

Welcome to Trail Talk - A monthly newsletter all about the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail. This newsletter contains information and updates about construction and work on the trail, as well as other aspects including work being carried out with businesses and tourism interests.

November 2014

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Opening of Stage One a roaring success



Deputy PM Bill English (in blue) and locals are piped into the ceremony

People gathered from the four corners of the Southland District and beyond, to celebrate the opening of Stage One of the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail.

A crowd of hundreds were there for the official opening, held on November 1 at the newly-revamped Lumsden Railway Station. The day's festivities had a focus on entertaining the whole family, with a mini market, comprised of stalls manned by local businesses, for the adults and activities like face-painting and crazy bikes to keep the kids happy. Entertainment also featured performances including kapa haka and dancing, as well as a band to keep the atmosphere on a high all afternoon.



The crowd began to swell shortly before noon. They were there to see the grand entrance of Deputy Prime Minister Bill English, who donned a blue Around the Mountains t-shirt and cycled into the centre of the town from the Lumsden Bridge. The Deputy PM was flanked by members of the five communities the trail passes through on its first stage - Lumsden, Kingston, Athol, Garston and Mossburn.



Luckily the riders had a tail wind - Lumsden did not escape unscathed by blustery weather that swept across much of the District on the day.

Shortly before cutting the ribbon, Mr English joked that he hoped the second stage of the trail could take in Dipton - his hometown.

Mayor Gary Tong was rapt with how the day had panned out.



"Something like this is near impossible to do without the backing of the communities you are working in, and it has been excellent to see so many people turn out to show their support for the cycle trail," he says.

"To have the Deputy Prime Minister Bill English, and our MPs Todd Barclay and Sarah Dowie, in attendance as well shows the importance that the Government has put on these cycleway projects."

Those he had spoken to on the day ran the gamut from fourth-generation Southlanders to curious visitors from as far away as Australia and Asia.

No matter where they came from, opening day attendees had one thing in common - they were impressed, His Worship says.

"Everybody seemed to be having a great time. It was a really positive atmosphere here - you really could feel the place humming."



Hearing for second stage to be held in New Year

Submissions have closed on resource consent applications for the second stage of the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail, with a hearing before an independent commissioner set to take place in early 2015.

208 submissions were received on the proposal between 4 October and 3 November. Southland District Council Resource Management Planner Marcus Roy said 79 submissions were in support of the proposal, 4 were neutral and 125 were in opposition. There were also 18 late submissions: 4 were in support of the proposal, 1 was neutral, and 13 were in opposition.

The Southland District Council is seeking peer reviews of Landscape and Market Demand/Economic Impact Reports from suitably qualified experts, as some of the submissions raised concerns with the findings of these two reports, Mr Roy said.

The hearing is expected to take place in the first week of February 2015. It is likely to be heard over four days and will take place at the Southland District Council's Invercargill office.

Around 30 kilometres of proposed trail near the Upper Oreti River and Centre Hill Road needs resource consents from Environment Southland and the Southland District Council. Consent was initially sought in 2012 but a commissioner declined a portion of the application, due to concerns around river works and their impact on the ecology, river and amenities of the area.

The new resource consent application includes two significant changes: a new lower and longer bridge over a section of the Oreti River, designed to have a lesser impact visually and on the river and surroundings; and a change to the proposed path the trail would take. Proposed groynes have also been removed from the consent application.

A special thank you



Congratulations to all who were involved in the opening day of Stage One of the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail, in particular the Lumsden CDA, the riders who represented their communities and Deputy Prime Minister Bill English and MPs Todd Barclay and Sarah Dowie.

Southland District Council wants to thank all our sponsors of both the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail and the opening day:

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Your generous support of the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail project is most appreciated.

Final touches added to first stage of trail

The final touches on the first stage of the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail have been added, and the Southland District Council is keen to hear the public's feedback.

Assets and Services Group Manager Ian Marshall says projects like installing internal access gates, kilometre pegs, barricades and signage were almost complete.

"There's been a huge amount of work done, in a whole lot of places, by a bunch of different people, to get all of those last-minute things that always crop up during a project like this finished to perfection," he says.

His guiding principle since beginning the project was to approach the trail as a visitor would.

"Every time I have ridden the trail, I have done so as if I had never been on it before. When you're in that state of mind, you want to look up and see a sign directing you to where you need to be going. We want the whole experience to be as seamless and as easy as possible for our visitors," Mr Marshall says.

"We are really keen to hear back from anybody who has ridden the trail, to see if they have gotten lost or been a bit confused at all. We want to hear about anything on the trail that people think we could improve."

The only thing left to do was to install signage directing motorists where they needed to go to begin their ride on the cycle trail. To do this, the Southland District Council has continued to work with the New Zealand Transport Authority.

"Their attitude towards helping us, starting off with the great work they did with the electronic signage and hand rails on the Lumsden Bridge, really has been fantastic and their helpfulness has continued on in the same vein the whole way through this process. They've been brilliant to work with and the District Council is incredibly appreciative of that," Mr Marshall says.

Meanwhile, work is also continuing around the development of interpretation panels along the Around the Mountains Cycle Trail.

Venture Southland Community Development Team Leader Bobbi Brown said the panels would share historical information and the unique story of each area with visitors.

There was still the opportunity for some communities to have an input into which stories they wished to see told.

"The trail presents a unique opportunity for the local community to share their stories and history with people cycling through. Feedback from cyclists who have cycled other trails is that this enhances their overall experience - getting that insight and understanding of the townships and landscapes they are cycling through," she says.

The aim is to complete the plan by early 2015, with applications for grants to make the panels the following step.

If anybody is interested in being involved in work on the interpretation panels - including providing information for inclusion on them - please contact Venture Southland.

Congratulations to our lucky winners

A big congratulations to the winners of the competitions that ran on opening day of Stage One, as below:

Winner of the Attendance register draw:

Well done to Brian Ross, of Lumsden, who won a guided cycle tour for two, courtesy of Real Journeys and Around the Mountains Ltd.

Winner of the Friends of the Trail draw:

Congratulations to Sheril Jones, of Athol, who won a \$250 accommodation voucher for Hectors in Kingston.

Winners of the Colouring Competition:

Category One: Ebony Black 1, Victoria Grant 2, James Roger 3.

Category Two: Chanelle Evans 1, Ruby Sellens 2, Maisie Mitchell 3.

Category Three: Isobel 1, Hana Sellens 2, Lily Antokivic and Philip Lewis equal 3.

Open day for Welcome Rock Trails approaching



Photo: Supplied

A tourism venture that complements that nearby Around the Mountains Cycle Trail will host an open day on 6 December.

Welcome Rock Trails is a 27-kilometre, single track, mountain bike and hiking trail, that takes visitors cross country across one of New Zealand's longest, most historic water races. The track takes its name from the prominent rock that sits on the skyline above the Blackmore Station homestead, owned by the O'Brien family since 1911. The rock was used as a meeting and trading point by the early settlers of the area.

Tom O'Brien and his wife Katie started the trail in 2012, after they came up with the idea to create a trail following the old goldminer's water races. Actual physical work began a year later, with Tom turning the first sod of soil in June 2013. The trail was hand-built using picks and shovels, much like the gold miners of yesteryear.

The opening day on 6 December will kick off at 10am at the Historic Southland Ski Hut, on the Nevis Road at Garston. During the opening weekend, free entry to the trail will be offered to riders and hikers. Bookings are essential as numbers are limited.

For booking information and more details about the trail, bike hire, transport and accommodation visit www.welcomerock.co.nz or email trails@welcomerock.co.nz.