

# Paving the way forward

The high season is almost upon us but can Waiheke's footpaths and cycleways deal with the massive influx of visitors?

Currently, the answer is no, but a new pathways plan is under development with the aim of improving footpaths, roads and trails to enable commuters, cyclists, runners, walkers and even horse riders to travel safely.

Loose gravel, potholes, narrow cycleways and a general lack of footpaths are a significant safety issue, and the local board is getting serious about fixing them.

"Recently there are a lot more people biking and walking," says Waiheke Local Board chair Cath Handley. "The current footpaths and cycleways are completely inadequate to deal with this. It has also



Cycleways like this one in central Auckland need to be clearly marked and separate from the footpath.

been identified that many children would like to bike or walk to school; however, parents are concerned for their safety."

According to the board, the Waiheke Pathways Plan sets out a 10-year programme of upgrades, improvements, new paths and maintenance that should make traversing Waiheke safer.

Separate footpaths and cycleways are planned for the main roads along their whole length. Areas near schools will be prioritised, and cycleways will be green to ensure they stand out and to avoid cyclists sharing footpaths with walkers.

Although much work is likely to be done to improve main roads, small and winding back roads where many of the island's residents live will be left without many bells and whistles. According to the draft plan, "their layout encourages all users to slow down and be aware of their environ-

ment. These roads do not need separate footpaths or cycleways. Where possible, grass verges need to be kept weed free to allow walkers a place to step off the road when a vehicle passes by".

When it comes to the island's connecting roads, which are not as busy as the main arterial routes, but busier than the smaller back roads, the safety of those travelling on foot will be prioritised.

"These roads are not raceways - their layout and width must encourage cars to take care and keep to speed limits which may be lowered, but they also must be more convenient to drive than our back roads," according to the pathways plan. It goes on to say that walkers should be separated from vehicles by providing a path, while although cyclists will share the road with cars they should be marked to make drivers aware of this.

"Special care is needed to make sure cyclists have the option to veer onto the footpath or grass verge in an emergency. This can be achieved by installing flat or angled concrete edges on the grass verge or the edge of footpaths".

The plan also recommends the creation of off-road routes and greenways to keep cyclists and walkers away from roads where possible and to improve safe access to popular destinations.

Greenways are usually at least three metres wide and are shared off-road routes for walkers and cyclists.

According to the plan these routes "offer opportunities to lead walkers and cyclists away from the arterial and feeder routes and to create appealing new connections".

The board encourages people to give feedback on the plan by visiting the Auckland Council website. Feedback is open until 4pm Friday 14 December. • *Sophie Boladeras*

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