

## **Submission to the Marlborough District Council Long Term Plan 2021-2031 Consultation Document**

### **Ara Wairau Cycle Trail**

Cycling – and specifically off-road cycling – is taking off! Since climate change and Covid moved to front of mind ....the global acceleration has been exponential.

More and more people – young and old alike – are taking to the velocipede...for transport, for leisure and for health & fitness. Cycle-tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market.

Marlborough offers some of the very best and most varied landscapes in the world.

Yet, Marlborough is not a great place to cycle around. The mountain bike park is good (but not suitable for many), the QCT excellent (but not suitable for many)...and there is all too little connectivity to allow residents and visitors to cycle around and enjoy our spectacular region - and its unparalleled early history - without risking life and limb on roads not designed with the cyclist in mind.

The Ara Wairau Cycle Trail is a project which aims to address that by creating a 2-5 day 150+km orbital off-road cycle trail around our valley...essentially by joining the dots of existing disconnected off-road trails. The route crosses public and private land, on coastal and river land, through vineyards and the Southern hills ....to create one of the most AW-some trails in NZ, for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike,

Two of those required connections involve spectacular suspension bridges, across both the Opoao and Wairau Rivers.

This is a charitable community initiative: and we are not seeking funding for those bridges. But we are seeking Council support for the project as a whole, we are seeking ongoing access to and assistance from key executive personnel to assist, we are seeking access across Council land, and we are seeking relatively modest financial help to create one of the most diverse cycle tracks in New Zealand.

It will transform access to the lower Wairau region, and provide unparalleled educational opportunities to learn about the nation's first settlers.

It offers the community opportunities for some wonderful (& wonderfully easy and family-friendly) day rides, allowing access to rarely-visited landscapes.

Ara Wairau will attract visitors from NZ and from around the world, providing a much-needed boost to our wine, tourism and hospitality industries.

This submission is but a brief introduction to the project, and I look forward to presenting the proposal more fully to Council as part of the LTP hearing process.

Neil Charles-Jones