February 2021

Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa
Conical Hill Flyride Project
Recreation effects assessment
Prepared for Response Planning

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1 Introduction and summary

The Hurunui District Council – via its business unit the Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa – is applying for resource consent to develop a 'Flyride' commercial recreation activity on the western slope of Conical Hill in Hanmer Springs village. The site is a recreation reserve under the Reserves Act 1977 and is subject to the Hurunui District Council Reserves Management Plan (2012). This report assesses the effects of the proposal on existing recreation values at Conical Hill and reviews the proposal's compliance with the Reserves Act and the Reserves Management Plan.

The proposal is to construct a 'start station' with a toilet north of the summit of Conical Hill, separated from the existing viewing platform on the summit. A rail and wire system mounted on seven towers will support suspended chairs in which customers sit. A battery-powered motor unit will control the rate of descent of the chairs depending on the level of excitement desired. The chairs will return autonomously from the 'stop station' at the bottom of the ride. A target of 50,000 riders per year has been set (10% of the patronage of the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools and Spa), with up to 60 riders per hour during peak times.

The Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa, as a business unit, is administered via the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa Management Committee, a committee of the Hurunui District Council. The Hanmer Springs Community Board also contributes by communicating the interests and concerns of residents. Staff of the Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa have conducted two community meetings to review the Flyride proposal and consequently adjusted the concept from running down the south-eastern side of Conical Hill to its western side.

Financial surpluses from the Flyride proposal will be returned to the Council for expenditure on district recreation and community services, as is the policy for the Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa.

Conical Hill is described as an iconic walk in Hanmer Springs and is the most popular track in the village. The track has a generous width and is well graded. Facilities at the summit and entrance are in poor condition. A redevelopment project has been proposed according to a 2018 concept plan, and is expected to proceed along with the Flyride, and to be funded by it. Provincial Growth Fund funding has been secured for the Flyride proposal.

The Flyride will be based entirely within one land parcel gazetted as recreation reserve under the Reserves Act. This assessment considers whether the proposal is consistent with the primary purpose for a recreation reserve as defined by the Act and finds that, *a priori*, it is, particularly considering the precedents set by other commercial recreation developments nationally on recreation reserves (including the Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa).

By reviewing national research on recreation conflict, this assessment identifies a set of assessment matters appropriate to review the effect of the proposal on existing recreation values. These include:

- Will the proposed activity on Conical Hill represent a significant change in existing activity modes? That is, will walkers on the Reserve encounter users having a substantially different experience and using a different mode to access it?
- Will the commercial component of the activity be sufficiently evident to change the experience of existing users?
- Will the new activity increase the patronage of Conical Hill to the point where crowding becomes an issue or overwhelms the capacity of facilities on the Reserve, leading to more conflict between visitors?

- Is the current visitor experience on Conical Hill dependent on a specialised resource that will be compromised by a commercial development?
- Will commercial recreation on Conical Hill be considered generally incompatible in the context of Hanmer Springs as a visitor destination?

Of the five assessment matters, only one raises the potential for concern – that is whether the Flyride will 'dominate' the recreation experience on Conical Hill. The tracks to the summit from both the north and the south are well-separated from the Flyride by the contours of the Hill and by mature vegetation, and the walking experience will largely remain as it is. The start station will be obvious from summit, but will not dominate the key experience, which is the view to the south from the viewing structure. Vegetation may be used to screen the start station, but sounds of activity will likely be heard. Considering that the main visitor experiences on the Conical Hill walk are the track and the view to the south from the summit, the Flyride is unlikely to 'dominate'.

In summary, while not directly contemplated by the Hurunui District Council Reserves Management Plan, the development is able to be contemplated within it. The Reserves Act does not provide any direct impediment to the proposal, and it can be considered, broadly, an appropriate development for a recreation reserve. The site-specific issue is whether the proposal sustains and enhances recreation values on Conical Hill. This assessment finds that – considering the obvious role of Hanmer Springs as a developed tourism destination, and the ability to sustain existing recreation values on the Conical Hill track – the proposal is acceptable from a recreation and tourism development perspective.

2 The Conical Hill Flyride proposal

The proposal is for the installation of a 'Flyride' experience on the western face of Conical Hill in Hanmer, to be owned and operated by Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa, which is a business unit owned and operated by the Hurunui District Council (HDC). Financial surpluses from the Spa (targeted at $2 to $2.5 million per annum) are used by Council to fund district-wide reserve costs, including the library, cemeteries, public toilets and reserves.[1]

The preferred option for the Flyride is a 'Switchback' system developed by Holmes Solutions Ltd, a New Zealand-based engineering company (Figure 1). The system relies on a tower-mounted rail which carries a suspended chair equipped with a battery-powered motor which controls the rate of descent, and which returns the empty chair to the summit after use. Downward travel recharges the unit's battery. Multiple chairs can be mounted, but with only one rail proposed, a capacity limit is defined by the time it takes the chairs to return to the summit. The proposed target is 50 passengers per hour, and, considering the ability to provide tandem rides, up to 60. The speed of descent of the chairs can be controlled over all parts of the ride depending on the wishes of the passenger and the demands of the operator and rail design.

Figure 1: Holmes Solutions 'Switchback' rail and chair example

Rough & Milne Landscape Architects has developed a landscape concept for the proposal which includes a 'start station' north of the Conical Hill summit linked to a 'stop station' on the lower eastern slope linked by seven towers (Figure 2). Patrons will walk to the start station via existing tracks on Conical Hill or via existing walking and cycle trails on commercial forestry land (Ngai Tahu Forest Estates Ltd) which surrounds the Reserve to the west, north and east. These off-site routes will also be used for construction access. No additional transport service for clients (besides the Flyride) is proposed. Short additional exit tracks are proposed within the Reserve to link the stop station with existing tracks.

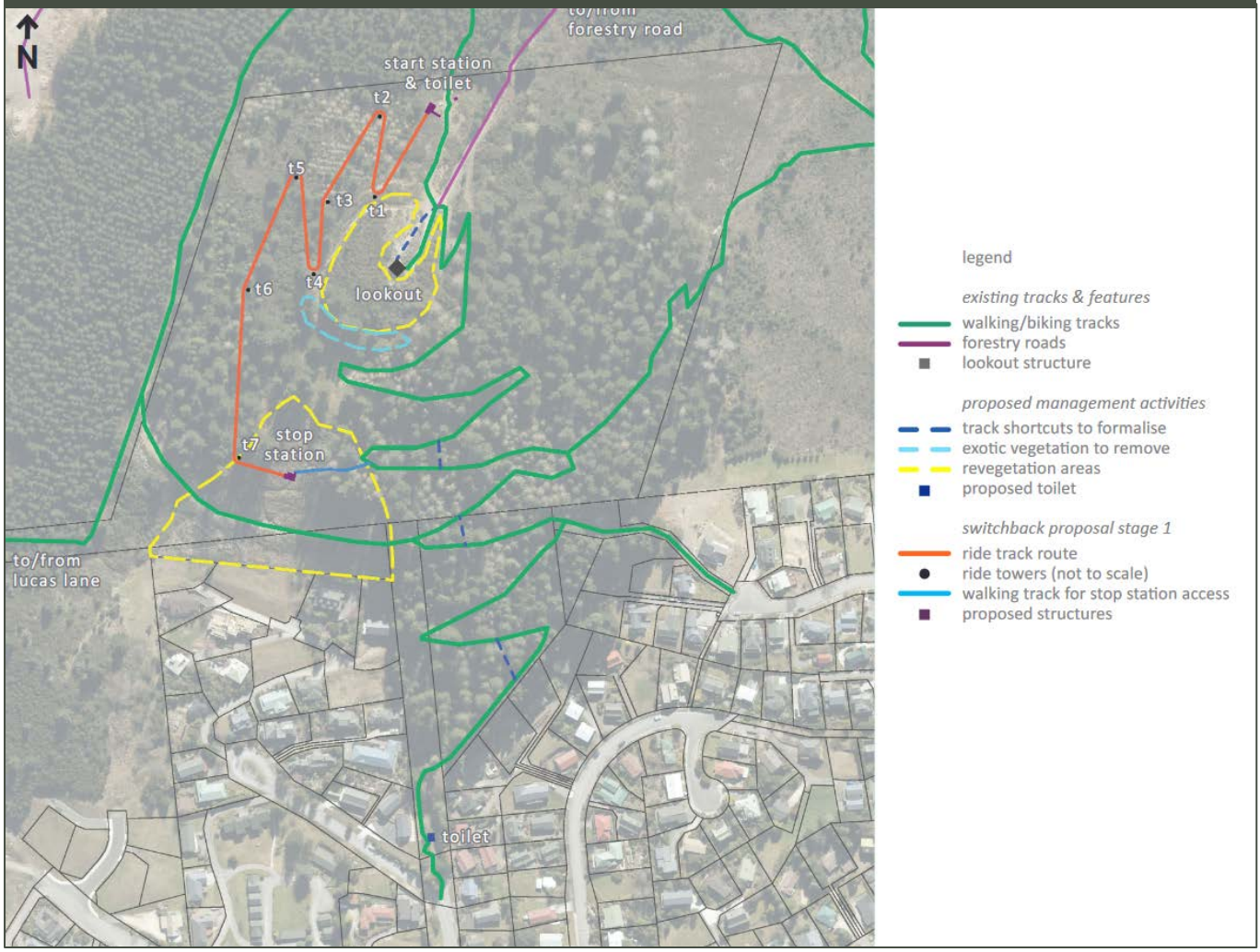
Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa has completed two community meetings to discuss the proposal. The first meeting led to an original proposal for the Flyride to be based on the southern face of

[1] Hurunui District Council Long Term Plan 2018 - 2028

Conical Hill being abandoned in favour of the western face, where there is less interaction with existing users and reduced visibility from Hanmer Village.

Provincial Growth Fund funding has been secured to support the Flyride development. The Hurunui District Council is also proposing to upgrade public facilities on the Reserve in accordance with the 2018 *Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan* (see Section 4). A new toilet block is currently under construction at the entrance to the Reserve.

Figure 2: Rough & Milne landscape concept



3 Reserves Act context

Conical Hill is a recreation reserve (in four titles) under the Reserves Act 1977, administered by the Hurunui District Council. Recreation reserves are set aside (17(1)) "for the purpose of providing areas for the recreation and sporting activities and the physical welfare and enjoyment of the public, and for the protection of the natural environment and beauty of the countryside, with emphasis on the retention of open spaces and on outdoor recreational activities, including recreational tracks in the countryside."

The Flyride proposal will be based entirely within one of the reserve parcels (RES 3661) and will not cross any title boundaries.

The Act requires that "having regard to the general purposes specified" above, that the public shall have freedom of access to the reserve (although some restrictions can be implemented to protect the reserve and its users), that natural features will be protected to the extent possible considering its use for recreation, that "those qualities of the reserve which contribute to the pleasantness, harmony, and cohesion of the natural environment and to the better use and enjoyment of the reserve shall be conserved" and the reserve's value as a soil, water, and forest conservation area shall be maintained "to the extent compatible" with its primary use.

Leases for recreation reserves can be allowed in accordance with section 54 of the Act, "to the extent necessary to give effect to the principles" defined for the reserve (as described above). Section 54(1)(g) allows an administering body to "grant leases or licences for the carrying on of any trade, business, or occupation on any specified site within the reserve, subject to the provisions set out in Schedule 1 relating to leases or licences of recreation reserves issued pursuant to this paragraph: provided that the trade, business, or occupation must be necessary to enable the public to obtain the benefit and enjoyment of the reserve or for the convenience of persons using the reserve."

Schedule 1 of the Act defines the basic terms which would form the basis of a lease agreement. In the case of the Flyride site, the lease would most likely be held by the "Hurunui District Council (trading as Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa)".

This assessment must therefore consider:

- The degree to which the proposal is compatible with the primary purpose of a recreation reserve; and
- Whether the proposal is "necessary to enable the public to obtain the benefit and enjoyment of the reserve or for the convenience of persons using the reserve."

The latter is, at face value, a high bar, considering that what is 'necessary' for enjoying a recreation reserve could vary enormously. It could be interpreted to only encompass a walking track – only the barest necessary item to access a reserve. This would preclude issuing *any* lease for a 'trade, business, or occupation'. However, there is plenty of precedent to indicate that a wide range of commercial and community recreation leases can be agreed for recreation reserves – such as the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa and the campgrounds, accommodation, retail and tourism services on the Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve in Tasman, and multiple golf courses nationally.

The interpretation applied here is whether the proposal could possibly enable the public to obtain, within a local context, a benefit and enjoyment of the reserve that is supported by the community without unduly limiting the ability of other users to enjoy their existing activities (assuming that the community wishes for these activities to continue), and whether the proposal is compatible with the primary purpose of a recreation reserve and the relevant reserve management plan. However, considering the ability to lease part of a recreation reserve for, for example, mini golf (in the case of Kaiteriteri), it is taken as read that a

commercial service like the Flyride is, *a priori*, compatible with the reserve's gazetted primary purpose.

4 Conical Hill Reserve Management Planning

The primary goal of the Hurunui District Council Reserves Management Plan (2012) is "To manage the reserves of the Hurunui District in a manner that meets the needs and expectations of the community, providing for recreational needs and ensuring the preservation of natural and physical resources." With the second aim: "The development and maintenance of reserve land and facilities to the appropriate standard which reflects their value, character, and use and to enable maximum public use, enjoyment, and safety consistent with preservation of natural values." Objectives include, "Developed and maintained recreation reserves for public enjoyment, protection of the environment, and retention of principal tourism features."

Policy 3 refers to leases and licences, but does not provide much clarity for the Flyride proposal. Policy 3.7 states that, "Council may enter into lease agreements on reserve land to sports organisations, recreational organisations and community groups when suitable and if appropriate classified reserve land is available." Policy 3.8 notes, "In application (sic) for a lease agreement, applicants must demonstrate a clear requirement for consistent use of facilities."

Policy 5 refers to commercial activities and notes, "Some recreational experiences can only be provided by commercial entrepreneurs e.g. golf driving ranges, and provided the activity is carefully controlled the use of reserves in this way is not contrary to the Reserves Act. Licensees can also enhance recreational experiences by providing food, drink, equipment etc. and will be permitted in limited areas under carefully controlled conditions." Relevant provisions include:

> *5.1 Commercial activity will not be permitted on reserve land unless specifically allowed for in an individual reserve policy or otherwise licensed by Council.*
>
> *5.2 Where permitted, the activity must be of a recreational nature, or enhance the recreational use of the reserve and be considered to benefit the community.*
>
> *5.3 If a commercial lease is terminated, or expires with no provision for renewal, the lease shall be tendered on the open market. However, if it expires with both the lessor and lessee wishing to continue with the lease, a new lease may be entered into without tendering.*
>
> *5.4 Individual licenses may be granted on application. Licensees can enhance recreational experiences by providing food, drink, equipment etc. and are permitted in limited areas under carefully controlled conditions to ensure that no activity is contrary to the Reserves Act.*
>
> *5.5 Commercial activities will incur a charge as outlined in the Council's annual Schedule of Fees and Charges.*
>
> *5.6 Renewable licenses will be granted for an annual period expiring 30 June each year. The license fee will be reviewed each year.*
>
> *5.7 Individual licenses will be monitored to assess the impacts of the activity and these impacts will be taken into consideration in the renewal process.*

Policy 16 refers to structures on reserves, and states that, "The design of reserve structures shall take into account the natural or physical character of the environment and be in keeping with its use. All structure design shall work with each site rather than against it." Further, "Designers should be aware of the interplay between their designs and the environment. Effort should be made to put some of the context into their design, whether it is geological landforms reflected in the roofline or the colours relating to the landscape."

Specific reference to Conical Hill Reserve is made under the Hanmer Springs Ward Reserves section of the Management Plan. This describes the main features of the Reserve:

> *Conical Hill Reserve is one of the best known features in Hanmer Springs. The walking track to the summit has been popular for almost a century. The main point of access to the reserve is on foot from the top end of Conical Hill Road. The reserve is surrounded on three sides by commercial plantations of radiata pine, Douglas-fir and larch….*
>
> *At the summit of Conical Hill walkers are rewarded with spectacular 360 degree vistas; southward over the entire Hanmer Basin, westward to the Waiau River, and northward toward Jacks Pass and the Hanmer Range.*

Policies for Conical Hill Reserve focus on maintaining a high standard of service provision for visitors, the management of weeds and pests, the maintenance of views from the summit and managing the exotic forest to a high standard while encouraging the regeneration of native species, and excluding "mountain bikes and other wheeled vehicles" from the reserve. In reference to "future development potential" on the Reserve, the Plan states:

> *Conical Hill Reserve is a Hanmer Springs 'icon' along with the thermal pools. The summit walk has always been a significant aspect of the Hanmer Springs experience, particularly as a family outing or as a prelude to soaking in the thermal pools. Being a reserve that has been visited for almost a century, the reserve is testimony to the beginning of forestry in New Zealand. All of these factors must be taken into account when considering the standards of maintenance and any development proposals.*

There is no other direction given for commercial service provision in the Management Plan for Conical Hill.

The Council prepared the *Conical Hill Forest Management Programme 2012-2022* in 2012. The goal of the Programme is, "To add to the Hanmer Springs wellness and educational experience by having a highly maintained, near natural and pest free environment on Conical Hill." The programme identified, "Features identified as being important to the local community":

- *Want to tidy up the reserve, turn it from an "eyesore" to an "icon",*
- *Remove wilding conifers and other weed species,*
- *Upgrade the tracks,*
- *Encourage native regeneration of tree species already making a presence on the reserve,*
- *Have well maintained infrastructure on the reserve (tracks, signs, look out, etc.),*
- *Reduce the risk of damage to neighbouring property by large trees on the southern boundaries of the reserve,*
- *Have information boards on the track and at the summit.*

The *Conical Hill Reserve Landscape Concept Plan* was prepared for the Council in 2018. The Concept Plan set out to implement requirements of the Reserves Management Plan and included improvements for the summit, entrance and access tracks, and additional vegetation management to maintain views and encourage native regeneration. There was no reference to any further development of recreation opportunities on the Reserve beyond the use of walking tracks.

5 Assessing social effects in the Conical Hill setting

Wray & Booth (2010)[2] give a useful summary of the concepts that can be applied in assessing the effects of a new commercial recreation activity in an area with an existing use pattern. These relate to managing recreation conflict. They write:

> *Recreational conflict can be defined as 'a negative experience, occurring when competition for shared resources prevents expected benefits of participation from accruing to an individual or a group' (Crawford et al. 1991:309). It is a specific type of user dissatisfaction which occurs when people feel that their recreational experience is compromised by other visitors. The most commonly applied model, and the most substantial theoretical basis for understanding recreational conflict, is the theory of goal interference provided by Jacob & Schreyer (1980). The theory defines conflict as 'goal interference attributed to another's behaviour'. According to the theory, conflict is a negative experience which occurs when participants with incompatible goals come into contact. The theory suggests that conflict in outdoor recreation can be caused by four major factors:*
>
> *1. Activity style*
>
> *2. Resource specificity*
>
> *3. Mode of experience*
>
> *4. Lifestyle tolerance*
>
> *Research has shown that conflict is increasing between participants in outdoor recreation activities, and that conflict is likely to occur in areas where there are high levels of use and/or a variety of different activities competing for the same resource (Manning 1999). There is also research to suggest that conflicts have developed between commercial and non-commercial recreationists (ibid.). This notion is supported by the Department of Conservation's Visitor Strategy, which states that:*
>
> > *Conflict is most likely to occur between dissimilar groups, particularly if one group's behaviour is considered to be inappropriate by the other ... Some visitor groups resent the intrusion of increasing numbers of visitors and an expanding range of commercial activities. (DOC 1996: 21)*

Jacob & Schreyer's (1980) four factors influencing goal interference are, in more detail:[3]

- Activity style: The level of importance a person places on the specialisation required to enjoy their particular activity. This applies to more skilled activities like angling and backcountry skiing.
- Resource specificity: The degree to which people are dependent on a particular resource or place for their activity, and the availability of substitute settings.
- Mode of experience: This relates to the focus of the participant. Conflict might arise between some mountain bikers who are more focused on traversing ground rapidly and some trampers who are focusing on the wider environment.
- Lifestyle tolerance: This relates to perceptions of personal differences between individuals and may be based on stereotyping. For example, an independent angler might consider a guided angler to have different and more entitled attitudes.

[2] Wray, K. and Booth, K. 2010. *Attitudes towards commercial recreation on public conservation lands.* Department of Conservation Science for Conservation 301

[3] From Watson, A.E. 2001. *Goal Interference and Social Value Differences: Understanding Wilderness Conflicts and Implications for Managing Social Density*. USDA Forest Service Proceedings RMRS-P-20. 2001

Wray & Booth (2010) detailed further reasons why independent wilderness visitors objected to commercial recreation in remote and wilderness areas. While the setting for their analysis is clearly different to the front-country setting of Conical Hill, many of the nine themes appear transferrable:

- The fear that traditional recreation experiences will be damaged, threatened or changed – largely because commercial recreation is 'different' and requires higher levels of service than traditional independent activities.
- Fear that commercial recreation will 'open the floodgates' to commercialisation.
- Dislike of impacts associated with commercial recreation (more people, more facilities, more infrastructure, more noise, etc).
- Commercial clients are 'different' from independent visitors (as per Jacob & Schreyer's (1980) 'lifestyle tolerance').
- Commercial recreation is a reminder of the civilisation that independent wilderness visitors want to escape.
- Philosophical objections to commercial recreation on conservation lands (private gain from public land).
- Commercial recreation is antithetical to traditional outdoor recreation (by removing the basic elements associated with wilderness experiences – risk, independence and no profit motive).
- Commercial recreation is elitist and only for the rich (as per Jacob & Schreyer's (1980) 'lifestyle tolerance').
- Inappropriate behaviour of commercial groups (such as taking over public huts, being noisy, not cleaning up after themselves in huts).

Cessford (1999)[4] summarises two forms of potential recreation conflict relevant to this assessment: 'intra-group conflicts' (conflicts between user groups with different motivations or behaviours) and 'inappropriate uses and behaviours' (such as the use of new technology, the staging of events or commercial activities – noting that the term 'inappropriate' is relatively subjective).

For assessing intra-group conflicts, Cessford (1999) recommends:

> *The main information needs identified for managing the social impacts of intragroup conflicts were based on the need to improve understanding of inappropriate behaviour and crowding. This was based on defining and describing different behavioural and crowding problems, and understanding both the common contributing factors applying in most cases, and the unique factors specific to certain activity types or sites. How do these factors relate to on-site management for specific recreation experience goals? Are these goals made apparent to visitors to influence their expectations prior to their visits, and their behaviours while on their visits?*

The types of intra-group conflict issues identified were:

- Types of inappropriate behaviour,
- Crowding and conflict perceptions,
- Different values and attachments for settings and activities,

[4] Cessford, G. 1999. *Social Impacts of Visitors to Conservation Lands.* Department of Conservation Science and Research Internal Report 171

- Traditional versus non-traditional cultural use,
- Different activity orientations,
- Guided versus independent participation,
- The degree of regulation compliance,
- The degree of fee compliance.

For assessing inappropriate uses and behaviours, Cessford (1999) recommends:

> *The main information needs identified for managing inappropriate uses and behaviours emphasised improving the understanding of interactions between different visitors, activity styles, place and activity dependence, group values and individual values, and perceptions of place. What makes some particular types of recreation activities, experiences and visitor groups more or less susceptible to impacts than others? What visitor characteristics and behaviours have disproportionately greater impact effects?*

Key questions for this assessment include:

- Will the proposed activity on Conical Hill represent a significant change in existing activity modes? That is, will walkers on the Reserve encounter users having a substantially different experience and using a different mode to access Conical Hill?
- Will the commercial component of the activity be sufficiently evident to change the experience of existing users?
- Will the new activity increase the patronage of Conical Hill to the point where crowding becomes an issue or overwhelms the capacity of facilities on the Reserve, leading to more conflict between visitors?
- Is the current visitor experience on Conical Hill dependent on a specialised resource that will be compromised by a commercial development?
- Will commercial recreation on Conical Hill be considered generally incompatible in the context of Hanmer Springs as a visitor destination?

Section 7 responds to these questions.

6 The Conical Hill setting

Conical Hill is probably the most popular walking destination in Hanmer as a result of its proximity to the township, its well-graded and – in the main – wide tracks (Figure 3), its reasonably achievable peak, and the grand views from the summit, particularly to the south over the Hanmer Plain. Dogs are permitted on a leash, and as there are few similar dog-walking options locally, dogs are commonly encountered. Walking only is permitted on the track on the Hill's southern face, while mountain bikers are able to ride via its northern face (largely outside the reserve boundary).

The quality of the entrance area (Figure 4) and the facilities at the summit (Figure 5) are in poor condition and do not match the stated status of the Hill as an icon destination. Some structures require immediate attention (Figure 6).

A pedestrian counter located at the base of the walk to the summit has recorded a steady rise in patronage from 30,476 walkers in the 2014/15 year to 52,973 in 2019/2020. By comparison, the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa has approximately 500,000 visitors annually.

Walkers encounter a private dwelling (Figure 7) and Council water tank on the path (Figure 8). The setting is urban or urban fringe and there is no impression of having departed Hanmer Springs village for a natural or remote experience. Such experiences would be sought beyond the boundary of production forestry surrounding Hanmer Springs on, for example, the Mount Isobel, Jollie Saddle, Waterfall and the Chatterton River Tracks.

Figure 3: Conical Hill path width example

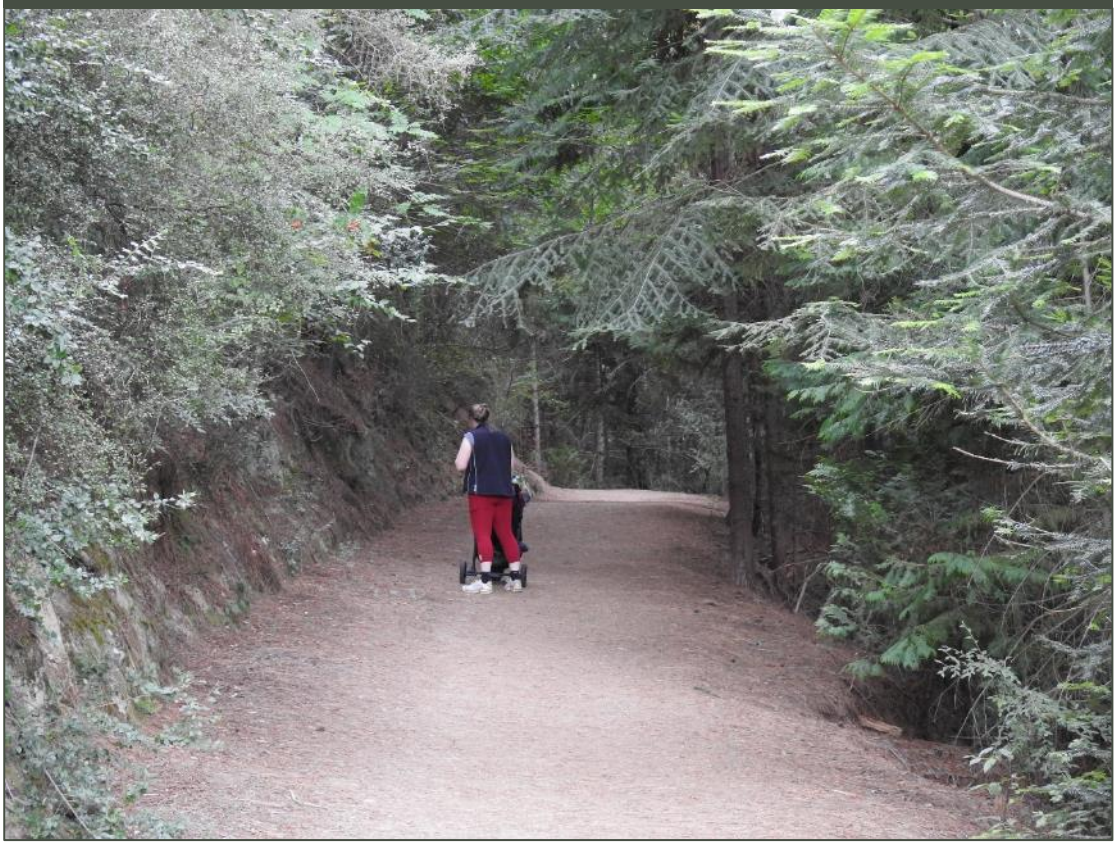


Figure 4: Conical Hill entrance

Figure 5: Conical Hill summit viewing platform

Figure 6: Conical Hill facility condition example

Figure 7: Private housing adjacent to Conical Hill track

Figure 8: Council water tank adjacent Conical Hill track

6.1 Strava – pedestrian and cycle activity indications

Figure 9 shows the Strava heatmap for 'running' in Hanmer for the 24 months up to November 2020. Strava is a social media application which uses GPS records from subscribers' smartphones and other devices uploaded to a central database, allowing speed and time comparisons with other cyclists, runners, kayakers and swimmers (for example), and the monitoring of individual activity or training targets. While the service is popular with professional athletes, its membership is dominated by casual recreation participants. Strava indicated that it had 50 million international users in early 2020 (80% outside the US) with an additional million joining per month. It is now popular amongst regular cyclists and runners.

Comparisons between different forms of data gathering show a degree of reliability for Strava data with a range of 1% to 12% of users recorded on-site that are connected to the service; and this is growing.[5] Such response rates would compare favourably to an on-site intercept survey of users in an outdoor setting, particularly since Strava data are collected over all seasons and all day (an intercept survey would normally only cover relatively short time periods and be confined to specific interception points). Nevertheless, caution needs to be applied to the use of Strava data as they show participation by only Strava members. There will be an inherent bias to the more competitive and tech-savvy, and some data accumulate from users staying logged in when they are doing other activities, such as driving. Some records are also offset by tens of metres due to either poor GPS reception or map projection errors. However, most records appear in their correct locations.

Strava is therefore a little like a tag and release programme, but unlike, for example, tagging 10 longfin eels with GPS devices and seeing where they head to breed[6] Strava essentially tags several thousand active people in an area and monitors where and how they recreate. Its greatest strength is therefore in showing the relative value of settings for different forms of recreation. In the experience of the author of this report, if an area is publicaly accessible, it will appear on the Strava heatmap.

Heatmaps indicate the cumulative activity of Strava subscribers in any setting. The brighter the colour, the more activity there. Figure 9 indicates that the Conical Hill walk is likely to be the most popular recreational pedestrian setting in Hanmer. In addition, there is a reasonable level of use of the Majuba Walk which leads north-east from the Conical Hill track at its mid-point, and some use of the link to Lucas Lane which leads west.

Figure 10 for cycling shows little activity on the Conical Hill track, and this is most likely from illegal activity, cyclists leaving their GPS record live while they walk the track, or miscoding of activity type. Lucas Land appears to be a far less popular access route to the mountain biking options north of Conical Hill compared with Chatterton Road.

[5] Herrero, J. 2016. *Using big data to understand trail use: three Strava tools*. TRAFx Research See also https://medium.com/strava-metro/cdc-finds-strava-metro-data-correlates-strongly-with-census-active-commuting-data-8ab1be0fe130

[6] As NIWA did in 2019 and earlier in the century see https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/ourchangingworld/audio/2018695044/mystery-of-the-longfin-eel-s-breeding-ground

Figure 9: Hanmer Strava heatmap for running

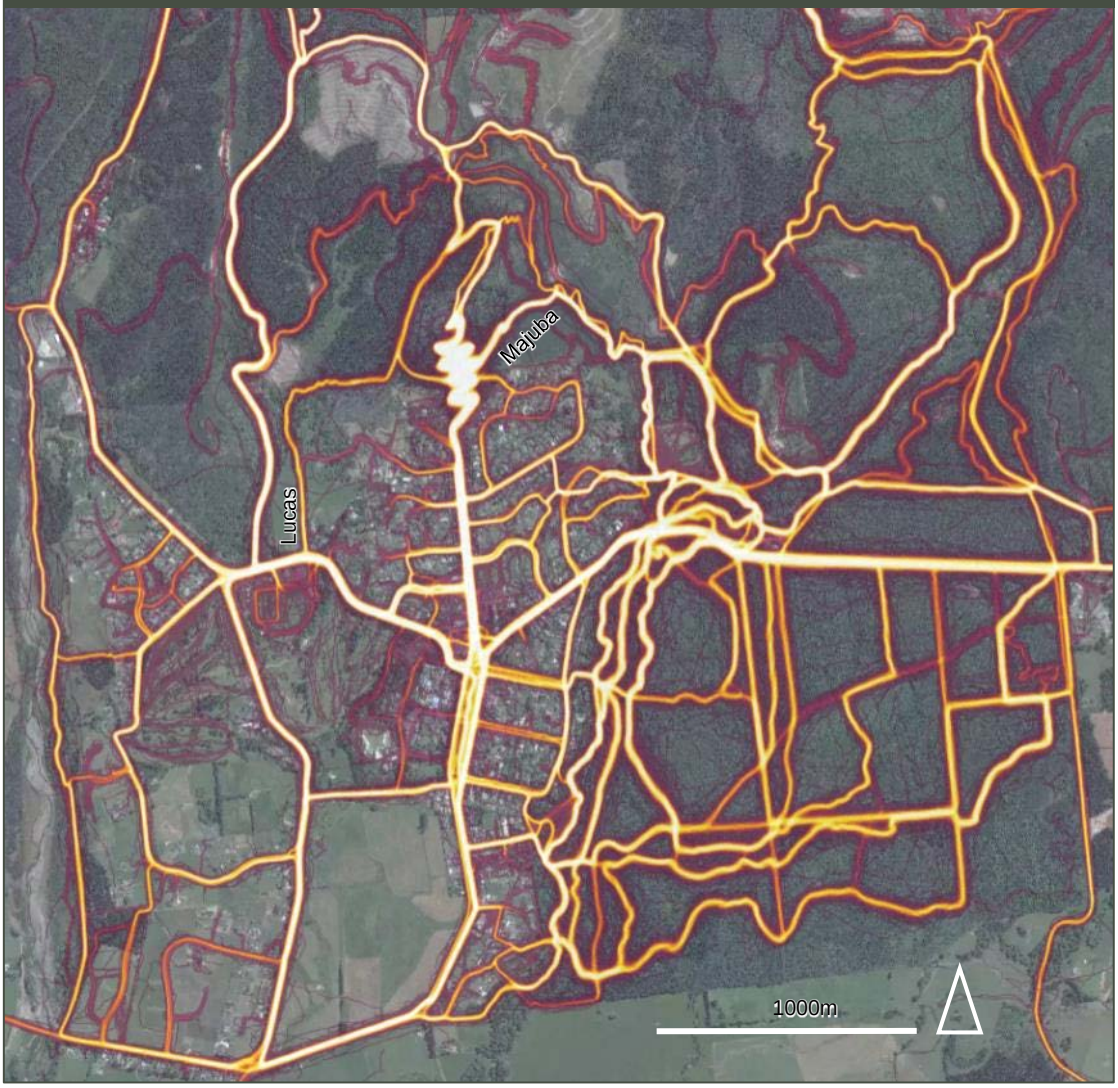


Figure 10: Hanmer Strava heatmap for cycling

7 Effects assessment for social values

This section considers the potential effects of the Flyride proposal on current users of the Conical Hill Reserve based on the assessment matters identified in Section 5 of this report.

7.1 Mode shift

Will the proposed activity on Conical Hill represent a significant change in existing activity modes? That is, will walkers on the Reserve encounter users having a substantially different experience and using a different mode to access it?

Since users of the Flyride will depend on foot-power to access the experience from the south face of Conical Hill, existing users will only encounter other walkers on the access track to Conical Hill. Similarly, there is no proposed alternative access option for walkers and cyclists accessing the Hill from the north. There will therefore be no mode shift on the access tracks.

7.2 Dominance of Flyride

Will the commercial component of the activity be sufficiently evident to change the experience of existing users?

Existing users will encounter the facilities associated with the Flyride at the summit of Conical Hill (the start station) and north of the Lucas Lane access track (the stop station). Temporary plastic pipes have been mounted on site to indicate the proposed location of the permanent Flyride towers, and these indicate limited opportunities to view the Flyride structure from the access tracks, considering that they are largely surrounded by mature exotic trees.

Figure 11 shows the proposed location of tower 1 below the summit viewing platform (see Figure 2 for tower numbers and locations). While the tower will be difficult to see from the platform, its rail link with the start station, and the station and toilet, will be dominant features when viewing north. There will be no interruptions to the vistas to the south.

Figure 11: Tower 1 position looking south from proposed start station site

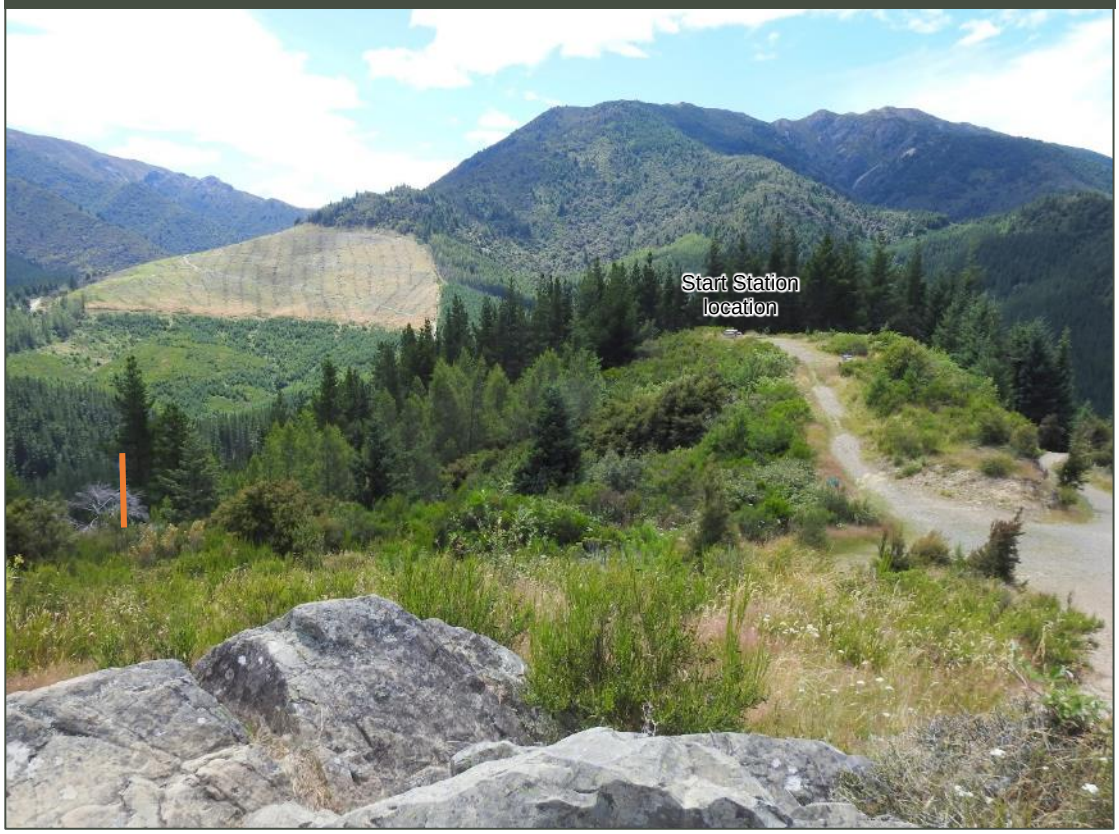
Figure 12 shows the view north from adjacent to the viewing platform (at the orientation table) showing tower 1 and the proposed location of the start station and toilets. Visitors to the viewing platform will clearly be aware of the new development and users of the existing picnic table at the proposed start station location will be displaced.

The Flyride will not dominate the experience of the Conical Hill track, or the main feature which is the views to the south over the Hanmer Plain and to the Organ and Amuri Ranges. It will become a significant feature of the summit looking north. This view is towards Mount Isobel

and the pine plantations on its flanks, and the proposed facilities could be partly screened by vegetation if desired.

In sum, the proposal will not dominate the Conical Hill experience, but will be an obvious feature of it.

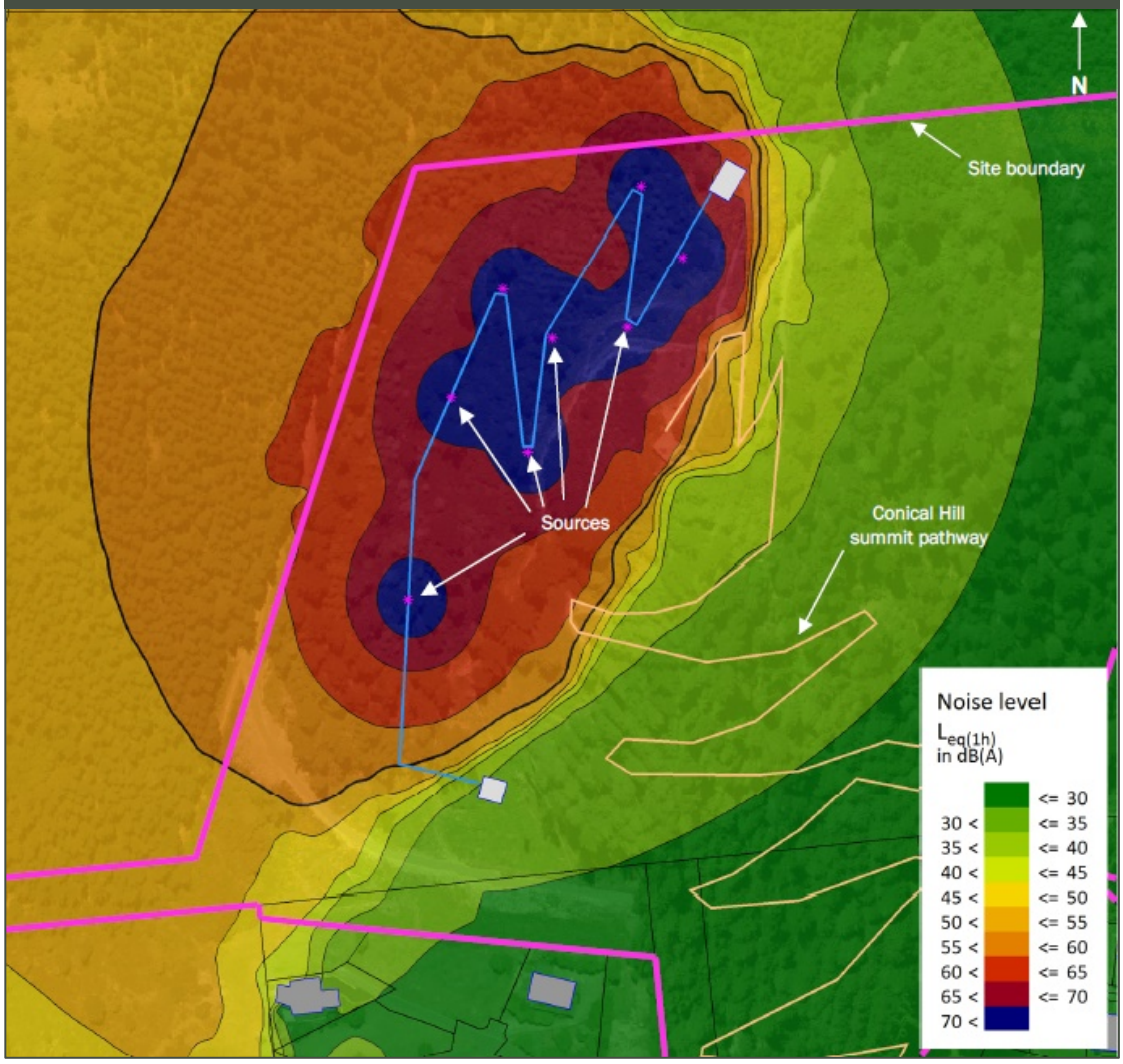
Figure 12: View north from adjacent viewing platform showing tower 1 position



The noise generated by users of the Flyride (screams and shouts) has been assessed by Acoustic Engineering Services Ltd (2020) with a focus on District Plan noise level compliance at neighbouring residential properties. The noise assessment also provides a description of expected noise levels within the reserve. The technical details of the noise assessment are contained in the original report and are not repeated here. Figure 13 shows the 1-hour averaged sound pressure noise level contours for screams emanating from riders, and includes a 5dB 'penalty' (an increase) considering the special nature of the noise (unlike a truck passing for example). This indicates the degree of noise shelter on most of the Conical Hill track provided by the land contour. Intermittent noise from users will be evident at one corner of the track and at the summit. This is unlikely to 'dominate' the walking experience, but will be a feature of the time spent on the summit (when the Flyride is operating and when someone lets out a whoop).

The noise assessment recommends slowing the ride near the stop station to reduce the likelihood of noise affecting neighbouring residences.

Figure 13: $L_{Aeq(1h)}$ of screams from riders over a 1 hour duration at 1.5m height



7.3 Crowding

Will the new activity increase the patronage of Conical Hill to the point where crowding becomes an issue or overwhelms the capacity of facilities on the Reserve, leading to more conflict between visitors?

The track counter at the base of the Conical Hill track reported just over 52,000 walkers in the 2019/20 season. The target patronage of the Flyride is 50,000, which is approximately 10% of the current patronage of the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa. The capacity of the Flyride will be between 50 and 60 passengers per hour, which will only be reached during peak visitor periods (summer weekends and school holidays). Some of the patronage will come from existing users of the track, and so, at peak times, total use of the reserve should not double. However, some users of the Flyride will do more than one ride, and part of the track (between the start and stop stations) may have more use than sections of track below the stop station.

Track width on Conical Hill is quite generous (2 to 3.5m for much of its length – see Figure 3) and there is significant capacity for additional use, considering on-site observation of users of the Hill over a busy weekend in January 2021. Near the summit, several short sections of track narrow to 1 to 1.5m, and widening may be required over some tens of metres to reduce the potential for user conflict. Otherwise, there appears to be substantial capacity for the paths to cater for increased use. This will, in turn, increase encounter rates between visitors. However,

considering the proximity of Conical Hill to central Hanmer, low encounter rates are unlikely to be an expectation for most visitors.

7.4 Specialisation

Is the current visitor experience on Conical Hill dependent on a specialised resource that will be compromised by a commercial development?

Walking is a very generalised activity and is accessible to most people and occurs in most recreation settings. There is no specialised user group to displace and ample alternative walking (or running) destinations in and around Hanmer (see Figure 9). The only specialised feature of Conical Hill is the view from the summit south across the Hanmer Plain (which is unaffected), and the view north over plantation forest and towards Mount Isobel (which is attainable from many other locations). It is unlikely that conflict in this setting can be ascribed to effects on specialist recreation opportunities.

7.5 Commercialism

Will commercial recreation on Conical Hill be considered generally incompatible in the context of Hanmer Springs as a visitor destination?

The *2015-2020 Hurunui District Tourism Strategy* (HDC 2015) identifies Hanmer Springs village and the Thermal Pools & Spa as the 'primary drivers' of tourism in the Hurunui District, followed by the Waipara Valley wine experience. Table 1 enumerates the number of tourism operators by location within the District. Hanmer Springs accounted for more than a third of all tourism businesses in the District in 2015.

Table 1: Tourism operators in the Hurunui District 2015 (HDC 2015)

	Hanmer Springs	Culverden /Hurunui	Hawarden /Waikari	Waipara Valley	Amberley /Leithfield	Greta Valley	Cheviot Area	Rotherham /Waiau /Mt Lyford	TOTAL per sector
Accommodation	51	6	6	8	10	3	12	6	102
Attractions	22	3	7	5	6	5	5	6	59
Shopping	13	4	4	1	10	0	4	0	36
Tours & Transport	5	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	9
Services & Trades	22	7	4	5	35	2	18	8	101
Wine & Dine	24	6	3	5	15	1	6	4	64
Artists	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Wineries	1	1	3	22	0	0	2	0	29
TOTAL per area	138	28	28	48	76	14	47	24	

The tourism strategy has three goals:

1. *To feature Hanmer Springs as a key product of the region.*
2. *To feature Waipara Valley as a key product of the region.*
3. *To continue to support and enhance tourism in the entire Hurunui district by working alongside operators and identifying opportunities.*

The region is largely dependent on the domestic tourism market. Prior to COVID, visitors to the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa were 85% domestic, with a heavy dependence on

Canterbury. Maintaining a sufficient supply of activity options to maintain a repeat visitor base for Hanmer Springs is a key motivation for the Flyride proposal.[7]

Conical Hill is a local reserve for Hanmer Springs village. There is no apparent reason to assume that the setting is removed or remote from the village. Services for tourism are part and parcel of the Hanmer Springs experience, and the presence of commercial recreation services will not be unexpected in this setting.

The Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa, as a business unit, is administered via the Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa Management Committee, a committee of the Hurunui District Council. The Hanmer Springs Community Board also contributes by communicating the interests and concerns of residents. Staff of the Hanmer Thermal Pools & Spa have conducted two community meetings to review the Flyride proposal and adjusted the concept from running down the southern side of Conical Hill to its eastern side. It is assumed for this assessment that these different levels of input to the proposal have confirmed a certain level of community support for the proposal.

7.6 Summary

Of the five assessment matters, only one raises the potential for concern – that is whether the Flyride will 'dominate' the recreation experience on Conical Hill. The track to the summit from both the north and the south are well-separated from the Flyride by the contours of the Hill and by mature vegetation, and the walking experience will largely remain as it is. The start station will be obvious from summit, but will not dominate the key experience, which is the view to the south from the viewing structure. Vegetation may be used to screen the start station, but sounds of activity will likely be heard. Considering that the main visitor experiences on the Conical Hill walk are the track and the view to the south from the summit, the Flyride is unlikely to 'dominate'.

[7] Ben Smith, Business Development Manager, Hanmer Springs Thermal Pools & Spa, pers. comm. Jan 2021.

8 Reserves Act considerations

This section considers the assessment parameters set by the Reserves Act 1977 and Hurunui District Council Reserves Management Plan (prepared according to the Reserves Act).

8.1 Primary purpose of the Reserve

The degree to which the proposal is compatible with the primary purpose of a recreation reserve under the Reserves Act 1977 and as interpreted by local reserve management planning.

Considering precedents set for commercial recreation leases and activities on recreation reserves nationally (see Section 3) it is not possible to interpret the Reserves Act as denying outright the potential for the Flyride proposal on the Conical Hill recreation reserve.

The Conical Hill section of the HDC Reserves Management Plan (2012) states (as reviewed in Section 4):

> *Conical Hill Reserve is a Hanmer Springs 'icon' along with the thermal pools. The summit walk has always been a significant aspect of the Hanmer Springs experience, particularly as a family outing or as a prelude to soaking in the thermal pools. Being a reserve that has been visited for almost a century, the reserve is testimony to the beginning of forestry in New Zealand. All of these factors must be taken into account when considering the standards of maintenance and any development proposals.*

Development proposals on Conical Hill are therefore contemplated by the Reserves Management Plan.

General policy in the Management Plan states:

> *5.1 Commercial activity will not be permitted on reserve land unless specifically allowed for in an individual reserve policy or otherwise licensed by Council.*

There is no policy specific to the Flyride proposal as the Management Plan predated the concept. The proposal will, however, be 'otherwise licenced by Council' and is a Council proposal.

There appears to be no impediment to the proposal based on an assessment of whether the proposal is compatible with the primary purpose of a recreation reserve.

8.2 Is it 'necessary'?

Is the proposal "necessary to enable the public to obtain the benefit and enjoyment of the reserve or for the convenience of persons using the reserve" according to the Reserves Act.

Using the same assessment framework as applied in Section 8.1 above, a wide range of commercial recreation services have been considered 'necessary' on recreation reserves nationally. In the case of the Flyride proposal, the service extends the range of commercial recreation product in Hurunui and supports the objectives of the *2015-2020 Hurunui District Tourism Strategy* (HDC 2015).

8.3 Is it an enhancement?

The HDC Reserves Management Plan (5.2) states, "Where permitted, the activity must be of a recreational nature, or enhance the recreational use of the reserve and be considered to benefit the community."

The Flyride activity is clearly of a recreational nature. The proposal expands the recreation opportunities on Conical Hill, and, considering the low scale of effect on existing activities, can be considered to enhance the recreation use of the reserve by increasing activity diversity.

Considering the requirement for patrons to walk (on the northern and southern sides of Conical Hill) or cycle (on the northern side only), the proposal will increase the general level of physical activity uptake in Hanmer Springs. This can be considered a benefit to the Hurunui community; beyond sustaining the tourism product diversity in Hanmer Springs and the return of financial surpluses to the HDC for expenditure on regional recreation and community services. The latter financial considerations would not form part of an assessment under the Reserves Act, but are relevant to HDC Reserves Management Plan considerations.

8.4 Summary

The Reserves Act and the HDC Reserves Management Plan are not hostile to the Flyride proposal.

9 Conclusion

This report assesses the effects of the proposed Flyride on existing recreational users of Conical Hill in Hanmer Springs village, and reviews its compatibility with the provisions of the Reserves Act and the HDC Reserves Management Plan (2012).

Conical Hill is an iconic recreation destination in Hanmer Springs and provides the most popular local walk on its southern face. Panoramic views south across the Hanmer Plains are the main reward, and the summit also provides a vista to the north towards Mount Isobel across a foreground of production forestry. While the access track is well-maintained and of generous width, facilities at the summit and reserve entrance are in poor condition and are the subject of a redevelopment plan.

The Flyride development has limited potential to affect existing users of the track to the summit of Conical Hill as a result of its location on its western slope. The start station to be located at the summit will be an obvious feature north of the lookout and, while not affecting the primary view south of the Hanmer Plain, will form part of the foreground when looking north. However, the view to Mount Isobel is transected by production forestry and the station will be within a developed visitor setting.

While not directly contemplated by the HDC Reserves Management Plan, the development is able to be contemplated within it. The Reserves Act does not provide any direct impediment to the proposal, and it can be considered, broadly, an appropriate development for a recreation reserve. The site-specific issue is whether the proposal sustains and enhances recreation values on Conical Hill. This assessment finds that – considering the obvious role of Hanmer Springs as a developed tourism destination, and the ability to sustain existing recreation values on the Conical Hill track – the proposal is acceptable from a recreation and tourism development perspective.