September 2022

To Hastings District Council

Please find attached DPA’s submission on the Draft Reserve Management Plans for Eskdale, Frimley, Tainui, Tanner, Tauroa and Hikanui Reserves and Keith Sands Grove Reserve

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

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Introducing Disabled Persons Assembly NZ

Disabled Persons Assembly NZ (DPA) is a pan-impairment disabled person’s organisation that works to realise an equitable society, where all disabled people of all impairment types and including women, Māori, Pasifika, young people are able to direct their own lives. DPA works to improve social indicators for disabled people and for disabled people be recognised as valued members of society. DPA and its members work with the wider disability community, other DPOs, government agencies, service providers, international disability organisations, and the public by:

* telling our stories and identifying systemic barriers
* developing and advocating for solutions
* innovation and good practice

## United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DPA was influential in creating the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), a foundational document for disabled people which New Zealand has signed and ratified, confirming that disabled people must have the same human rights as everyone else [[1]](#footnote-2). All state bodies in New Zealand, including local and regional government, have a responsibility to uphold the principles and articles of this convention. There are a number of UNCRPD articles pertinent to this submission, including:

**Article 4.3 - Involving disabled people and our organisations in decisions that affect us**

“3. In the development and implementation of legislation and policies to implement the present Convention, and in other decision-making processes concerning issues relating to persons with disabilities, States Parties shall closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities, through their representative organizations.”

### Article 9 – Accessibility

“States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications.”

**Article 30 - Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure, and sport**

“5. With a view to enabling persons with disabilities to participate on an equal basis with others in recreational, leisure and sporting activities, States Parties shall take appropriate measures:

a) To encourage and promote the participation, to the fullest extent possible, of persons with disabilities in mainstream sporting activities at all levels;

b) To ensure that persons with disabilities have an opportunity to organize, develop and participate in disability-specific sporting and recreational activities and, to this end, encourage the provision, on an equal basis with others, of appropriate instruction, training and resources;

c) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to sporting, recreational and tourism venues;

d) To ensure that children with disabilities have equal access with other children to participation in play, recreation and leisure and sporting activities, including those activities in the school system;

(e) To ensure that persons with disabilities have access to services from those involved in the organization of recreational, tourism, leisure and sporting activities.”

New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016-2026

Since ratifying the UNCRPD, the New Zealand Government has established a Disability Strategy to guide the work of government agencies on disability issues. The vision is that New Zealand be a non-disabling society, where disabled people have equal opportunity to achieve their goals and aspirations, and that all of New Zealand works together to make this happen [[2]](#footnote-3). It identifies eight outcome areas contributing to achieving this vision, including:

**Outcome 5 – Accessibility**

“We access all places, services and information with ease and dignity.”

# The submission

DPA welcomes the opportunity to submit on the Hastings District Council’s Draft Reserve Management Plans for Eskdale and Frimley Parks, and the Tainui, Tanner, Tauroa and Hikanui Reserves and Keith Sands Grove Reserve. We acknowledge the importance of these parks to local Māori and the need for people to enjoy, play, recreate and contemplate within them. We are especially pleased that the plans to update the reserves management policy will enable improvements to be made to the accessibility of these areas, especially around shared pathways, walkways, toilets and vehicle permitted areas. We approve too of the plans to develop sensory gardens which would be of huge benefit to everyone, including disabled people across the impairment spectrum, for whom accessing the natural environment can be difficult, especially if living with neurodiversity, as blind or vision impaired people and people with mobility impairments.

**Shared pathways**

In this regard, DPA particularly welcomes proposals to improve the paving of shared walkways on each of the parks as this will ensure smoother access for people with mobility impairments who are mobility aid users, i.e., people who use wheelchairs, mobility scooters and walking frames, etc. Also, this will enable greater ease of access for people pushing children’s strollers. It is important that tactile indicators be placed at strategic locations around each of the parks and reserves to enable safe, inclusive and accessible navigation for blind and vision impaired people.

However, we would like to emphasise that there are inherent risks for disabled and non-disabled people alike when using shared pathways as well. Therefore, that is why we recommend that for any shared pathways there should also be well-constructed safety barriers built which blend in with the natural environment along with appropriate safety signage in each of the parks and reserves. This is needed as blind and low vision people, wheelchair users, mobility impaired people, older people as well as Deaf and hard of hearing people may not readily or even, in some cases, be able to detect the approach of a cyclist or e-cyclist in sufficient time, thereby presenting a safety risk for both pedestrians and cyclists in any shared space.

DPA does note the acknowledgement made by the HDC that there have been conflicts between various modal users in shared spaces, especially between pedestrians and cyclists in the reserve areas. Therefore, we welcome the proposals to create, for example, a separate mountain bike track within the Tainui Reserve and the conversion of a shared track in the western valley to a walking track as well, on the proviso that this be made fully accessible.

DPA understands that it is sometimes difficult to get the balance right in terms of accommodating the needs of all users across any park network, but it is imperative, that everyone should be safe when doing so as safety is important in enabling everyone to enjoy the outdoors in an inclusive and accessible way.

**Other aspects of inclusivity – seating, children’s playground, public transport.**

Around other aspects of inclusivity, DPA also welcomes the proposal to improve seating at each of the parks and reserves covered by this plan. We also recommend that seating be of varying heights to enable people of different heights and with impairments to be able to easily get in and out of them. Further, we recommend that seating around, for example, picnic tables, have an open space for people using mobility equipment, especially wheelchairs and walking frames, to enable them to slide in and sit alongside any other people they are with.

DPA welcomes the proposal to both move and install new children’s playground equipment and adult fitness equipment in some of the parks, including at Frimley. We recommend that any new playground and fitness equipment is accessible and inclusive, including for disabled children and adults, to use.

We also recommend that accessible public transport, including buses, provided through the Hawke’s Bay Regional Council, have routes which can take people to and from these parks, especially during peak summer periods, thereby enabling disabled people who cannot access traditional private transport, i.e., cars to do so.

Finally, we recommend that all information about each of the HDC parks (including booking and application processes) be made available in accessible formats (including New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Te Reo, ethnic languages, Braille, and large print) which can be done via the use of electronic apps where people can access this information via a QR code on the signs.

**Accessibility plans need disabled people’s co-design input**

DPA also welcomes the proposal to create accessibility plans for the Tanner, Tauroa, and Hikanui Keith Sands Grove Reserves. Around this, DPA recommends that these accessibility plans be developed as part of a co-design process between Council and disabled people and our representative organisations known as disabled persons organisations (DPOs) in accordance with Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD. The same process should apply around the proposed accessibility improvements at Eskdale and Frimley Parks too.

**Need for universal design**

DPA would like to see the changes to park infrastructure meet universal design principles, particularly around the construction and upgrading of buildings, facilities, tracks and paths within the park. Providing reasonable accommodations might also address any shortcomings in geographical or other factors that might otherwise create inaccessible environments.

Overall, we want to see these great proposals come to life. Indeed, the ideas contained for the various features to be added or upgraded in these parks and reserves would make them amongst the best available anywhere in Aotearoa. Our desire is that disabled people can enjoy these parks and reserves whether as residents or visitors to the region. Making all parks and reserves inclusive will mean the development of more integrated spaces which anyone, of any age, can enjoy.

# DPA’s recommendations

The Disabled Person’s Assembly recommends:

**Recommendation 1:** That all public buildings to be based on each of the council parks, especially new and upgraded facilities, be constructed to universal design principles which would include features such as widened doorways, wet floor shower areas, accessible toilets, level entry access, appropriate lighting to accommodate blind, low vision and neurodiverse people and seating arrangements, etc.

**Recommendation 2:** We support the proposal to have smoother, paved surfaces on the shared walkways in each of the parks and reserves as this will ensure better access for people with mobility impairments who are mobility aid users, and we recommend that tactile strips be placed at strategic locations around each of the parks to enable safe, inclusive and accessible navigation for blind and vision impaired people.

**Recommendation 3:** That to ensure the safety of all users on the proposed shared pathways there should be well-constructed safety barriers built which blend in with the natural environment along with appropriate safety signage in each of the parks and reserves covered by this review process.

**Recommendation 4:** That the new accessible public toilets and changing areas can be easily accessed by disabled people, especially wheelchair users and those with mobility impairments as well as adults with young children.

**Recommendation 5:** That for the new seating to be installed that these are of varying heights to enable people of various heights and impairments to be able to get in and out of them.

**Recommendation 6:** That seating around, for example, picnic and other tables have an open space available for people using mobility equipment, especially wheelchairs and walking frames, to enable them to insert themselves into it and thus easily sit alongside any other people who are accompanying them.

**Recommendation 7:** That the placement of mobility car parks in all vehicle parks should be undertaken within each of the HDC parks and reserves in this plan.

**Recommendation 8:** That any new children’s playground and adult fitness equipment is accessible and inclusive, including for disabled children and adults, to use.

**Recommendation 9:** That accessible public transport, including buses, provided through the regional council, have routes which can take people to and from these parks, especially during peak summer periods, thereby enabling disabled people who cannot access traditional private transport, i.e., cars to do so.

**Recommendation 10:** That all wayfinding signage be adjusted so that print, height, and colour contrast are fully considered, especially for blind and low vision users. We would like to encourage the development of signage in accessible formats as well (i.e., in New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Te Reo and ethnic languages) which can be done via the use of electronic apps where people can access this information via a QR code.

**Recommendation 11:** That all information about each of the HDC parks (including booking and application processes) be made available in accessible formats both online and in hard copy and this includes in New Zealand Sign Language, Easy Read, Te Reo, ethnic languages, Braille, and large print.

**Recommendation 12:** That when developing accessibility plans for the Tanner, Tauroa, and Hikanui Keith Sands Grove Reserves (as well as for the Eskdale and Frimley Parks), this be undertaken as part of a co-design process between Council and disabled people and our representative organisations known as disabled persons organisations (DPOs) in accordance with Article 4.3 of the UNCRPD.

1. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, December 13, 2006. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-2.html> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Office for Disability Issues. (2016). *New Zealand Disability Strategy 2016 – 2026*. Retrieved from https://www.odi.govt.nz/assets/New-Zealand-Disability-Strategy-files/pdf-nz-disability-strategy-2016.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)