Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

CONSULTATION REPORT

Central Coast Council

October 2021

Executive Summary

This report provides an overview of the phase 2 engagement activities of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study which was carried by Central Coast Council from 22 February to 22 March 2021.

Phase 1 engagement activities were conducted 2019 and aimed to understand the desires, needs, issues and concerns of the riders, and the issues and concerns of other stakeholders. The results of this consultation were presented in an engagement report that can be viewed at yourvoiceourcoast.com.

Following the phase 1 consultation a discussion paper was prepared to support an informed conversation with the community on topics including:

1. Key concerns and issues toward mountain biking
2. Selecting suitable sites
3. Options and recommendations for managing the demand for mountain biking on the Central Coast

This report documents the methods and approach of the phase 2 discussion paper engagement and provides an analysis of and response to community and stakeholder feedback during this phase.

What we heard

Council received a total of **245** guided submission forms, **43** emailed submissions, **62** petition/generic emailed submissions and **32** emails providing feedback. A majority (63%) of respondents indicated that they mountain bike on the Central Coast.

Key themes and issues raised during the consultation included:

- The discussion paper and engagement report captured a majority of the community's views and attitudes towards mountain biking on the Central Coast.
- Of the six management options presented in the discussion paper development of a regional trails plan, improving partnerships and expanding and enhancing the shared trail network were the three options ranked of highest importance to respondents in the guided submission form. Retaining status quo was ranked the second lowest option importance for all respondents.
- There was consensus that:
    - engagement, ongoing communication and the establishment of collaborative partnerships must occur throughout the process with all stakeholders

- o site selection criteria, a trails approval and closure process must be established and agreed upfront as a priority
- o each site should be inspected, environmental and heritage impacts assessed, cost-benefit analysed, and mitigation strategies considered before recommendations made for selection
- o shared trails are not suitable or preferred by either riders or other reserve users, including runners and walkers
- o mountain bike riders support a dispersed trail network with equitable locally accessible nodes such as small trails, dirt jumps, pump tracks and skills development areas rather than discrete large facilities.
- Key points of contention included whether or not:
  - o the provision of authorised tracks that meet demand will reduce unauthorised track construction and associated impacts to environment, heritage, and other users
  - o unauthorised trails on Council land should be considered for formalisation in any future trail network
  - o dedicated mountain biking trails should be built on COSS land.
- Other comments received included the need for demand and economic analysis, a ratepayer survey to determine degree of support for Council expenditure, systematic audit of unauthorised trails in Council reserves and a cost benefit analysis of each recommendation.

It's important to note that while we do our best to develop projects to meet the needs and requests of the community and stakeholders, technical constraints, costs, and the overarching project objectives must also be considered to deliver a project that is safe, functional and best balances the competing needs of all those affected including the environment.

Next steps

Council will use the submissions and feedback received to make final recommendations to Council for consideration. A report providing this consultation report and final recommendations is expected to go to Council in late 2021.

Stakeholders will be notified when the business paper is available on Council's website prior to the Council meeting.

Contents

2. Introduction

2.1 The study

The aim of the Mountain Biking Feasibility Study is to assist in planning for recreation in Council's natural reserves by:

- identifying the role that Council's natural reserves may play in the provision of mountain biking experiences across the Central Coast
- protecting areas of high conservation and heritage value
- minimising the key drivers for the building of unauthorised trails
- maximising the safe use of Council reserves by all visitors.

This project relates to MTB riding and does not include trail bikes, motorbikes etc.

Council carried out the first phase of engagement in June and July 2019. This phase was to understand the desires, needs, issues and concerns of the riders, and the issues and concerns of other reserve users, neighbours, the broader community and other stakeholders including key land managers.

This involved:

- an online survey, completed by 1949 individuals
- key stakeholder workshops
- written submissions.

The results of this consultation were presented in the phase 1 engagement report that can be viewed at yourvoiceourcoast.com.

Following the phase 1 consultation a discussion paper was developed to present the findings of the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study and was intended to support an informed conversation with the community on topics including:

- Key concerns and issues toward mountain biking
- Selecting suitable sites
- Options and recommendations for managing demand for mountain biking on the Central Coast

Council welcomed feedback on the discussion paper between 22 February and 22 March 2021.

3. Engagement Approach

3.1 Purpose of Engagement

The purpose this second phase of engagement was to:

- encourage all stakeholders to read the discussion paper or learn about its content
- capture the community's feedback on the discussion paper
- identify if there is any consensus on the options or recommendations before making any further recommendations to Council
- evaluate whether the discussion paper reflects the community's views (including issues and concerns)
- evaluate the level of community support for the proposed recommendations or capture any other suggested options

3.2 Our engagement framework

Consultation has been designed in accordance with Central Coast Council's Engagement Framework. This framework is available to view at https://www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/Central-Coast-CouncilEngagement-Framework

3.3 How we consulted

Consultation methods

Written submissions	Community members and other stakeholders could make a written submission via a guided online submission form on yourvoiceourcoast.com. Submissions could also be sent via email. A copy of the guided submission form can be found in **Appendix A**.
Virtual meetings	The project team hosted 20-minute virtual Microsoft Teams meetings with interested parties to discuss concerns or answer any questions they may have had on the discussion paper. Sessions could be booked between: • 9.30am and 12.30pm, Monday 1 March • 1pm and 4pm, Thursday 11 March • 9.30 and 12.30pm, Monday 15 March

	• 1pm and 4pm, Wednesday 17 March
	The content discussed in these meetings was noted however did not constitute as formal feedback. Participants were asked to provide all formal feedback in writing via the submission form, or email.
Submit a question	Community members and other stakeholders could submit a question to the project team to be answered publicly. Six individuals submitted 10 questions, with all answers uploaded onto the Your Voice Our Coast project page. This content did not constitute formal feedback.

Promotion of activities

We carried out promotion of the consultation to ensure the community and stakeholders were aware of the opportunity to participate.

Media Release	• 24 February 2021 – It's time to talk mountain biking A copy of the media release can be found in **Appendix B**
Coast Connect articles	• Coast Connect – 3 March 2021 A copy of the article can be found in **Appendix C**
Your Voice – Our Coast website	• Project page updated on 22 February 2021. • PDF download of discussion paper and phase 1 engagement report • 12 minute video presentation of discussion paper content • FAQs • Online submission form 22 February to 22 March 2021 • https://www.yourvoiceourcoast.com/MTB • 1,575 visits during consultation period
Social media	• Facebook post on 25 February 2021 Reaching 4,478 users, attracting 40 Comments, 17 reactions and 6 shares • LinkedIn post in February 2021 reaching 8,683 followers • Copies of the posts/advertisements can be found in **Appendix C**

Presentation to Council Committees and Advisory Committees	- One hour presentation on 25 February 2021 given to interested members of the:
	   - Coastal Open Space System Committee
	   - Employment and Economic Development Committee
	   - Heritage Advisory Committee
	   - Pedestrian Access and Mobility Advisory Committee
	   - Tourism Advisory Committee

Hard copies placed on exhibition	- Hard copies of the discussion paper were available for viewing at Gosford, Erina, Lake Haven, Tuggerah, Woy Woy and Wyong, Customer Service Centres during the exhibition period
Emails/letters to stakeholders	- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service – Central Coast Area - Forestry Corporation of NSW - Department of Regional NSW - Adjoining local Council's - Central Coast Mountain Bike Trail Alliance - Central Coast MTB Club - Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council - Guringai Tribal Link Aboriginal Corporation - Businesses/groups with regular bookings in Council's natural reserves - Environmental groups on the Central Coast - Local high schools - People who had previously written to Council regarding the project and/or who had requested to be updated on the project - Council staff managing related projects

4. What we heard

Council sought feedback from the community between 22 February and 22 March 2021 via a guided submission form and/or emailed submission.

4.1 Method 1 - Guided submission form

A total of **245** completed guided submission forms were completed during the consultation period.

To make sure feedback was relevant to this stage of the consultation, respondents were strongly encouraged to read the discussion paper, watch the information video or contact the project team directly with any questions.

A note about sampling bias: This consultation was 'opt-in', which means participants proactively sought to participate as opposed to a sample or respondents being selected to accurately reflect and represent the population makeup of the Central Coast community.

The following are the responses to the questions raised in the form.

Figure 1: Please select which response/s best apply to you (*Participants could select multiple options – the results presented are based off total respondents*):

Response	Percentage
I have not watched the video overview	5%
I watched some of the video overview	7%
I watched all of the video overview	47%
I have not read the discussion paper	2%
I skimmed over the discussion paper, or read parts of it	35%
I have read the discussion paper in full	57%
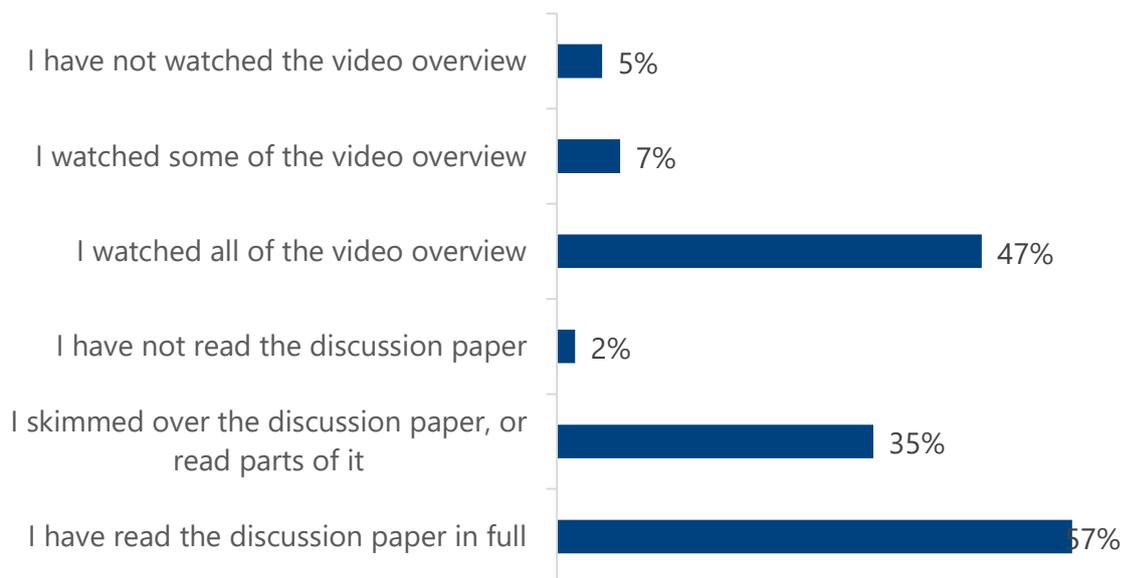
Total respondents = 245

Figure 2: How would you best describe your interest in this consultation you? (*Participants could select multiple options – the results presented are based off total respondents*)

Category	Percentage
I am a visitor to the Central Coast	11%
I mountain bike on the Central Coast	63%
I am a member of a mountain biking advocacy group or club	20%
I own or run a mountain biking-related enterprise	3%
I am a bushwalker or trail runner	5%
I am a member of the Aboriginal community	1%
I am a member of an environmental group	16%
Other (please specify)	13%
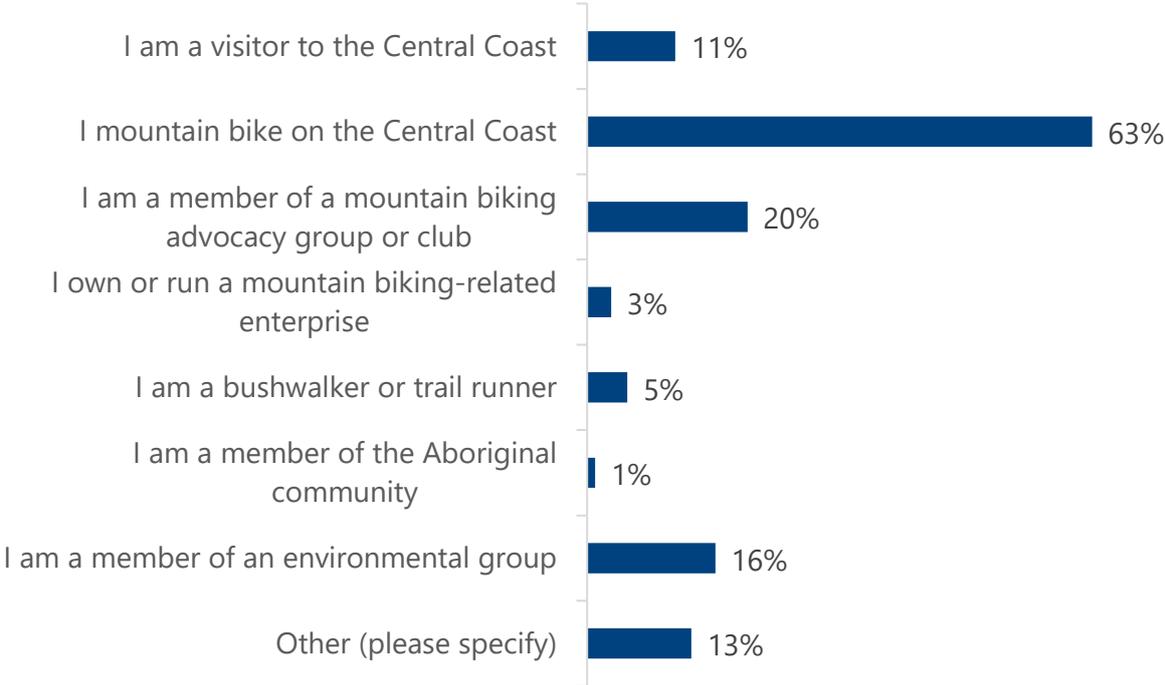
Total respondents = 245

Topic 1: Views and Attitudes

The discussion paper and the engagement report provided an overview of the community's views and attitudes towards mountain biking captured during the phase one consultation in 2019.

The most common issues and concerns identified were:

- conflict between users of shared trails
- environmental impacts of unauthorised trails
- lack of awareness regarding which trails are authorised for mountain biking
- construction of unauthorised trails
- need for an appropriate trail network
- limited supply of authorised trails and increasing demand for trails.

Figure 3: Do you think there any other views or attitudes on mountain biking on the Central Coast that have not been presented in the discussion paper or engagement report? – coded information.
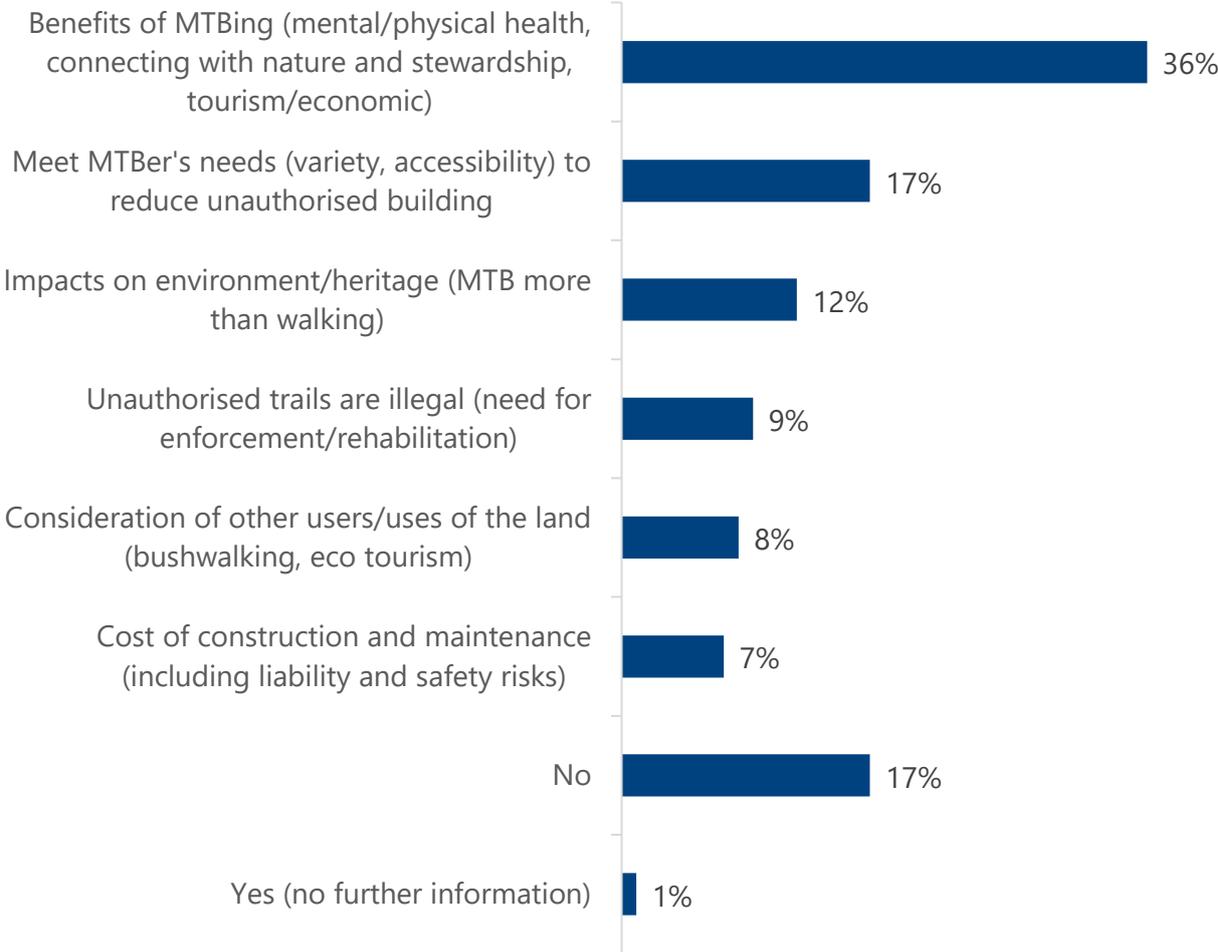
Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

A majority of the views/attitudes identified in Figure 3 were presented in Table 23 of the Phase One Engagement Report with the exception of:

- unauthorised trails are illegal (response and rehabilitation)
- liability and safety risks.

Topic 2: Site Selection Criteria

Chapter 9 of the discussion paper presented a site selection matrix which identified the most suitable locations for mountain bike trails or networks on land across the Central Coast.

The sites assessed in the matrix were categorised into four rating types:

- local,
- regional,

- national, or
- excluded.

These ratings are based on site selection criteria derived from the MTBA Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines, general trail planning, design, and construction principles. These are:

- length of trails
- number of loops
- proportion of single track
- minimum area of site
- location
- road access
- trail classification range

In addition, the consultant also considered additional criteria to assess feasibility.

Figure 4: Do you have any comments on how the site selection criteria have been applied to give the potential site a local, regional, national or excluded rating? – coded information.
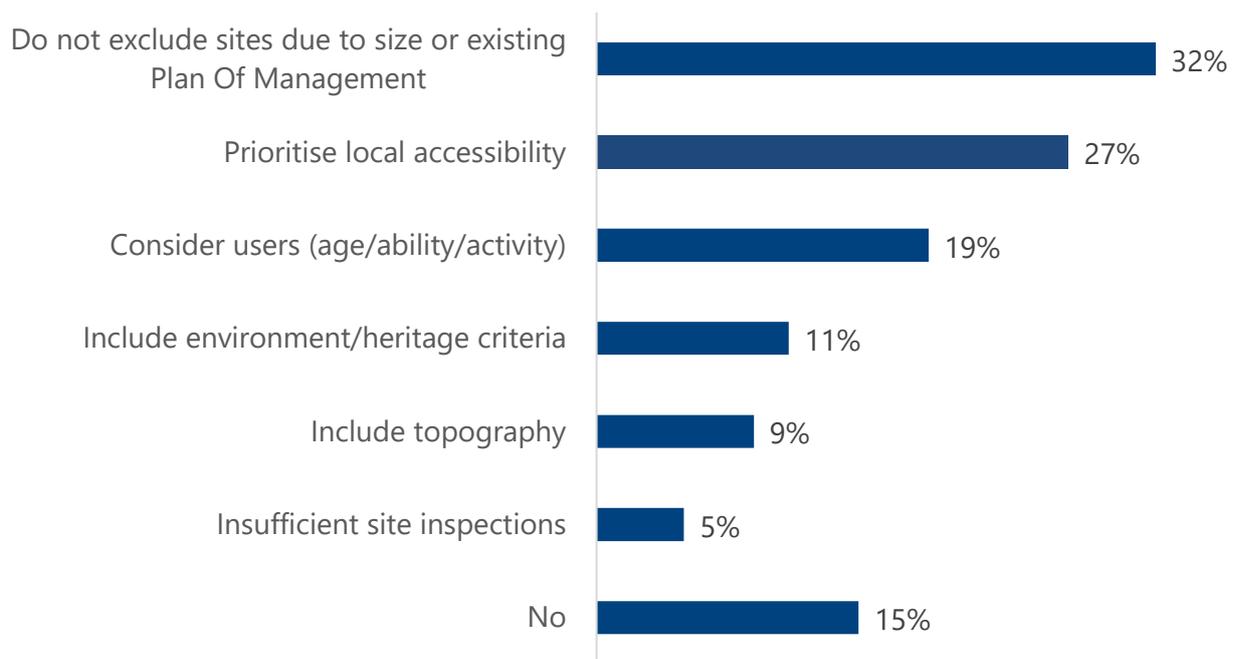
Category	Percentage
Do not exclude sites due to size or existing Plan Of Management	32%
Prioritise local accessibility	27%
Consider users (age/ability/activity)	19%
Include environment/heritage criteria	11%
Include topography	9%
Insufficient site inspections	5%
No	15%

Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

Figure 5: Are there any site selection criteria that could be removed? – coded information.
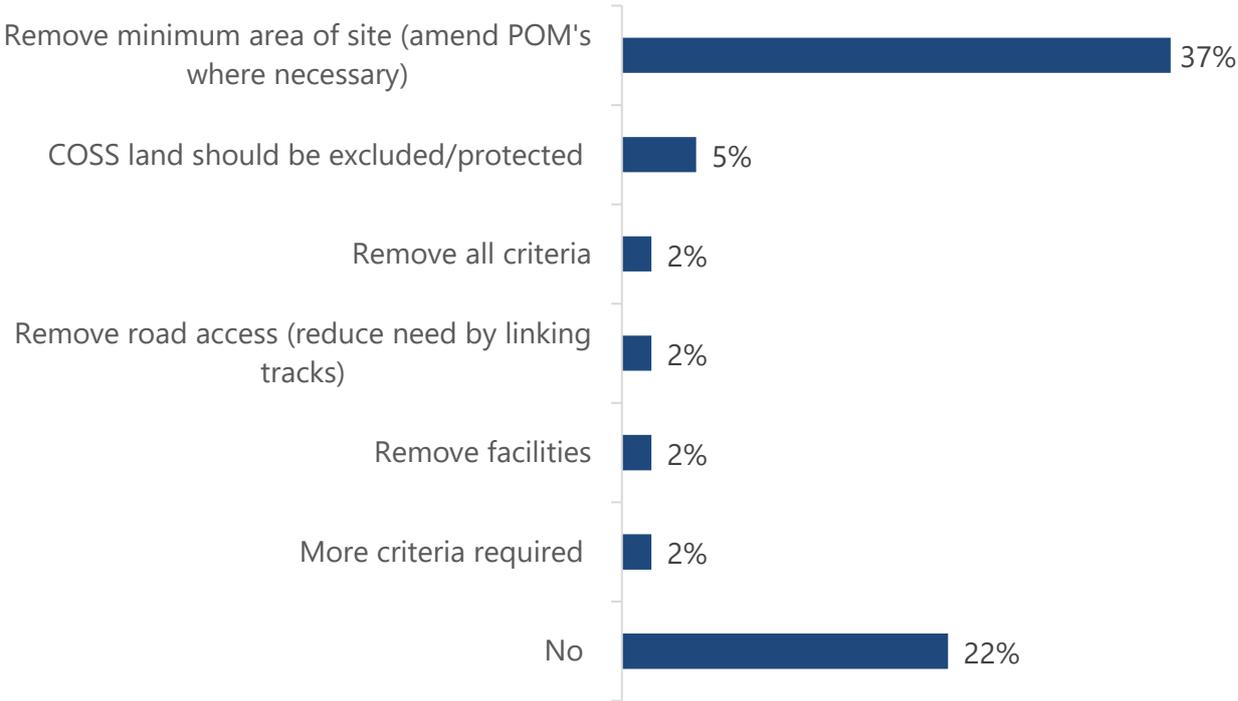
Remove minimum area of site (amend POM's where necessary)	37%
COSS land should be excluded/protected	5%
Remove all criteria	2%
Remove road access (reduce need by linking tracks)	2%
Remove facilities	2%
More criteria required	2%
No	22%

Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. Blank responses have not been included. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

All sites listed as suitable for mountain biking would be subject to landowner approval and further detailed assessment to fully investigate if a trail network could be established.

This detailed assessment would include:

- whether planning laws allow MTBing on the land
- potential environmental and cultural heritage impacts and mitigation strategies
- importance of the trail development to the local and wider community in terms of recreation, economy and health outcomes
- effects on the local community and existing users of a proposed location
- alignment with overall planning strategies for the region
- financial impact - funding and resourcing requirements

Figure 6: Noting these detailed assessments will be carried out before any network could be established, do you think additional criteria could be applied at this early feasibility stage to assess whether or not a site is suitable for mountain biking? – coded information.

Category	Percentage
Consider mitigation strategies (e.g. reroute or engineer) before exclude	29%
Meeting needs of MTBers (topography, local supply formalise or replace trails)	27%
Environment/heritage values (no go areas)	13%
Other site users	13%
Cost/benefit analysis	7%
Consideration of sites regardless of size (as part of network)(update POM's)	3%
As above	1%
No	12%
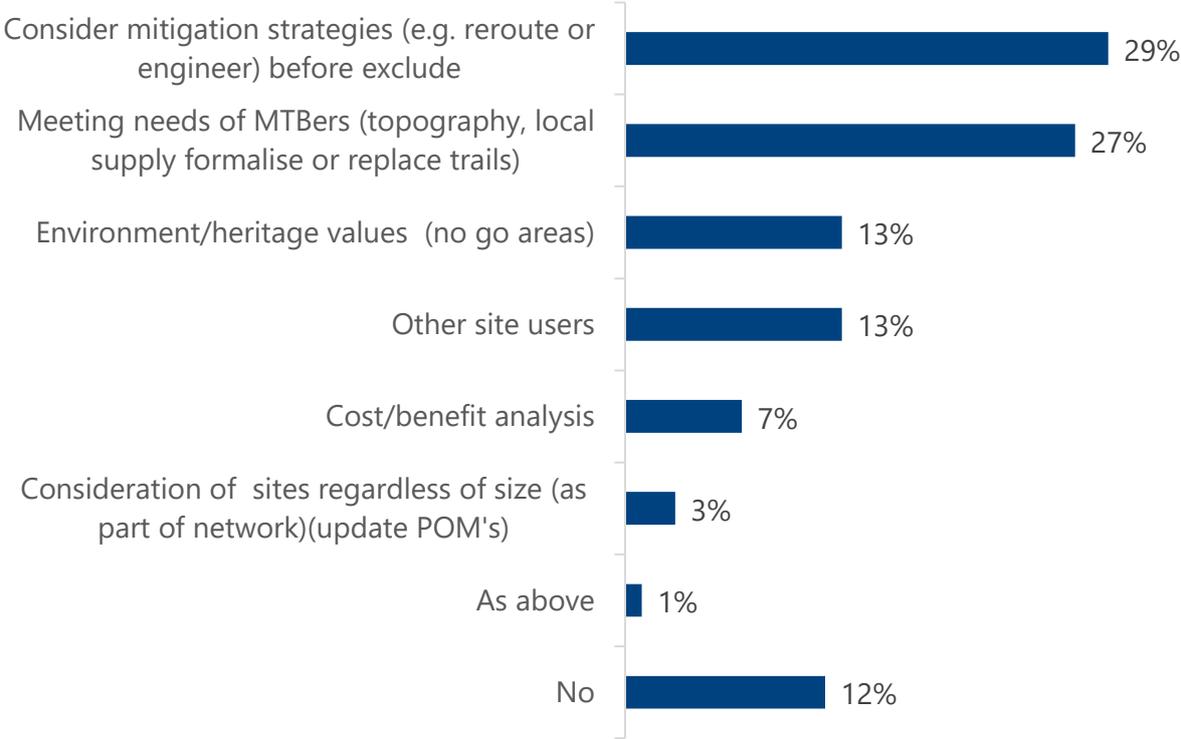
Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

Topic 3: Management Options

Chapter 10.4 of the Discussion Paper presented six options for responding to the current and future demand for mountain bike trails:

- Retain status quo
- Expand and enhance the shared trail network
- Increase education and awareness
- Improve partnerships
- Develop a regional trails plan
- Increase enforcement

Figure 7: Please rank the options in order of importance to you, with 1 having the highest importance and 6 having the lowest

Retain status quo	31% 14% 26% 20%	
Expand and enhance the shared trail network	24% 18% 13% 27% 9% 9%	
Increase education and awareness	15% 21% 23% 31%	
Improve partnerships	36% 22% 20% 13%	
Develop a regional trails plan	44% 22% 13% 12%	
Increase enforcement	15% 13% 62%	

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6
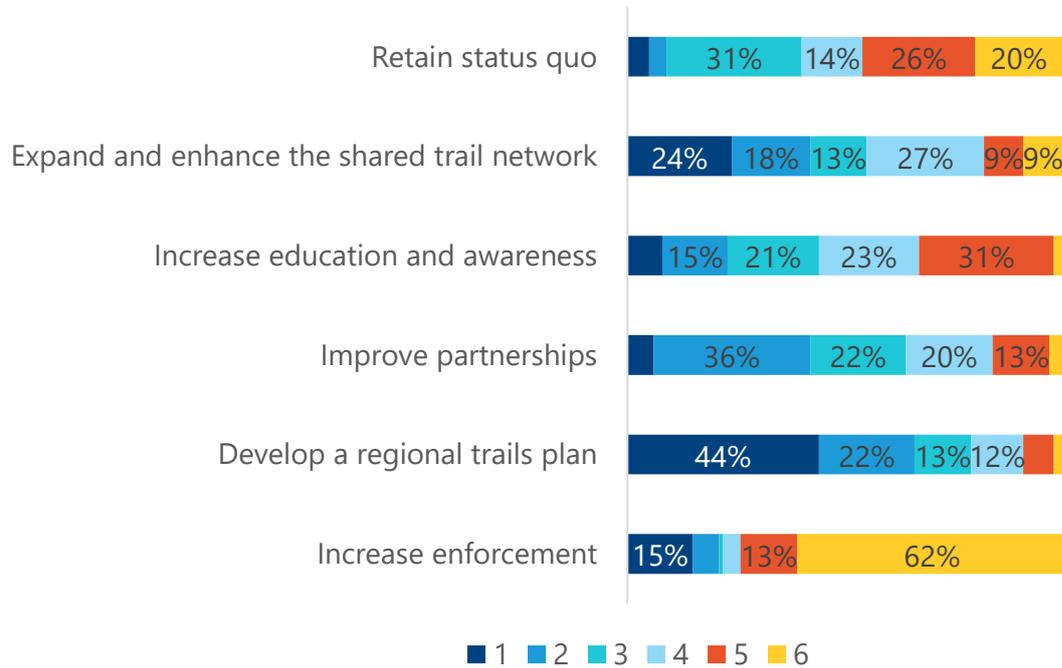
Figure 8: Please rank the options in order of importance to you, with 1 having the highest importance and 6 having the lowest.

Retain status quo	32% 8% 16% 34%	
Expand and enhance the shared trail network	8% 24% 27% 14% 25%	
Increase education and awareness	16% 29% 22% 11% 18%	
Improve partnerships	29% 12% 27% 25%	
Develop a regional trails plan	26% 22% 17% 22% 9%	
Increase enforcement	46% 14% 9% 28%	

■ 1 ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 ■ 6
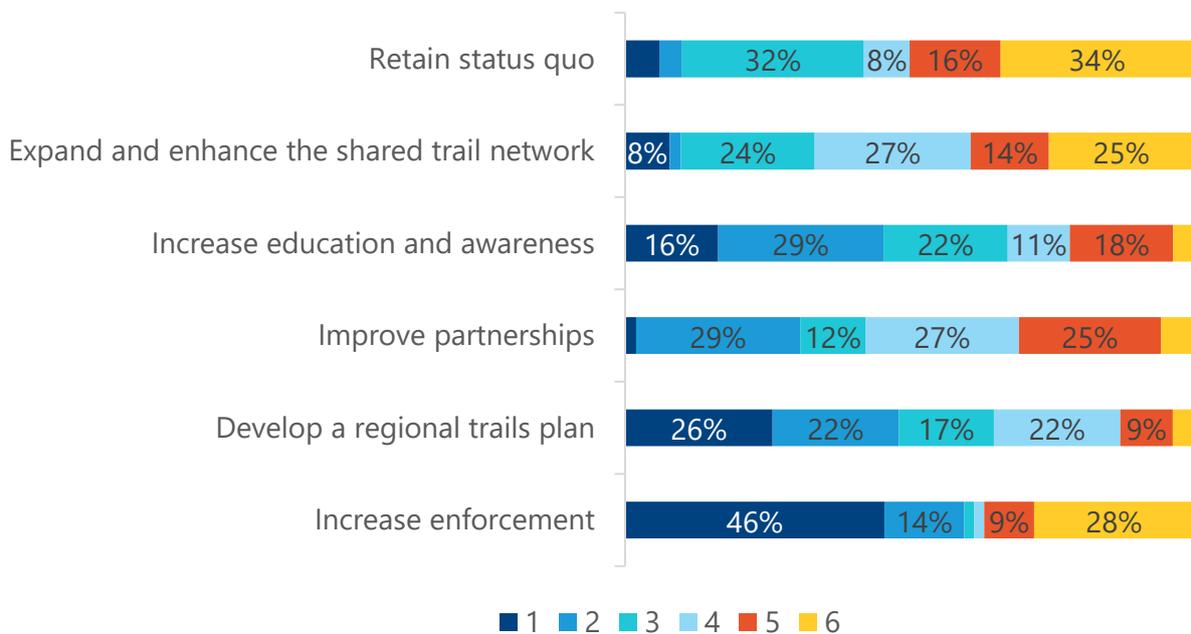
Limited to respondents that did not identify themselves as participating in mountain biking. Total respondents ranged between 50-57 as not all respondents ranked all options.

Topic 4: Recommendations

The discussion paper offered five recommendations for consideration (Chapter 2.2 in the Executive Summary):

1. **Trail assessment criteria:** Establish agreed trail assessment criteria to identify unauthorised trails that should be closed
2. **Trails audit and management program:** Undertake a trails audit and management program for Council's natural reserves
3. **Education and awareness program:** Develop an education and awareness program to be delivered by Council to provide information on mountain biking and the location of authorised trails in the Central Coast region
4. **Regional trails plan:** Prepare a Regional Trails Plan that could be led by Council and prepared in collaboration with state land managers and rider groups
5. **Trails approval process:** Adopt a trails approval process that allows local users and the community to have a say on any new trail proposals

Figure 9: Recommendations ranked in order of importance to respondents. 1 = highest importance and 6 =lowest importance.
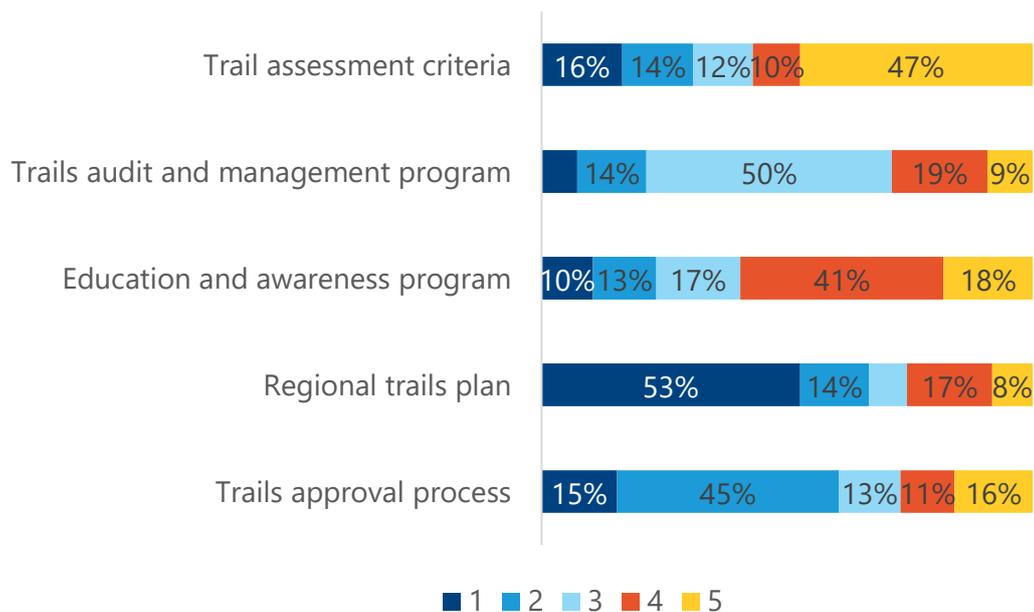
Figure 10: Recommendations ranked in order of importance to respondents. 1 = highest importance and 6 =lowest importance.
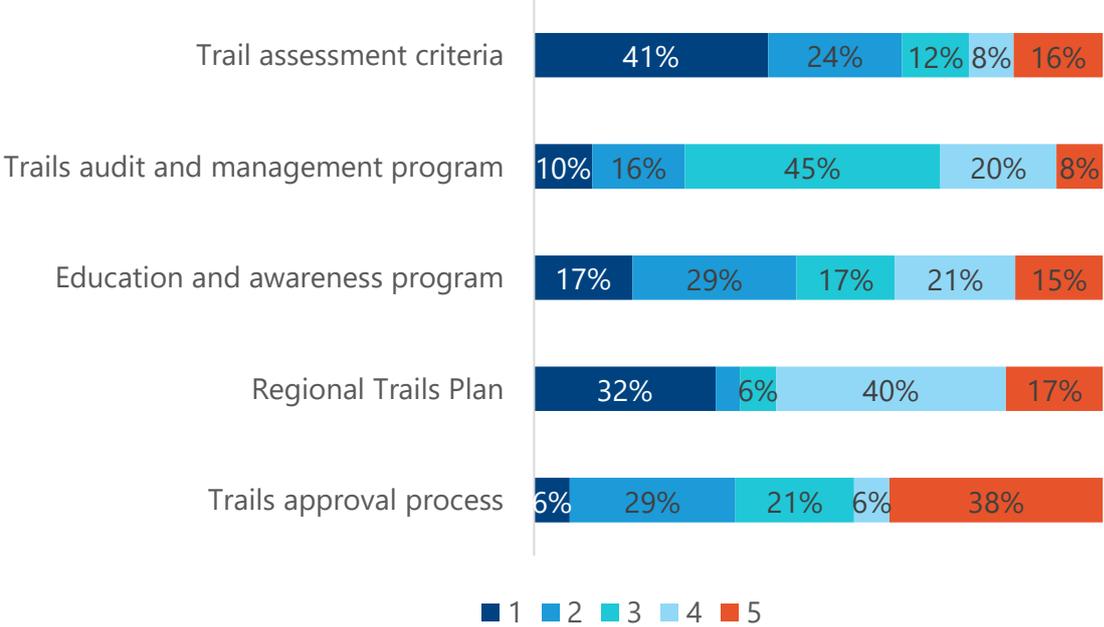
Limited to respondents that did not identify themselves as participating in mountain biking. Total respondents ranged between 47 - 52 as not all respondents ranked all recommendations.

**Figure 11:** Do you think there are other options Council could investigate to respond to the demand for mountain biking? – coded information.

Category	Percentage
Stakeholder engagement (other councils/Aboriginal community/businesses/MTBing...	36%
Meeting needs of users (demand/variety/walkers)	27%
Engage professional trail builders (sustainable /network)	25%
Investigate all options (private land/approving unauthorised trails/charging for sites)	15%
Unauthorized trails are illegal (response/rehabilitaion)	3%
Environmental and heritage impacts	2%
As above	2%
No	6%
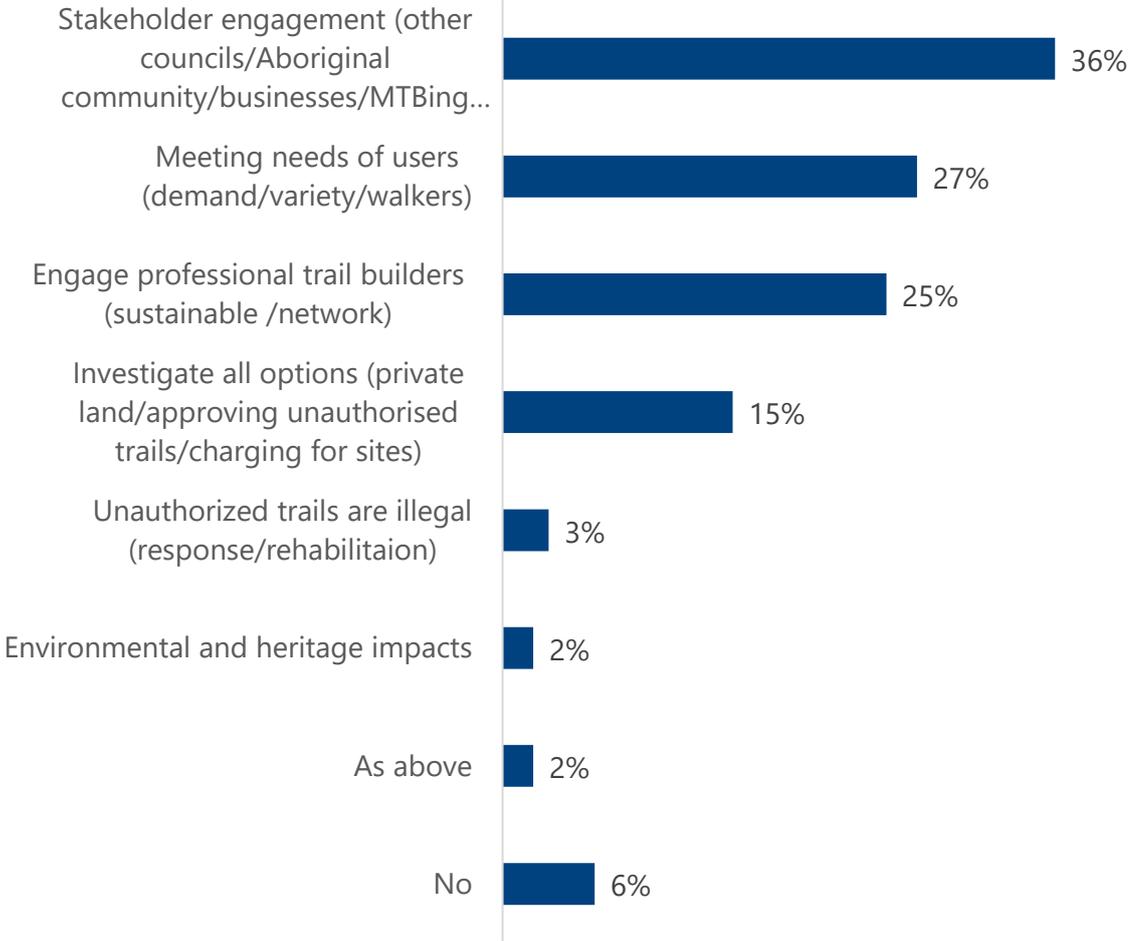
Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

Figure 12: Is there any more information Council may need to consider before adopting any of the recommendations? – coded information.
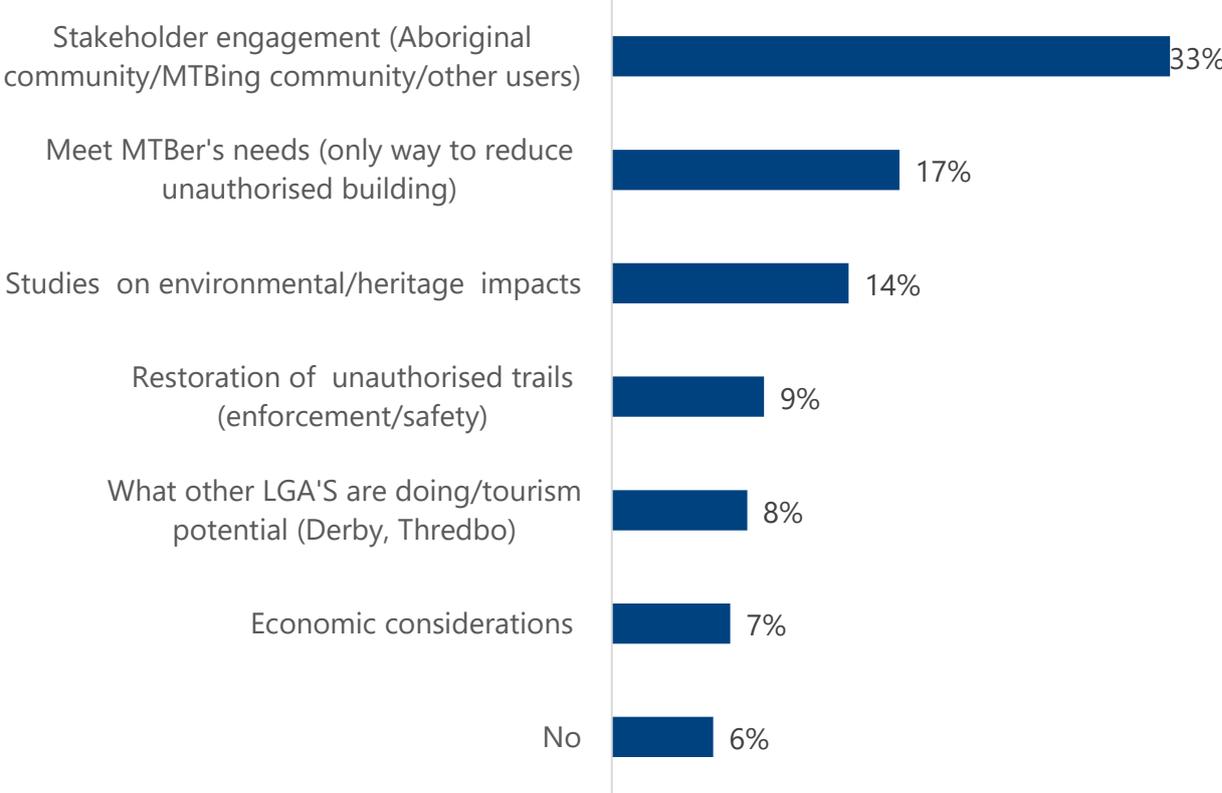
Category	Percentage
Stakeholder engagement (Aboriginal community/MTBing community/other users)	33%
Meet MTBer's needs (only way to reduce unauthorised building)	17%
Studies on environmental/heritage impacts	14%
Restoration of unauthorised trails (enforcement/safety)	9%
What other LGA'S are doing/tourism potential (Derby, Thredbo)	8%
Economic considerations	7%
No	6%

Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. Blank responses have not been included. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

Figure 13: Do you have any further comments regarding mountain biking on the Central Coast? – coded information.
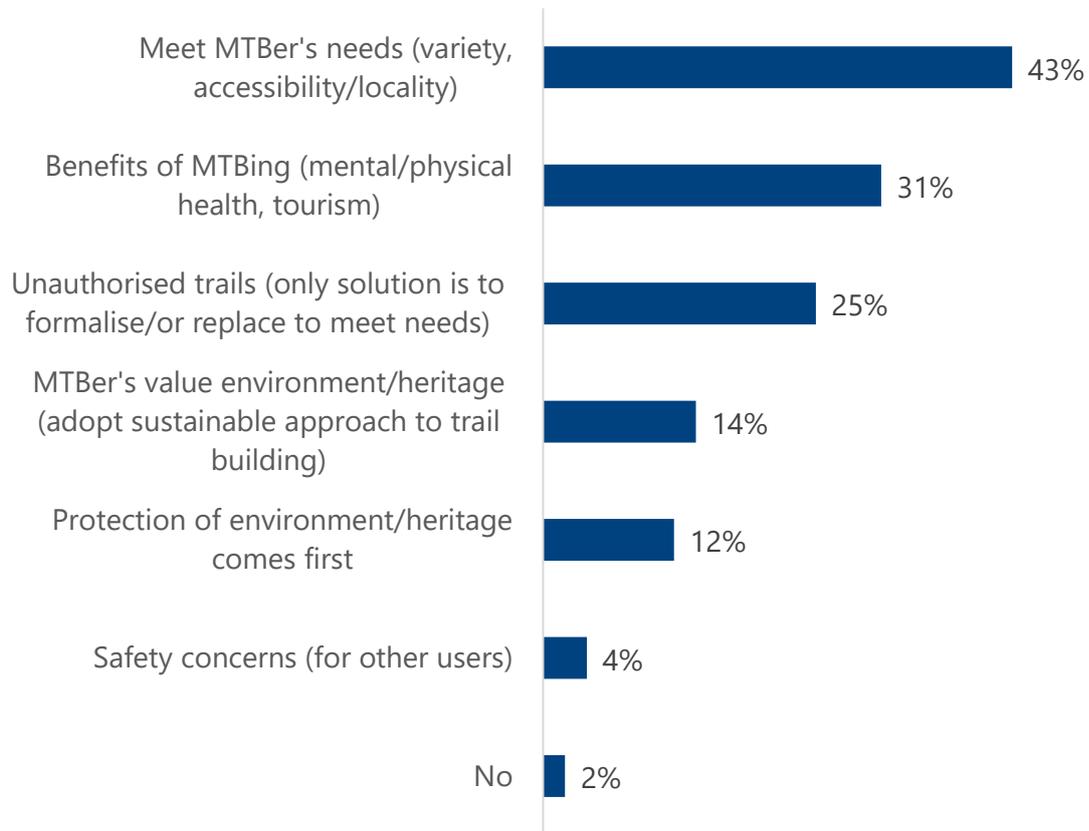
| Category	%
Meet MTBer's needs (variety, accessibility/locality)	43%
Benefits of MTBing (mental/physical health, tourism)	31%
Unauthorised trails (only solution is to formalise/or replace to meet needs)	25%
MTBer's value environment/heritage (adopt sustainable approach to trail building)	14%
Protection of environment/heritage comes first	12%
Safety concerns (for other users)	4%
No	2%

Multiple codes per submissions could be applied. The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

Figure 14: Did you complete the initial MTB survey we ran in 2019?

Response	%
Yes	32%
No	35%
I'm unsure	22%
No response	11%
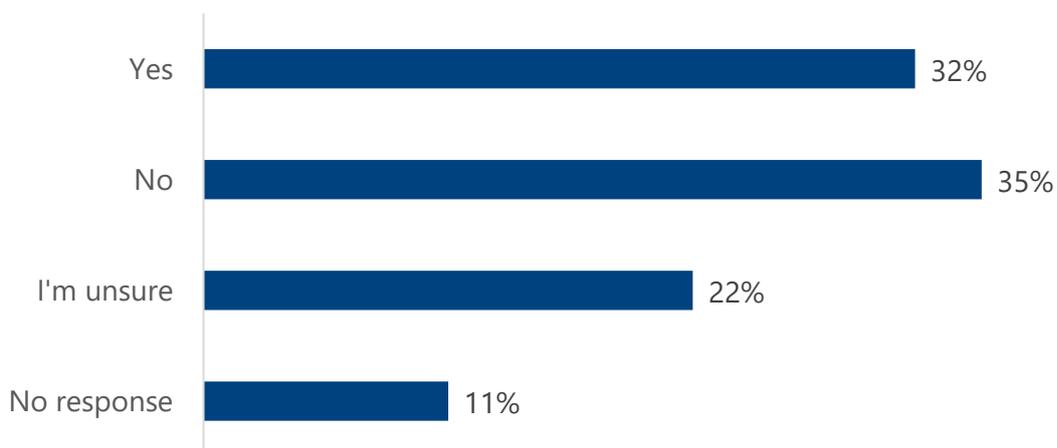
The results presented are based off total respondents. Total respondents = 245.

4.2 Method 2 – Emailed submissions

A total of **43** emailed submissions were received during the consultation period.

An additional **62** emailed submissions were received that exclusively expressed support for the Central Coast Trail Alliance and/or Central Coast Mountain Bike Club's submissions.

A further **32** emails were received that provided feedback but did not meet Council's requirements to be considered a submission during the consultation period.

The topics raised in emailed submissions and level of support for each mirrored the feedback received from the online submission form. The following range of topics were raised in emailed submissions:

Topic 1: Views and Attitudes

Feedback provided in the submissions that were provided via email on the views and attitudes included:

- o positive benefits of mountain biking on health and well-being, social connection, tourism and other local businesses
- o unauthorised tracks are illegal
- o unsanctioned trails occur due to local rider demand, usage and accessibility
- o concerns that the Discussion Paper understates the damage illegal mountain bike activity is having in Council-owned reserves, in particular Kincumba Mountain and COSS, including substantial environmental damage and risk of harm to Aboriginal heritage sites
- o concerns that environmental and heritage impacts of mountain biking are based on observation of unauthorised trail construction and not sustainable, professionally built trails
- o trail corridor determines impact not the user
- o concerns that opposition to mountain bike trails driven by personal prejudice as opposed to any fact-based position, for example the unchallenged impact of the 1.8 metre wide machine excavated corridor proposed through endangered ecological community for the Terrigal Lagoon (walking) trail
- o comments about it being time to move from current system of unsanctioned trail building and toward a formalised network of dedicated locally accessible purpose-built sustainable mountain bike trails that meets community desires for diversity and progression that is supported by Council.

Topic 2: Site Selection Criteria

Feedback provided in the submissions that were provided via email on the site selection criteria included:

- o include a community value index (based on existing use)
- o include environmental and heritage criteria based on professional environmental and heritage assessments and consider applicable mitigation strategies when assessing risk

- o delete minimum area for sites as it removes small valuable trails and sites suitable for miniparks, dirt-jumps and pump tracks and hinders ability to create locally accessible trails. Would exclude Ourimbah MTB Park that occupies 226 Ha as meeting local significance criteria
- o include all land tenure – public and private, COSS and Council managed lands
- o exclude (no go) COSS and areas of cultural heritage value
- o include all Council land - plays an important role for mountain bikers with much of the local user demand occurring on these lands
- o include land-use planning zone, note Council-owned COSS land is zoned E2
- o comments about Council's ongoing commitment to COSS and the community values it represents
- o include other users and uses of sites and potential impacts on these from mountain biking
- o exclude Kincumba Mountain or Rumbalara-Katandra-Ferntree Reserves - not suitable to be developed as regional mountain bike facilities due to erodible soils, potential damage to sensitive EECs and habitats and Aboriginal cultural significance
- o undertake rigorous scientific assessment of land suitability to identify sites for new trails or approval of unauthorised trails
- o Council must assume and recognise its responsibility to provide dedicated mountain bike infrastructure within its own lands and not shift responsibility to other land managers when majority demand occurs on their land at the interface with highly populated urban areas.

Topics 3 and 4: Management Options and Recommendations

Feedback provided in the submissions that were provided via email on the management options and recommendations included:

- o undertake broad stakeholder and community engagement, ongoing communication and establishment of collaborative partnerships throughout any future processes including environmental and indigenous groups, mountain biking community, clubs and organisations, other user groups, tourism and business representatives and land managers and NSW Sport representatives
- o Council can't afford to move forward on this
- o direct funding solely to signage about the penalties, surveillance cameras, enforcement action and bush regeneration
- o large scale concentrated mountain bike parks will not remove need for local trails, may increase local demand by increasing participation, will require significant vehicle-based travel time and require significant budget and time to construct. Alternative proposal of a dispersed trail network would be more flexible to constraints and demands, requires fewer ancillary facilities, can be incrementally planned and constructed as budgets become available
- o undertake trail audit, prepare and implement closure and rehabilitation procedure, education program and effective enforcement strategy
- o Council should work with private landholders to develop and promote facilities for mountain bikers and focus on the Central Coast's potential as an eco-tourism destination
- o trails audit and management program – prioritise formalising existing unauthorised trails where appropriate otherwise replace existing trails with like for like trails in the same location with the same length, grade, and purpose and that are planned, constructed and maintained through models of ecological and cultural sustainability. This is a proven means of mitigating and eliminating unsanctioned trails

- o trails audit and management program - illegal tracks should not be converted into sanctioned or legal tracks as this endorses and rewards illegal behaviour. All illegal tracks need to be audited, closed and remediated as the first step
- o expand and enhance shared trail network - management trails, fire trails and shared trails are generally not suitable nor desired for mountain biking. Will not reduce unsanctioned trail building. Shared trails (walkers/riders) are not appropriate for safety reasons
- o prepare a Regional Trails Plan – shift focus from facility based to a dispersed trail network focused on dedicated MTB single track, that offers diversity and progression and is locally accessible. Plan to be progressed by a cross-functional working group
- o adopt a trails approval process - suggests new trails can be added in an ad-hoc open-ended manner as demand increases or desire arises with no upper limit
- o education and compliance options – education and compliance without required infrastructure would not be effective at reducing unauthorised track construction
- o develop processes to manage, monitor and evaluate protection of public safety and sensitive environmental and heritage areas
- o establish agreed guidelines for the design and operation of mountain bike facilities.

Other commentary received:

Council also received other commentary within the emailed submissions identifying information Council should consider prior to the adoption of any of the recommendations, these comments included:

- o evidence that providing new tracks to meet demand will stop unauthorised track construction
- o demand analysis for mountain bike facilities on the Central Coast
- o survey of whether ratepayers support Council allocating funds to prepare a regional mountain bike plan, or establishment and ongoing maintenance of dedicated trails beyond fire trails and existing sanctioned trails in the LGA
- o economic analysis of the Central Coast becoming a mountain biking destination
- o systematic trail audit of all Council reserves that quantifies footprint of existing unauthorised trails, assessment of ecological and heritage impact of each trail, estimated asset value, replacement cost, value to local economy (current and future opportunities) and value to local community health and wellness
- o capital and whole of life cost analysis for each recommendation and Council's ongoing commitment for funding to address required rehabilitation, especially given Council's financial position
- o an effective enforcement strategy.

Additional commentary included the following:

- o disconnect between Council building a mountain bike profile for the Central Coast whilst restricting access for mountain bikers to Council land, writing misinformation in Council documents and lacking any coherent communication strategy
- o the objective to attract biking tourism from outside the Central Coast guarantees no possible network could satisfy future demand
- o Kincumba Mountain was identified as a location of high importance for mountain biking but also for biodiversity, environmental and cultural heritage values

  o MTBing is deemed appropriate in National Parks and World Heritage areas. Does Central Coast Council have greater conservation responsibilities than NPWS?

4.3 Sample of comments from consultation

There were multiple opportunities to provide feedback throughout the guided submission form as well as via emailed submissions, below is a sample of the comments provided by respondents. Some comments have had minor editing to provide clarity.

Topic 1: Views and Attitudes

"…increased accessibility for adaptive mountain bikes. I am a nearby resident and also require adaptive tracks to ride. It would greatly increase my community interaction (being able to ride with my mates once again) and provide general health benefits to me and others like me."

"I think we need to listen to the Aboriginal people and their voice about the destruction of their sites needs to be forefront."

"…there is a total lack of confidence of the public in trusting CCC in managing the implementation and ongoing maintenance of professionally designed and built trails to a standard that has no adverse impact on the sensitive areas of many reserves."

"…extended negative experiences of Council interactions have created a visible 'trust gap' with the riding community that contributes to disengagement with Council processes and a 'DIY' approach to community and trail building."

"Mountain biking contributes little to our community. Make them make the case for a fee doing so much damage. They are on record for environmental destruction on Kincumber mountain."

"The positive benefits of engaging in mountain biking; physical, mental and social health rated very little mention…Mountain Biking should not be viewed as a management issue. Instead it should be seen as recreation that is enabled by council for local residents, due to the benefits that participants receive and the conservation outcomes that can be derived."

"…ride your mountain bikes in your own land. Form clubs, lease and buy the land. But do not ask me to pay for your indulgence and lack of care."

"Bushwalker safety. Due to increased mountain bike traffic in Kincumber mountain (my backyard) it is unsafe to bushwalk - too many close calls where myself and the mountain biker have nearly collided due to speed on descent and narrow paths. It's just not safe, especially for little kids (my toddler is terrified, as he has nearly been hit a few times)."

"...the potential to cause social conflict between mountain bike riders and community members who engage in passive interactions with the bush/nature, e.g. bird watchers, bush walkers, and forest bathers. Many people escape to bushland areas for peace and quiet."

"We are not opposed to the creation of limited, solidly constructed mountain bike track in suitable areas provided there is no environmental risk nor impact on other users."

"...Council must realise that construction of unsanctioned trails is not wilful vandalism on the part of the trail builder, instead it is a community response to an ongoing frustration that has no sign of any form of outcome. If proper infrastructure is not provided then informal trail building will continue."

"Establishing trail networks encourages people to be active in their local communities connecting with each other and the natural area through shared experience and the time invested in it."

Topic 2: Site Selection Criteria

"The minimum area appears a bit large for local trails - according to the document rideshare Kulnura has ~27km of trails in 170ha and the club at Ourimbah only has access to ~210ha (out of ~3000). From the Hornsby shire council website, Old Mans Valley is approximately 12.5ha and it has a successful local trail network."

"The overall area required to class an area as suitable for a local trail network should be greatly reduced - this should be considered more in line with a football field or local park. Small mtn bike trail loops of varying degrees of difficulty can be made in surprisingly small areas - and hence provide increased amenities to local residents"

"The site selection criteria look to be biased towards single location "bike parks". That is not how the central coast network operates and how it supports rider demand. A desktop analysis does not reflect how the Central Coast communities use the bushland to connect to each other and to connect to the network. The Central Coast, due to its topography, has corridors that connect the larger sections of the illegitimate MTB network. These should be maintained so that the network continues to act as it does now - as a holistic connection of the Central Coast. The land size should not be the primary calculator. The Central Coast is not a "one site" attraction such as Derby in Tasmania. The network is far more complex and ties all the small communities together."

"The large land area criteria - this should be reconsidered- as it can lead to larger travel distances for users to reach trails. More small local trails can encourage rides without the use of cars to access areas."

"...excluding sites based on size limits functionality and reduces access for riders, particularly young riders without transport."

"A way to link the various areas has not been considered. Imagine a combined section. Bouddi Kincumber, Katandra, Ourimbah and Gosford. This would be a game changer and massive tourist attraction."

"Trail networks can also be used as a safer means of travel, accessing other areas of the coast, without having to resort to riding on busy and dangerous roads with minimal cycle lanes."

"...the criteria are overcooked for local use trails. stick a pump track next to an oval. regrade the fire trails and provide signage at each end telling you where you'll end up and how steep it is. build easy little links."

"Mountain Bike Trails that cross through sensitive natural areas can still be incorporated as trail building engineering solutions can often remove the specific impact and allow a trail to sustainably cross sensitive areas. Rerouting small sections of trails rather than closing an entire trail is also an option that must be considered."

"I am opposed to the site selection criteria process. Central Coast Council should not be pursuing any expansion of mountain bike riding on the Central Coast. Illegal trains should be closed. Mountain Bikers should pay for land and develop their own trails on that privately owned land."

"No reference has been made to the potential impact on other users of the land – this should have been included in the selection criteria and should be a key consideration."

"From a strategic viewpoint- generally COSS lands should be a "no go" area except for the use of fire trails to provide access through to other more suitable areas and possibly lower environmentally sensitive pockets that may pass the assessment criteria."

Topic 3: Management Options

"... the dispersed trail network concept. This strategy provides a workable basis for Council to provide mountain bike infrastructure, in less intensive fashion, requiring lower capital outlay and more in keeping with the values of Council managed bushland. It aligns better with general community expectations and offers multiple benefits."

"Supply, small destinations around the coast where illegal trails are being built to prevent them and create official networks managed by volunteers."

"To seek state or federal funding in the development of mountain bike trails"

"Introduce a yearly and short term, trail permit pass. This would help provide funds for development and maintenance of trails."

"...increased communication between the community and the council is important. Mountain bikers do not want to cause environmental damage, erosion, etc. when they build trails and are very apprehensive about the Council coming in and destroying them. If the community and the council can comfortably talk about if they can or can't build a trail, and how they can build and maintain trails, then we can solve any potential conflicts much easier."

"...a trail network concept plan should be first developed by a professional trail building organisation in conjunction with direct involvement with the local mountain bike community, Council and traditional owners. As this will be a dedicated trail network for mountain bikers additional plans to upgrade and expand the bushwalking trail network should be planned in conjunction."

"Perhaps single track could be proposed to run close to existing fire trails?"

"Council should have a MTB advisory group made up of the various MTB clubs in the area."

"Invest in pop up cafe (shipping container or the like) and lease it to an operator. Provide a website with trail maps but incorporate it with all types of riding. E.g www.ride Dungog.com.au"

"Just legalise the building of "illegal trails" and try and get your budget in order instead of telling citizens where they can't ride and build trails."

"Find more appropriate land that doesn't disturb traditional sites. Or build one somewhere else."

"...Incorporating several options into a strategic plan which concurrently looks at future trails plan while working with local communities to address local needs (audit current trails, assess user safety environmental cost factor trade-offs & alternatives, determine rectification actions such as improve some trails and remediate others and build alternatives eg pump skills circuit) is an option. The phasing of works within a Strategic Plan means that activities can be progressed as funding and criticality allows whilst ensuring that the big picture vision (such as developing and maintaining local, regional and world class national trails network) and goals (safe, environmentally sustainable, etc) remain consistent."

"Engage local "MTB ambassadors" - local businesses and individual influencers who can provide input and spearhead a community program."

Topic 4: Recommendations

"A formalisation of local volunteer riders lead by council earth workers could be a safe and cost effective work force - to make required improvements to existing unauthorised trails to bring them up to whatever criteria is required. Empowering and involving the local users will aid in the enforcement stage of closing and regeneration of a percentage of unauthorised trails that are deemed to not meet said criteria."

"Of the final recommendations of the discussion paper, the first refers to closing trails, and there are 2 programs, 1 plan, and 1 process. Nowhere is there any commitment to building trails, just more process. Meanwhile even a small council like Dungog is in the doing phase and reaping the benefits."

"Detailed demand analysis, quantitative and empirical. Send it out with the next rates notice. Let's find out the real levels of demand before we spend any more rate payer funds. Detailed site audit of every site mentioned in the discussion paper. Hardly any sites were even visited by the consultants, this must be done before any further action is taken. Consequently I'd argue Council cannot afford the site audit. Do the demand analysis of the whole population. If there really is unmet demand, then move on. If not, can this project."

"...resourcing impact for capital and ongoing costs must be transparent before adopting the recommendations. There needs to be an upfront commitment of ongoing funding to offset the amount of rehabilitation required."

"Financially Council is currently unable to carry out its primary responsibilities with the reserves and existing trails so it is essential to have a realistic management model prior to the construction of any new trails."

Other comments regarding mountain biking on the Central Coast

"Ever-increasing tourism is NOT the answer for the Central Coast. Our economy should be driven with futuristic and environmentally regenerative industries... Tourism will clog our beaches, clog our parking, clog our everythings ... and drive up prices ... and attract yet more population which drives the vicious circle further and faster."

"I think there is considerable scope to establish a variety of MTB facilities on the Central Coast in a sustainable fashion. This discussion paper (thank you) is a valuable step towards community-wide agreement about what can and cannot occur in which locations."

"Kincumba Mountain in many ways is the 'hot topic', and for good reason. Though unauthorised, the trail network there is excellent, extensive and it's in close proximity to many people. It has been serving many mountain bikers well for many years. Leveraging the existing network as much as possible, with some augmentation, makes a lot of sense. Particularly when the council's current financial situation is brought into the picture. Managing this with opponents of such a strategy however will need careful consideration."

"This whole report and survey seems to dressed up as a mechanism to remove existing trail networks. The council needs to be genuine about its efforts to provide the community with facilities that are better than what is offered by the unsanctioned networks. The only way to test this is to leave older networks open after new sanctioned ones are created and have them compete. If you don't do this, the whole exercise will have achieved nothing."

"Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates V-shaped ruts, kills small animals and plants on and next to the trail, drives wildlife and other trail users out of the area, and, worst of all, teaches kids that the rough treatment of nature is okay (it's NOT!). What's good about THAT?"

"Only a well-planned approach is likely to be acceptable to most party's. The complete eradication of unauthorised trails is unlikely under any scenario but can be vastly reduced with the right plan going forward."

"Don't delay or else more unauthorised tracks will develop due to the need for riding tracks. Not all trails need to be technical as many just enjoy off road riding."

"Environmental conservation is important for mountain bikers. If the trails damage the bush and cause erosion and degradation, they can't ride there anymore. It often feels like we are on conflicting sides with the Council but we really shouldn't be"

"If mountain bike infrastructure is supplied that does not meet community expectation then this will have no effect on the construction and use of unsanctioned trails."

"Yes it's only a good thing. Yes it has environmental impacts but pretty much everyone I see on a mountain bike is a nature lover - that's why they're doing something outside. There is a balance but to shutdown something or slow it down because it impacts the environment is ridiculous, going for a picnic impacts the environment - we all have to share what's on offer, we pay rates and taxes and see it all go off to big developments in the cities, just let us play in the dirt."

'It is really important to protect COSS and National Parks on Central Coast and keep MBs to existing fire and other infrastructure trails. If people want to drive dangerously they have to go to specific sites; MB trails need to be set up away from protected bushland and pedestrians'

"Council should be monitoring illegal activity on its reserves, closing illegal tracks, prosecuting illegal tree removal and other environmental vandalism and spending its money on weed control and other bush management measures that are so desperately needed. Mountain bike riders should pay for access to extreme sport facilities like everyone else."

"…rejects the assumption that new trails will reduce demand to the point where illegal trails are not being created. This has not occurred in reserves managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, including Royal National Park, Kosciuszko National Park and Glenrock State Recreation Area, where networks of illegal trails have been created even after mountain biking was permitted."

"The resourcing impact for capital and ongoing costs must be transparent before adopting the recommendations. There needs to be an upfront commitment of ongoing funding to offset the amount of rehabilitation required."

"questionable whether Central Coast Council can afford this speculative project with significant and quantifiable costs in exchange for benefits and revenue streams that have not been quantified in the discussion paper."

4.4 Key findings from consultation

A majority (63%) of respondents indicated that they mountain bike on the Central Coast.

The key findings from the views and attitudes component include:

- the discussion paper and engagement report captured a majority of the community's views and attitudes towards mountain biking on the Central Coast

- a key view was the benefits of mountain biking on mental and physical health, people connecting with nature support and local tourism and businesses
- a key attitude was that provision of sufficient (local accessibility, diversity, distance) authorised trails that meet demand is the only way to reduce unauthorised trail construction
- an alternative key attitude is that unauthorised trails are illegal and should be closed and remediated
- key concerns related to the impacts of mountain biking on environmental and heritage values and other reserve users and Council's liability, particularly in relation to illegal bike tracks.

The key findings from the site selection criteria component include:

- the site selection criteria need to be refined, agreed to by stakeholders and reapplied to all land
- the minimum size for a local site should be deleted. Criteria for road access, toilets and other facilities should be deleted
- additional criteria should be included: community value index, impact on other site users/uses, environmental and heritage constraints/no go areas, topography, land use zoning and mitigation strategies
- each site should be inspected, environmental and heritage impacts assessed, cost-benefit analysed and mitigation strategies considered before sites are recommended for selection.

The key findings from the management options component include:

- development of a regional trails plan, improving partnerships and expanding and enhancing the shared trail network were the three options of highest importance on average for all respondents. Retaining status quo was ranked the second lowest in importance for all respondents.
- for respondents that did not identify themselves as participating in mountain biking, the three options of highest importance were increasing enforcement, development of a regional trails plan and increasing education and awareness
- in addition, there was support expressed for:
  - effective engagement and collaborative partnerships with a range of stakeholders including mountain biking community, Aboriginal community, environmental and heritage community groups, other users, local businesses and operators, land managers, at each stage of the process
  - engaging professional trail builders to identify sustainable trail networks and construction techniques
  - investigating all options including private land, user pay systems and formalising unauthorised tracks.

The key findings from the recommendations component include:

- development of a regional trails plan, a trails approval process and a trails audit and management program were the three recommendations of highest importance on average for all respondents
- for respondents that did not identify themselves as participating in mountain biking, the recommendations of highest importance were establishing agreed trail assessment criteria and a regional trails plan
- there was consensus that:
  - engagement, ongoing communication and establishment of collaborative partnerships must occur with the mountain biking community, Aboriginal community, environmental and heritage groups, other users, local businesses and operators, land managers and public agencies, at each stage of the process
  - selection criteria and a trails approval and closure process must be established and agreed upfront as a priority
  - shared trails are not suitable or preferred by either riders or other reserve users including runners and walkers
  - mountain bike riders support a dispersed trail network with equitable locally accessible nodes such as small trails, dirt jumps, pump tracks and skills development areas rather than discrete large facilities
- key points of contention include whether or not:
  - provision of authorised tracks that meet demand will reduce unauthorised track construction and associated impacts to environment, heritage and other users
  - unauthorised trails on Council land should be considered for formalisation in any future trail network.
  - dedicated mountain biking trails should be built on COSS land.
  - a majority of ratepayers support Council funding mountain biking facilities and if there is sufficient demand and economic benefit.

Other information Council should consider before adopting any of the recommendations includes:

- evidence that providing new tracks to meet demand will stop unauthorised track construction
- demand and economic analyses for mountain bike facilities on the Central Coast and ratepayer support for allocation of funds to plan and provide infrastructure
- systematic trail audit of unauthorised trails in Council reserves detailing environmental and heritage impact and community and economic benefit
- cost benefit analysis for each recommendation and Council's ongoing commitment to fund given current financial position
- what other LGAs are doing, including effective enforcement strategies.

5. Council's response

A full list of themes raised throughout consultation can be found in **Section 4**. Council's response to these themes can also be found in this section.

Due to the large volume and variety of content contained within community feedback, not every issue or theme was able to be included and responded to in the following table, however all feedback has been read and will be considered by the project team.

Table 1: Issues and responses

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
Topic 1: Views and attitudes	Unauthorised trails are illegal, damage the environmental and heritage values of Council reserves and should be closed and remediated	Council does not currently have sufficient information to estimate the number of locations or the total length of unauthorised mountain bike trails across the Central Coast. Construction of an unauthorised trail on Council managed land may constitute multiple offences depending the nature of the construction, site values and protection and management framework of the land. Unauthorised trails can be closed by removing any unauthorised structures, installing signage, installing physical barriers (such as fencing or woody debris) and revegetating or 'brushmatting' exposed soil. Previous instances where Council has closed trails has in some cases been ineffective in the longer term. An aim of the mountain bike feasibility study was to minimise the key drivers for the building of unauthorised trails. Feedback during this phase of consultation was that the only way to reduce unauthorised trail construction is to provide purpose-built trails that meet the needs of riders. In the NSW NPWS (2011) 'Sustainable Mountain Biking Strategy' a key strategy for reducing unauthorised track construction was to

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		provide a small number of high quality single-track mountain bike experiences that meet rider's needs. The strategy also discussed that development of partnerships during the design, construction, and maintenance of mountain bike experiences, including modification of existing tracks, leads to positive outcomes.

If trail assessment criteria are developed in consultation with all stakeholders and part of a regional planning process such that suitable alternative sites are identified for those trails that must be closed if there is an absence of other local trails, then trail closure is more likely to be successful. There is also the potential for self-policing by rider groups, if stakeholder representatives are engaged and support the approach.

Planning and prioritisation of unauthorised trail closure and remediation involves a number of considerations including tenure, existing Plans of Management and any legal agreements, significance of the environmental and heritage impacts occurring, risk to public safety, impact on other Council projects of closing or not closing trails, community benefit of remediation, cost of remediation, engagement with users, and available resources. Council has and will continue to close and remediate trails in light of these considerations within available budgets and resources. However, a recommendation will be made to council that this is conducted in parallel with the development of a regional trails plan.

Recommendations regarding track closure and preparation of a regional trails plan will be presented in the report to Council for consideration. |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
Topic 1: Views and attitudes	Public liability and safety risks of mountain biking	Public liability risk to Council and the safety of reserve users are two important factors for Council to assess when considering whether to provide a new type of activity or a new asset on Council managed land. This issue will be raised in the report to Council for consideration.

Council manages a variety of recreational facilities, such as play spaces, BMX tracks and skateparks, which present safety risks to users. Risks to both users and Councill are reduced when features are built and maintained to a recognised standard and appropriate signage is installed for users to evaluate the risk of using the facility. Play spaces, for example, can include features that involve risk taking, such as rope climbing frames. These are carefully designed to relevant standards to minimise the distance of any fall and therefore the potential severity of any injury whilst giving the user the perception of risk taking due to the height and movement of the rope.

Similarly, authorised mountain bike trails could be professionally designed to integrate elements of risk taking and be built and maintained to a recognised standard and signage installed to manage Council's liability and the safety of users.

Council has a duty of care for responsibilities under the *Civil Liability Act 2002*. The outcome of any legal proceedings brought against Council for an alleged breach of the *Civil Liability Act 2002*, or other legislation, would be subject to the particulars of the individual case. |
| Topic 2: Site selection criteria | Do not exclude sites due to size or existing Plan of Management | The Discussion Paper presented site selection criteria derived from the MTBA Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines, as well as general trail planning, design, and construction |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		principles. The criteria were applied to each of the mountain biking locations identified on the Central Coast to determine the most suitable locations for mountain bike trails or networks. Locations were then categorised into four rating types: Local, Regional, National or Excluded.

The criteria for a local significance trail network included a minimum site area of >250 ha. This minimum land area was considered to be the minimum necessary to accommodate a trail network of up to 20 km. Any locations with an area less than 250 ha were categorised as 'Excluded'.

Several submissions noted that if the threshold were applied to the permit area utilised for the Ourimbah Mountain Bike Park it would be excluded as being too small for a local significance network. The park provides approx. 20 km of authorised trail that receives an estimated 40,000 rider visits per annum.

For each of the mountain biking locations considered, the area related to the size of the reserve or land parcels in common ownership. There is potential to plan a local trail network accessible to local communities by including adjoining Council managed land such as parks, road and drainage reserves and other assets.

Smaller land parcels may be sufficient to provide short locally accessible trails for younger riders. Whether or not the parcels are suitable should be determined by applying the selection criteria rather than a minimum threshold.

The minimum area threshold does not appear to be appropriate for the Central Coast, given the topography, mixture of land tenure and competing pressures for land use. |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		If considering land managed for conservation, a 'carrying capacity' for trails will be required to provide for the protection of biodiversity and other recreational users. The 'carrying capacity' is likely to be site specific, depending on the values on the site and other cumulative impacts. Existing Plans of Management were not considered in the site selection criteria. A recommendation to refine the site selection criteria and seek the agreement of all stakeholders will be presented in the report to Council for consideration.
Topic 2: Site selection criteria	Consider site users (age/ability/activity) and other uses of the land (eco-tourism)	The feedback from both the Phase 1 and Phase 2 consultation periods for the feasibility study identified strong consensus amongst all users that shared trails are not suitable or preferred by either riders or other reserve users, including runners and walkers. The types of current uses and the ages and ability of users should be key considerations when assessing the suitability of additional uses. It is agreed that this should be included in the site selection criteria. A recommendation to refine the site selection criteria and seek the agreement of all stakeholders will be presented in the report to Council for consideration.
Topic 2: Site selection criteria	Include environment/heritage values (no go areas), exclude COSS land Include consideration of mitigation strategies (reroute or engineer)	Environmental and heritage constraints, including land use planning zones, restrictions on title and the COSS, could be included in the site selection criteria. There may not be reliable mapping or information available for all constraints in all locations and the precautionary principle should be applied. Detailed planning and design may be able to address some site specific constraints, for

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		example detailed route planning may be able to avoid values present in a specific location. There is merit in considering the spatial distribution, significance, and nature of environmental or heritage constraints and possible mitigation measures. Further assessment is warranted to identify the environmental and heritage values/constraints on which mountain biking could have serious or irreversible impacts, what impacts cannot be avoided or mitigated and therefore require 'no go' areas. This process may be undertaken at the regional/landscape stage and again at the site specific detailed design stage. 'No go' areas would need to be the focus of pro-active surveillance and enforcement activities to protect from unauthorised trail construction. A recommendation to refine the site selection criteria and seek the agreement of all stakeholders will be presented in the report to Council for consideration.
Topic 2: Site selection criteria	Whether the location meets the needs of MTBers (types of trail and grades) and a community value index for existing trails or if replacing trails if it is 'like for like'	There is merit in including topography, accessibility/distance to population centres, and an indicator of community value of existing unauthorised trails or potential trails based on usage, trail type and grade in the site selection criteria in order to aim to identify locations that meet the needs of mountain bikers and reduce the key drivers for the building of unauthorised trails. The diverse needs of mountain bikers may not be able to be met on Council managed land exclusively. When planning assets for the community, Council must consider a variety of factors including purpose of the land, other users and uses of the land, public safety and

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		liability, cost of construction and maintenance, maintenance responsibilities and public benefit. It is likely that a mixture of land tenure and types of facilities (such as single track, pump tracks, dirt jumps and track networks of local, regional and national significance) would best meet the diverse needs of mountain bikers on the Central Coast. Through a regional planning process, the appropriate mix of infrastructure that considers factors including demand, cost and accessibility could be considered. A recommendation to refine the site selection criteria and seek the agreement of all stakeholders will be presented in the report to Council for consideration.
Topic 3: Management options	Stakeholder engagement, ongoing communication and establishment of collaborative partnerships must occur throughout the process with the mountain biking community, Aboriginal community, environmental and heritage community groups, other users, local businesses and operators, land managers and public agencies, at each stage of the process.	Council agrees that the management option relating to improving partnerships and the recommendation to establish a stakeholder engagement group as part of preparation of a regional trails plan should not be limited to the mountain biking community and should be expanded to encompass broader representation of interested stakeholders which may include other land managers and owners (including neighbours), the Aboriginal community, environmental and heritage community groups, other land users, local businesses and operators (including those engaged in tourism and economic development) and relevant public agencies such as Office of Sport and DPIE. Recommendations for establishing a balanced and representative working group will be presented in the report to Council for consideration.

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
Topic 3: Management options	Investigate all options (private land/approving unauthorised trails/charging for sites)	In order to fulfill the diverse needs and demand of mountain bikers it is agreed that all options should be investigated including private facilities, leases on public land, trails on public land and user pay systems. Approval of unauthorised trails will require careful consideration of land suitability and impacts of closure or retention. A regional planning approach should investigate all options.
Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations	Evidence that providing new tracks to meet demand will stop unauthorised track construction	Council staff have consulted several land managers who have reported that the provision of purpose-built trails when in conjunction with building good partnerships, communication and education programs, and strategic planning, has reduced unauthorised riding/track construction. See the case studies in the Discussion Paper for Old Mans Valley (Hornsby Shire Council) and Glenrock State Conservation Area (NSW NPWS) and section 7.2.3 regarding Ourimbah Mountain Bike Park.

It is likely though that demand will continue to increase due to population growth on the Central Coast and Greater Sydney-Hunter area, growing participation in mountain biking and tourism. The risk that demand continues to surpass Council's ability to respond, and unauthorised track construction continues at existing or higher rates, will be presented in the report to Council for consideration by the Council. |
| Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations | Systematic trail audit of unauthorised trails in Council reserves detailing environmental and heritage impact and | A systematic trail audit for the Central Coast, including Council managed land, would be a key starting point to enable implementation of several of the recommendations in the Discussion Paper. A systematic trail audit would help to identify the most preferred trail locations and types, the environment, heritage, and safety impacts of existing unauthorised trails and |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
	community and economic benefit	potential cost effective mitigation measures to reduce impacts. Impact assessments would require input from professional environmental, heritage and trail building consultants. This information could then inform preparation of a regional trails plan or a trail management program. Assessment of social and economic benefits of trails is further discussed in the cost/benefit analysis theme below. The recommendation to complete a systematic trail audit and impact assessment will be presented in the report to Council for consideration by the Council.
Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations	Demand analysis for mountain bike facilities on the Central Coast	There are several indicators that participation in mountain biking and demand for trails on the Central Coast is high and continues to grow, such as membership of the Central Coast Mountain Bike Club, formation and growing membership of the Central Coast MTB Trail Alliance, volume of mountain bike sales, trail counter data for Ourimbah Mountain Bike Park, participation in mountain biking events, viability of mountain biking related enterprises, use of fire trails, informal requests received by Council for facilities, construction and use of unauthorised trails across multiple locations, number of survey responses received in Phase 1 consultation and number of submissions received during Phase 2 consultation for the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study, as well as mountain biking being identified as the most popular activity in the Council's Active Lifestyles Strategy survey (57% of respondents). Auscycling (2021) engaged GHD to prepare an economic and participation analysis for mountain biking in Australia. The report noted

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		that given participation in mountain biking can be informal, participation rates are difficult to quantify. The report quoted another study by Sports Australia, the Ausplay survey conducted in 2020, that estimated that approximately 341,900 Australian's participate in mountain biking (approximately 1.6% of the population). This estimate is made up of 326,700 adults and 15,200 children under the age of 14. The Auscycling study estimated participation in mountain biking in Australia in 2020 to be between 73,823 and 837,352 (3% of the population). The large variation in estimates was due to factors such as COVID lockdowns hampering survey participation in some States. The report concluded that total participation is most likely to be closer to the Ausplay estimate of 341,900.

If the Ausplay estimated participation rate is assumed to be representative of the Central Coast community, then the estimated local participation in mountain biking would be 5,679 based on the forecast population in 2021. This estimate does not include visitors.

Obtaining reliable data on participation in informal sport is challenging. For example, the 'Central Coast Council Draft Tennis Facilities Action Plan' notes usage figures are not available for most facilities but identifies there are 14 clubs with more than 3,000 members operating on the 30 Council owned facilities. Monitoring participation trends, including improving participation data capture, is listed as an action in Council's plan.

More reliable figures are available for organised sports. For Council facilities on the Central Coast during the 2020/21 summer/winter seasons there was a total of: |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		• 15,993 participants utilising the 74 football (soccer) fields • 12,692 participants utilising the 28 touch football/OZ tag fields • 6,169 participants utilising netball facilities • 6,047 participants utilising the 26 rugby league fields • 2,587 participants utilising the 57 cricket wickets and 18 cricket nets. The concern regarding lack of data on demand is noted and will be raised in the report to Council for consideration by the Council.
Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations	Cost/benefit analysis of providing mountain bike facilities on the Central Coast including estimation of capital and whole of asset life costs for each recommendation and social and economic benefit and impact analysis for both mountain bikers and the broader community Council's ongoing ability to fund given current financial position	The report to Council will present the financial impact of each of the recommendations made and this will be a key consideration for Council. It would be difficult to prepare a cost benefit analysis for the recommendations presented in the Discussion Paper as they are high level and do not provide sufficient detail, such as scale, nature or phasing of the works involved, in order for accurate capital and whole of asset life costs and benefits to be estimated. If a cost benefit analysis were to be conducted it would require numerous assumptions to define parameters that have not yet been determined by Council. It is not considered that undertaking an economic analysis of each of the recommendations would be value for money and is unlikely to substantially assist Council in considering the recommendations presented, given the degree of uncertainty. The Discussion Paper presented several funding and management models for the construction and maintenance of trail infrastructure, such as user pay, shared trail management between Council and community groups and leasing of land to clubs. If Council, for example, resolved to

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		prepare a regional trail plan, the funding model should be explored and the preferred model presented in the plan.

A cost benefit analysis could be completed once the plan was drafted, and the actions known. Once the scale and nature of the preferred actions have been scoped then there are other studies that could help inform a social and economic analysis. Auscycling (2021) estimated the social and economic values of mountain biking in Australia including total expenditure annually and per ride, annual expenditure on purchasing large items and expenditure on interstate holidays per trip and estimated economic contribution including employment supported by participation. Other studies have analysed social benefits including health benefit, criminal and social justice benefit and civic/volunteering benefit.

Given the uncertainty of the economic benefit of supporting mountain biking on the Central Coast, it is recommended that economic benefit not be a key consideration in Council's consideration of the options. |
| Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations | Evaluation of ratepayer support for expenditure of Council funds on planning, constructing and maintaining mountain biking infrastructure | Ratepayers are currently funding the cost of managing unauthorised trails, including inspections, on-ground works to close trails and remediate land, education and awareness raising and enforcement. For two recent examples, the financial cost of remediation was in the order of $25/m^2$. For one of the examples, the work was required to be repeated at one site within a one month period as the unauthorised features were rebuilt. As such the costs can be ongoing.

Council consulted broadly with the community in relation to mountain biking during the feasibility study. Concerns regarding the cost |

Theme	Summary of theme / Example of comment	Council's response
		and ratepayer willingness to support was raised by up to 7% of respondents. The concern regarding ratepayer support is noted and will be raised in the report to Council for consideration by the Council. This is a typical consideration for Council when making decisions and whilst consultation is often undertaken, targeted ratepayer surveys are generally not conducted.
Other information Council should consider before adopting recommendations	What other LGA'S are doing/tourism potential (Derby, Dungog, Thredbo)	The discussion paper presented nine case studies, four of which are relevant to local Council's including Old Mans Valley (Hornsby Shire Council), Blue Derby (Dorset Council), Stromlo Forest Park (ACT Government) and Koala Bushland Coordinated Conservation Area (Logan and Redland City Councils). Council staff have also consulted, or reviewed strategic plans, from the following Council's: Northern Beaches, Ku-ring-gai, Hornsby, Cessnock, Brisbane, and Wollongong Councils. Staff continue to consult other Council's on their plans and processes.

6. Next steps

The feasibility study concluded that there are insufficient authorised trails to meet the demand for mountain biking on the Central Coast. The combination of unmet demand and a desire for locally accessible trails was suggested to account for the large number of unauthorised trails that have been built.

The feedback received through this community consultation indicates strong support from mountain bike riders for development of a dispersed trail network for the Central Coast that supports the needs of the community in a safe manner and protects the natural and cultural heritage values in a sustainable way.

Strong community concern remains regarding the impact of mountain biking on environmental and heritage values, safety/shared access for other users, the financial cost, broader community and economic benefit and liability related to managing mountain biking on Council land, as well as the ineffectiveness of enforcement action against illegal trail builders. Many respondents identified the preferred option was supply on private land where these issues are addressed at the expense of the user.

Council will use the submissions and feedback received to make final recommendations to Council for consideration. A report providing this consultation report and final recommendations is expected to go to Council in late 2021.

Stakeholders will be notified when the business paper is available on Council's website prior to the Council meeting.

Appendices

Appendix A – Guided submission form

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

Welcome to the submission form for the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper.

This in an opportunity to provide your feedback on some of the key topics explored throughout this discussion paper:

- Topic 1: Views and attitudes
- Topic 2: Site selection criteria
- Topic 3: Management options
- Topic 4: Recommendations

Before you provide feedback

Prior to completing this form you will need some background information to make sure your feedback is relevant to this stage of consultation.

We strongly recommend:

- Reading the discussion paper,
- Watching the information video, or
- Contacting the project team directly with any questions (phone, email or via a virtual meeting)

This information is available at yourvoiceourcoast.com

Please make sure your comments are your own, any copied/generic responses may not be counted.

We appreciate you taking the time to participate.

This form may take up to 30 minutes to complete, depending on your level of prior reading or amount of feedback.

Please note your answers will not be saved until you submit the form at the end.

Your attention is drawn to the provisions of the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 which allows for possible access to certain public and personal documentation. View our privacy statement.

Please select which response/s best apply to you:

☐ I have read the discussion paper in full

☐ I skimmed over the discussion paper, or read parts of it

☐ I have not read the discussion paper

☐ I watched all of the video overview

☐ I watched some of the video overview

☐ I have not watched the video overview

1 / 6   17%

Next

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

Topic 1: Views and attitudes

The discussion paper (pages 37 to 34) and the engagement report provides an overview of the community's views and attitudes towards mountain biking captured during consultation in 2019.

The most common issues and concerns identified were:

- conflict between users of shared trails
- environmental impacts of unauthorised trails
- lack of awareness regarding which trails are authorised for mountain biking
- construction of unauthorised trails
- need for an appropriate trail network
- limited supply of authorised trails and increasing demand for trails.

Re-read an overview of the community's views and attitudes.

Question

Do you think there any other views or attitudes on mountain biking on the Central Coast that have not been presented in the discussion paper or engagement report?

Prev   Next

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

Topic 2: Site selection criteria

Chapter 9 of the discussion paper presents a site selection matrix which identifies the most suitable locations for mountain bike trails or networks on land across the Central Coast.

Re-read the site selection matrix.

You will notice the sites assessed in the matrix have been categorised into four rating types:

- Local
- Regional
- National, or
- Excluded

These ratings are based on site selection criteria derived from the MTBA Australian Mountain Bike Trail Guidelines, general trail planning, design, and construction principles. These are:

- Length of trails
- Number of loops
- Proportion of single track
- Minimum area of site
- Location
- Road access
- Trail classification range

In addition, the consultant also considered additional criteria to assess feasibility.

Re-read both the MTBA and consultant's own criteria.

Question

Do you have any comments on how the site selection criteria have been applied to give the potential sites a local, regional, national or excluded rating?

Please note there is a separate question on environmental considerations to follow.

Question

Are there any site selection criteria that could be removed? Please explain why.

Detailed assessment and environmental considerations

All sites listed as suitable for mountain biking would be subject to land owner approval and further detailed assessment to fully investigate if a trail network could be established.

This detailed assessment would include:

- Whether planning laws allow MTBing on the land
- Potential environmental and cultural heritage impacts and mitigation strategies
- Importance of the trail development to the local and wider community in terms of recreation, economy and health outcomes
- Effects on the local community and existing users of a proposed location
- Alignment with overall planning strategies for the region
- Financial impact - funding and resourcing requirements

Question

Noting these detailed assessments will be carried out before any network could be established, do you think additional criteria could be applied at this early feasibility stage to assess whether or not a site is suitable for mountain biking?

Prev   Next

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

Topic 3: Management Options

Chapter 10.4 of the Discussion Paper presents six options for responding to the current and future demand for mountain bike trails:

- **Retain status quo** with limited provision of purpose-built mountain bike trails and continued support for shared use on fire trails and service tracks. This is unlikely to address the spread of unplanned trails arising from the increasing demand in the community for places to ride within natural areas. The development of unlawful/ unauthorised trails is a direct response to community need but risks causing damage to environment and cultural heritage sites.

- **Expand and enhance the shared trail network** for recreational riders – this may address some of the recreational riding demand which is for trail networks within natural areas. It does not address demand for flow and other more specialist trails which would be left to specific club or other agency managed sites. A detailed assessment of opportunities could identify additional service track and fire trail sections that could support an overall recreational shared trail network.

- **Increase education and awareness:** Better information about where to ride and trail etiquette on shared networks. Education, signage and awareness are key factors in any successful strategy to respond to increasing demand. About 30% of riders are currently unaware of where they can lawfully ride, which trails can be ridden and the difficulty of the trails.

- **Improve partnerships** in provision: The Central Coast Mountain Bike Club is currently operating and maintaining the trails at Ourimbah. Working with the club and other groups to improve the extent of trails at Ourimbah (or other locations) is an option that relies on community or other agency partners to develop and maintain trails.

- **Develop a regional trails plan:** Identify suitable sites for new shared trails, identify opportunities for urban bike parks (skills circuits, pump tracks) to meet localised demand and implement some local or regional flow trails which can complement the existing shared trail network. This plan would be prepared in partnership with other land managers and mountain bike riders.

- **Increase enforcement** This would involve the closing and revegetation of unauthorised trails in sensitive areas. This would need to be informed by a detailed trail audit to identify priority locations. If new trails in suitable locations are developed to cater to the demand, then increased enforcement can be pursued for any unauthorised trails developed. The closure of trails should be undertaken in partnership with local MTB clubs and users, so they understand the reasons, are able to assist in the work and have an opportunity to be involved in the location and const construction of trails in sanctioned locations.

Re-read the detail of each option.

Question

Please rank the options in order of importance to you, with 1 having the highest importance and 6 having the lowest.

☰	⇕	Develop a regional trails plan
☰	⇕	Increase education and awareness
☰	⇕	Increase enforcement
☰	⇕	Improve partnerships
☰	⇕	Expand and enhance the shared trail network
☰	⇕	Retain status quo

4 / 6   67%

Prev   Next

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

Topic 4: Recommendations

The discussion paper offers five recommendations for consideration (Chapter 2.2 in the Executive Summary):

- **Trail assessment criteria:** Establish agreed trail assessment criteria to identify unauthorised trails that should be closed
- **Trails audit and management program:** Undertake a trails audit and management program for Council's natural reserves
- **Education and awareness program:** Develop an education and awareness program to be delivered by Council to provide information on mountain biking and the location of authorised trails in the Central Coast region
- **Regional Trails Plan:** Prepare a Regional Trails Plan that could be led by Council and prepared in collaboration with state land managers and rider groups
- **Trails approval process:** Adopt a trails approval process that allows local users and the community to have a say on any new trail proposals

Re-read the detail of each recommendation.

Question

Please rank each recommendation in order of importance to you, with 1 having the highest importance and 5 having the lowest

☰	⇕	Education and awareness program
☰	⇕	Trails audit and management program
☰	⇕	Regional Trails Plan
☰	⇕	Trail assessment criteria
☰	⇕	Trails approval process

Question

Do you think there are there other options Council could investigate to respond to the demand for mountain biking?

Question

Is there any more information Council may need to consider before adopting any of the recommendations?

Question

Do you have any further comments regarding mountain biking on the Central Coast?

Prev   Next

Submission form - Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Discussion Paper

About you!

* What is your full name?

[   ]

* Address

[   ]

* Suburb

[   ]

Phone number

[   ]

* Email address

[   ]

* How would you best describe your interest in this consultation?

Please check all that apply.

☐ I am a Central Coast resident

☐ I am a visitor to the Central Coast

☐ I mountain bike on the Central Coast

☐ I am a member of a mountain biking advocacy group or club

☐ I own or run a mountain biking-related enterprise

☐ I am a member of an environmental group

☐ Other (please specify)

[   ]

* Did you complete the initial MTB survey we ran in 2019?

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ I'm unsure

Prev   Done

Appendix B – Media Release

It's time to talk mountain biking

Wednesday, 24 February 2021

Central Coast Council is encouraging the community to contribute to discussions on mountain biking across the Central Coast.

Community consultation on the Mountain Bike Feasibility Study discussion paper is open until 22 March 2021.

Council Unit Manager Environmental Management, Luke Sulkowski said with participation in mountain bike riding as both a sport and a recreational activity increasing, it was important to plan ahead in a sustainable way.

"There is currently no strategic framework for managing the rapidly increasing demand for mountain biking across the Central Coast," Mr Sulkowski said.

"As the demand for the sport increases, Council needs to have a way to balance the requirement of the sport with environmental and heritage protections for our natural areas.

"By identifying the role that Council's natural reserves may play in the provision of mountain biking experiences across the Central Coast, we will be better able to protect areas of high conservation and heritage value, minimise the building of unauthorised trail construction and maximise the safe use of Council reserves by all visitors."

Council Administrator, Dick Persson AM said it was important for the community to engage in the discussion with respect.

"We recognise there are different views within the community on how to respond to the demand for mountain biking on the Central Coast," Mr Persson said.

"However, our research shows there are also some areas of agreement – for example 95% of survey respondents supported mountain biking continuing in areas where it is currently allowed.

"Our survey also showed that 87% were concerned about the lack of authorised trails for mountain biking and 75% about the lack of clarity regarding which trails are authorised.

"I strongly encourage all members of our community interested in this topic to review the discussion paper and watch the information video before completing our survey."

In addition to the discussion paper and information video – community members are invited to submit a question regarding the discussion paper online though Council's Your Voice Our Coast platform, or register to talk to our staff at a virtual drop in session. yourvoiceourcoast.com/mtb

Last updated : Wed 24 Feb 2021

Appendix C – Social Media Posts/Advertisements

Coast Connect Article – 3 March 2021:

Central Coast Council

Coast Connect
3 March 2021

It's time to talk water, sewer and stormwater prices

Every few years Council reviews how much it costs to produce drinking water, treat sewage and manage stormwater.

Part of this involves us checking in with you to make sure your views are considered.

The time to have your say has come again – tell us what's important to you about how we provide these services and how they should be priced.

Fill in our online survey >

Referendum: Reduction of Councillors and wards

Council resolved to hold a Constitutional Referendum for the reduction of Councillors (from 15 to 9) in conjunction with the September 2021 Local Government Elections. First we want to know what you think.

Have Your Say >

Administrator appoints new CEO

Council Administrator, Mr Dick Persson AM has announced Mr David Farmer as Council's new Chief Executive Officer. Mr Farmer has had up to 40 years' experience in Local Government and will commence in April.

Read more >

STEP UP TO CLEAN UP
SUNDAY 7 MARCH

Clean Up Australia Day

Did you know there's still time to 'Step Up to Clean Up' and join one of over 50 sites across the Coast.

Find out more

It's time to talk mountain biking

With participation in mountain bike riding as both a sport and a recreational activity increasing, we need to plan for it in a sustainable way.

Find out more >

Do you hear the Morning Melodies?

If you're not quite the night owl but still want to experience the latest in live theatre, our new Morning Melodies program might be perfect for you.

View the program >

More across the Coast

Administrator's weekly message

Development applications

Online Customer Service Centre

Have my say
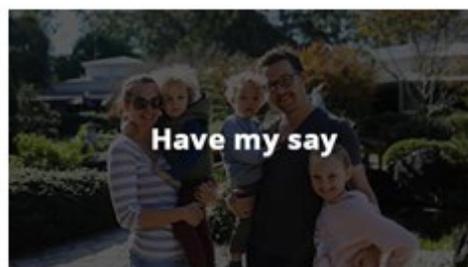
Contact us

Gosford Office

49 Mann Street
Gosford NSW 2250
Ph: 1300 463 954

Wyong Office

2 Hely Street
Wyong NSW 2259
Ph: 1300 463 954

Email us

ask@centralcoast.nsw.gov.au

Important links

Planning our water future

Have your say - Mannering Park shared pathway

Have your say - Floodplain management

Porters Creek Wetland Biodiversity Conservation Agreement on exhibition

Rates Harmonisation – Overview and FAQs

Facebook post – 25 February 2021

Central Coast Council ✓
February 25 · 🌐

···

Between 5 June to 2 July 2019 we carried out initial public consultation to inform a Mountain Bike Feasibility Study for the Coast. Now, you can review the Discussion Paper, watch the information video and provide feedback.

1,949 survey responses, plus input from other community groups, has helped us understand community views, demand, utilisation, opportunities and risks for mountain biking on the Central Coast.

With participation in mountain bike (MTB) riding as both a sport and a recreational activity increasing, and demand for suitable areas to ride growing, it is important to plan ahead in a sustainable way. Have Your Say at https://hubs.la/H0H6Fqn0

YOURVOICEOURCOAST.COM
Mountain Bike Feasibility Study | Your Voice Our Coast
Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Mountain Bike Feasibility Study Mountain Bike Feasibility Stud...

Central Coast Council
8,682 followers
6mo · 🌐

Your Voice - Our Coast is our online hub, where you can provide real input and direction into the projects and initiatives affecting our area and our region. Projects open now for your feedback include:

🏉 Kariong Oval Recreational Area (until 21 March)
🚵 Mountain Bike Feasibility Study (until 22 March)
🏠 Proposed Conservation Agreement for Porters Creek Wetland (until 29 March)
🐕 Helen Reserve, Gorokan - dog park (until 31 March)
🤸 Active Lifestyles Strategy (until 5 April)
📋 Policy for Development Application Functions (until 7 April)
📝 Amended Code of Meeting Practice (until 21 April)

Read more and Have Your Say on projects that interest you at https://hubs.li/H0JcYqf0

?