



THE RIDGELINE TRAIL

Community Vision

A background document capturing knowledge, ideas and opportunities

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION | AUGUST 2023

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The Ridgeline Trail spans the traditional lands of the Wadawurrung People.

We Acknowledge them as the Traditional Owners and Protectors of this place.

We Acknowledge their Ancestors who cared for the land, rivers and sea - and all of its creatures - for thousands of generations.

We pay our Respects to Elders past, present and future who continue on this path.

Acknowledgements

The Bellbrae Primary School Community and Surf Coast Energy Group initiated what has become The Ridgeline Trail project. Project champions Shauna Burford, Graeme Stockton and Perry Mills navigated the process and have ridden the bumps to arrive at this Community Vision document, developed through the collaborative efforts of many.

Children riding to school, local residents walking their dogs, runners, bike riders, families, school staff, local businesses, property owners, historians, councillors, council officers and Regional Roads Victoria teams have all shared their thoughts and ideas.

The Ridgeline Trail Community Vision has been drafted by and for the Surf Coast community.

Our aim is to create a community trail that runs along the Spring Creek Valley ridgeline from Bellbrae to Jan Juc and Torquay. Locals and visitors will be able to walk, run or ride through native woodlands to get to school or to work, or even just for fun (did we mention the winery?).

This document is designed to kickstart a conversation with the broader community and with government project teams. It summarises important information about the ridgeline pathway and the ecological corridor. We're guessing many don't even know it's there.

This document presents an alternative vision for the ridgeline. A change in focus from "a service road" to "a scenic community trail that connects us to nature and the places we want to go". A holistic vision, that integrates active travel, recreation and the environment, and that recognises nature is one of the Surf Coast Shire's most valuable assets.

The document aims to raise awareness, educate and influence change.

We thank everybody who has contributed.

We thank the Surf Coast Shire Council and Patagonia for their contributions in funding the work required to produce this vision.



1. Our Vision



A scenic community trail that connects us to nature and to the places we want to go

A community trail that integrates active transport, recreation and the environment

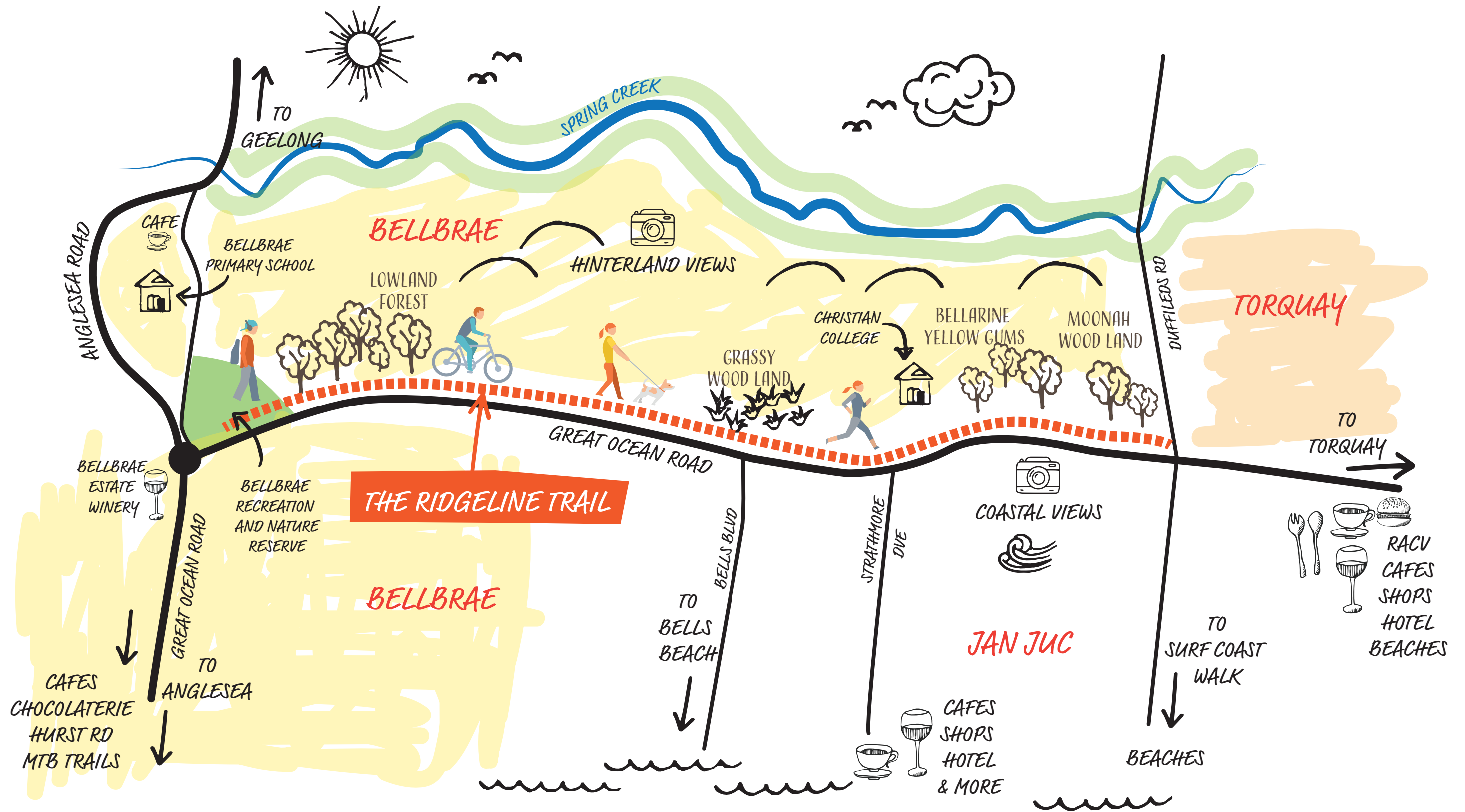
A nature experience that brings to life our aspirations for the future

Surf Coast Shire People Place Future – Community Survey 2021

The top 4 place values identified as being important to the Surf Coast Community are “protection of the natural environment, elements of the natural environment, walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to community activity” and “the general condition of open space”.

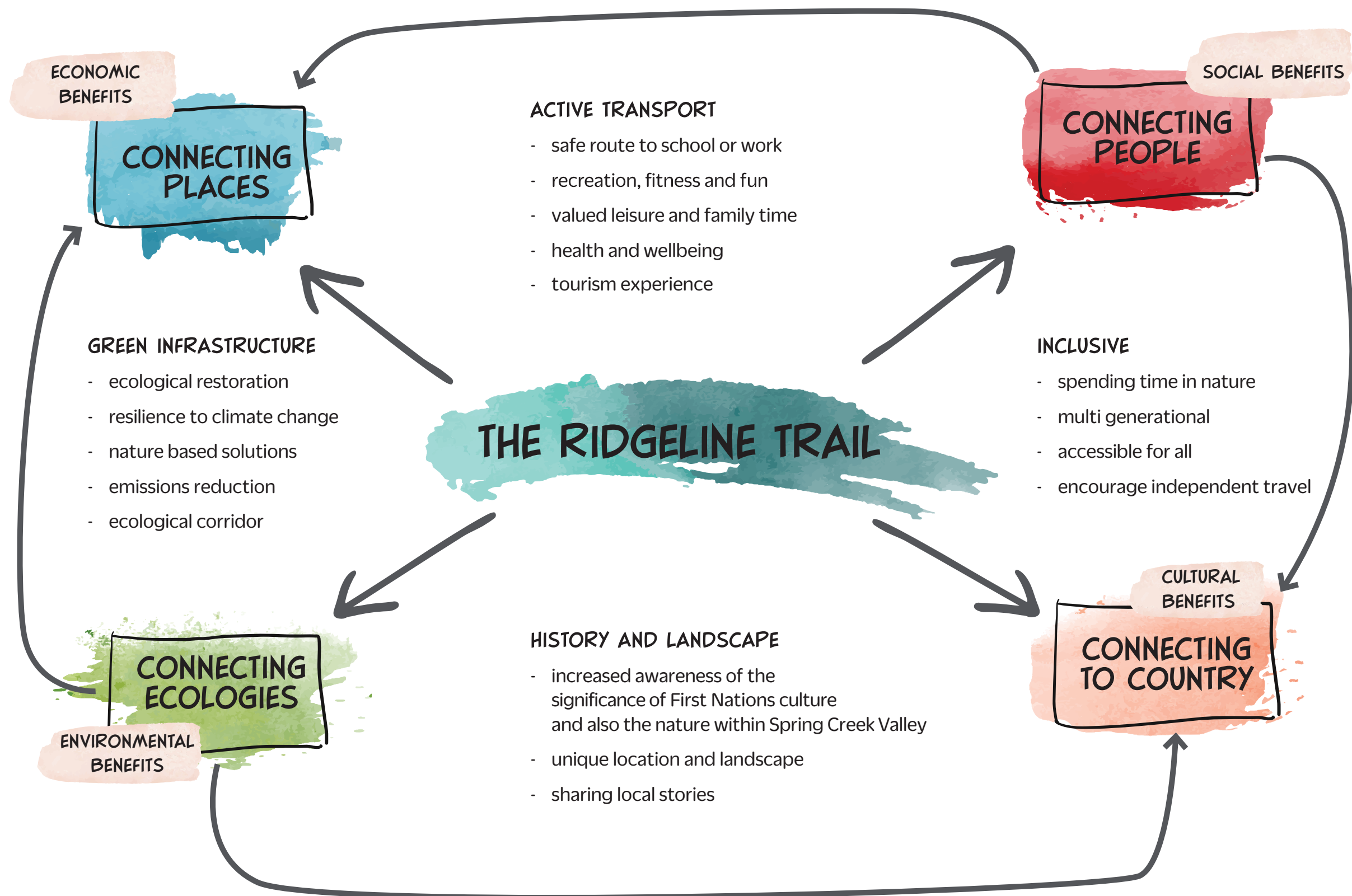
Surf Coast Shire - Community Vision 2022

“From the hinterland to the coast, from the first peoples to the children of the future, we are an active, diverse community that lives creatively to value, protect and enhance the natural environment and our unique neighbourhoods. We will leave the Surf Coast better than we found it”



2. Framework

A community trail that does more than get you from A to B...



3. Desired Outcomes

Development of the Ridgeline Trail will result in an upgraded and extended pathway, restoration of local biodiversity and an enhanced trail experience.

Success would mean the Ridgeline Trail corridor is...

Valued

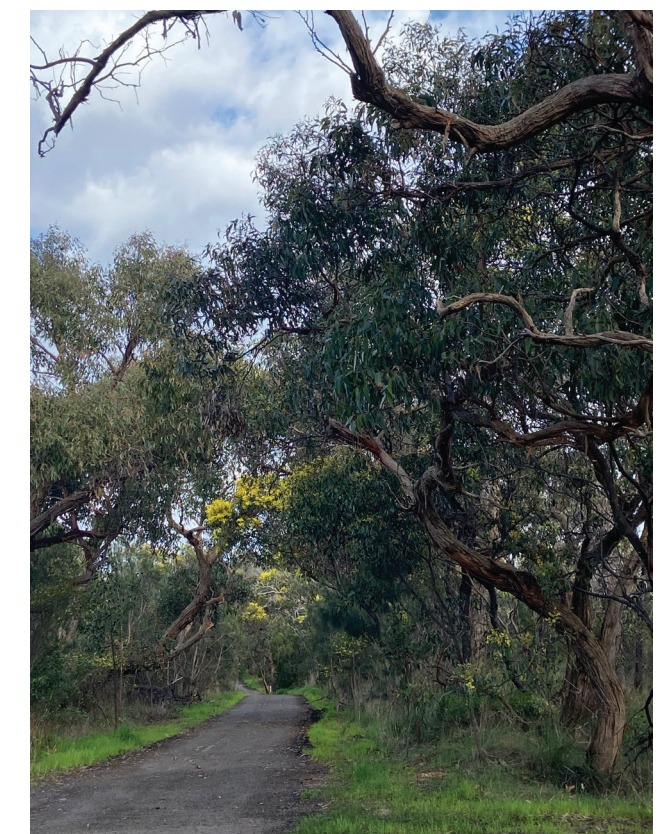
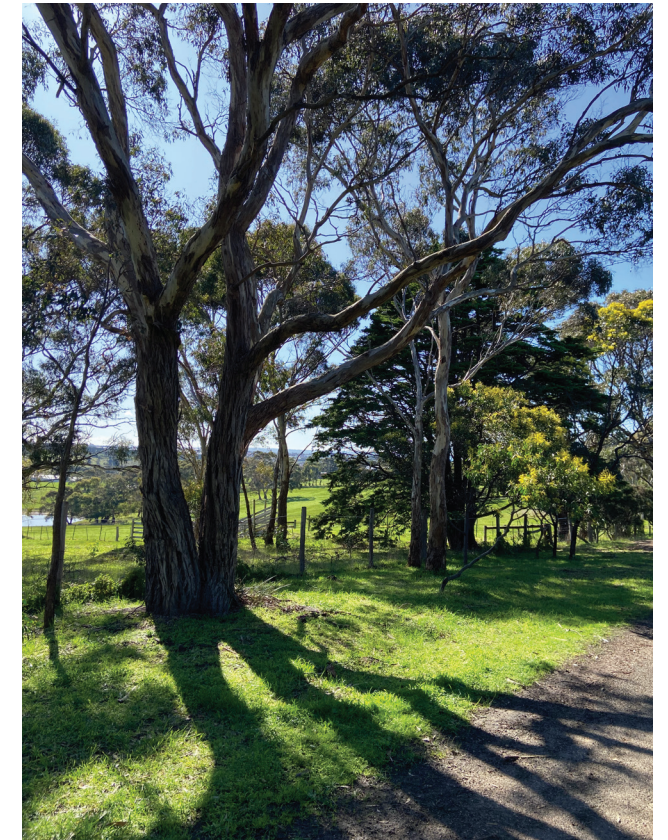
- The Spring Creek Valley ridgeline is special.
- The trail sits within a “significant landscape” that is valued, used and enjoyed by the community.
- Recognition of this value is reflected in local and state government planning.
- “Green infrastructure” or “nature” is valued as much as capital assets (i.e. asphalt, street furniture)

Cared for

- The road reserve is maintained.
- Shared service levels are agreed, appropriate and understood.
- Existing biodiversity is conserved.
- Regionally restricted and highly invasive weeds are controlled.
- Pathways and pathway shoulders are maintained.
- The corridor is rubbish free.
- Fire management is achieved through weed eradication, and co-ordinated, regular and consistent mowing schedules (DTP and Council).
- Community capacity is understood, valued and enabled.
- A collective stewardship model is in place (state government agencies, Council, traditional owners and community).

Revitalised

- A vision for the Spring Creek Valley ridgeline has been agreed.
- The Ridgeline Trail is used by a broad range of community members of differing ages, experience and genders. It is inclusive.
- An active travel link connects us to the places we want to go. It is more than a service road.
- Vulnerable trail users feel safe, accessing and being on the trail.
- Views of the valley are revealed and enjoyed.
- Playful elements amplify landscape values and add to the experience, encouraging increased usage.
- A biodiverse landscape contributes to community learning, health and climate resilience.
- There is a greater awareness and appreciation of the area’s past.
- Social, ecological, cultural and economic community benefits are realised.
- The place and the experience is even more special.



4. Background analysis



4.1 Where is the Ridgeline Trail?

The trail is located parallel and to the north of the Great Ocean Road between Bellbrae and Torquay.

The land corridor is 3.7km long and 9.6 hectares in size.

It is a significant location in more ways than one....

- start of the Great Ocean Road
- regional connection between Bellbrae, Jan Juc and Torquay
- servicing a local residential population of 24,031 (2021 census data)
- two schools with a forecast student population of 1000+



Bellbrae Primary School P-6



Bellbrae Recreation and Nature Reserve



Private land owners



Views over Spring Creek Valley



Bells Boulevard (to Bells Beach)



Christian College Surf Coast Campus K-9



Torquay (start of the Great Ocean Road)



Intersection of Duffields Rd and Great Ocean Rd

4.2 What is the Ridgeline Trail?

It's a significant land corridor that contains...



Infrastructure Assets

- 3.7km linear pathway through road reserve.
- Used as a school cycling route, a recreational cycling and walking link, a recreation space, an access road to private properties and a utility provider service road.
- Currently defined by 2 distinct sections.
 1. 2.6km asphalt service road from Bellbrae Reserve to Christian College. Varying width of 3.5-5m. Original width of 7m. Partially remediated "stack site".
 2. 1.1km informal, dirt "goat track" from Christian College to Duffields Road. 80m community constructed bike jumps.
- Variable pathway quality
- Drainage and culverts
- Vehicle related signage.
- Property and utility infrastructure crossovers.
- Located within a Transport Zone (TRZ2)
- Emergency corridor
- Western end covered by Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)

Natural Assets

- 9.6ha of road reserve ranging in width from 18 to 42m wide.
- Mix of native vegetation species (76 varieties) and introduced species (86 varieties).
- Limited understanding of fauna species.
- Remnant vegetation of varying condition.
- State significant trees and endangered species are present in the corridor (Bellarine Yellow Gum and Coastal Moonah).
- Vegetation protection overlay at western end (VP01 – Significant Native Vegetation).
- 7 regionally controlled noxious weeds are in the corridor (WONS).
- Part of a significant landscape
- Overlooks Spring Creek Valley
- Significant views

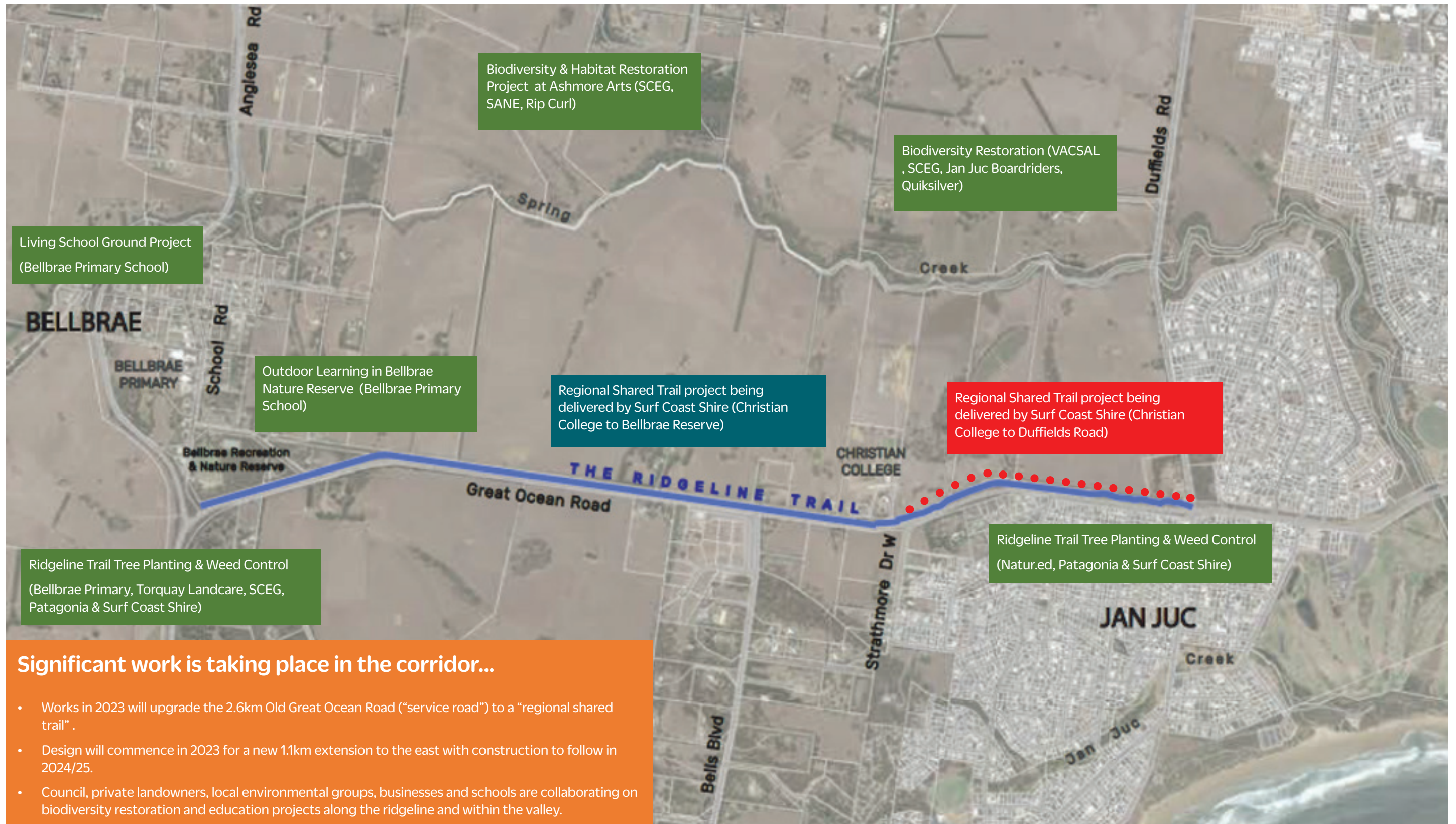
Cultural Assets

- Site of the Old Great Ocean Road, decommissioned in the late 1960's.
- In 2011 the Great Ocean Road and it's scenic environs (from Torquay to Allansford) were found to be a place of outstanding national heritage significance. The Old Great Ocean Road and road reserve are on the National Heritage List and Victorian Heritage Register (VHR).
- There are areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity within the road reserve.
- Overlooks culturally significant waterway (Spring Creek).

Utility Assets

- Above and below ground
- Barwon Water – water and sewerage
- Telstra – telecommunications
- NBN - internet
- Powercor – electricity
- Ausnet - gas

4.3 What's happening on or near the Ridgeline Trail?



Significant work is taking place in the corridor...

- Works in 2023 will upgrade the 2.6km Old Great Ocean Road ("service road") to a "regional shared trail".
- Design will commence in 2023 for a new 1.1km extension to the east with construction to follow in 2024/25.
- Council, private landowners, local environmental groups, businesses and schools are collaborating on biodiversity restoration and education projects along the ridgeline and within the valley.

4.4 What makes the trail special?

Connection with nature

The landscape (not just the pathway) is valued by the community and is a key part of the trail experience

Special qualities:

- The nature within the road reserve is highly valued and is a significant feature.
- Connecting with nature facilitates community health and wellbeing.
- Trail users describe the sensory experience (how it makes them “feel”)... like

“a bush track”, “uncrowded”, “sense of enclosure”, “I feel like my kids are safe”, “by the time my child gets to school they seem less anxious”, the “old trees providing shade and relief from the fiery northern sun”, there is an auditory and visual connection, “the bird sounds”, the “quality of the light”.

“I like it because it's nice and peaceful in the mornings, and like, you get to see it all in the sunlight. And I enjoy talking to mum.... it makes me feel calm and happy”

(Rosie, 9 years)



A diverse ecology

The landscape is of significant ecological value and it is important to protect and enhance it

Special qualities:

- Remnant vegetation from 3 ecological vegetation classes (Lowland Forest EVC 175, Grassy Woodland EVC 175 and Coastal Alkaline Scrub EVC 858).
- The road reserve contains state significant trees, critically endangered habitats and species (Bellarine Yellow Gums and Coastal Moonah).
- Bookended by the Bellbrae Nature Reserve and runs adjacent to high quality remnant vegetation on private land.
- The western end of the trail is identified by DEECA as having a high strategic biodiversity value (4) and very high strategic carbon value (5).
- Key sites:

Lowland Forest habitat - the highest quality native vegetation is at the western end of the trail (the section that feels old, dense and wild).

Grassy Woodland habitat - the middle and largest section of the trail is more open with great views and large old trees.

Coastal Alkaline Scrub habitat - is at the east with a special ‘Moonah tunnel’ feature that marks the entrance to the trail.



Hinterland views

The hinterland views differentiate the trail experience from other local pathways

Special qualities:

- The ridgeline is the highest point in Torquay / Jan Juc.
- The views across the valley and towards the ocean are a special part of the trail experience.
- The land contours stretch into the distance and the trail stretches through tunnels of overhanging trees.
- In the open areas where views are great, controlling weeds will allow views of the hinterland from the road.

“I love the view of the Spring Creek valley (open space). I also love the serenity”

(Miyo)



Topography

The natural topographical features of the trail contribute to the enjoyment of the trail experience

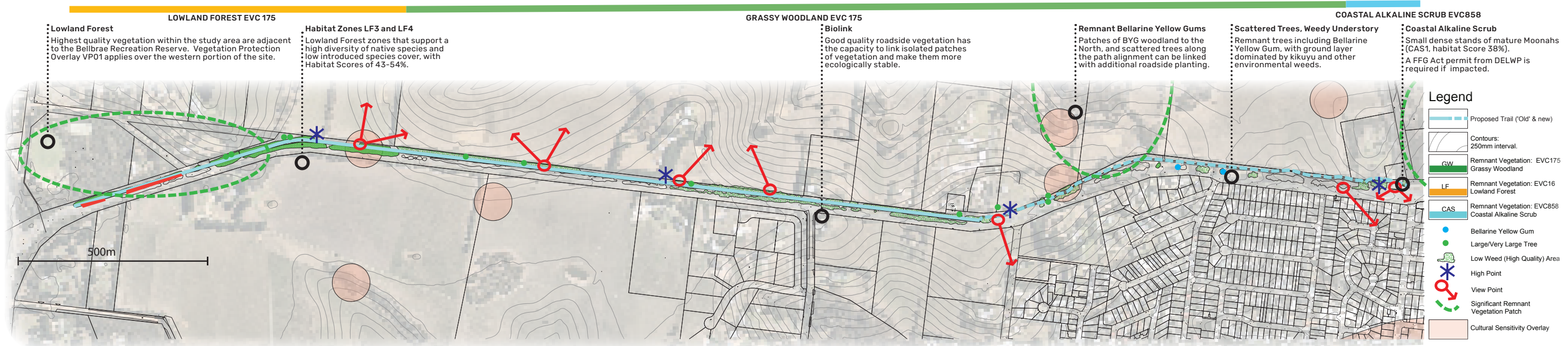
Special qualities:

- The trail ascends from Torquay towards Bellbrae.
 - The hills and the gullies on the trail are like a roller coaster, making the trail interesting (visually and physically) and creating natural play opportunities.
 - An 80m section of the ‘goat track’ has bike jumps. They need some work but the kids are proud of their creations.
 - Running parallel to the Great Ocean Road, the trail dips and rises, above and below the Great Ocean Road.
 - Embankments create a natural safety barrier from the road and a sense of being hidden from sight.
 - The topography adds to the sensory nature of the trail.
- Fast vs. slow, steep vs. flat, hidden in the gullies vs. visible to the road, views vs. filtered views, riding in the open vs. riding through tree tunnels, cleared vs. wild, sheltered vs. exposed, shade vs. sun.

“So, I like the hills, but you could squish them down a little bit”

(Archie, 10 years)

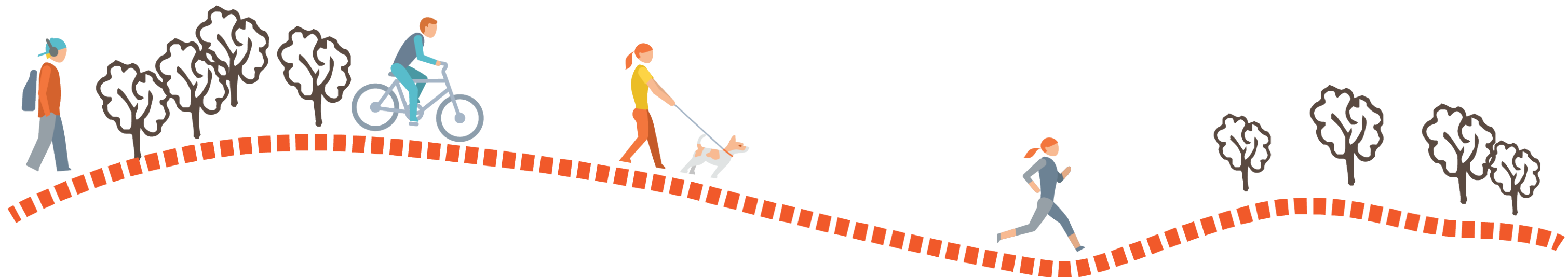




Elevation Profile

Bellbrae

Jan Juc



4.5 What is currently not so great about the Ridgeline Trail?

Pathway quality and drainage

The quality of the pathway impacts usage, safety and accessibility.

Issues:

- Trail surface quality varies – some sections are good (both sealed and unsealed), other sections are corrugated, cracked, have potholes or poor drainage.
- Vegetation has encroached on the Old Great Ocean Road over time. The visible width of the service road varies from 3 to 5m. Some sections have a gravel shoulder.
- The width of the “goat track” varies from 0.5m to 5m as trail users navigate their own path.
- There are a number of drainage culverts that intersect the pathway. Planks are used as bridges.
- Sections of the path are inaccessible in winter due to mud and water pooling in the dips.

“There are some bits with cracks and like bits that have random potholes”. “Maybe, like dry it up a bit, because sometimes it’s muddy”
(Bellbrae PS Grade 5 Students)



It is very weedy and not cared for

Weeds and rubbish in the road reserve impact biodiversity, the trail experience and visitor experience.

Issues:

- There is a hidden gem underneath the weeds.
- Weeds are hiding the views and invading high value ecological habitat. If left unmanaged we will lose what is left of the remnant vegetation.
- 89 introduced weed species along the ridgeline including planted vegetation (shelter belts, fence lines, landscaping) and introduced grasses.
- Weed mapping has identified 7 regionally controlled noxious weeds and 5 highly invasive weeds (a threat to biodiversity as they displace native species).
- There are leftover aggregate piles covered in weeds at the old DTP stack site. Apart from being unsightly, there is a risk highly invasive weeds will spread into the Bellbrae Nature Reserve.
- The road reserve is used as a tip by some community members (green waste, industrial waste, general rubbish) and as a source of firewood.

“The grade 6’s were doing bike ed and there was a snake right in the middle of the track. This was in the section between Christian College and Duffields Road. So when the Grade 5’s did their bike ed we rode on the GOR.”

(Bellbrae Primary School Teacher)

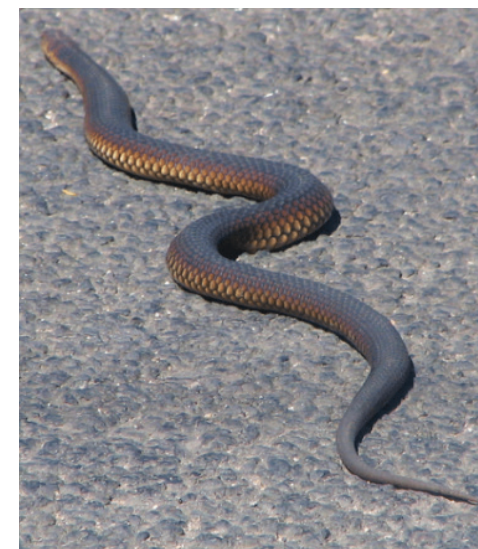


Trail users don’t feel safe in some sections

Safety fears impact use and inclusivity.

Issues:

- This is an off-road pathway with a high proportion of women, older and younger users.
- It is difficult to get onto the trail. Entrance points to the trail are not signposted.
- Path users fear crossing the Great Ocean Road at Bells Boulevard, Strathmore Drive West, East and Duffields Road (high speed / high volume vehicle traffic / no signalised crossing).
- Bellbrae Primary parents drive their children to Christian College to safely start their ride to school.
- There is no traffic safety or wayfinding signage along the trail. Trail users have made their own.
- Parents fear children’s independent navigation of the Christian College entrance and Cemetery Road intersection (high volume vehicle traffic before and after school).
- There have been instances of young children riding along the Great Ocean Road and Cemetery Road.
- The grass along the shoulders of the trail can often be over children’s heads and invasive environmental weeds spread quickly along path edges.
- Path users fear snakes.



Pathway connections and shared access

Lack of connection impacts usage, slows uptake of sustainable transport modes and impacts liveability.

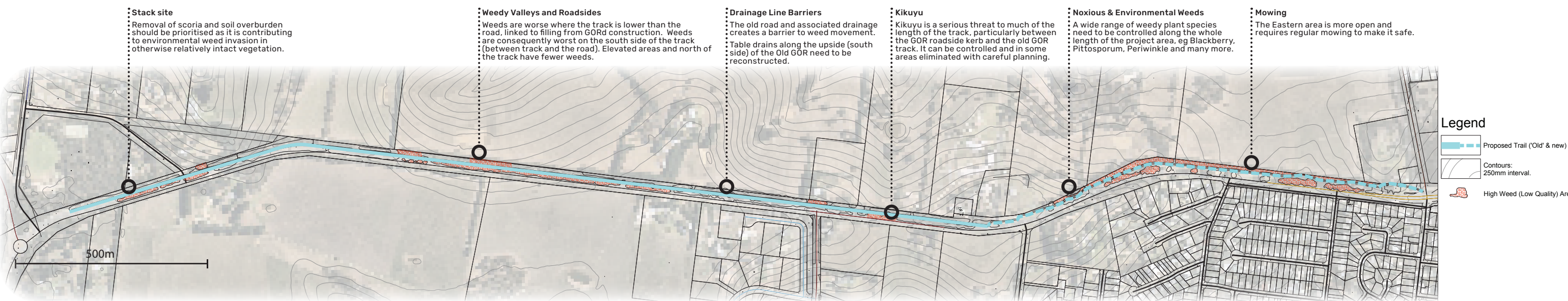
Issues:

- Locals can’t get where they want to go.
- It is a trail that doesn’t connect to existing community, public transport, pathway or road infrastructure.
- There are no defined access points for pedestrians and cyclists along the trail.
- The trail is “shared use”.
- Vehicle access is required for property access and maintenance of infrastructure assets along the trail. It is unclear how frequently this is required, whether it is possible to limit vehicle size or limit vehicle use to certain sections.
- It is used more frequently by pedestrians, runners and bike riders, than trucks, cars or motorbikes.
- It is open to vehicle entry at intersections, crossovers and at trail ends.

Safer walking and cycling infrastructure, separate paths for cars and bikes / pedestrians, more off road cycling routes and more attractive walking and cycling routes are identified by Surf Coast residents as 4 of the most effective improvements the Shire should make to shift transportation towards more resilient and sustainable modes. Road Safety Strategy 2022-27



Weeds are a serious threat to the future of the trail and its significant vegetation...

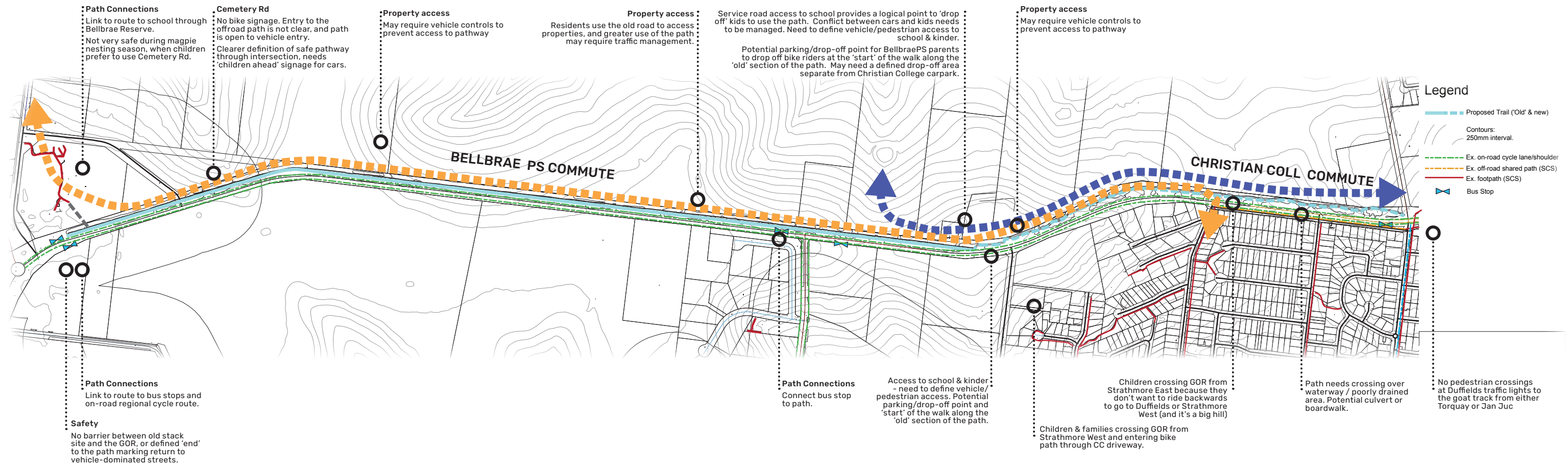


Examples of weed assessments showing 2 of the 6 trail sections (undertaken by West Coast Indigenous Nursery 19/08/22) to guide a collaborative approach to weed eradication

1. Bellbrae Reserve Track to Stack site gate (at Cemetery Road)					
North side of GOR track			South side of GOR track		
Botanical Name	Common Name	Priority	Bot. name	Comm.Name	Priority
Dactylis glomerata	Cocksfoot	2 - High	Pittosporum undulatum	Sweet Pittosporum	1 - URGENT
Grevillea sp.		4 - Low	Rubus sp.	Blackberry	1 - URGENT
Agapanthus praecox	Agapanthus	2 - High	Pennisetum clandestinum	Kikuyu	1 - URGENT
Fraxinus angustifolia	Desert Ash	2 - High	Grevillea sp.		2 - High
Melaleuca armillaris	Giant Bracelet Honey-myrtle	2 - High	Cuppressus macrocarpa	Cypress	2 - High
Cuppressus macrocarpa	Cypress	2 -High - Saplings only	Agapanthus praecox	Agapanthus	2 - High
Pinus radiata	Pine tree	2 -High - Saplings only	Fraxinus angustifolia	Desert Ash	2 - High
Pittosporum undulatum	Sweet Pittosporum	1 - URGENT	Prunus sp.		3 - Medium
			Westringia fruticosa	Westringia	4 - Low
			Dodonea viscosa		4 - Low
			Callistemon sp.		4 - Low One only

2. Cemetery Road east to LOT 410					
North side of GOR track			South side of GOR track		
Bot. Name	Comm. Name	Priority	Bot. Name	Comm. Name	Priority
Billardiera heterophylla	Bluebell creeper	1 - URGENT	Chrysanthemoides monilifera	Boneseed	1 - URGENT
Pittosporum undulatum	Sweet Pittosporum	1 - URGENT	Billardiera heterophylla	Bluebell Creeper	1 - URGENT
Rubus sp.	Blackberry	1 - URGENT	Pittosporum undulatum	Sweet Pittosporum	1 - URGENT
Vinca major	Blue Periwinkle	2 - High	Rubus sp.	Blackberry	1 - URGENT
Dodonea sp.		4 - Low	Leptospermum laevigatum	Coast Teatree	2 - High
			Paraserianthes lophantha	Cape Wattle	2 - High
			Watsonia bulbifera	Watsonia	2 -High - One only
			Acacia longifolia	Sallow Wattle	3 - Medium
			Dodonea sp.		4 - Low
			Dodonea viscosa	Giant Hopbush	4 - Low
			Hakea salicifolia	Willow-leaf Hake	4 - Low One only

Connectivity and shared use issues.....



4.6 Who uses the trail and for what?

The area and environment has been used by the community for a long time.

The ridgeline and the valley have a unique story. It is not widely known and is fascinating.

The Traditional Owners name for Spring Creek is Doorangwar.

The earliest evidence of Aboriginal occupation in the hinterland is dated to the mid to late Holocene, approximately 5000 years ago. Stone artefacts, shell middens and scar trees have been found throughout the Spring Creek valley. We understand that the first people who lived in this area were members of the Wadawurrung who are part of the Kulin nation that surrounds Port Phillip Bay.

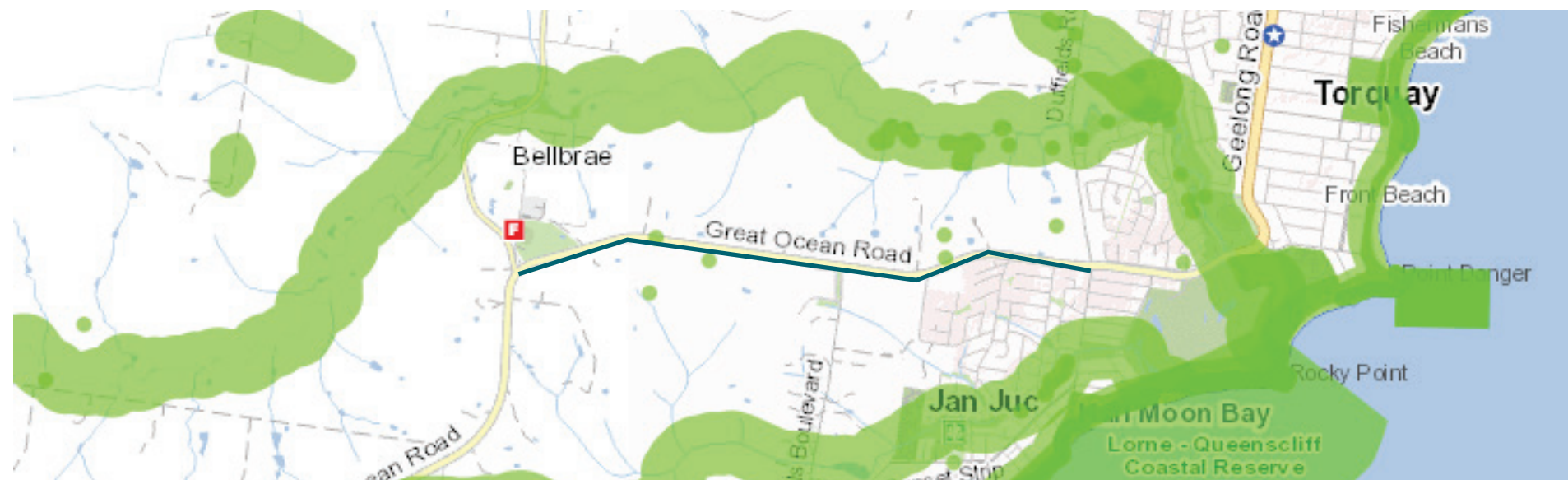
The valley was an important source of fresh water, and a transport corridor for the Wadawurrung, and provided places for camping, fishing and hunting. There are anecdotal stories from early settlers of indigenous camps along Spring Creek. Aboriginal groups used the resource rich areas on the coastal margins and wetlands, moving seasonally between the coast and the productive plains of the hinterland.

Before European settlement, the valley would have supported rich and diverse flora and fauna; water birds, fish, eels, turtles and platypus in the creek and billabongs; and kangaroo, wallaby, and possibly emu.

Natural materials from birds, marsupials, mammals and gum trees were used for tools, weapons, utensils, baskets, bags, clothes, house materials and ceremonial dress. Large animals were used for meat, skins, thread and bone.

The trail runs along Spring Creek valley ridgeline. Artifacts and scatters found on the alignment of the pathway record ancient aboriginal custodianship of the country.

The Wadawurrung believe that “Dja” (country) is more than a place. They believe our coast, hinterland and people were all formed by Bunjil and ancestor spirits, who continue to live in the land, water and sky. They believe it’s our shared responsibility to care for country, and to work together to make Wadawurrung Country strong.



Legend

Areas of Cultural Heritage Sensitivity

The Ridgeline trail

References: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System (ACHRIS)
Surf Coast Cultural Heritage - Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) Distinctive
Areas Landscape Submission, SCSC Cultural Overlay, Wadawurrung Healthy Country
Plan, KWP Archaeology Cultural Heritage Advice, SCEG Distinctive Areas Landscape
Submission, Torquay & District Historical Society



Post settlement

The first non-indigenous people to live in the valley were squatters and woodcutters.

In 1844 Joseph Gundry took up land west of old Jan Juc (Bellbrae). He called it Iron Bark Station. He opened up the area to pastoral settlement and established the Jan Juc Common School (Bellbrae Primary) in 1861 for his own and neighbouring children. The first settlers / squatters on the land along the ridgeline trail were Edward and Charles Gundry (the brothers of Joseph).

It is believed Robert Zeally purchased land along the trail in 1850.

In 1853, the land the trail is on was named the Parish of Jan Juc. The parish comprised of the southern slopes of the Spring Creek basin, the Spring Creek valley ridgeline and the Jan Juc Creek basin.

In 1919 construction started on the Great Ocean Road. Prior to this the south-west coast of Victoria was only accessible by sea or rough bush track. It was envisaged that the road would connect coastal settlements and be a vital transport link for tourism and the timber industry. The old road was a challenging drive and could only fit a single vehicle at a time.

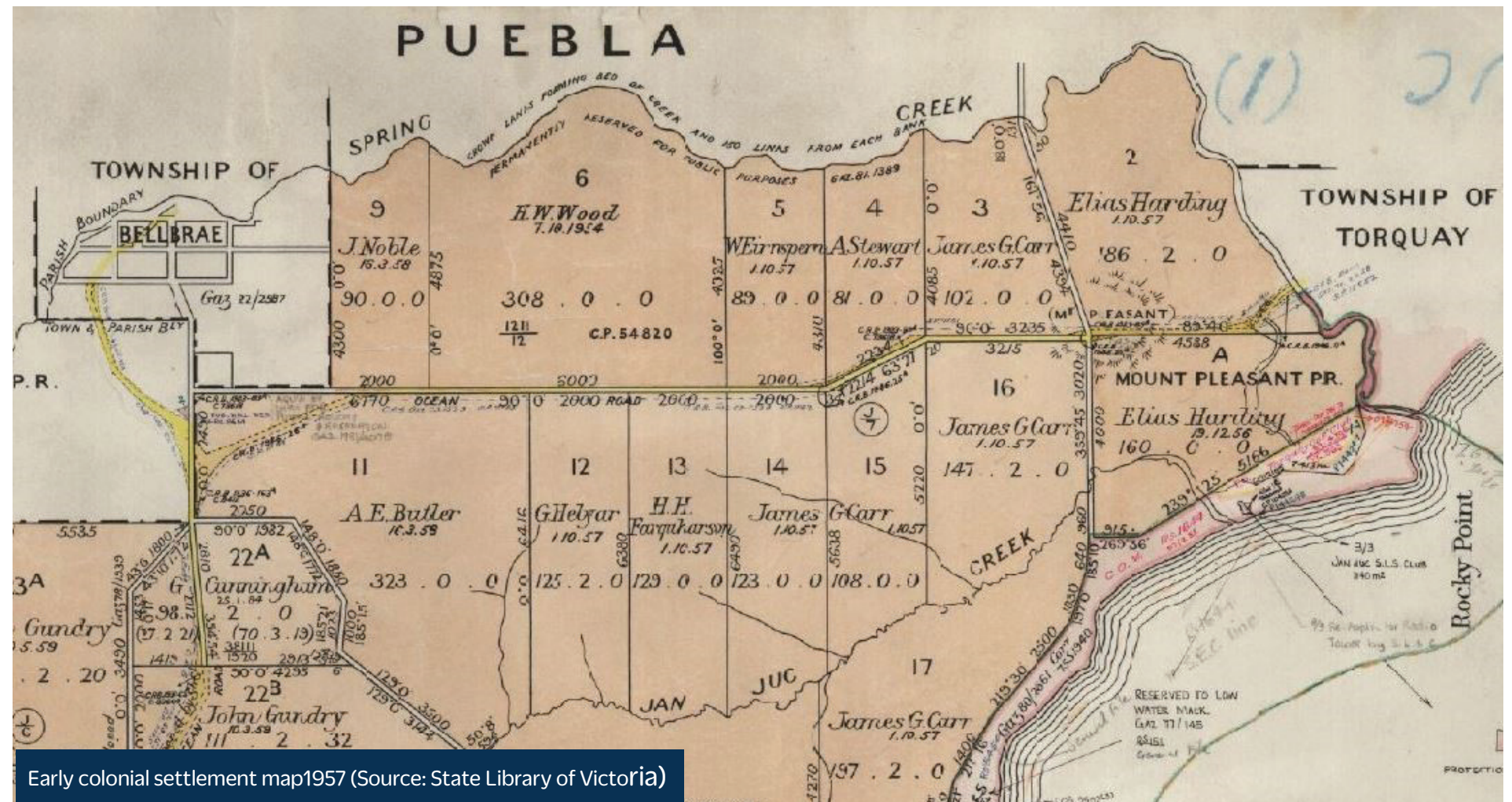
In 1962, the road was deemed by the Tourist Development Authority to be one of the world's great scenic roads.

A section of the Great Ocean Road was rebuilt in the 1960's and the "old road" became a 'service road'. You can still see part of the old Great Ocean Road in the section of trail between Christian College and the Bellbrae Reserve.

Locals tell stories about how in the 1940's-1950's, surfers would drive their old bombs along the 'old' Great Ocean Road to Jarosite Road, where they would walk through farmland carrying their surf boards to get to Bells Beach.

There are also stories of community members using the trail when they were children; jumping the fence to go yabbing in the dams, picking blackberries and learning to drive with their parents. "Kids have been building jumps in the section between Butterfield and Duffields Rd for 20-30 years – in fact I was one of the first!", Tony

References: *Trails & Tails - The Cobb & Co Story - History Matters, Issue 007*, *Torquay Museum without Walls*, *Torquay and District Historical Society*



Early colonial settlement map 1957 (Source: State Library of Victoria)



Early tourists used the trail to visit Anglesea and Lorne (Source: Torquay and District Historical Society)

Current use - the trail is more than “a service road” - it is a place for community

The trail is used by all age groups, using different modes of transport (pram, walking, dog walkers, running, horse riders, bikes, e-bikes & scooters, motorbikes, cars, trucks). It is used for commuting, recreation, tourism, education and access (utility & landowner).

I LIVE HERE



"I love walking out my front door into nature. It was great getting a letter in the mail and seeing the trees the students have planted." – Leslie



I COMMUTE HERE



"I ride in a group with my friends and I like talking to them" – Lillie

"I think it's really nice that I get to ride through the bush to school" – Hudson

"I use it to catch the bus to school in Geelong." – Mali



I PLAY HERE



"As a family we use the track several times per week. We love the outlook onto the farms, watching the lambs and ducklings grow." – Bridget

"I love speeding down the hills" – Jarvis

I HELP MY COMMUNITY HERE



"I'm more than happy to help. We all, and most importantly the environment, benefit from working together" – Lesley



I EXERCISE HERE

"I use the track for exercising. It's pretty much the only path for Bellbrae Residents other than the Reserve, so over the years I have gotten to know it very well. Not seeing the traffic is lovely and being a safe distance from cars is also lovely." – Miyo

"I walk my dog on the track very early in the morning. I love the view of the Spring Creek valley (the open space). I love the serenity. I also love the bird sounds" – Georgina

"I walk from Jan Juc to Bellbrae. It is more overgrown.... than I remembered... and even more beautiful. The trees and bushes provide shade and relief from the northern sun." – Martin



"I'm looking forward to saying hello to my tree when I ride to school" – Archie



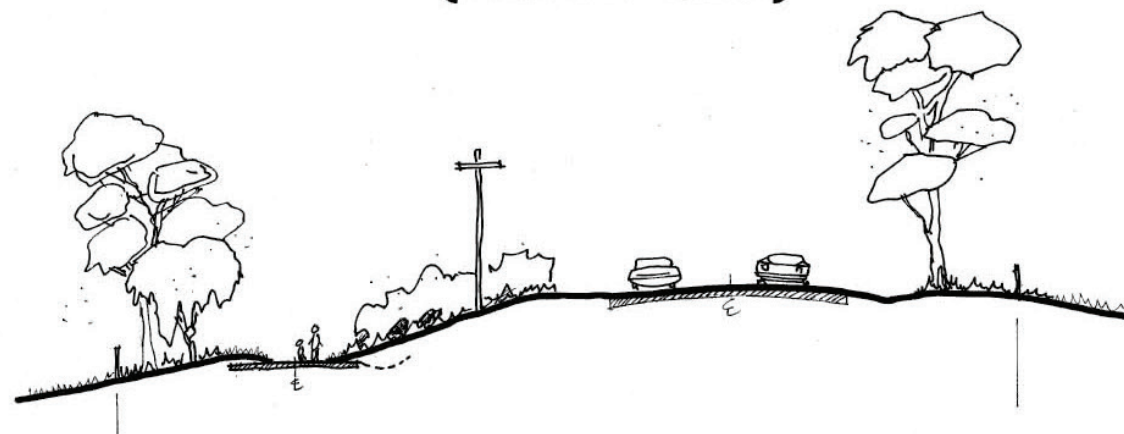
I LEARN HERE

"Possum Pete led the students in an investigation and exploration of the biodiversity existing in our local environment. The students became scientists looking through the microscope at living things. They developed understanding by observing closely, the plants, animals, physical geography, and all the incredible interactions occurring. We are all amazed by what they found." – Luke

4.7 Who is responsible for the trail?

As a community, we have a collective responsibility to care for the Spring Creek valley ridgeline. The trail and the road reserve seem to have fallen off the radar.

Management Responsibilities - 80km Roads (Rural Zone)



SURF COAST SHIRE

From boundary line to southern edge of shoulder service road.
(NB Shoulder is assumed to be 1.2m from original edge of the road pavement)

VICROADS /

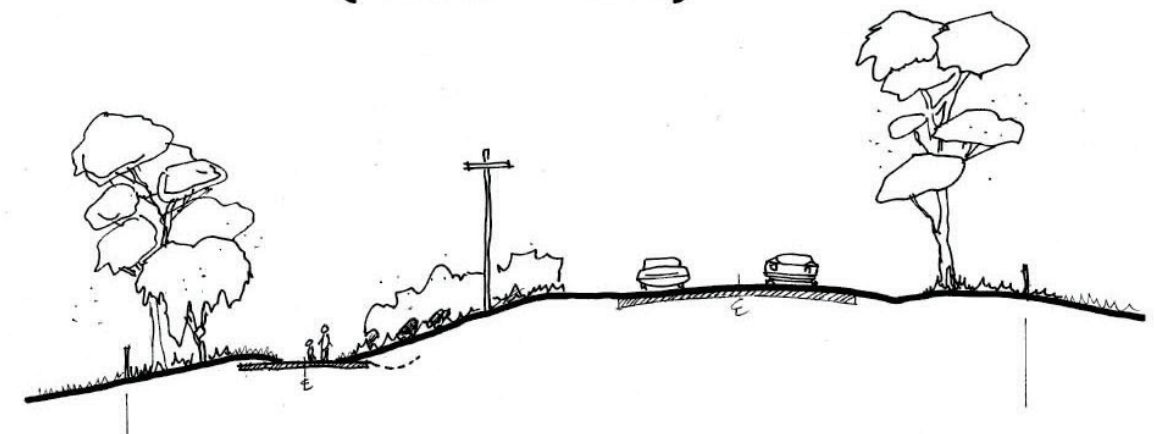
DEPT OF TRANSPORT
Balance of road reserve to southern boundary.

Approvals

Any works within areas of Surf Coast Shire responsibility would need SCS approval and also to inform VicRoads (as their approval may also be required)

Any works within areas of VicRoads responsibility would need approval from VicRoads.

Management Responsibilities - 60km Roads (Rural Zone)



SURF COAST SHIRE

Entire road reserve from the back of the roadside table drain to private property boundary.

VICROADS /

DEPT OF TRANSPORT
Great Ocean Road surface, shoulders and table drain.



Legend

Proposed Trail ("Old" & new)
Contours:
250m interval.

5. Opportunities summary

Key improvement themes



Connecting Places

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Trail Naming / Branding
2. A local and regional connector
3. A safe route to school
4. A new tourism experience
5. A unique regional landscape
6. Integrated and holistic trail design

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Trail construction principles
2. A cohesive wayfinding and safety signage plan
3. Advocate to DTP and Christian College to formalise crossing point over the Great Ocean Road
4. Advocate to DTP to schedule the upgraded Duffields Road pedestrian crossing by 2024/2025
5. Collaborate with Christian College on design of the section of trail that runs in front of school entrance
6. Consider multi-modality transport connections
7. Managing vehicle access to private properties
8. Manage vehicle access to infrastructure assets
9. Manage general vehicle access to the trail (lost Googlers)
10. End to end inspection and maintenance program to
11. agreed standards (path and surrounds)
12. Standards established for rectification works



Connecting People

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Supporting equitable cycling participation
2. A mixed use trail
3. Encouraging active travel and social interaction
4. A sense of safety
5. A playful pathway
6. Partnerships and Collaboration
7. Equitable and inclusive trail design

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Enhancement of the trail experience with places to stop, play, connect, listen, reflect
2. Identification of trail heads, access points and meeting spots
3. Places offering great views and shade provide opportunity to rest
4. Hydration
5. Activate the trail
6. Enhance playful pockets along the way
7. Facilitate learning opportunities
8. Maintenance of trail, edges and surrounds



Nature

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Community led climate response
2. Collaboration is the key to success
3. Preservation and restoration focused on high value sections
4. Demonstrating the benefits that a healthy and resilient natural environment brings to our community

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Share knowledge / communicate ecological significance
2. Clarify Council and DTP service levels and commitment
3. Advocate to DTP to complete rectification works in the old stack site
4. Better management of high impact clearing
5. Environmental management plans
6. 'Adopt a Highway' type approach
7. Drainage
8. Signage and artwork (about trail biodiversity)
9. Grow knowledge and skills (nature repair)
10. Grant applications and sponsorship



Connecting to Country and Heritage

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

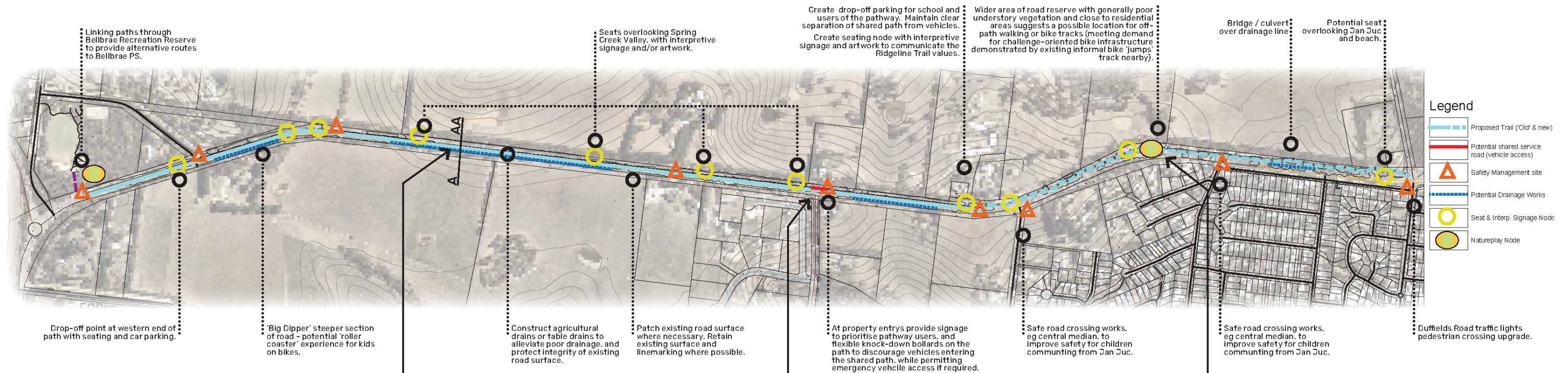
1. Valuing country and culture
2. Building relationships
3. Learning and knowledge sharing
4. Working together to care for country

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Understanding the area's cultural heritage
2. Understanding settler history
3. Respect and incorporate community history
4. Connect with Country through language
5. Interpretation signage and artwork
6. Joint management planning
7. Opportunities for Wadawurrung people to work on country

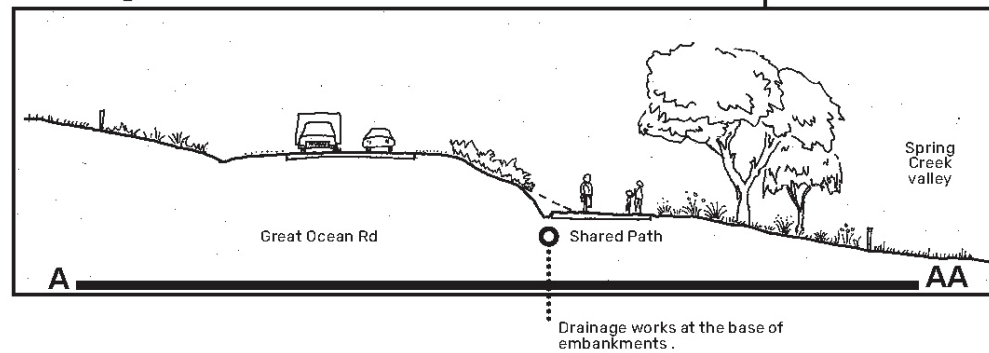


Opportunities

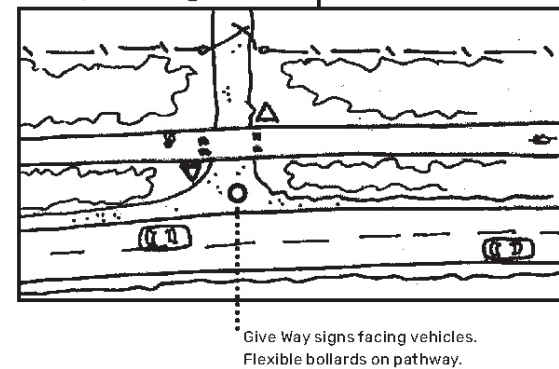


POTENTIAL TREATMENTS

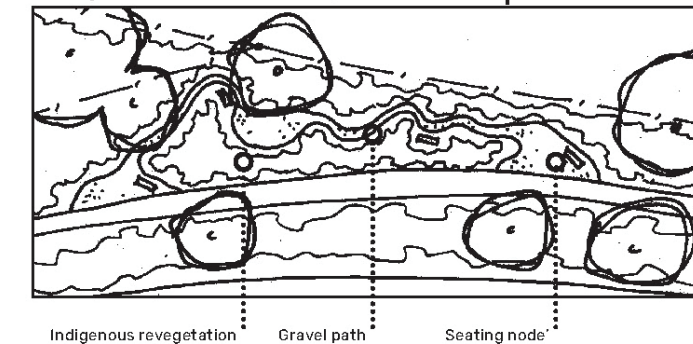
Drainage works



Safety management



Off-path nature walk/bike track



Connecting places

Trail connectivity will encourage physical activity and bring economic benefits. Physical barriers will be reduced and way finding enhanced. Safety and inclusivity will be prioritised. A hidden landscape will be revealed.

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Trail Naming / branding

The trail's working title, "The Ridgeline Trail", reflects its location running along the Spring Creek Valley ridgeline. There is an opportunity for the community to drive trail naming and branding, launched when the first stage of pathway works are done (end 2023).

2. A local and regional connector

A trail that connects Bellbrae, Jan Juc and Torquay. Links residents to kindergartens, schools, work, shops, cafes, beaches, trails, a nature and recreation reserve and to public transport. An accessible, connected trail with good supporting infrastructure that enhances liveability and makes it easier to move around without relying on cars.

3. A safe route to school

Many Jan Juc and Torquay families send their children to school at Bellbrae Primary and Christian College. This will only increase as Christian College increases the size of its campus. Off road bike paths are safer to ride on than roads and facilitate independent mobility.

4. A new tourism experience

Located at the start of the Great Ocean Road, this very accessible trail connects residents and visitors to key tourism locations (RACV resort, Bellbrae Estate Winery, Great Ocean Road Chocolaterie and Ice Creamery, Hurst Road Mountain Bike Trails, etc).

5. A unique regional landscape

The ridgeline location creates an opportunity for trail users to experience, enjoy and learn more about the natural and cultural features of the valley.

6. Integrated and holistic trail design

Design a trail that connects people to the places they want to go (to current and planned public transport, pathway and cycling networks), that integrates and values pathway infrastructure and green infrastructure, that provides an end-to-end experience (School Rd Bellbrae to Duffields Rd).

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Trail construction principles

A 'light touch' methodology applied to the upgraded and new pathway sections with a focus on surface consistency, an ecologically friendly surface (durable but permeable), good drainage, bridges or culverts over low points, allowance for playful pathway elements and prioritisation as a trail not a road. Consideration of nature-based solutions and recognition of biodiversity assets.

2. A cohesive wayfinding and safety signage plan

Trail head, wayfinding and risk management signage (at Cemetery Road / GOR intersection). Signage to have a trail not road focus.

3. Advocate to DTP and Christian College to formalise crossing point over the Great Ocean Road

Seeking clarity on the type, location and timing of planned pedestrian infrastructure crossing the Great Ocean Road at Strathmore Drive West.

4. Advocate to DTP to schedule the upgraded Duffields Road pedestrian crossing by 2024/2025

Council's proposed 2024/25 budget includes construction of a new pathway from Christian College to Duffields Road. This new path will require an upgrade of Duffields Road traffic lights (adding west and north crossings).

5. Collaborate with Christian College on the design of the section of trail that runs in front of the school entrance.

Consider current road safety issues (access, congestion, shared use), parking/meeting spot and impact of planned campus expansion (updated Christian College Masterplan). This will ensure safe movement of vehicles, bikes and pedestrians.

6. Consider multi-modality transport connections

The trail can encourage multi-modality commuting with connections to bus stops (link trail to Bellbrae and Bells Blvd Bus Stops and install bike rails).

7. Manage vehicle access to private properties

Review and improve trail crossovers to minimise private property vehicle travel along the trail and on the road reserve. Better vehicle crossover access needs to be created for 260 GORd.

8. Manage vehicle access to infrastructure assets

Barwon Water, Telstra, Powercor and gas providers currently access their assets along the service road (for maintenance and renew). Clarify asset locations, access points, maintenance requirements, type of vehicle used and frequency of access. Advocate for prioritisation of regular community use over infrequent access to infrastructure assets (with potential guidelines to protect path and vegetation assets with controls on vehicle weight, size, speed).

9. Manage general vehicle access to the trail (lost Googlers)

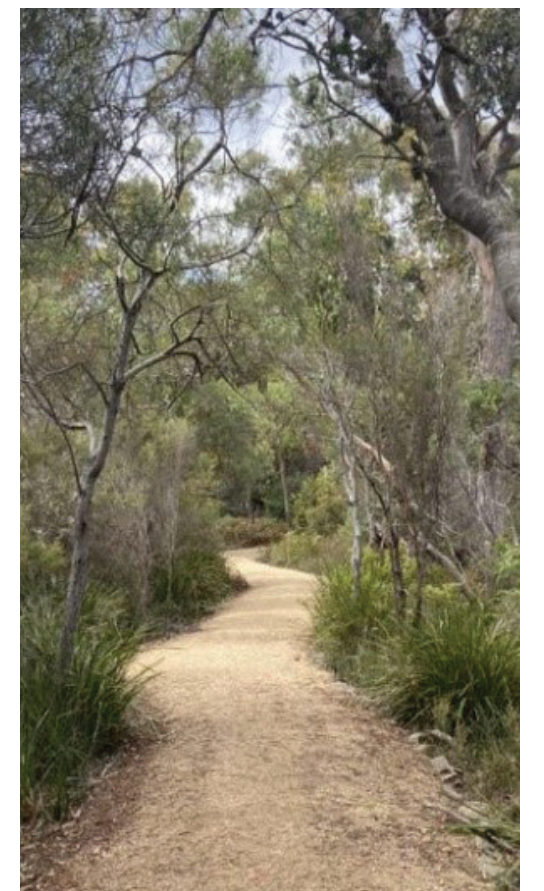
Use signage and bollards to restrict unauthorised general vehicle access along the trail. Identify pedestrian / cyclist access only sections of the trail to discourage dumping of rubbish. Where possible use planting to prevent drivers from going "cross country" via the road reserve.

10. End to end inspection and maintenance program to agreed standards (path and surrounds)

Requires routine inspection and maintenance by land managers (Council and DTP in relevant sections) to agreed service level standards and schedules.

11. Standards established for rectification works

Advocate to Barwon Water to complete rectification works in areas surrounding water and sewerage assets. Establish recommended standards for utility asset providers when accessing and servicing assets. Planting or artworks could help screen ugly assets.



Appendix 1 - Opportunities Unpacked



Connecting people

An accessible community trail, welcoming a diverse group of trail users. A safe trail, infused with play pockets and opportunities to enjoy nature. A trail that encourages conversation and discovery.

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

- 1. Supporting equitable cycling participation**
Running parallel, but separate to the busy Great Ocean Road, the location and length of the trail supports greater use by children, women and older residents. Recent Monash University research found lower participation in bike riding amongst these groups on routes where motor vehicle traffic is encountered.
- 2. A mixed use trail**
A trail for walking, running, cycling, playing, sightseeing, fitness, fun and commuting. A biodiverse habitat enhancing climate resilience. An access point for private landowners and utility providers. A learning landscape within walking distance of two schools. A remnant of a shared history.
- 3. Encouraging active travel and social interaction**
The natural trail aesthetic contributes to active travel by enhancing the overall experience and attractiveness of the trail. Trails with beautiful scenery, natural landscapes, and well-designed elements create a more enjoyable experience for walkers, runners, and cyclists leading to increasing usage.
- 4. A sense of safety**
There are many factors that influence how safe a person feels on a trail – separation from vehicles, safe and navigable roadway crossings, consistent pathway surface condition, visual quality, maintained pathway edges, ease of navigating the way, having open areas along the way and others around.
- 5. A Playful pathway**
Incorporate a playful pathway design philosophy (for the ‘valley side’ of the trail) to encourage independent mobility and family use.
- 6. Partnerships and Collaboration**
A great opportunity for a collaborative approach between state government, local government, private landowners, local business and the community.
- 7. Equitable and inclusive trail design**
Design a trail that is inclusive, that encourages equitable participation, that considers who trail users are and could be and that contributes to community health and wellbeing.

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

- 1. Enhancement of the trail experience with places to stop, play, connect, listen, reflect**
Enhancement ideas include but are not limited to:
 - nature play
 - “safe” climbing tree at a view or rest spot
 - “safe” fallen tree for balance or climbing
 - seating at viewing areas – this may be at a high point, in an open area or where there is shade
 - “all ages and abilities” chair swing with a view
 - hidden swings, giant rope swings, ninja swings
 - small clearing near a tree for cubby building
 - small platform for “mornos” or picnics
 - retaining community built “berms, jumps and rollers”, ensuring no damage to remnant habitat
 - create small side ‘off-shoot paths
 - art hidden in the trees showcasing fauna or connection to culture
- 2. Identification of trail heads, access points and meeting spots**
Not all pathway users have the desire, time or capacity to walk, run or ride the trail from end to end. Need trail access points and meeting spots along the trail. Allow for cars to park to drop off, or to park for duration of ride/walk (with seats too). Common meeting points are Christian College car park, Bellbrae Reserve car park.
- 3. Places offering great views and shade provide opportunity to rest**
Viewing or trail rest spots (with a seat) at high points and other suitable locations, utilising natural materials provide opportunity to rest, connect with others and enjoy the views. Shaded sections along the trail facilitate all weather access and climate resilience.
- 4. Hydration**
A drink fountain or 2 along the way with dog water bowls would be great on hot days and maybe Barwon Water may be interested in helping to fund this infrastructure and water connection.
- 5. Activate the trail**
Create opportunities to connect people. Weekly group rides, Cycling without Age, Bellbrae Reserve Coffee Van, art walks i.e. painting valley views, nature walks, nature immersion activities, tree planting days, weeding days, etc
- 6. Enhance playful pockets along the way**
The ‘valley side’ of the trail offers great off-path playful opportunities, degraded sections can be activated and revitalised (i.e. bike features and an adult swing) and the natural features along the way can also be playful (i.e. nature play, a climbing tree, a hidden nook or tunnel, a natural swing, a pile of logs or an undulating surface for balancing on). The kids would love to be involved in opportunities for community-built bike jumps (bike berms and rollers) and other play features.
- 7. Facilitate learning opportunities**
Bike education, outdoor learning areas, learning landscapes. Share new understanding of vegetation significance within the road reserve, the cultural heritage of the valley and climate action initiatives. Bellbrae Primary School and Christian College could play a hands-on role in ongoing conservation and restoration via an environmental stewardship program or participate in the co-design of interpretative signage.
- 8. Maintenance of trail, edges and surrounds**
Key safety issues are the long grass along the trail edges (increases risk of snakes, lowers visibility, increases fire risk and makes trail users uncomfortable), illegal rubbish dumping along the service road is unsightly but may also contain contaminants. Install rubbish bins and dog bags at trail entrances.



Connecting Ecologies and to Nature

The significant vegetation and biodiversity of the trail will be better understood so that values are protected and enhanced. Destructive weeds will be eradicated and other weeds controlled. Strategic planting will restore biodiversity and create opportunities for learning and environmental stewardship.

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Community led climate response

Strong leadership from local environment groups and schools has delivered tangible, on the ground action and funding and will continue to do so.

2. Collaboration is the key to success

A collective approach is critical to the development, protection and enhancement of the trail and trail corridor. Future generations will be rewarded for our collaborative planning, consistent applications and shared value for both hardscape and greenscape. A clear plan will focus volunteering effectiveness and assist with sourcing project funding. A great step forward would be a joint meeting between community stakeholders, the Surf Coast Shire and DTP to develop a working 'fit for purpose' model for this land.

3. Preservation and restoration focused on high value sections

Whilst the entire corridor is important, it makes sense for efforts to be focussed on restoration in the highest value sections.

4. Demonstrating the benefits that a healthy and resilient natural environment brings to our community

Nature contributes to our quality of life, generates economic benefit and supports community climate resilience.

"We ... value, protect and enhance the natural environment and our unique neighbourhoods. We will leave the Surf Coast better than we found it". Climate emergency response / mitigation action M15 "Promote active transport and embed climate considerations into road and pathway infrastructure planning."

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Share knowledge / communicate ecological significance

Recent biodiversity assessments have given us a better understanding of the ecological significance of the road reserve. This information needs to be broadly communicated (to DTP, Council teams, schools, environmental groups, utility providers, property owners, trail users, etc) via signage, websites, events, curriculum, PD days, nature walks.

2. Clarify Council and DTP service levels and commitment

Clarify service levels for weed and tree management to prevent further environmental degradation. Proactive weed eradication and control plan for long term weed management. Priority area for weed control is on the southern side of the trail (between the path and the GORD) in the 80km per hour zone and removal of overburden piles in old stack site (DTP). Removal of regionally declared weeds, maintaining open (fuel break) areas along the trail, regular and consistent mowing schedules and rubbish removal.

3. Advocate to DTP to complete rectification works in the old stack site

Remove aggregate piles to reduce the risk of highly invasive weeds spreading into the Bellbrae Reserve. Restore the southern side of the stack site with planting under powerlines that considers both personal safety and biodiversity within the Bellbrae Reserve.

4. Better management of high impact clearing

Avoid destruction of valuable remnant vegetation by high impact clearing and encourage a joint fuel management plan that recognises the ecological, recreational, and aesthetic value of this land corridor to the local community. Consider Traditional Owner active management of the ecosystem.

5. Environmental management plans

Important in order to eliminate any risk to high value ecological habitat loss through trail works.

6. 'Adopt a Highway' type approach

Community stakeholders have capacity and interest to assist via DTP's 'Adopt a Highway' type approach which enables community volunteers to work on road reserve improvements. Works in Road Reserves Permits are not practical for this type of work. There are key local community groups who have knowledge, experience and passion – who can lead ecological restoration (this could be Surf Coast Energy Group or Torquay Landcare). Community clean up days can be co-ordinated with assistance from Council, Department of Transport, Torquay Rubbish Rangers, Bellbrae Primary School and Christian College.

7. Drainage

With the pathway acting as a type of weed barrier, identifying areas where drainage can be improved (via agi-drains or swales at the base of embankments on the southern side of the trail) is key to preventing spread of weeds to the north and into the valley and will help to protect the integrity of trail surface.

8. Signage and artwork (about trail biodiversity)

Interpretative signage or artwork to communicate what's special about the biodiversity along the trail and to tell the trail's story. Signage along the trail next to high value assets (i.e. bellarine yellow gum)

9. Grow knowledge and skills (nature repair)

We need to collaborate to build a deeper understanding of ridgeline biodiversity. We have a good understanding of flora species but not fauna species. There may be a way community can contribute to and build this knowledge i.e. Fauna Assessment, iNaturalist / bioblitz / Aussie bird count.

10. Grant applications and sponsorship

Community can drive grant applications related to restoration of biodiversity, climate change, active travel, community health and wellbeing. Local business and local funding partners can sponsor projects and also provide hands on assistance.



Connecting to Country and Heritage

The trail will reveal a hidden cultural landscape.

STRATEGIC AND FOUNDATIONAL

1. Valuing country and culture

The Spring Creek valley and ridgeline is culturally significant.

2. Building relationships

The Ridgeline Trail project provides an opportunity for a meaningful partnership involving Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, Council, Department of Transport, Bellbrae Primary School, Christian College and the Surf Coast Energy Group (all of whom are looking to strengthen relationships, build respect and learn more about Wadawurrung history, culture and perspectives).

3. Learning and knowledge sharing

Cultural awareness is a critical step towards connecting with Country. We would welcome a collaboration with the Wadawurrung traditional owners to learn more about this area and its significance to First Nations people.

4. Working together to care for country

If Country is healthy, we all benefit.

OPERATIONAL AND PRACTICAL

1. Understanding the area's cultural heritage

Seek to collaborate with the Wadawurrung to better understand the presence and significance of culturally sensitive locations in the valley and along the ridgeline. While we have learnt a lot from reference documents, it is important that First Nations people tell their story. Any understanding gained through this project has the potential to have a broader impact (curriculum, cultural education and tourism). Information about connection to land, language (places, plants, animals), natural resources, living spaces, caring for the land will be extremely useful in supporting student learning.

2. Understanding settler history

As part of the old Great Ocean Road, and on the national heritage list, interpretative signage could tell the settler history of the area. We loved the stories of early visitors to the coast travelling along the road in the old Cobb & Co carriages.

3. Respect and incorporate community history

Children used to ride to school on horses along this track. Children have made bike jumps and played in this space for years.

4. Connect with Country through language

Consider a single name or dual naming for the Spring Creek valley and ridgeline. Incorporate Wadawurrung language into trailhead and interpretative signage.

5. Interpretation signage and artwork

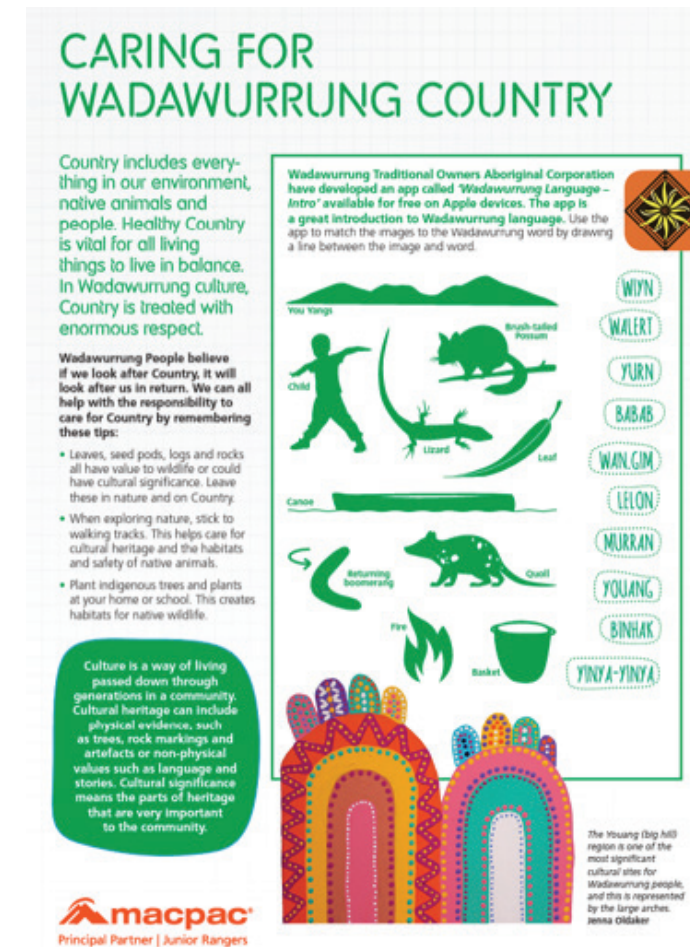
Seek collaboration with Wadawurrung Traditional owners in the development of content and style for interpretation signage revealing the cultural landscape at suitable points along the Ridgeline Trail. Signage that shares the cultural heritage of the valley will enrich the tourism or education experience along the trail. Where appropriate, artwork may be used to creatively embed stories into the landscape. Use natural materials from or of country in the design and construction of seating, signage or play elements.

6. Joint management planning

Council and DTP to partner with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to care for country (restore biodiversity, build climate resilience, cultural burning of vegetation to manage fire risk).

7. Opportunities for Wadawurrung people to work on country

The Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporation are an approved Council supplier able to undertake revegetation and weed management services on Country managed by Council. Traditional Owner involvement in the project could also involve selection of plants and plant supply via their nursery at Bostock Reservoir.



Parks Victoria : Wadawurrung Junior Ranger Booklet

