



20 February 2026

Upper Derwent Valley Precinct Plan  
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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Upper Derwent Valley Precinct Plan.

Bicycle Network has been advocating for over a decade for the council/state government to investigate the feasibility of a rail trail on the disused Derwent Valley rail line, so we are very pleased it's finally being considered.

It's incumbent on the council to make the most cost-effective choices about the local infrastructure available to it. Developing a feasibility study/business plan will give the council the information it needs to make an informed decision on an asset that could benefit the whole upper valley community.

Rail trails provide a year-round tourism asset as well as providing a valuable active transport and recreational corridor for locals to enjoy. Great rail trails celebrate rail history and provide a platform for rail enthusiasts to showcase refurbished machines.

### **Tasmania's health**

For Tasmanians to prevent diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and some cancers they should be getting 30–60 minutes of moderate exercise five times a week. More than two-thirds of Tasmanian teens and adults do not get this recommended level of exercise.<sup>i</sup>

It's the role of governments at all levels to help provide the infrastructure that makes it easier for people to be physically active.

About one-third of Tasmanians ride a bicycle, whether it's everyday or just once a year.<sup>ii</sup>

Trails through natural areas, separated from motor vehicle traffic, are preferred routes for people riding for pleasure. As well as recreational riding, trails can also provide locals with a safe, separated route for cycling or walking to nearby towns so they don't have to drive a car.

### **Derwent Valley a prime position for a rail trail**

Bicycle Network has also supported plans for a rail trail in the north-east of the state along the disused line between Lilydale and Scottsdale. Many of the reasons why a rail trail is a fit for that line also apply to the Derwent Valley, although the Derwent Valley has more features to pull in cycling tourists.

The success of the Maydena Mountain Bike Park means there is already a reputation for cycling in the valley, such as Derby's reputation would pull tourists to the north-east.

While the mountain bike park has been very successful, it attracts a different type of riding tourist than a rail trail would. Rail trails are popular with older riders and families looking for activities and attractions along the way, rather than the thrill of riding fast. People who ride rail trails tend to spend longer in an area and want an immersive experience.

Electric bicycles mean more people are now able to undertake this sort of cycling tourism and there's been a boom in e-bike touring in other places with rail trails. Retirees are a prime market and tend to spend more on accommodation and food than some younger riders.

Mt Field National Park is another big attractor. Being able to ride to the park's entrance and get off to do the Russell Falls or Tall Trees walks is very appealing for active tourists, as is the journey alongside the Derwent and Tyenna rivers.

And then there are the opportunities for farms and producers to attract tourists off the trail for tastings and purchases, or experiences such as pick-your-own berries.

### **Tourism benefits**

While Tasmania already has a number of rail trails, the longest is the current section of the North-East Rail Trail between Scottsdale and Billycock Hill.

In contrast, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia all boast rail trails over 100 km, which lend themselves to multi-day rides that offer tourism benefits for accommodation, food and transport businesses.

Professor Sue Beeton in 2010 estimated that the Murray to Mountain rail trail in Victoria injected \$200 into the economy, per visitor, per day.<sup>iii</sup>

The two longest rail trails in north-east Victoria attract about 100,000 riders per year, with that number rising.<sup>iv</sup> These trails boast mountain views, farmland, forests and access to built heritage. A basis on which Tasmania can easily compete.

New Zealand's well known Central Otago rail trail in 2015 had 17,164 visits and brought in \$1.35 million in revenue.<sup>v</sup>

A 2023 We Ride Australia report into the economic benefits of cycling found that spend per trip by cycling tourists in Tasmania was \$1,290 - the highest of any region.<sup>vi</sup>

Regular surveys of tourists by the Tasmanian Government has seen interest in cycling tourism increase post pandemic with 53,000 cycling or mountain biking in the quarter to September 2025. That's more than the number who bushwalk overnight (52,000), play golf (37,000), trout fish (19,000) or 4WD (14,000).

The business case for the north-east rail trail in Tasmania predicts economic benefits of more than \$40 million over the next decade and thousands of people enjoying the trail each year. For a capital cost of \$4 million it's a good investment in infrastructure that local business can build from.

The kinds of businesses that can set up and expand with a well-used rail trail include bicycle hire, shuttle services for riders and their luggage, farmgate opportunities, events, increased visitation to existing attractions, accommodation and food and drink producers.

### **Activity for Tasmanians**

The benefit of a rail trail for the valley is that it can be used by locals as well as tourists.

The north-west Coastal Pathway is a good example of a piece of infrastructure built for tourism that has attracted frequent use by locals. The shared path runs from Latrobe to West Ulverstone and Burnie to Wynyard, with gaps between West Ulverstone and Penguin and Heybridge to Burnie.

While it took many years to be funded and built, once any serious length of path is finished it has been adopted by locals for running, walking, cycling and scooting. So much so that the Cradle Coast Authority, which has overseen its construction, started receiving requests for new paths to connect the Coastal Pathway to townships as soon as each section was finished.

A rail trail through the upper valley would give local residents the opportunity to exercise regularly in a safe, off-road environment that was easily accessible. As the Tasmanian Local Government Act outlines, it's council's role to provide for the health of the community and recreational opportunities like a rail trail have the potential to deliver health outcomes at relatively low cost.

### **Train tourism**

There are many examples of rail trails around the world that can be looked at to see what may work in the Derwent Valley to accommodate active recreation as well as train tourism.

There could be a hybrid of trail and rail, for example, where tourists are encouraged to cycle a rail trail west of New Norfolk but then ride a heritage train to the east where the line may be easier to upgrade and maintain.

Any feasibility study should consider a rail trail in the context of any community desire to run a heritage train so that decisions complement each other rather than compete. Any study should also set out the costs of each option so it's clear where investment will work the best.

## About Bicycle Network

With around 45,000 members, Bicycle Network is one of the biggest bike riding organisations in Australia. With a proud history reaching back more than 50 years, we are committed to improving the health and wellbeing of all Australians by making it easier for people to ride a bike.

We have a measurable and large-scale impact in community participation and the promotion of healthy lifestyles through bike riding.

We achieve this through:

- improving the bike riding environment by working with government at all levels to provide better infrastructure, data, policies, legislation and regulations
- delivering successful behaviour change programs such as Ride2School and Ride2Work
- providing services that support bike riders through membership
- being a key spokesperson on issues related to cycling and physical activity.

We promote bicycle riding for recreation and transport because it's a healthy, low-cost, convenient, non-polluting way to stay active and get around.

Yours sincerely



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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/professionals/working-health-promoting-ways/priority-areas/more-active-communities-more-active-people>, accessed 20 February 2026.

<sup>ii</sup> <https://www.cwanz.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/251001-CWANZ-National-Walking-and-Cycling-Participation-Survey-Report-Tas.pdf>, accessed 20 February 2026, p 43.

<sup>iii</sup> Sue Beeton, "Regional community entrepreneurship through tourism: the case of Victoria's rail trails", *Int. J. Innovation and Regional Development*, Vol. 2, Nos. 1/2, 2010, p 134.

<sup>iv</sup> <https://www.indigoshire.vic.gov.au/Living-in-Indigo/Sport-and-recreation/Walking-and-cycling-tracks>.

<sup>v</sup> <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/7661de82b6/nz-cycle-trail-evaluation-report-2016.pdf>

<sup>vi</sup> [https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The\\_Australian\\_Cycling\\_and\\_e-scooter\\_Economy\\_in\\_2022\\_WeRide\\_and\\_EY\\_2023\\_Report\\_Final\\_web.pdf](https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/The_Australian_Cycling_and_e-scooter_Economy_in_2022_WeRide_and_EY_2023_Report_Final_web.pdf), accessed 20 February, p 19.