

Director City Services Report No. CS13/16



Subject: Malabar Headland - Western Walking Track - Update

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Introduction

A report on the community consultation outcomes for the proposed Western Walking Track through the Malabar Headland National Park (MHNP) was presented at the Council meeting held on 24 May 2016. The Council resolved as follows:

“(Stevenson/Matson) that the fence along the western side of the walkway near the residents be a chain wire fence with a height of 1.5 metres, national parks to lock the walkway at night for safety reasons and the proposed Ford Street entrance be changed to Brown Street, after consultation with the residents.”

The resolution proposes amendments to the proposal that requires agreement from the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) as the responsible authority for the National Park. We have subsequently sought feedback from NPWS on the various elements of the resolution. This report outlines the feedback from NPWS and recommends amendments to the proposal that will address local resident concerns and meet the objective of constructing a continuous western walking track past the Malabar Headland.

Issues

The Council resolution proposes 3 key actions. The implementation of these actions is reliant on agreement from NPWS as the responsible authority for the National Park. Randwick Council officers met with NPWS staff and requested that NPWS consider and agree to the key actions outlined in the resolution. NPWS has written to Randwick Council in response to the request and outlined its formal position on each of the key actions.

Resolution Action 1 - “that the fence along the western side of the walkway near the residents be a chain wire fence with a height of 1.5 metres”

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) does not believe this extra fence is necessary however will accept(s) this resolution in order to allow the western walking track to be constructed. The fence may benefit the recovery of the endangered ecological community, Eastern Suburbs Banksia Scrub. It must be installed within the 4m construction zone as approved in the Western Walking Track Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and remains subject to REF conditions. Specifications are subject to NPWS approval prior to installation. NPWS will take care not to damage fence as result of land management activities including prescribed burning. However, the asset would remain the responsibility of Randwick Council for its lifespan, including maintenance requirements and ultimate removal if determined by an authorised NPWS agent.

Resolution Action 2 - “national parks to lock the walkway at night for safety reasons”

Once walking tracks are constructed in Malabar Headland National Park they will be open to public access. NPWS may close part of or all of a walking track, either

permanently or temporarily, for management or visitor safety reasons. For example, during severe weather or fire danger or rifle range operation (eastern section). NPWS will consider opening hours of the park in consultation with neighbours and stakeholders as part of the Plan of Management process. Generally the opening hours of a walking track in a national park is by way of notice rather than locked gate.

Resolution Action 3 - "the proposed Ford St entrance be changed to Brown St"

Should Randwick Council choose to abandon the construction of the Ford Road entrance, NPWS will not object in order to allow the western walking track to be constructed. However, NPWS does not support the proposal to relocate the Ford Road entrance to Brown Road. This is because NPWS believe that a desire for public access at Ford Road will remain as it is the shortest route. NPWS is concerned that without a formal entrance at Ford Road there is potential for impact to the sensitive ecological community in the area. Should the Ford Road entrance not be constructed initially, NPWS will monitor the impact of informal access and reserves the right to instate formal access and/or alter the configuration of access or fencing in Malabar Headland National Park.

Discussion

From the NPWS feedback, they have indicated that they will permit Randwick Council to modify the proposed walkway to:

- include a 1.5m chain wire fence to the west of the elevated boardwalk as per resolution action 1
- will not object to the removal of the Ford Road access from the proposal

However, NPWS have indicated that they do not support the Brown Road access link through the National Park. On this basis, it is proposed that this option not be pursued.

NPWS have also indicated that they do not generally restrict access to a walking track by locked gate but rather by way of notice. They have indicated that they will consider the opening hours of the National Park when consulting with neighbours and stakeholders to develop a Plan of Management for the Malabar Headland National Park.

Relationship to City Plan

The relationship with the City Plan is as follows:

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| Outcome 3: | An Informed and Engaged Community. |
| Direction 3c: | The community has increased opportunities to participate in decision making process. |
| Outcome 4: | Excellence in Urban Design and Development. |
| Direction 4a: | Improved design and sustainability across all development. |
| Outcome 5: | Excellence in Recreation and Lifestyle Opportunities. |
| Direction 5a: | Maximise opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy both active and passive open space uses. |
| Outcome 6: | A Liveable City. |
| Direction 6a: | Our public assets are planned, managed and funded to meet the community expectations and defined levels of services. |

Financial impact statement

The cost estimate for the construction of the Western Walking Track in the Malabar Headland National Park is \$2,177,240. There is currently \$1.55M available in the

2015-16 Capital Works budget for the coastal walkway project. An additional \$800,000 has been allocated to this project in draft 2016-17 Capital Works Budget.

Council received \$200k Metropolitan Greenspace Grant for the construction phase of this project in December 2014.

Conclusion

Council has consulted with NPWS to seek concurrence to the actions outlined in the Council resolution from its meeting held on 24 May 2016.

NPWS has agreed to the installation of a 1.5m fence to the west of the boardwalk and to remove the Ford Road access.

However, NPWS does not support the Brown Road access and has outlined that it does not generally restrict park access by locked gate. They have advised that they will consider the opening hours of the National Park walkway when consulting with neighbours and stakeholders to develop a park Plan of Management.

On the basis of NPWS feedback, it is recommended that the proposal be amended to include a new 1.5m high chain wire fence west of the boardwalk and to remove the Ford Road access link.

Recommendation

That:

1. the proposed Western Walking Track proposal be amended as follows:
 - a) installation of a 1.5m chain wire fence to the west of the elevated boardwalk to restrict access into the part of the National Park behind the Byrne Crescent and Ford Street residents.
 - b) the Ford Road access link be removed from the proposal.
2. the proposal proceeds to detailed design stage and the tendering of the construction.

Attachment/s:

Nil