



22 April 2005

John de Zwart
Christchurch City Council
PO Box 237
Christchurch

Re: Heathcote River Vision - SUBMISSION

Spokes Canterbury, the local cycling advocacy group, is pleased to offer this submission to you regarding the Heathcote River Vision. We would be happy to provide any further information or clarification if required.

In making this submission, Spokes has based its feedback on the public consultation brochure received, and from our members' observations of the area. In January this year we held a recreational ride for Spokes members along the Heathcote from Cashmere to Woolston and back again, and this has been useful in determining our views.

General

Spokes strongly supports the development of a Vision (essentially a strategy) for the Heathcote River; this is an important corridor both ecologically and for recreation.

The corridor has the potential to be a very popular route (on both sides) for all non-motorised recreational users, and in some parts for school and commuter users as well. At present it is only partly achieving this potential because of gaps or pinch-points along the way and due to poor promotion of the corridor.

Specific Comments

Spokes offers the following specific observations about the proposal:

- We believe that an adequate width path (or quiet street alternative) needs to be provided along the entire route so that cyclists, pedestrians, and all other active users can use it with minimal conflict. At the very least this should allow someone to safely pass someone else (requiring at least 2.2m) and the improvement of sightlines where surrounding vegetation/bush is dense. Ideally however, where space permits, a **3m wide** shared path should be provided, as recommended by national cycling & pedestrian guidelines.
- We have no problems with the use of simple properly formed gravel pathways for some parts of the corridor (e.g. as currently provided through Ernle Reserve). They provide a pleasant break from sealed routes and, provided that drainage is adequately catered for, should provide a reasonable all-weather surface.
- We would like to see much better crossing facilities provided at the major road crossings along the way, specifically: Colombo St, Malcolm Ave, Burnbrae St, Waltham Rd, Ensors Rd, Beckford Rd. Kerb extensions, handrails, and central refuge islands (as per Rutherford St further downstream) would greatly assist safe crossing.
- We are unclear about the status for cycling of King George V Reserve (opposite Hansen Park); at present it appears to be the only section of the river where cycling is not allowed. Apart from some widening of the bush section of the route, we see no reason why this should be so. This needs to be promptly rectified.

- The riverbank near Centaurus Rd is the only section fronting an arterial road. Although the recent cycle lanes provide some relief for cyclists, development here of a wider shared pathway for less confident cyclists should be a priority. This should also more clearly link to Farnley Reserve; at present only an informal track has been worn along the riverbank.
- Path signage should also be introduced to explain appropriate behaviour for all path users (e.g. keep left, warn when approaching, etc). In most Australian states a common set of protocols are used to reinforce these behaviours, with symbolic signs provided along pathways (see Figure 1 below). We commend a similar approach be taken along the Heathcote River (and along other Christchurch pathways), and a parallel publicity & education campaign be carried out.



Figure 1: Standard path behaviour signs used in Australia

- We support the introduction of further displays explaining significant ecological and historical sites. For people walking/cycling along, these provide interesting diversions along the way. We would also support the introduction of regular map boards showing the whole Heathcote River route and facilities available, to help people plan their trips.
- We also support additional artworks along the river, particularly where they also incorporate practical amenities. For example, drinking fountains, seats, shelters, and bike racks could all form part of interesting artworks. This technique is very commonly used in the UK along its renowned Sustrans path network.
- We support the closure of Hunter Tce near the South Library. The space available will provide a very adequate shared pathway and a play area too we suggest. The South Library cafe could also extend to provide outside service to passing cyclists & pedestrians.
- We would like to see greater use of traffic management along local streets that run beside the river. Currently there are sections of the route where motor traffic can reach inappropriate speeds. However, where these treatments includes narrow pinch-points, cycle bypasses should be provided. Greater use of street closures or false one-way treatments (both with path bypasses) would also help to reduce the volume of unnecessary motor traffic. For example, possible locations could include Eastern Tce south of Malcolm & south of Waltham, and Waimea Tce south of Sandwich.
- The introduction of consistent & conspicuous route signage (e.g. "Heathcote River Pathway") would help make it clear where the route continues. For example, there are a number of signed "no exit" streets along the way (Fifield/Riverlaw/Sloan Tces) that in fact provide continued access for non-motorised users. Sub-plates for "No Exit" signs stating "Except Cyclists & Pedestrians" (recently introduced in NZ) would also be helpful.
- We would like to see the removal of a number of path and bridge barriers that are both annoying and dangerous. Not only do they provide an unnecessary inconvenience to cyclists but other users with prams and wheelchairs must also

struggle with them. The orientation of many bridge barriers (e.g. Ford Rd bridge) also directs cyclists towards the steep river edge. Specific examples for barrier removal include Thorrington School pathway (Sloan Tce end), King George V Reserve (Riverlaw Tce end), and most footbridges along the route.

- Although there are a reasonable number of toilet facilities along this section, better signposting of them would help (including on map boards). Additional useful locations for toilets (if not already there) could be Sloan Tce reserve, Farnley reserve (Centaurus shops), Waimea reserve, Esher PI reserve, and King George V Reserve (opp Hansen Pk).
- For our recent Heathcote River Ride, a map was prepared indicating various points of interest and also highlighting hazardous locations. We commend you to have a look at it and take note of some of the comments; see it on our website at www.can.org.nz/spokes_chch/heathcote/Heathcote-River-Ride.pdf (633kb)

Please consider incorporating the issues raised above in the final Vision document.

Yours sincerely,

Glen Koorey

Chairperson
SPOKES Canterbury
Email: spokes_chch@can.org.nz
Phone: 331-7504

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 transportation and planning proposals.

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

