

## Response to revised concept, Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Design (Fairhaven to Skenes Creek),

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### Context:

Friends of Lorne responded to the original version of the trail design, where we described the roles of the Friends of Lorne in some detail. In summary, our purpose is to achieve a balance between preservation of the natural environment and the appropriate development of Lorne to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

We recognise that

- all levels of government in Victoria are committed to protecting biodiversity and reducing greenhouse gas emissions
- tourism, upon which Lorne depends, is a profligate generator of greenhouse emissions and can be damaging both directly and indirectly to biodiversity
- community awareness of, and support for, environmental matters is enhanced by experiencing natural environments
- more tourism-as-usual is not environmentally acceptable

We support the construction of a walking track as a way of, potentially, resolving some of the conflicts above. Walking can be, but is not necessarily, a low impact form of tourism.

### General points of concern

- Availability of funding for bridges appears to have introduced a bias for bridges. Their environmental consequences may not be receiving sufficiently rigorous scrutiny. This could feed into resentment among communities along the GOR, which feel that several inappropriate projects have been imposed on them by the availability of money.
- There still appears to be a reluctance to use existing tracks. Although the unused tracks are sometimes at least nominally vehicle tracks, these may in fact differ little from the well-formed surfaces envisaged for the walking track, particularly in sections developed for disabled access. The tracks have merit (see next section).
- Great care is needed to ensure the walking track is not damaging to the natural environment either directly or by incremental creep (such as enabling access to other, off-track points).
- Views should not be pursued at all costs. This point about views particularly applies to the Cumberland region where an extensive network of new tracks and a bridge is proposed to gain access to Langdale Pike. It also applies to a lesser extent to Kellsalls Rock.
- The absence of a resident population at the Cumberland may be allowing commercial considerations to dominate thinking in that section. Friends of Lorne is opposed the wholesale transformation of the Cumberland that the revised concept entails.
- Difficulty in communicating plans for the track and therefore in obtaining feedback. It is difficult for people with standard computing systems to display the documents in such a way as to understand the details of the proposal. We, of course, understand that it has been difficult to run physical meetings, but we contend that communities should have the opportunity of attending one. The meeting should be genuinely interactive.

## Comments on sections of the proposed track near Lorne

### Section 1 Fairhaven to Spout Creek

Eastern section	Eastern part which, in the main, uses existing tracks with possible circuit by returning along the beach is good.
Western section	Western part – appears as if more use could be made of an existing track (called Clark Spur Track?) Where do people camp/stay at the end of this section?

### Section 2, Spout Creek to Lorne (Lily Pond)

Bridge 0	We are not familiar enough with the eastern part area to comment on Bridge 0. We note however that it looks difficult to access, and therefore may not be a good choice for disabled access as suggested at the bridges consultation in March 2022.
Kellsalls Rock	Kellsalls Rock is a beautiful spot but without ocean views. We regret that its use in the walk may mean the addition of intrusive safety rails. Such structures will reduce its value to those who already visit the Rock. It would be a retrograde step if a structure is erected there, as may be implied by its being denoted a 'lookout'.
Merits of tracks such as Big Hill Track	There is an existing, informal route from Kellsalls Rock to the Big Hill Track. Friends of Lorne believes that more use should be made of vehicle tracks such as the Big Hill Track in preference to opening up new routes as is done here. Some of us who visit the Rock regularly have yet to encounter a car (the Big Hill Track is seasonally closed.). The relatively open verges provide opportunities to see macropods that would, in limited quantities, be appreciated by most walkers.
Merits of powerline track	We are pleased to see the existing foot track being used to approach Big Hill Creek. The area immediately after crossing Big Hill Creek is associated with the powerlines and is floristically atypical of the Lorne region, presumably at least in part because of the way it is managed. Grasstrees within the adjacent forest may be the closest ones to Lorne. These things make for an interesting walk. We would prefer the powerline track be used rather than a new track constructed for this part of the route.

### Section 3, Lily Pond to Cumberland

New sections useful	Friends of Lorne is pleased about the use of existing tracks on this part of the route, and notes that the new track sections that allow the Allenvale Road to be avoided are good additions.
Suggest use of Sharps Track. Trailhead?	On the other hand, there still seems to be unnecessary construction after crossing Sharps Track. Sharps Track leads to an existing path (near the intersection with the Allenvale Road) to the Sheoak Picnic area. There is no information about the location of a trail head

### Section 4 Cumberland to Jamieson Creek

Opposition to over-development.	Plans for this section are of great concern to the Friends of Lorne. The Cumberland is a near-wilderness area and should not undergo the sort of transformations the revised plan entails. Our concerns are for the settlement itself, the river and the surrounding forest.
Cumberland settlement	Space is a problem. The Cumberland has a small camp ground with a small, parking area for visitors. It is contained by cliffs and the sea and is affected by coastal erosion. The water supply comes from the Cumberland River. Water storage is

limited.

Forest biodiversity The revised proposal opens up many areas in the surrounding forest that have, over many years, recovered from past uses. Opening new areas increases the likelihood of further, incremental damage as walkers penetrate the forest to reach other locations using the new routes as starting points.

Proposed routes The current plan shows many new tracks and ignores an old one (Cumberland Track, closed to the public). We believe there are errors in the way in which sections of track are identified.

We insert below a modification of the plan for the Cumberland that would be more acceptable to us. This is to some extent a repetition of a modified plan we submitted before, but in this version we accept the track up Langdale Pike and a couple of proposed tracks. Our preferred route removes bridges 3 and 4, makes use of the Cumberland Track, and uses the new route to get from the Cumberland Track to the Jamieson. But it has not escaped our notice that it could incorporate bridge 4 and/or be well served by a small bridge on its way to the Cumberland Track.

#### Friends of Lorne. Suggested amendment for Cumberland to Jamieson (section 4)

