linkages |
| 5. Ingleside Chase Trail | 15. Manly Warringah BMX | 24. Gahnia and Serrate Mountain Bike Trails (NPWS) |
| 6. Lynne Czinner Bike Park | 16. Terrey Hills Dual Slalom Dirt Jumps | 25. Manly Dam Mountain Bike Trail |
| 7. North Narrabeen Bike Park | 17. JJ Melbourne Hills Trails | 26. Seaforth Oval Bike Park (Int-Adv) |
| 8. Bilarong Reserve Bike Park | 18. Bare Creek Bike Park | 27. Grove Bike Park (Junior) |
| 9. Narrabeen Lagoon Multi-use Trail | 19. Wyatt Ave Bike Park (Junior) | 28. John Fisher Park Bike Park |
| 10. Koorangi Reserve Bike Park | | |