

Response to Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Design (Fairhaven to Skenes Creek), sections 2, 3 and 4

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Context:

The purpose of the Friends of Lorne (FoL) is:

- To encourage and contribute to the planning and development of the environment within Lorne and its environs consistent with the need for preservation of the natural features, flora and fauna of the district
- To encourage and contribute to the planning, development and maintenance of community services and activities within Lorne and its environs consistent with the balanced needs of permanent residents, holidaying residents, campers and tourists.

Through newsletters, visitor information, citizen science and public meetings including Webinars, FoL contributes to debate about both the natural and built environment.

FoL has opted to submit its comments on the walking track, which we support in principle, as an addendum to the notes from a group interview rather than through Engage Victoria. Engage Victoria is designed for responses from individuals. Our group encompasses people from a range of postcodes in addition to Lorne, people who live and work in Lorne and people who do not, members of business and community associations, and employees of public and private businesses and business owners.

Further to Lorne Groups Interview 27/10/2021

Because we need a record of our comments about the walk that can be understood by members we have repeated some points already in the notes from the group interview. We also have some additional points to make.

Our representative at the meeting, Mary Lush, expressed concern that the absence of a permanent or part-time community at the Cumberland might mean that this section of the track was not as well vetted as others. Since the meeting, Mary has walked Sharps Track, the Cumberland Track and the tracks to the Cumberland Falls and Castle Rock. Some things now appear in a different light and are detailed below.

General comment

In examining the proposed route, our thinking has been

1. That the disturbance to natural areas should be minimal
 - a. Use (or up-grading) of existing tracks should be preferred to the creation of new ones
 - b. Structures should only be used in areas in which there is ready access for the equipment needed for construction and maintenance.
 - c. Constructions should be confined to those needed for walking and appreciation of the natural environment.
2. The focal points and attractions of the walk should be nature and natural features not man-made ones.

We have some general reservations about how visiting bush walkers would actually experience the track.

- Although the aim is for an ‘easy’ walk, that is hard to achieve in some steep or foreshore sections.
- The state of existing tracks around Lorne varies over time. To the extent that variability is natural, eg tree falls or rain, that is a part of bush walking. However, some of the tracks around Lorne have also been subject to long, official closures because of the failure of structures. It appears that Parks Victoria is struggling to manage the existing network.
- There have also been long closures associated with the activities of Forest Fire Management Victoria. These closures already create problems for visitors intending to walk. They would be a major problem for walking tour organisers and accommodation providers.

Comments on sections of the proposed track near Lorne

Section 2 - in to Lorne from Fairhaven

South from junction with Big Hill track	FoL noted that what is marked as new work is already serviced by a good track, known by various names including Packhorse Track. The track starts where the Great Ocean Road crosses Big Hill Creek and continues to the gate on the Big Hill Track
Suspension bridges 1 and 2	We accept that suspension bridge 1 could be useful and that because it is located close to the road, construction should not be very destructive of the natural bush. Suspension bridge 2 may not meet our minimal destruction criterion.

Section 3 - out of Lorne to the Cumberland

Section to Allenvale	<p>We note that the route follows the Cherry Tree Creek Track. We prefer this to the track up the St George River on environmental grounds. We acknowledge that the St George track is more scenic, but at places it is very close to the river (inadequate protection of the waterway) and subject to flooding. With some re-routing the St George Track might be acceptable. We expect that map literate walkers might take the St George route anyway.</p> <p>We like the fact that Allenvale will be reached without having to walk along the road.</p>
Section out of Allenvale to the Sheoak Falls	<p>The first part is marked as an existing track. It is in fact so overgrown that using this route would require, in effect, the creation of a new track. As a side benefit, we note that reopening this track will enable the Sheoak picnic area to be reached without walking on the road (via Sharps Track and the nature trail).</p> <p>The justification of the new construction from Sharps Track to the Sheoak Falls is not clear given there is an existing track to the falls from the Sheoak picnic area that could be used (see preceding paragraph). If the</p>

existing track is not suitable, the need for new construction might be reduced by following Sharps Track to near the start of private property and diverting to the falls from there.

Sheoak Falls to
Castle Rock

We suggest an additional lookout be positioned before Castle Rock looking up the Cumberland River valley. This could be a simple platform with a very short approach from the existing track. This perspective is not available from Castle Rock itself. Vicmap Lorne 7620-1-1 includes such a lookout.

Castle Rock to
Cumberland

This is a very steep slope with options limited by private land. It is not clear how it will be managed. It is an important link.

Allenvale Trailhead

Allenvale is on the St George River and offers accommodation in permanent structures (also at Qdos). We think it would be environmentally undesirable (protection of the waterway) to expand the bush camping ground. It is similarly undesirable to expand the car park. We suggest the Queens Park camping ground or the Sheoak picnic area as better options for the trailhead. Both are already serviced to some extent.

Section 4 - Cumberland to Jamieson Creek and associated loops near the Cumberland

General comment
on the Cumberland
area

The Cumberland has carved a very steep sided valley for much of its length, as has the Jamieson Creek. As a consequence, this area has always been difficult to access and it is where the proposed trail passes closest to 'wilderness'. We suggest that this part of the track should provide glimpses of the wild by creating short side tracks to vantage points but not venture far into it. The Cumberland Track follows a ridge. There are opportunities for additional lookouts along it, eg near Mt Defiance. For footage of the river itself see <http://www.inthebubbleline.com/projects.php>.

Although maps show several tracks between the Cumberland and the Jamieson all of these with the exception of the Cumberland Track are overgrown to the point of being obliterated. Mary reported she could only identify the position of the tracks by combined use of a GPS, map and pre-existing marking tapes. There is no need to undo nature's recovery.

A modified map of Section 4 is at the end of the response.

Suspension bridge
3, Castle Rock to
Langdale Pike

Building and maintaining this bridge could require considerable destruction of environment. Although much of the track to Castle Rock is suitable for vehicles, making a track to Langdale Pike on the other side of the proposed bridge would be very destructive.

We also have reservations about the aesthetics of such a bridge. It seems inappropriate to insert into this landscape with its landmark cliffs, an additional, prominent, man-made structure.

In the existing plan for the Cumberland area there is an element of suspension bridge theme park which we find inappropriate.

Langdale Pike

We see no need to include the Pike in the walk. All of the routes to it are environmentally difficult. Views from Castle Rock and an additional

lookout on that track (see before), combined with lookouts off the Cumberland Track are sufficient to give walkers an understanding of the nature of the country. If the Pike is included, it should be a side trip not on a loop.

Loop walk including Langdale Pike

As mentioned before, the Cumberland region is close to wilderness. We are pleased to see its recovery from past uses and reluctant to see it reopened. We would prefer to see this section omitted.

Option for a loop walk

At our meeting it was mentioned that the foot track to the Cumberland Falls from the Garvey Track is closed. This is not correct. It is possible to walk up the Cumberland to the Falls, backtrack slightly, then ascend to the Garvey Track. From there you can walk to the Upper and Lower Kalimna Falls, and return to the Cumberland via the Sheoak picnic area and Castle Rock.

There are problems with this suggested route. The section to the Cumberland Falls is too close to the river to protect the waterway and is subject to flooding. Its merit is that it provides some experience of the nature of the Cumberland (and Sheoak). If the track beside the Cumberland was rerouted there would be options for bridges and views such as seen here <http://www.inthebubbleline.com/projects.php>.

Despite its environmental downsides, this loop is preferable to the Langdale Pike loop option. We are aware that it may be deemed unsuitable because it departs from the concept of a coastal walk.

Mt Defiance

As noted at the meeting, Mt Defiance is not located correctly on the plan for the walk. The Cumberland Track goes past it, and we suggest that options for a lookout there could be considered as a short side trip from the main walk, or as shortish (~2-3h) walk from the camping ground. There are other opportunities for lookouts further along the Cumberland Track but they become mainly bush views (eg into the Jamieson valley).

Proposed lookout 6

This lookout is on the Great Ocean Road and already exists. Confusingly, because it is not actually at Mt Defiance, it is called the Mt Defiance lookout. Reaching it from sea level (as implied for this part of the long loop walk) might be tricky.

Inland route from Cumberland to the Jamieson

We have not identified any easy options. The grandfather of one of our members had a mail run pre-Great Ocean Road. Said grandfather is thought to have used the Cumberland Track to Mt Defiance and then worked his way down to the Jamieson from there. It seems likely that he used a similar route to that proposed for the section near the Jamieson and avoided the area proposed for suspension bridge 5.

Suspension bridge 5

We note that it is possible (in principle) to walk more or less along contours from the proposed take off from the Cumberland track to the SW end of the proposed bridge. The bridge does not therefore seem essential. We note however that the outlook from the bridge will be an interesting one, and we further note that its NE end is relatively close to the Cumberland Track.

Suggested changes to Section 4 of the proposed track through the Cumberland area. Some proposed tracks and features are crossed out, suggested options for tracks in red, additional lookouts as **oo**. Correct position of Mt Defiance indicated.

