



31 May 2004

The Avon-Heathcote Estuary Ihutai Trust
c/o Christchurch Environment Centre
PO Box 2657
Christchurch

Re: Draft Ihutai (Estuary) Management Plan 2004

Spokes Canterbury, the local cycling advocacy group¹, is pleased to offer this submission regarding the above draft Management Plan. We would be happy to provide any further information if required.

General Comments

As a group broadly concerned with environmental issues in general, **Spokes welcomes this draft Management Plan** as a way to ensure that our valuable estuary is preserved in the long-term for both people and wildlife. Our comments below are largely focused on how cycling and the estuary can happily co-exist.

Spokes believes that **the estuary surrounds offer ideal environments for recreational cycling**, providing both a traffic-free setting and an opportunity to appreciate our local flora and fauna up close. This type of cycling activity is likely to be quite different to the (often more energetic) mountain-biking opportunities provided by the Port Hills, Bottle Lake Forest and so on. It also links in well with the existing riverbank cycle pathways provided along both the Heathcote and Avon rivers.

Spokes appreciates that there is the **potential for conflicts** between cyclists and either native wildlife or other trail users. We do not believe that this should result in outright exclusion of cyclists from the estuary surrounds. We are therefore keen to see solutions identified to mitigate these concerns, such as:

- Boardwalk-style paths to raise trails above key birdlife movement routes.
- Clear identification of cycle-use trails and walking-only trails
- Adequate sight distances and widths along trails to minimise unexpected conflicts
- Strong track delineation where adjacent plants might be threatened
- The adoption of suitable rules for shared trail use

We would be happy to work with the Trust to identify acceptable solutions in these areas.

Specific Comments – Goals, Targets and Actions

Spokes' main interest is in Goal 4 "*Safe and Balanced Recreation*"; in general we broadly support the other stated goals. We offer the following specific observations about the proposed Plan:

¹ See the end of our submission for more details about Spokes

- Under Target 1 (“*Community spirit through community events and activities is fostered...*”), we suggest that Action #4 could be broadened to include guided biking tours around the estuary. This may appeal to a different audience, and may also allow a greater area to be covered during a tour.
- We would like to see Target 18 re-worded to say “***non-motorised*** access to and around the estuary is protected and improved”. This reflects the wider group of estuary users (including cyclists) who should be encouraged to experience the estuary surrounds. We support the underlying Actions for this Target, although #61 would also need to be re-worded to reflect the wider usage of trails.
- With regards to Action #60, where car parking areas are to be provided for access to estuary trails, we request that appropriate cycle parking is also provided and signposted.
- We support Target 19; “*Improved public access and facilities for recreational activities are provided at appropriate sites around the Estuary*”. We are keen to provide input to the proposed surveying of needs.
- We support Target 20; “*Adverse recreational and visitor impacts on the Estuary environment are minimised*”. If you are interested, we are able to supply you with references to research on the environmental and social impacts of bikes on trails, which is often perceived to be greater than actual reality.

Please consider modifying the Plan to incorporate the issues raised above. We look forward with interest to future activities in the estuary area.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Hayman / Glen Koorey

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Spokes Canterbury (the former Canterbury Cyclists' Association) is a local cycling advocacy group dedicated to including cycling as an everyday form of transport within local and regional planning. The group is affiliated with the national Cycling Advocates Network (CAN) and includes a number of CAN's executive members.

Spokes provides significant cycling expertise through its many longstanding advocates, transportation professionals and (most importantly) regular cyclists. The group is represented on Christchurch City Council's cycling steering committee and Environment Canterbury's Regional Land Transport Committee and provides regular feedback on various council proposals for transportation, parks/reserves and planning.

Website: http://www.can.org.nz/spokes_chch