



New section added to Great Taste Trail with support from Nelson Forests

BY SANDRINE MARRASSÉ AND JACQUIE WALTERS | PHOTOGRAPHY JESS KELLIHER

Tasman's Great Taste Trail is a drawcard for the Nelson Tasman region, for visitors and locals alike. The Great Taste Trail is part of Nga Haerenga | The New Zealand Cycle Trail. Nga Haerenga means 'the journeys' in Māori and refers to both the physical and spiritual journeys we take.

The Great Taste Trail is still being fully completed, and when complete, the whole trail – including a section in the Motueka River Valley – will cover a distance of 175km. You will be able to walk or cycle on the coastal and rail routes from Nelson, to Richmond, Brightwater, Wakefield out to Tapawera, along the Motueka River Valley to Riwaka, Kaiteriteri, and then back to Richmond through Motueka, Mapua and Rabbit Island.

Representatives of the Great Taste Trail reached out to Nelson Forests for some assistance to finish a section of the Trail between Spooners Tunnel and the Kohatu Flat Rock Café, because they knew the company was supportive of community initiatives. Nelson Forests

had been contributing to the project for some time as part of an ongoing commitment, and the company responded with a donation of significant value of work in kind to help get the new Trail section completed.

Connecting with what's important to the local Nelson Tasman community is one of the long-standing commitments of Nelson Forests, and the in-kind donation to Tasman's Great Taste Trail is one of several community support projects that the company is currently engaged in.

The Great Taste Trail is one of New Zealand's Great Rides, beginning at the Nelson Airport or the Nelson City i-SITE and featuring panoramic coastal and mountain views over Tasman Bay, Waimea Estuary and the Western Ranges, and ending at Kaiteriteri. The Trail passes by many places to stop and explore the best of the region's food and drink offerings.

The Trail also features the 1.4km long Spooners Tunnel, the sixth longest tunnel open to cycling and walking in the world, and the longest in the southern

hemisphere. Trains used the Nelson Railway line and Spooners Tunnel until services stopped in 1955. Cycling or walking through the tunnel is a great adventure at any time of the year – make sure you have a good torch!

"We were really delighted when the Trust approached us to help," says Nelson Forests Estate Value Manager, Andrew Karalus. "The trail is a great community asset, many of us have enjoyed riding on it, it passes through our forest estate so it made sense to offer our help. Our support has been in the form of undertaking the earthworks for the Great Taste cycle trail along the historic Belgrove to Kawatiri Railway reserve where it passes through the Golden Downs Forest from Belgrove through to Spooners Tunnel and now on to the Kohatu Flat Rock Café.

"This included striping the soil where the cycle trail path was to be built and providing access to stockpiled gravel material for the cycle trail surface (path). The small section on private land was constructed by another contractor, as was the laying of the gravel onto the trail."

The construction work was provided by Taylors Contracting Company including excavator work by Wayne Hart and supervision by Charlie Thompson and Mike Fahey. Nelson Forests staff, James Appleton and Heather Arnold provided planning support to the project.

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NELSON TASMAN CYCLE TRAILS TRUST BOARD CHAIR GILLIAN WRATT



"This section of the trail captures the beauty of the Golden Downs Plantation Forest, and in particular the amenity species that line the Norris Gully and the historic Railway Reserve," says Karalus.

"The support for the Trail from Nelson Forests has been key in getting the trail through Spooners Tunnel, and to Kohatu," says Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust Board Chair Gillian Wratt. "They have been open to the route through their forests and have had their contractor help with trail construction without the costs coming back to the Trust. We have really appreciated their approachability, enthusiasm, and support for the Trail."

Joshua Aldridge, Trail Manager, for the

Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust says that Kohatu is a key entry point to the Trail for visitors coming from the South (Canterbury and the West Coast). "The Flat Rock Café do great coffee and food which makes it a good start or end point for day trips from Nelson or Wakefield. Spooners Tunnel is only 7.5km from Kohatu so that's an easy distance for families with younger kids or for people who want to just have a shorter ride."

People riding along the Norris Gully to Kohatu section of the trail are passing through an area rich in history. The trail follows the historic railway alignment between Nelson and Glenhope which operated for 79 years between 1876 and 1955.

Above: The new section of the Great Taste Trail
Opposite page: Riders try out the new Trail section and stop for a break at the Kohatu Flat Rock Café

"Construction of the cycle trail has preserved the historic culverts and bridge abutments," says Aldridge.

"We have had great support from landowners along this section of trail. Nelson Forests, Toa Rangatira Trust and private landowners have all been very accommodating throughout the route planning, design and construction of this section of trail."

In addition to Nelson Forests' contribution, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) contributed 50 percent of the funding for this section of trail, which matched funding from Tasman District Council.

The priority for the Cycle Trails Trust is now connecting the missing link between Wakefield and Wai-iti Domain.

"We recently obtained the final land access agreements needed to begin building this section and are preparing for construction this summer," says Aldridge. "Our focus will then turn to the section from Kohatu to Tapawera - which will bring immediate community and economic benefits to residents of Tapawera."



Above: From left to right, Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust Trail Manager Joshua Aldridge; Higgins Project Manager Steve Lovell; Tasman District Council Mayor Richard Kempthorne and Nelson Tasman Cycle Trails Trust Board Chair Gillian Wratt judge a children's colouring competition at the preview day of the new Trail section

Contact

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