



# Ningaloo Trails Master Plan (Shire of Exmouth)

## Acknowledgements

The Ningaloo Trails Master Plan has been prepared by TRC Tourism Pty Ltd ([www.trctourism.com](http://www.trctourism.com)) for the Shire of Exmouth.

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# Executive Summary

The Shire of Exmouth is seeking to develop recreational trails to improve outdoor recreational opportunities and connections for residents and to showcase the area's unique environment and attract visitors.

The area's natural beauty and biological diversity was recognised in 2011 when the World Heritage Committee recognised the outstanding universal value of the area's diverse and abundant marine life, its amazing cave fauna and the spectacular contrast between the colourful underwater scenery and the arid and rugged land of the Cape Range and inscribed the Ningaloo Coast on the World Heritage List<sup>1</sup>.

The Ningaloo Trails Master Plan is intended to address:

- ▶ the current situation of trails in the Shire of Exmouth
- ▶ the context, trends and markets in trails in Australia and internationally
- ▶ the appropriate mix and standard of trail experiences to be provided to meet market needs (both community and visitors)
- ▶ current events and opportunities for improvement
- ▶ sustainable management, maintenance and partnerships for trail networks
- ▶ investment needs and opportunities
- ▶ social and economic benefits from trails.

## Trends in Trails Use and Development

There has been a global increase in the development, use and demand for trails reflecting growth and change in participation in outdoor activity and the trend to experience-based tourism in which visitors seek more immersive and authentic ways to experience people and places.

## Benefits of Trails

Globally the provision of trails has been shown to lead to multiple health, lifestyle, social and economic benefits for communities.

## Economic development

Trail development in the Shire of Exmouth is part of broader initiatives to diversify the economy and enhance quality of life in the Shire in a way that is sustainable and values the natural and built heritage. Tourism is a major contributor to the Shire's economy.

## Tourism Planning

Tourism development in Exmouth is guided by regional tourism strategies<sup>2</sup> that seek to:

- ▶ Improve visitor products, experiences and infrastructure to encourage visitors to stay longer, travel more widely and spend more
- ▶ Provide a greater diversity of visitor opportunities
- ▶ Attract more high yielding visitors by providing experiences and packages that meet their expectations.

## Trail Planning Considerations

Development of trails in the Shire of Exmouth needs to take into account the protection and showcasing of the area's significant natural and cultural assets, community needs and future sustainability of trails.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/ningaloo>

<sup>2</sup> Gascoyne Development Commission (15 October 2014). *Gascoyne Regional Tourism Strategy*, prepared by Kadar Pearson & Partners Pty

Ltd; TRC Tourism (June 2014), *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy*.

Depending on their location and the tenure of the area, trail opportunities, planning and development will be guided by the provisions of land use plans, protected area management plans and other land and sea management arrangements including:

- ▶ the Exmouth Townsite Structure Plan, Exmouth South Structure Plan and Town Centre and Foreshore Revitalisation Plan
- ▶ Water Source Protection Plans
- ▶ Cape Range National Park Management Plan
- ▶ Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park.

### State Strategic Trail Blueprint

The Ningaloo Trails Master Plan fits within a State-wide planning structure which guides consistent planning, development and management of trails throughout the State including the *Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2021*.

### Local Residents

Current and potential use of trails by the local community within the Shire of Exmouth includes:

- ▶ commuting to work, school and other local destinations on foot or bicycle
- ▶ trail-based recreation activities such as walking, running, cycling, mountain biking, kayaking, snorkelling and diving
- ▶ accessing and enjoying local parks, beaches and conservation areas
- ▶ outdoor activities by school, youth and health groups.

### Exmouth Visitors

The town of Exmouth is a major visitor hub for the Gascoyne Region and a major gateway to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area which includes the Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park. Holiday visitation is concentrated between April and October.

Most visitors to the Shire of Exmouth and the Gascoyne Region are domestic visitors. The main purpose of visiting is for a holiday or leisure – 71% of domestic overnight visitors and 94% of international visitors are holiday or leisure visitors.

### Current Trails and Trail Use

The community of Exmouth has a small but growing interest in trails and trail based activity including casual walkers, runners and horse riders and mountain bikers.

### Strengths and Challenges

The distinctive features of the Exmouth area are its pristine reef, beach and marine environments and the rugged nature of the Cape Range – all of which are recognised through the Ningaloo World Heritage listing. The area's distinctive natural assets provide setting for some potentially unique trail experiences capable of attracting domestic and international visitors. However, due to the visitor focus on the reef, the climatic conditions (very hot summers) and distance from large population centres, the majority of future trail activities are likely to be focused on development of trails of local and regional trail significance. For most visitors to the area, it is likely that trails will form part of the experience rather than the core driver for visitation.

Exmouth faces a number of **CHALLENGES** in improving its trail offer, including:

- ▶ Remoteness
- ▶ Climate – Trails links in and near the town of Exmouth – Sustainability – Risk Management – Multiple Tenures
- ▶ Governance and Partnerships
- ▶ Investment and Funding
- ▶ Effective Promotion

Demand for trails in the Shire of Exmouth will come from a range of local and visitor markets each with differing motivations and expectations in relation to trail experiences. Current and potential trail markets for Exmouth and potential trail opportunities to suit market needs are explored.



## Trail Vision

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The Ningaloo Coast, Cape Range and the Shire of Exmouth will be recognised as the place where all people connect to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area and spectacular scenery through unique opportunities, experiencing adventure, contemplation and scenic beauty through popular and sustainable trails.

Exmouth will have ongoing development of a range of trails that focus on the uniquely Ningaloo Exmouth experience and encourage local participation, community benefit and wellbeing.

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To achieve this vision, the Shire of Exmouth with other stakeholders will develop diverse trail opportunities including:

► Unique trails that compliment and showcase the Ningaloo World Heritage Coast

► A small number of short walks that add to the range of visitor experiences

► A cross range shared use trail experience that connects Exmouth with the Ningaloo Coast

► An Exmouth trail hub that connects people to events, places and activity

► Trails that represent the culture, landscape and biological diversity of the Ningaloo coast through art and sculpture.

## Trail Development

The Exmouth trails are planned for local community benefit or as infrastructure that provides visitor experiences strongly linked to the Outback and Coast themes and associated with products that provide economic benefit by increasing demand for services including accommodation.

The trails recommended within the Ningaloo Trails Master Plan include:

### *Unique Trails Showcasing World Heritage*

It is proposed to develop two new unique trail experiences that showcase the outstanding features of the Ningaloo World Heritage Coast and that have the potential to become iconic trails.

- ▶ Multi-Day Sea Kayaking trail providing 12 well positioned camping sites on the shoreline of the lagoons for 45 kilometres inside the fringing reef.
- ▶ Ningaloo Sculpture Trail incorporating the development of intertidal and sub tidal sculptures to provide a unique trail experience that promotes and celebrates World Heritage and cultural values.

### *Improved Ningaloo Coast Trail Opportunities*

- ▶ North West Cape Short Walk to complement the seven existing short walks and provide locals and visitors with a scenic and heritage North West Cape experience.
- ▶ Cape Range Crossing Trail to provide walking and mountain bike experiences across the range from Exmouth to the Ningaloo Coast.

### *Mountain Bike Hub*

- ▶ Combining with the Cape Range Crossing Trail for a shared use trail to the Ningaloo Coast.
- ▶ Developing trails close to Exmouth in the Exmouth Water Reserve outer catchment and on Unallotted Crown Land that provide for a range of skills.
- ▶ Linking trails to the Exmouth Recreation Area and the Ningaloo Centre.
- ▶ Develop a Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Skills, Pump and BMX Tracks.
- ▶ Providing level mountain bike trails area on Unallotted Crown Land to the south of the town.
- ▶ Expanding mountain biking opportunities in the Badjirrajirra Shared Use Trail area.

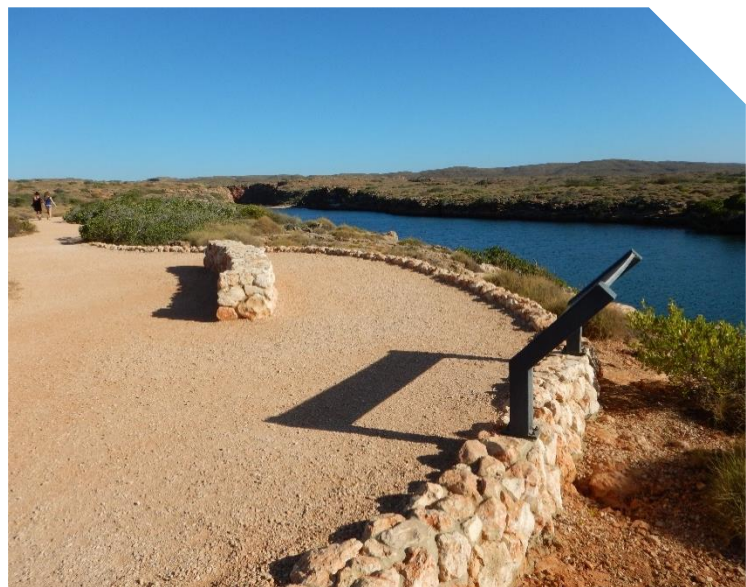
## *Ningaloo Centre Trail Hub*

- ▶ Exmouth Town loops and connections to provide popular shared use trail access for locals and visitors to link to the Ningaloo Centre and other important destinations in the town such as the Recreation Area and the beach.
- ▶ Exmouth Gulf Trail to provide locals and visitors with a shared use trail from the Ningaloo Centre to the Exmouth Gulf beach and incorporating a Ningaloo Centre Trail Head and Exmouth Gulf lookout.

### *Four Wheel Driving*

- ▶ Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road and the 4WD sandy track that follows the coast to Coral Bay provides a unique coastal driving experience.
- ▶ Sandy Bay Track proposed as a new land journey and regional drive loop which (subject to land transfers and approvals) links Learmonth to the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road across the range. Experience for 4WD vehicles, motor bikes and other road registered off road vehicles. Also provides an alternative vehicle trail experience when access across Yardie Creek mouth is closed.

*Image: 1 Yardie Nature Trail*



## Summary of Recommended Trail Projects

All trail projects proposed are considered vital to the Shire's future trail program. Priority trails recognise the importance of linkages with other trails and places, demonstrated trail user demand, community benefit and providing quality visitor experiences. Priority Trail Projects ✓✓ Secondary Trail Projects ✓

Implementation Short Term 1-3 years, Medium Term 3 - 5 years, Long Term 5 - 10 years

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments would be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan

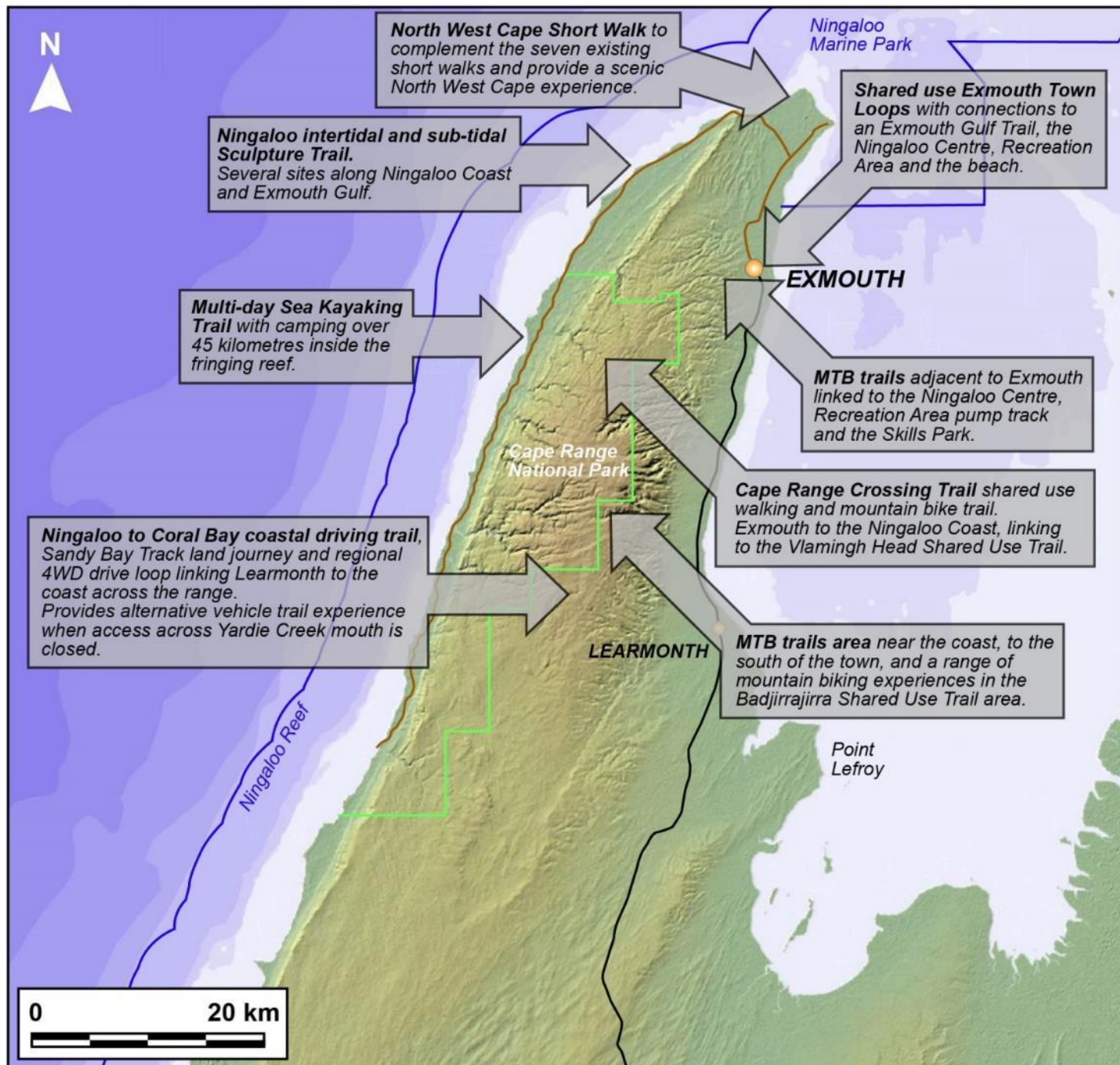
Project	Priority Trails	Indicative Costs	Time Frame
Unique Trails Showcasing World Heritage			
Multi-Day Sea Kayaking trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Overnight trail inside the fringing reef</li></ul>	✓✓	Total \$121,000 incl. \$31,000 for trail infrastructure and \$90,000 for upgrading of existing facilities	Short Term
Ningaloo Sculpture Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>A unique intertidal and sub tidal sculpture trail experience that promotes and celebrates World Heritage and cultural values</li></ul>	✓✓	Visionary trail concept future costs yet to be determined	Long Term
Improved Ningaloo Coast Trail Opportunities			
North West Cape Short Walk <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>to complement the seven existing short walks and provide locals and visitors with a scenic and heritage North West Cape experience</li></ul>	✓	Trail head way marking signs and beach access \$3,000	Medium Term
Cape Range Crossing Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>walking and mountain bike experiences across the range from Exmouth to the Ningaloo Coast</li></ul>	✓	Estimates under shared use scenario \$500,000	Medium Term
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>future shared use trail along the range from the Cape Range Crossing Trail Head to Vlaming Head.</li></ul>	✓	Estimates under shared use scenario \$400,000	Medium Term
Mountain Bike Hub			
Develop a Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Pump, Jump and BMX Tracks.	✓✓		Short Term
Developing trails close to Exmouth in the Exmouth Water Reserve outer catchment and on Unallotted Crown Land	✓	Mountain bike trails by recognised builders varies for \$35,000 to \$65,000/km trails to be developed over time by the community	Medium Term
Providing level mountain bike trails area on Unallotted Crown Land to the south of the town	✓		
Linking trails to the Exmouth Recreation Area and the Ningaloo Centre	✓		Medium Term
Expanding mountain biking opportunities in the Badjirrajirra Shared Use Trail area	✓		Long Term
Ningaloo Centre Trail Hub			
Exmouth Town loops and connections <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Exmouth Town loops and connections to provide popular shared use trail access for locals and visitors to link to the Ningaloo Centre, Recreation Area and the beach.</li></ul>	✓✓	\$686,000	Short Term
Exmouth Gulf Trail <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>shared use trail from the Ningaloo Centre to the Exmouth Gulf beach and incorporating a Ningaloo Centre Trail Head and Exmouth Gulf lookout.</li></ul>	✓✓	\$245,000	Medium Term
Four Wheel Driving			
Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road provides a significant contribution to iconic 4WD experiences along the Ningaloo Coast.	✓	Trail head sign, interpretation and way marking \$15,000	Short Term
Sandy Bay Track proposed as a new land journey Regional drive loop which (subject to land transfers and approvals) links Learmonth to the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road across the range	✓	Upgrading of eroded sections of existing track and signs \$50,000	Short Term



Image: 2 Oyster Stacks Ningaloo Marine Park







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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Master Plan

The Shire of Exmouth is seeking to develop recreational trails to improve outdoor recreational opportunities and connections for residents, showcase the area's unique environment and attract visitors.

Occupying 6,261 square kilometres at the tip of North West Cape (1,270 kilometres north of Perth), the Shire of Exmouth has a current population of approximately 2,700 people, most living in the town of Exmouth. The population increases dramatically during the tourist season between April and October. Exmouth is a growing regional centre for tourism, the fishing industry and services for the off-shore oil and gas industry.

Economic expansion and town improvements under the Royalties for Regions program are expected to lead to population and tourism growth and increasing demand for recreation and tourism opportunities. The Ningaloo Centre at Exmouth is being developed to provide a focus point for the community, researchers and visitors.

The Shire's attractiveness as a place to live and visit centres around its pristine, unique and significant marine environments and spectacular arid landscapes. The natural beauty and biological diversity of the area was recognised in June 2011 when the World Heritage Committee inscribed the Ningaloo Coast on the World Heritage List.

World Heritage listing recognises the outstanding universal value of the area's diverse and abundant marine life, its amazing cave fauna and the spectacular contrast between the colourful underwater scenery and the arid and rugged land of the Cape Range.

The boundary encompasses what the World Heritage Committee considered to be the Ningaloo Coast's key marine and terrestrial values of outstanding universal value.

On-ground management of the Ningaloo Coast is principally undertaken by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA)<sup>3</sup>.

The World Heritage listed Ningaloo Coast attracts visitors from around the world. The Ningaloo Marine Park contains a highly diverse sub-tropical coral reef (the longest fringing coral reef in the world) and spectacular marine life. The long beaches, spectacular cliffs and ancient gorges of Cape Range National Park are a stunning contrast to the area's turquoise waters.

There is a strong focus on marine activity including snorkelling and kayaking in the area. Rocky gorges and spectacular canyons offer hiking and walking, with several trails and 4WD tracks taking visitors to special places and lookouts offering spectacular views over the range, Ningaloo Reef and Exmouth Gulf.

The land and waters in the Exmouth area, including areas with potential for trail development, are held and managed under a range of tenures and management arrangements. Land tenure includes freehold, Crown Land, Department of Defence Land, historical sites, pastoral leases, Unallocated Crown Land, land under the care and control of the Shire of Exmouth, Water Reserves and substantial land within the Cape Range National Park and other Crown Reserves managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA).

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/places/world/ningaloo>



The Ningaloo Trails Master Plan is intended to address:

- ▶ the current situation of trails in the Shire of Exmouth
- ▶ the context, trends and markets in trails in Australia and internationally
- ▶ the appropriate mix and standard of trail experiences to be provided to meet market needs (both community and visitors)
- ▶ current events and opportunities for improvement
- ▶ sustainable management, maintenance and partnerships for trail networks
- ▶ investment needs and opportunities
- ▶ social and economic benefits from trails. What are Trails.

The Draft Western Australia Strategic Trails Blueprint defines trails as pathways or routes that are developed and/or used for commuting and travel, recreation, tourism and appreciation of natural and cultural values.

Trails may be:

- ▶ short or long
- ▶ part of a trail network or a single journey
- ▶ used for one activity or shared by several different uses
- ▶ primarily used by local residents or form a visitor attraction
- ▶ purpose-built paths or routes designated by signage and information.

Many trails are developed as local community infrastructure and as a visitor experience with associated products, services, accommodation and interpretation (TRC 2016)<sup>4</sup>.

Trails covered by the Ningaloo Trails Master Plan include non-motorised and motorised trails and have a strong connection between land and water reflecting the landscape and Exmouth experience.

## 1.2 Trends in Trails Use and Development

There has been a global increase in the development, use and demand for trails reflecting growth and change in participation in outdoor activity and the trend to experience-based tourism in which visitors seek more immersive and authentic ways to experience people and places. World-wide the development and use of trails for local leisure activities and tourism has been expanding. Trails are now an integral part of the lifestyle of many communities and of many tourism destinations.

Walking and bushwalking as ways of experiencing natural environments have been joined by mountain biking, horse riding and trail running, and the emerging trend of riding electric bikes. The growth of paddling and underwater sports has led to demand for water-based trail facilities, while the popularity of four-wheel driving and off-road trail biking has resulted in development of trails and routes for these activities. Trails also provide ways to experience and interpret cultural features in addition to the natural environment. Art and culture trails inspire the trail user through a progression of art works or cultural features that link to landscape, culture, history or people and can significantly add value to the trail experience.

Many of these new activities have a strong lifestyle and/or adventure focus and have motivated supporters who are closely involved in the development and maintenance of trails and trail events. The provision of well-constructed trails is vital to ensure that these activities are undertaken in a way that protects natural and cultural values and is environmentally and socially sustainable over the long term whilst offering excellent experiences for participants. Consumers are increasingly seeking trails that facilitate their overall enjoyment and appreciation of an area and now expect trails to provide 'total experiences' through the provision of supporting services, visitor products, interpretation and accessible information.

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<sup>4</sup>TRC 2016. *Draft Western Australia Strategic Trails Blueprint 2016 -2021*, Draft Report for WA Trails Reference Group, TRC Australia.

The growth in the range of people seeking support to explore natural areas (including growth in the retiree generation) has resulted in development of 'soft adventure' trails and guided or self-guided experience packages that provide information, accommodation, transport and equipment.

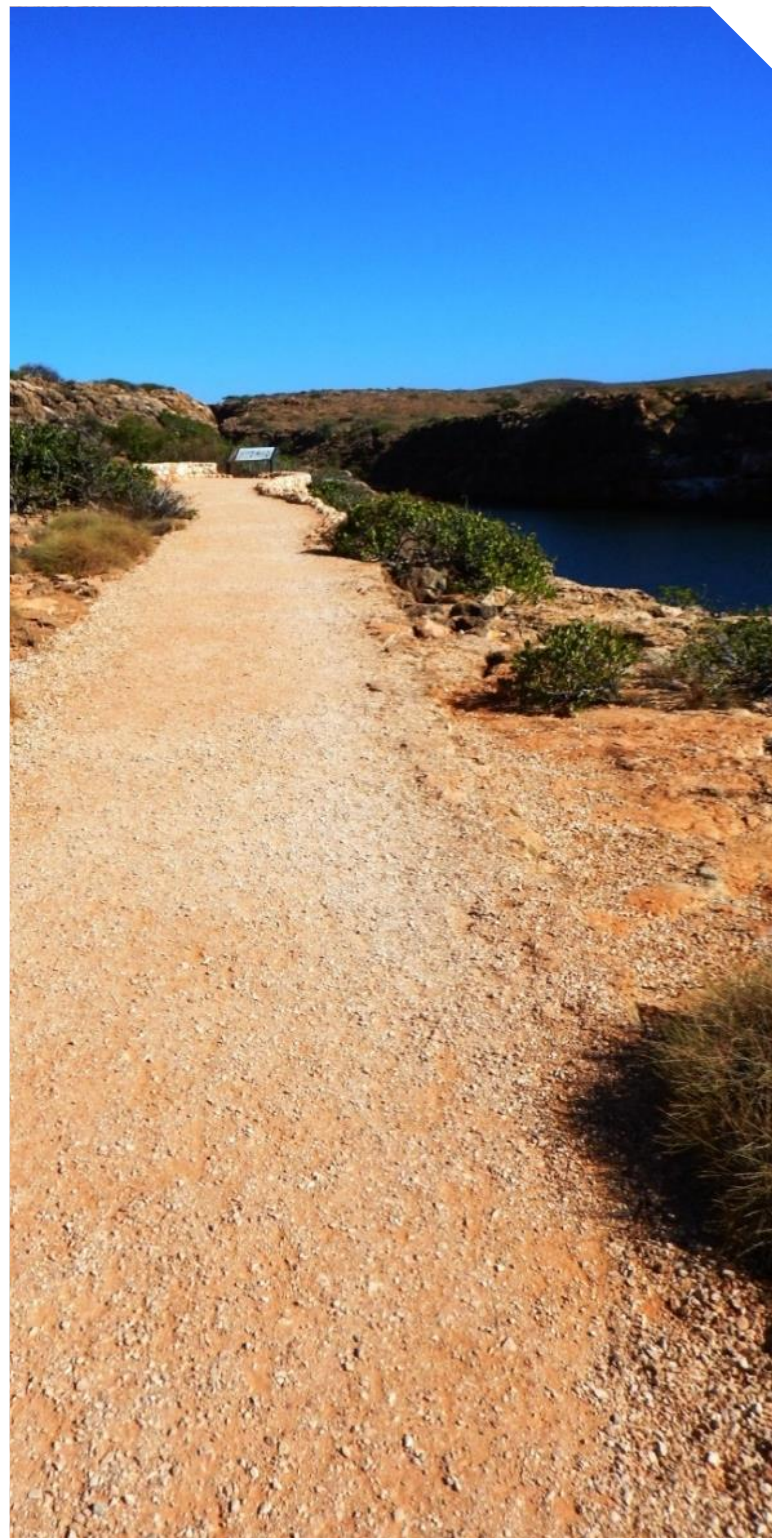
People are also using digital technologies (such as smartphones and apps) and social media to access information about trails and record their trail activities. There are increasing expectations for delivery of trail interpretation through digital sources.

### 1.3 Benefits of Trails

Globally the provision of trails has been shown to lead to multiple health, lifestyle, social and economic benefits for communities, including:

- ▶ encouraging more outdoor physical activity leading to improved physical and mental wellbeing
- ▶ improved lifestyle opportunities
- ▶ low cost facilities for recreation accessible to many different groups in the community
- ▶ improved awareness of and appreciation of the natural environment and support for its protection
- ▶ economic benefits from employment and business opportunities in trail development, management, maintenance, events and supporting products and services
- ▶ tourism growth to trail destinations with resulting economic stimulus of local economies
- ▶ protection and showcasing of natural, cultural and historic areas by providing sustainable access
- ▶ improved sustainability of local communities by making them more attractive places to live
- ▶ opportunities for social interaction and development of community identity through participation in trail activities, maintenance and conservation<sup>5</sup>.

Image: 3 Yardie Nature Trail



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<sup>5</sup> TRC 2016. *Draft Western Australia Strategic Trails Blueprint 2016 -2021*, Draft Report for WA Trails Reference Group, TRC Australia

## 1.4 Trail Classification

As a tool to understanding the roles and functions performed by different types of trails, in this Master Plan trails are classified according to their state, regional and local significance.

Table 1. Trail Classification

Classification	Attributes
<b>State trail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ An extended trail or trail network that is of sufficient quality and with appropriate facilities, products and services to be recognised beyond the State and to attract visitors to WA.</li><li>▶ Significant intrastate and interstate (and some international) visitation, interest and appeal.</li><li>▶ Showcases the State's significant natural and cultural landscapes.</li><li>▶ High standard of management and promotion.</li><li>▶ Government priority support at the state and regional level.</li><li>▶ Some trails of State significance have the potential to be developed as world-class trail experiences uniquely representative of Australia's natural and cultural landscape values and attracting international visitation. Such trails (for example Tasmania's Overland Track and Victoria's Great Ocean Walk) are destinations in their own right. They have a high standard of infrastructure and facilities and are supported by high-yield tourism products, accommodation and services.</li></ul>
<b>Regional trail</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ A major trail or trail network that services a population centre or large regional community, with facilities and services of a standard and appeal that could attract visitors from outside the region.</li><li>▶ Quality infrastructure and facilities appropriate to the type of trail and use.</li><li>▶ Supported by viable trail-based and associated regional tourism facilities, products and services.</li><li>▶ Representative of a region's natural and cultural landscape values.</li><li>▶ Well managed and promoted.</li><li>▶ Regional government priority support.</li></ul>
<b>Local trails</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ A trail or trail network that services the local community and provides facilities suited to local use.</li><li>▶ May also be used by visitors.</li><li>▶ Infrastructure, facilities, services and programs appropriate to the type of trail and use.</li><li>▶ Some local trails may have potential for development to regional status.</li></ul>



## 2 Planning context

### 2.1 Economic development

Trail development in the Shire of Exmouth is part of broader initiatives to diversify the economy and enhance quality of life in the Shire in a way that is sustainable and values the natural and built heritage. Tourism is a major contributor to the Shire's economy. Outcomes sought in the Shire's **10+ year Strategic Community Plan**<sup>6</sup> related to trail development are:

- ▶ Diverse tourism opportunities
- ▶ To maintain and improve access and connectivity to our natural assets
- ▶ To be a leader in eco-friendly initiatives and innovations
- ▶ To make Exmouth an attractive town that is a comfortable and welcoming place to live and visit, and reflects our lifestyle values and unique natural environment
- ▶ Excellent lifestyle, recreational and cultural facilities
- ▶ Residents and visitors have access to appropriate services and facilities to enhance their health and wellbeing.

Land use, environmental, infrastructure, economic and community planning in Exmouth comes within the broader goals and strategies set for the wider Gascoyne Region. In the **Gascoyne Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework 2015**<sup>7</sup> Exmouth is recognised as a growing regional centre for tourism, the fishing industry, marine services and services for the offshore oil and gas industry that will require investment in infrastructure.

The **Gascoyne Regional Investment Blueprint**<sup>8</sup> outlines current, proposed and possible tourism, infrastructure and service developments in Exmouth that are expected to stimulate tourism, economic and population growth. Improvements to the town centre, recreational facilities, the foreshore and airport have been carried out with contributions from the Royalties for Regions program. The Ningaloo Centre - an eco-friendly multipurpose centre which will include facilities for environmental research, education, exhibitions, visitors and the community - is under construction.

The purchase in August 2017 of the Ningaloo lighthouse Holiday Park at Vlaming Head by Mining magnate Andrew Forrest is likely to see new investment in accommodation range and capacity with linked demand for new and innovative visitor experiences. A spokeswoman for Andrew and Nicola Forrest quoted in the West Australian newspaper their support for eco-tourism in the North West and promoting marine ecological awareness.

"We believe in promoting marine ecology awareness, while encouraging active, population-wide engagement and appreciation of our globally-unique coastal wilderness," she said.

"The biodiversity and sustainable beauty of our fragile North-West shorelines can be enjoyed by all, if we never take it for granted<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Shire of Exmouth (2011). *10+ Year Strategic Community Plan 2011*.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Planning and Western Australian Planning Commission (February 2015). *Gascoyne Regional Planning and Infrastructure Framework*.

<sup>8</sup> Gascoyne Development Commission (2015). *Gascoyne Regional Investment Blueprint*.

<sup>9</sup> The West Australian Wednesday, Tom Zaunmayr | Pilbara News, 23 August 2017

## 2.2 Tourism Planning

Tourism development in Exmouth is guided by two regional tourism strategies<sup>10</sup> that seek to:

- ▶ Improve visitor products, experiences and infrastructure to encourage visitors to stay longer, travel more widely and spend more
- ▶ Provide a greater diversity of visitor opportunities
- ▶ Attract more high yielding visitors by providing experiences and packages that meet their expectations.

Improved trail infrastructure and trail-related experiences that showcase natural and cultural assets and provide opportunities for value-adding products and learning are potential elements in building the tourism offer for diverse markets. Development of this Ningaloo Trails Master Plan is identified as a priority in the 2014 *Gascoyne Tourism Strategy*. The *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy* focusses on development of experiences for the global *Experience Seeker* market and similar domestic markets – people who seek new and authentic experiences of a destination and its people and associated learning opportunities through interpretation and storytelling. The Experience Development Strategy aims to deliver quality visitor experiences centred around three themes – *Unexpected Encounters* (with the region’s people and places); *Outback and Ocean Discovery* (experiencing the region’s juxtaposition of rugged, arid landscapes with the ocean); and *Conservation through Participation* (opportunities for learning and participation in conservation).

Recommended opportunities with potential implications for trail development are:



- ▶ Improved exposure to the environment and wildlife, such as through sea kayaking, snorkelling, scuba diving and exploring on foot



- ▶ Sea and land journeys by drive trail (such as a regional drive loop), 4WD, tag-a-long tours, sea kayak and foot



- ▶ Baiyungu Track (a proposed 320 km track along the coast from Quobba to Exmouth) that would provide opportunities for walking, mountain biking and sea kayaking.

<sup>10</sup> Gascoyne Development Commission (15 October 2014). *Gascoyne Regional Tourism Strategy*, prepared by Kadar Pearson & Partners Pty

Ltd; TRC Tourism (June 2014), *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy*.

## 2.3 Trail Planning Considerations

Development of trails in the Shire of Exmouth needs to take into account the protection and showcasing of the area's significant natural and cultural assets, community needs and future sustainability of trails. Depending on their location and the tenure of the area, trail opportunities, planning and development will be guided by the provisions of land use plans, protected area management plans and other land and sea management arrangements including:

- ▶ Exmouth Townsite Structure Plan<sup>11</sup>, Exmouth South Structure Plan, Town Centre and Foreshore Revitalisation Plan<sup>12</sup> and the Shire of Exmouth Local Planning Scheme and Local Planning Strategy for Shire of Exmouth designate the uses and development controls for particular areas. The Strategy identifies the need for the improvements to the pedestrian/cycleway network particularly within the town centre, greater connectivity between the town centre and the Exmouth Gulf foreshore through pathway upgrades and maintenance and the introduction of signage and wayfinding elements given the prevalence of tourists in unfamiliar territory. The Strategy also recommends the use of natural drainage lines within the town centre as a safe pedestrian and cycleway movement corridor.<sup>13</sup> Changes to the Local Planning Scheme are planned to take effect in 2017.
- ▶ Water Source Protection Plans produced by The Department of Water and implemented by the Water Corporation establish the level of protection required within Water Reserves. The *Exmouth Water Reserve Water Resource Protection Plan 2000* (reviewed in 2011) provides the basis for establishing compatible land use and ensuring the long term protection of the Exmouth community's groundwater resource. The current Exmouth Water Reserve includes Priority 1 (P1) source protection areas defined to ensure there is no degradation of the water source. Wellhead Protection Zones are defined as a 500 metre radius around each production bore in a P1 area. Recreation in these zones should be avoided to

protect water quality and public health. The area outside of the wellhead protection zones but still within the Exmouth Water Reserve is referred to as the outer catchment. Some recreation (such as activities by individuals and small groups) can occur in the outer catchment.<sup>14</sup> The Exmouth Water Reserve is situated immediately west and south of the town and there is community interest in undertaking trail based recreation in parts of the outer catchment of the Exmouth Water Reserve.

- ▶ *Cape Range National Park Management Plan*<sup>15</sup> is a statutory plan under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984*. The Plan provides for the protection and management of the park's natural and cultural values and appropriate and permissible visitor infrastructure and uses (including walking, cycling and driving and commercial operations) and provides guidance for trail management and future trail development
- ▶ *Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park*<sup>16</sup> is a statutory plan under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* for the State marine park over the Ningaloo Reef and associated marine areas. It provides for protection and management of the marine environment and visitor use, including zoning of areas for different levels of permissible use. The provision of sea kayaking and dive trails is envisaged as a way to minimise visitor impacts on ecological values as visitation increases.
- ▶ Other land tenure and managements arrangements that may need to be taken into account in identification of trail opportunities and in trail development:
  - ▶ Giralia Station, former pastoral lease land proposed for addition to the conservation estate which is now managed by DBCA
  - ▶ Department of Defence Land – Including the Naval Communication Station Harold E. Holt at North West Cape and associated lands including a disused air defence radar site near Vlamingh Head and the Learmonth Air Weapons Range south of Cape Range National Park.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor Burrell Barnett (August 2011). *Exmouth Townsite Structure Plan*, prepared for Department of Planning and Shire of Exmouth.

<sup>12</sup> TME Town Planning Management Engineering Pty Ltd (October 2013). *Exmouth South Structure Plan*, prepared for the Shire of Exmouth.

<sup>13</sup>. *Local Planning Strategy for Shire of Exmouth*.

<sup>14</sup> Water and Rivers Commission (2000). *Exmouth Water Reserve Water Catchment Source Protection Plan 0* (Reviewed 2011)

<sup>15</sup> Department of Environment and Conservation and Conservation Commission Western Australia (2010). *Cape Range National Park Management Plan No 65*.

<sup>16</sup> Marine Parks and Reserves Authority and Department of Conservation and Land Management (2005). *Management Plan for the Ningaloo Marine Park and Muiron Islands Marine Management Area, 2005-2015*.



## 2.4 State Strategic Trail Blueprint

The Ningaloo Trails Master Plan fits within a State-wide planning structure which guides consistent planning, development and management of trails throughout the State through:

- ▶ *Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2017-2021* (in preparation) which provides broad principles, guidelines and strategies for trail planning, development and management
- ▶ State-wide Activity-Based Trail strategies – to date for cycling, mountain biking, equestrian and trail bike riding activities
- ▶ regional trails master plans and localised trail plans.

### Key strategies in the Blueprint are:

Effective governance to coordinate and facilitate trail development, management and promotion among the range of stakeholders

Consistent and collaborative planning at the state, local and regional levels

Sustainable trail design and maintenance

A sound knowledge base to assess trail demand, use and impacts; inform management and enable adaptation to changes over time

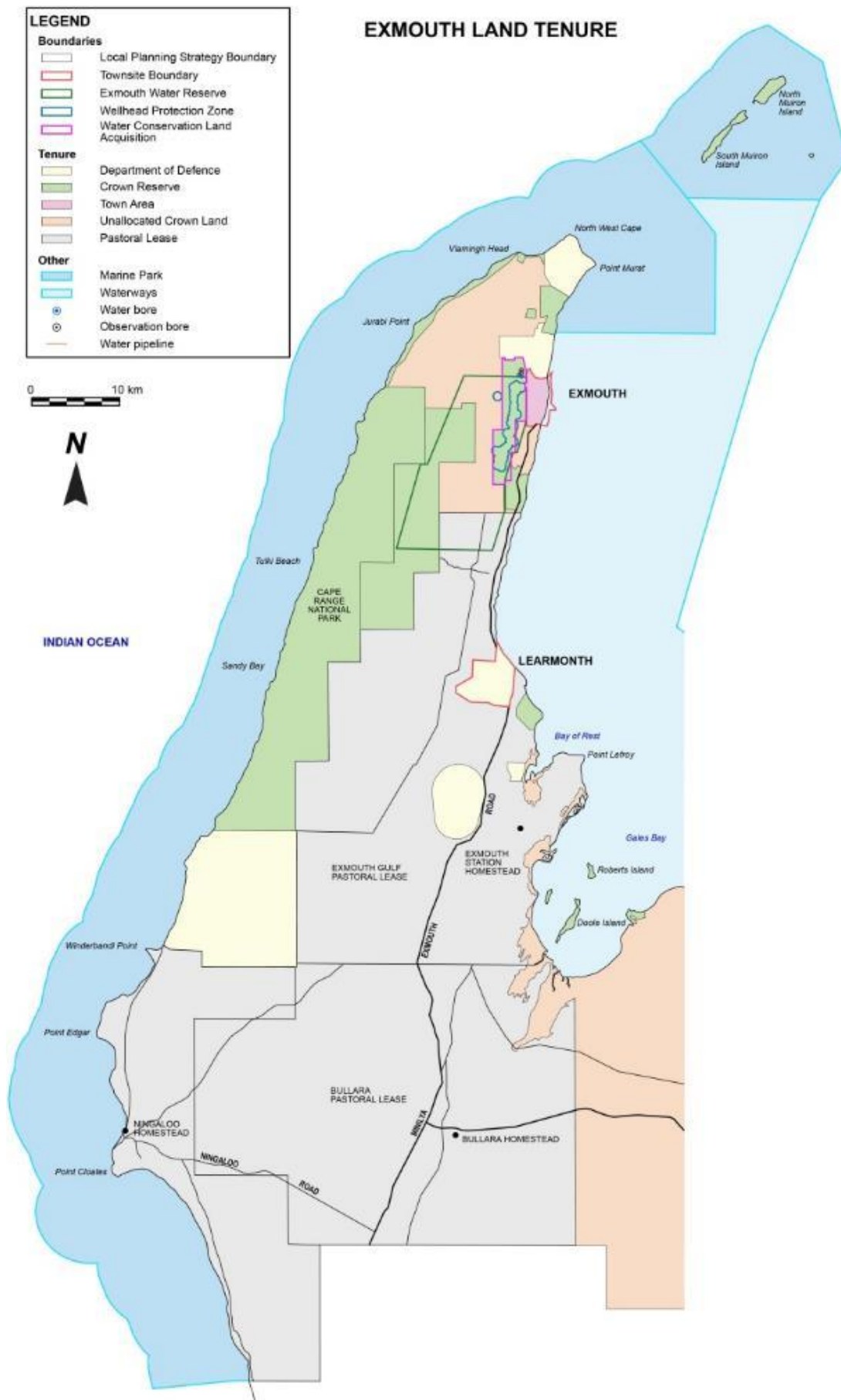
Community engagement to encourage community stewardship for trails and participation in management

Investment and financing sources to support trail development, management and maintenance

Building greater trail use and awareness through improved facilities, interpretation, events, promotion and marketing

Growing the visitor economy through high quality trail experiences that attract visitors and contribute to business and local economic development.

Map 2 Exmouth Land Tenure



## 3 Demand for Trails at Exmouth

### 3.1 Local Residents

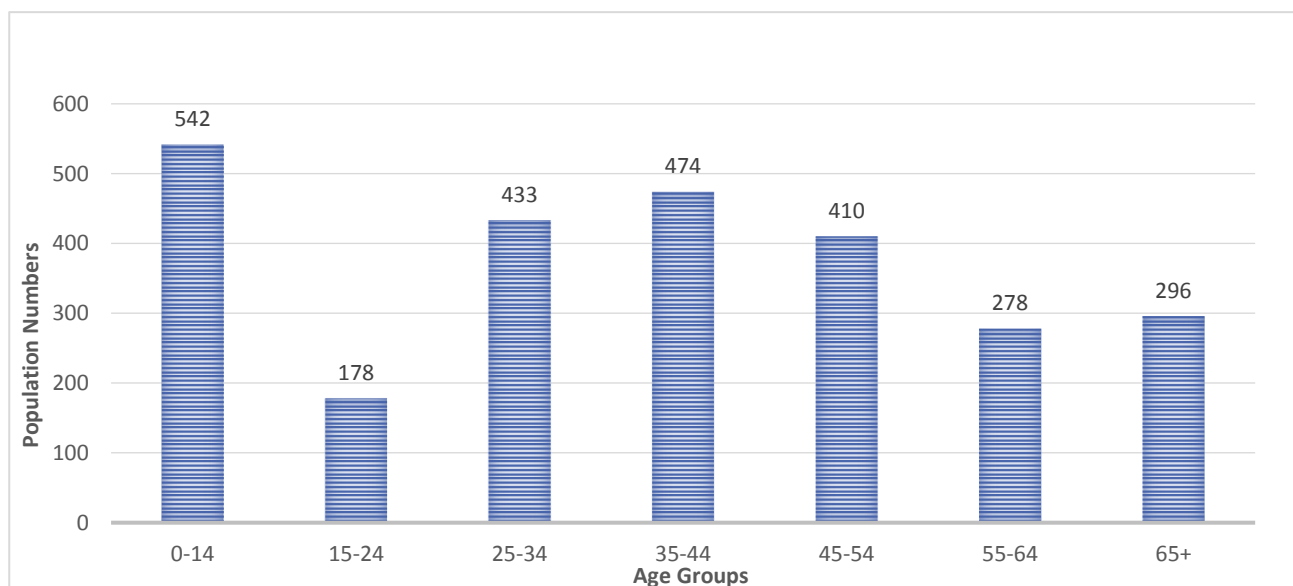
Current and potential use of trails by the local community within the Shire of Exmouth includes:

- ▶ commuting to work, school and other local destinations on foot or bicycle
- ▶ trail-based recreation activities such as walking, running, cycling, mountain biking, kayaking, snorkelling and diving
- ▶ accessing and enjoying local parks, beaches and conservation areas
- ▶ outdoor activities by school, youth and health groups.

The estimated resident population of the Shire of Exmouth in 2014 was 2,611 people, most of whom live in and round the town of Exmouth (see Figure 1). The relatively large number of children aged under 14 (20.8%) is likely to affect demand for trails and trail-based activities suitable for these age groups and families. On the other hand young adults (aged 15 to 24) form only 6.8% of Exmouth's population as many in the age group leave the region for education and employment. About 50% of the population is between the ages of 25 and 54. The 11.3% of the population over 65 years is expected to increase in accordance with general aging population trends. With the trend to people living healthy lifestyles and exercising later in life, demand for trails could be expected among the older age groups.

With an anticipated increase in employment opportunities associated with economic expansion and infrastructure developments, the Gascoyne Development Commission considers that Exmouth's resident population could grow to 4,469 people in 2026 and 4,604 people in 2051<sup>17</sup>. This would entail an associated expansion in local demand for recreation.

Figure 1 Shire of Exmouth estimated resident population, 2014<sup>18</sup>



<sup>17</sup> Gascoyne Development Commission (2015), *Gascoyne Regional Investment Blueprint*.

<sup>18</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Regional Profile for Exmouth LGA, 2014*, Regional Statistics by LGA, 2010-2014, 1379.0.55.001.



## 3.2 On line Survey

During development of this Master Plan an online survey was conducted of the views of local community members and stakeholders on trails use and development.

A total of 41 responses were received which is a relatively small sample size but does provide an indication of the thoughts of the local community.

The survey questions and summarised responses included:

### 1. What type of trails people would use and an idea of how often they would be used?

The top five trail activity responses were:

1. Short walks (up to 5km)
2. Easy Mountain Bike Trails
3. Intermediate Mountain Bike Trails
4. Snorkel/scuba trails
5. Four wheel driving

The respondents advised they would use short walks, easy, intermediate and difficult mountain bike trails and road cycling and horse riding daily whilst easy and difficult mountain bike, snorkel/scuba, and short walks would be undertaken weekly

Respondents considered occasionally using longer walks 5 km plus, kayaking, snorkel/scuba and short and overnight walks.

### 2. Does the draft vision for Exmouth trails reflect their views regarding the future for trails?

Most respondent agreed with the draft vision.

### 3. What contribution people could offer to trails?

Of the 41 respondents 29 out of 41 people were interested in contributing to trails in some way.

The types of contribution that people could offer to trails from most responses to lowest are:

- a) Trail promotion (24)
- b) Trail monitoring (23)
- c) Trail maintenance (17)
- d) Assistance with trail construction (16)

Respondents recognised the marine emphasis but were keen to see a focus on new land trails in the Exmouth region. Trails were discussed that could provide access to areas that showcase the rugged beauty of the terrestrial landscape and ocean including the cape to the gulf trails and links to Exmouth.

Several responses indicated the desire for a cross the range trail e.g. Yardie Creek Caravan Park to Town and further south from the top of Charles Knife Road with links to drop off and pick up for locals that could be popular for visitors.

Mountain biking or hiking experiences were sought across the Cape Range picking up on the gorges and links to existing trails in Cape Range National Park.

The comments identified a desire for a mountain bike hub, range crossing rides, skill based technical and flow trail rides, links to small trails and skills track, BMX and pump track close to town, notably near the ovals that could be the hub and information centre of the trail network system.

Links along the Exmouth town coast and links to Bundegi Beach for visitors and locals to enjoy the views and nature.

Respondents were keen to see a trail plan in place and as evidenced through this short survey they have great ideas to share and believe investment in land trails will be beneficial to residents and tourist alike.

A full summary of the online survey can be seen in Appendix A.

### 3.3 Exmouth Visitors

The town of Exmouth is a major visitor hub for the Gascoyne Region and a major gateway to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area which includes the Ningaloo Marine Park and Cape Range National Park. Holiday visitation is concentrated between April and October when daytime maximum temperatures are between 30°C and 24°C compared with the extreme heat of the summer months when temperatures often exceeds 40°C or 50 °C. During the main holiday period the Shire of Exmouth's population is swelled by visitors and seasonal workers to reach an estimated 7,500 people at any one time<sup>19</sup>. Most visitors arrive by private vehicle.

Visitation to Exmouth and Gascoyne Region is summarised in Table 2. Estimation of Exmouth's visitation is limited by the small sample size of data obtained from the National and International Visitor Surveys<sup>20</sup>. The Shire of Exmouth's total annual average overnight visitation between 2012 and 2015 was estimated as 97,000 visitors<sup>21</sup>. The Gascoyne Region (which in addition to Exmouth includes the Shire of Carnarvon and the Shark Bay World Heritage Area) received an average of 261,900 overnight visitors in the years ending December 2014 and 2015<sup>22</sup>.

Most visitors to the Shire of Exmouth and the Gascoyne Region are domestic visitors. The main purpose of visiting is for a holiday or leisure – 71% of domestic overnight visitors and 94% of international visitors are holiday or leisure visitors<sup>23</sup>.

About 46% of domestic overnight visitors to the Gascoyne Region are aged between 25 and 44 years travelling as family groups or adult couples. Grey Nomads – older retired people travelling around Australia or from the south of Western Australia for the winter - are a major component of visitors and often stay in the area for extended periods<sup>24</sup>.

The main sources of international visitors to the region are Germany, the UK, the US and other European countries– countries with strong trail sectors and whose travellers are among the most inclined to use trails. International visitors tend to be aged between 25 and 44 years and travel alone (46%) or as adult couples (33%). Some international visitors are on working visas and seek seasonal work.

Visitors stay relatively long periods in Exmouth and the Gascoyne Region and for this reason are likely to seek a variety of activities during their stay.

Table 2 Summary of visitation to Exmouth and Gascoyne region

Visitors	Shire of Exmouth (Annual average 2012 – 2015) <sup>25</sup>			Gascoyne Region (Annual average 2014 – 2015) <sup>26</sup>		
	Nos.	%	ALOS	Nos.	%	ALOS
International	24,000	24.7%	9 nights	42,900	84%	9.2 nights
Domestic Overnight	73,000	75.2%	8 nights	219,000	16%	7.1 nights
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>97,000</b>			<b>261,900</b>		

<sup>19</sup> Shire of Exmouth (2016), *Shire of Exmouth Budget 2015/16*.

<sup>20</sup> Gascoyne Development Commission (15 October 2014), *Gascoyne Regional Tourism Strategy*, prepared by Kadar Pearson & Partners Pty Ltd

<sup>21</sup> Tourism Research Australia (2015), *Local Government Area Profiles, 2015 – Exmouth, Western Australia*

<sup>22</sup> Tourism Western Australia (2015), *Gascoyne Development Commission Area – Overnight Visitor Fact Sheet 2015/2015-* Not that this visitor estimate is made over a different time period that the 2015

Exmouth visitor profile and the two estimates are not directly comparable

<sup>23</sup> This and the following information is obtained from Tourism Western Australia (2015)

<sup>24</sup> Tod Jones et al (2009), *Ningaloo coast region visitor statistics: collected for the Ningaloo destination modelling project*, Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism

<sup>25</sup> Tourism Research Australia (2015)

<sup>26</sup> Tourism Western Australia (2015)

Camping and caravanning are major activities and modes of accommodation (used by over half of domestic and international visitors to the region). In the Shire of Exmouth the main camping destinations are Cape Range National Park, the North West Cape area and caravan parks and camping areas in the town of Exmouth.

Exmouth is also developing as a cruise ship destination with several visits annually from international and Australian cruises.

Exmouth has small (but potentially increasing) visitation from education and research visitors associated with conservation and research programs in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area and conservation volunteers in the Ningaloo Turtle Program<sup>27</sup>. This visitation may increase with the completion of the Ningaloo Centre at Exmouth which will provide research, education and training facilities.

Image: 4 Exmouth Water Catchment



A visitor survey<sup>28</sup> conducted in 2007 and 2008 provides some insight into the characteristics and activities of overnight visitors to the Shire of Exmouth and their potential interest in trail and trail products. The survey found:

- ▶ Cape Range National Park had the greatest concentration of interstate and international visitors who tended to travel as couples. They had a strong orientation to the natural environment and snorkelling, relaxing on the beach and sightseeing were their most popular activities (undertaken by over 70% of respondents). Smaller numbers undertook tours, scuba diving, swimming with whale sharks and surfing or windsurfing
- ▶ Visitors staying on the Northwest Cape tended to be older Western Australians camping or staying for long periods in camping areas or caravan parks. Their interests tended to lie in sightseeing, boat based fishing and snorkelling, with lesser interest in tours and other water-based activities
- ▶ Overnight visitors to the town of Exmouth tended to be younger, to travel in a mix of different groups and stay for shorter periods in the region. Sightseeing and snorkelling were important trip activities, followed by fishing, tours, scuba diving and swimming with whale sharks. Cape Range National Park was a major day destination for these visitors.

However interpretation of the study findings needs to take account of the opening of more accommodation, facilities and nature-based products since that time.

The trails and water-based experiences at Yardie Creek in Cape Range National Park receive strong ratings from TripAdvisor reviews due to the area's environment, gorge scenery, wildlife, geology and quality of the boat tour. The area received 88 reviews on TripAdvisor in 2016 of which 62% rated the Yardie Creek experience as excellent and 24% as very good<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ningalooturtles.org.au/jurabi.html>

<sup>28</sup> Tod Jones et al (2009).

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction\\_Review-g488342-d9718231-Reviews-Yardie\\_Creek-Exmouth\\_Western\\_Australia.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/Attraction_Review-g488342-d9718231-Reviews-Yardie_Creek-Exmouth_Western_Australia.html#REVIEWS)





Image: 5 Shothole Canyon



## 4 Current Situation

### 4.1 Current Trails and Trail Use

The community of Exmouth has a small but growing interest in trails and trail based activity including casual walkers, runners and horse riders and mountain bikers. Non-motorised trail-based recreation occurs on fire trails, beaches, on trails in Cape Range National Park and on informal trails and routes. There are no formal mountain bike trails in the area, although mountain biking is being developed with the approval of DBCA on the Badjirrajirra Walk in Cape Range National Park. This trail will be developed as a shared use trail however at present the mountain biking experience requires a high skill level due to the level of difficulty. Exmouth's small enthusiastic mountain bike group is seeking the development of a range of mountain bike trails and a skills park. Four wheel driving occurs on the Yardie Ningaloo Track and some designated beaches.

Current trail experiences for visitors are focussed around the Cape Range National Park, on the Cape Range and day kayaking in Ningaloo Marine Park.

Trail activity is highest during the cooler winter months when there are more visitors around and conditions are much better for comfortable trail based activities. Local residents and some visitors still undertake activities on trails during the warmer months but participate in the cooler part of the day. Experienced walkers on the Cape Range avoid the gorges during warmer weather and stick to the exposed ridges to take advantage of the cooler breezes.

The current trails in the area are summarised in Table 3.

Map 3 Existing trail locations

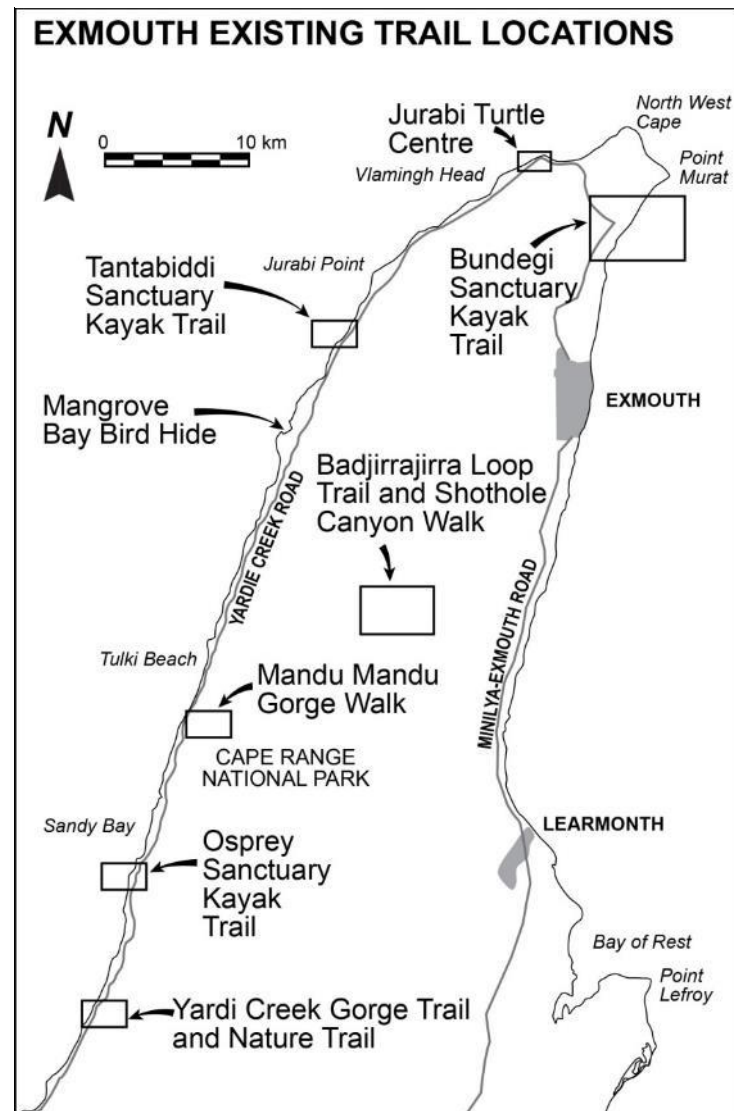













Table 3 Current Trails and Trail Activities in the Shire of Exmouth

Activity	Location	Trail Description	Experience	Significance
Walking, bushwalking and hiking 	Cape Range National Park	<b>Mandu Mandu Gorge Walk</b> Gorge Walk, 3 km loop, 2 hours return Class 4. Steep gradients, rough uneven surfaces. Provides access through and on top of the gorge on the western side of Cape Range.	Terrain features exposed ridges, major rock outcrops, vertical cliffs and overhanging rock walls.	Regional and local
		<b>Yardie Creek Gorge Trail</b> 800 meters linear trail, 1 hour 20 minutes, class 4. Steep gradients, rough uneven surfaces. Provides access through and on top of the Yardie Creek Gorge.	Short walk providing a unique arid zone water-filled gorge experience.	Regional and local
		<b>Yardie Nature Walk</b> 1.2 km linear trail, class 2. Short walk providing access to Yardie Creek Gorge and views.	Short walk suitable for a range of visitors and abilities. Views of exposed ridges, major rock outcrops, vertical cliffs and overhanging rock walls. Showcases rock pools and other permanent water features.	Regional and local
		<b>Badjirrajirra Walk</b> Top of the range 8 km loop walk, 3 hours, class 4. Steep gradients and rough uneven surfaces.	Views of deeply eroded canyons on the eastern side of Cape Range including deeply eroded canyons and well defined valleys with heavily dissected steep slopes and numerous lateral tributaries.	Regional and local
		<b>Mangrove Bay Bird Hide Walk</b> 100 metre, 10 minutes loop trail, class 3 Access to bird hide on formed surface with board walk sections.	Very short, easy walk providing bird watching opportunities and wading bird interpretation. Provides a coastal wetland experience with intermittent watercourses, saline mudflats and inundated tidal zones that contrast with surrounding terrestrial and vegetation features.	Regional and local
		<b>Shothole Canyon Walk</b> 100 metre, 15 minutes return trail, class 3. Steps to a lookout.	Very short lookout walk to a lookout with views down Shothole Canyon.	Regional and local



Activity	Location	Trail Description	Experience	Significance
	<b>Town of Exmouth</b>	<b>Shared use Trails</b> There are a number of shared use and fire trails that follow the coast generally behind the dunes and circuit the town on access tracks with some indistinct trails that follow water courses. The new developments around the marina include footpaths and crossings over the footbridge bridge at Horwood Quays. <b>Beach Access</b> Public access for vehicles is permitted other than between the Town Beach and the Yacht Club and the Marina area.	The town tracks are not marked or promoted and there is often little definition between the Water Reserve lands where access is restricted. The shared use trails behind the dunes are valuable for public access but these are again not well marked and do not provide direct access to the beach from the town centre and accommodation within the town. There is currently no access from the horse block area south of the Marina to the Pony Club or the beaches north of the Marina	Local
	<b>Bundegi Coastal park</b>	<b>Bundegi Coastal Park Tracks</b> The Coastal Park has a number of informal tracks that run behind the dunes and to the Murat Road. There is also a track behind the beach that leads to the boundary of the defence land.	Limited good trail experience with these tracks other than vehicle access	Local
<b>Trail Running</b> 	<b>Fire Trails, Walking Trails</b>	Running occurs on shared use and fire trails around Exmouth and existing walking trails.	Fire trails and informal trails are a valuable resource for casual running. However limited direct access to the beach and no defined access into Water Reserve	Local
<b>Mountain Biking</b> 	<b>Fire Trails, Badjirrajirra Walk</b>	There are no defined purpose-built mountain bike trails in the Shire. Existing mountain biking occurs on fire trails around Exmouth, on informal trails and on the Badjirrajirra Walk with the approval of DBCA in Cape Range National Park	Informal trail experience that is significant for the small but growing mountain biking community in the Exmouth area.	Currently informal use with local significance.
<b>Cycling</b> 	<b>Exmouth to the Base</b>	There is one purpose-built 4 km cycle trail to the Naval Communications Station Harold E Holt Base.	The cycle trail provides a small contribution to commuting and recreational cycling around Exmouth. It also and connects with a 1.5 kilometre sealed road access to the beach south of Bundegi.	Local

Activity	Location	Trail Description	Experience	Significance
<b>Shared use Trails</b> 		There are no defined shared-use trails in the Shire. Mountain Biking and walking occurs on existing Badjirrajirra Walking Trail within Cape Range National Park. The trail has not yet been formally identified as shared use but mountain biking has been approved by DBCA.	Badjirrajirra Walk provides Important contribution providing the only cycling and walking access to the Deeply eroded canyons and well defined valleys. Trail requires modification and maintenance as currently classed as difficult for mountain biking	Currently shared use with local significance.
<b>Horse Riding</b> 	North of Town Beach through to Bundegi to the boundary of the Defence Land north of Bundegi. South of Marina	<p>Horse riding occurs mainly on beaches.</p> <p>Beach access is provided for several horse owners on residential blocks on the south side of Exmouth.</p> <p>Horses are ridden or floated to beaches north of the Marina including Bunbegi.</p>	<p>Beach access trails are important but are not continuous due to development and structures</p> <p>Popular beach ride is from Bundegi Beach back to Exmouth.</p> <p>Horse riders have expressed a desire to access trails across Cape Range, horses are not permitted in the Water Reserve</p>	Local.
<b>Four Wheel Driving</b> 	<p>Ningaloo Coast</p> <p>North of Town Beach through to Bundegi to the boundary of the Defence Land north of Bundegi. South of Marina</p>	<p><b>Yardie Ningaloo Track</b></p> <p>This track traverses the Ningaloo Coast area between Cape Range National Park and the township of Coral Bay to the south. Access is subject to water depths which can affect the crossing of Yardie Creek at the northern end of the track.</p> <p>Other 4WD trail experiences are limited to some beaches on Exmouth Gulf.</p> <p>Four wheel driving is not permitted on Defence Land. Vehicle access to beaches is not permitted in Cape Range National Park.</p> <p><b>Sandy Bay Track</b></p> <p>Currently located on land proposed for addition to the public conservation estate and Cape Range National Park with limited off road vehicle use.</p>	<p>The Yardie Ningaloo Track is an iconic 4WD experience along the Ningaloo Coast. However, the experience is subject to the reliability of access across the mouth of Yardie Creek</p> <p>The 4WD access to beaches is generally for other beach recreation such as fishing and not a specific trail experience. Sandy Bay Track currently limited experience until land tenure arrangements are complete</p>	<p>Yardie Ningaloo track has the potential to be 4WD trail of state significance.</p> <p>Local</p>

Activity	Location	Trail Description	Experience	Significance
<b>Motor Cycling</b> 		There are no specific motor cycling trails in the Shire other than the Yardie Ningaloo Track for registered vehicles.	Trail experience defined to on beaches and the Yardie Ningaloo Track.	
<b>Kayak Trails</b> 	<b>Ningaloo Marine Park</b>	DBCA provides kayaking experiences of 1 to 3.5 kms short kayak trails to snorkelling sites where kayak mooring buoys are provided for kayak-based snorkelling.	The kayak trails are an important contribution to the Ningaloo and Exmouth experience by providing unique access to the reef and Yardie Creek.  Kayaking experiences are served by kayak tour and hire business State, regional and local significant trails providing unique access inside the fringing reef and to Yardie Creek.	Regional and local
	<b>Yardie Creek Gorge</b>	A 1.2 km paddling trail along Yardie Creek Gorge. Landing is limited to the northern bank to protect the wildlife sanctuary for the Black-flanked Rock Wallaby.		
<b>Underwater Activities (snorkelling, scuba diving)</b> 	<b>Various</b>	Snorkelling and scuba diving is undertaken and promoted at a number of sites on the Ningaloo Coast. However, currently there are no defined trails.	Limited current significance as trail experience. However snorkelling is one of the iconic Ningaloo experiences.	
<b>Art and Culture</b> 		There are no trails specifically designed to showcase art and culture.		



## 4.2 Strengths and Challenges

The distinctive features of the Exmouth area are its pristine reef, beach and marine environments and the rugged nature of the Cape Range – all of which are recognised through the Ningaloo World Heritage listing. The area's distinctive natural assets provide setting for some potentially unique trail experiences capable of attracting domestic and international visitors. However, due to the visitor focus on the reef, the climatic conditions (very hot summers) and distance from large population centres, the majority of future trail activities are likely to be focused on development of trails of local and regional trail significance. For most visitors to the area, it is likely that trails will form part of the experience rather than the core driver for visitation.

### STRENGTHS - Current & potential trails

- ▶ Outstanding natural qualities of the Ningaloo World Heritage Area which attracts a range of visitors focused around the marine and beach environments
  - ▶ Growth of kayaking as a way to experience the reef and marine environments, including through a unique kayaking and snorkelling experience and kayaking of Yardie Creek
  - ▶ Cape Range National Park which provides for camping, beach access and a range of walking trails and other nature based experiences and tours
  - ▶ Development of the Ningaloo Centre as a focus for visitor and community activities and research, learning about the Ningaloo Coast and as a the hub for Exmouth Gulf, local town and Cape Range Crossing Trails
  - ▶ Yardie Ningaloo Track as an established four wheel driving route with potential for further promotion
  - ▶ Inclusion in Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape which has the potential to attract visitors and commercial investment if leveraged through effective promotion and appropriate product development
- Local community support and enthusiasm for trail development including mountain bike skill and experience development.

### CHALLENGES - Current & potential trails

- ▶ Remoteness – To attract visitors any iconic trails would need to offer an outstanding experience showcasing the Ningaloo Coast's distinctive qualities. Other trails would need to be of high quality to provide a range of activities as part of the Ningaloo experience
  - ▶ Climate – Trails need to be designed and managed to cater for the hot climate, with a focus on water and beach-based activities and land-based trails as supporting experiences and for use during adverse weather and cooler parts of the day
  - ▶ Trails links in and near the town of Exmouth – Providing effective trail links through Exmouth and the Ningaloo Centre to recreational destinations in the town, on the Gulf of Exmouth and the Cape Range
  - ▶ Sustainability – Trails needs to be carefully designed and managed to be compatible with sensitive environments. Land-based trails need to be robust enough to cope with extreme weather and infrequent but heavy rainfall
  - ▶ Risk Management – Extreme weather conditions, water-based activities and rugged terrain pose risks to trail users. Trail design and management need to be tailored to users' ability and skill levels and users need to be informed of risks and appropriate behaviour and protocols on trails
  - ▶ Multiple Tenures – Additions to the Shire's trail offer need to take account of the variety of tenures and land and water managers whose commitment to and approval of trail development may be required
  - ▶ Governance and Partnerships – Development and management of a trail network in the Shire will require coordination and collaboration between the Shire Council, land and water managers, the tourism industry and community groups. An effective governance arrangement will assist implementation of the Trails Master Plan
  - ▶ Investment and Funding – Adequate financial and other resources will be needed for trail development and upgrading and investment from public and private sources encouraged to develop trail-related products
- Effective Promotion – Trail experiences will need to be effectively promoted to attract visitors.

## 4.3 Opportunities

Demand for trails in the Shire of Exmouth will come from a range of local and visitor markets each with differing motivations and expectations in relation to trail experiences. Current and potential trail markets for Exmouth and potential trail opportunities to suit market needs are explored in Table 4.

Table 4 Exmouth's Trail Markets

Market Segment	Characteristics	Preferences	Potential in Shire of Exmouth
<b>LOCAL RESIDENTS</b>			
<b>Local Residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People with an interest in outdoor activities for recreation, transport, exploring the natural environment and health purposes.</li> <li>Youth groups.</li> <li>Recreational and sporting groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pedestrian and cycling trails to destinations in the town of Exmouth and for exercise and fitness.</li> <li>A variety of trails for walking, horse-riding, water-based activities and four wheel driving for weekend and holiday activities in surrounding areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shared use trails that provide formalised access around the town, to recreation hubs and to Exmouth Gulf including Bundegi Coastal Park and Beach.</li> <li>Day walks and mountain bike trails across the range from Exmouth to the Ningaloo Coast.</li> <li>Formalised pathway from the town centre (Ningaloo Centre) to Exmouth Gulf that suits a range of abilities for locals and visitors.</li> <li>Route that enables horse riding between the McLeod Street area, the Pony Club and Town Beach.</li> <li>Kayaking trails utilising campsites and new experiences and facilities provided on the Ningaloo coast.</li> </ul>
<b>Local mountain bikers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain bikers – growing and enthusiastic participation reflected in growing group membership with over 40 active members, some 50% being juniors and more than 1500 Facebook members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to sites for a range of mountain bike activities, skill development programs (beginners to advanced) and local and regional competitions. Single track, cross country trails and development of a cycling hub with a skills park and pump track with opportunity for kids and junior riders to be involved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Shire is suited to local and regional mountain bike activity.</li> <li>Emerging mountain bike interest is contributing to community physical activity, fitness and wellbeing.</li> <li>Cycling trails on the range, adjacent to and within the town, pump and jump tracks and training facilities and would further contribute to skill development, fun, enjoyment and community fitness and wellbeing particularly for children and youth.</li> <li>Support from DBCA for mountain bike trail development and for further discussion and planning for trails within and through Exmouth Water Reserve.</li> </ul>

Market Segment	Characteristics	Preferences	Potential in Shire of Exmouth
<b>VISITORS</b>			
<b>Families</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WA families on beach or driving holidays, staying in Cape Range National Park or caravan parks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short trails for sightseeing and learning about natural, cultural features and new experiences including sub tidal and intertidal art work.</li> <li>• Trails from Exmouth to visitor destinations including Exmouth Gulf and more challenging walking across the range.</li> <li>• Alternative activities to the beach and sea during adverse weather conditions.</li> <li>• 4WD journeys.</li> <li>• Potential interest in mountain biking suited to children and family groups.</li> <li>• Cycling, kayaking equipment hire and pick up and drop off.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short walks on Cape Range and the coast for post-beach activities and when the weather precludes beach and water activity.</li> <li>• Walking or cycling to beaches from accommodation in Exmouth.</li> <li>• Cross range walking and cycling on class 4 trails for more experienced trail users. Pick up and drop off service provision.</li> <li>• Trail links from the town to a range of mountain biking trails including introductory trails for beginners and children. Bike hire.</li> <li>• Sea kayaking on Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo Coasts. Extended overnight inner reef experiences. Kayak hire. Guided products.</li> <li>• 4WD experience to Coral Bay and alternative options when beach closed via Sandy Bay Track.</li> </ul>
<b>Younger and Mid-life Couples</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A group with a varied demographic and income levels from WA and interstate.</li> <li>• May camp, stay in eco lodges or in hotel/motel accommodation.</li> <li>• Interested in discovering new places and learning about nature and the environment.</li> <li>• Some interested in adventure activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short and medium length trails for exploring land and sea areas on day trips and new experiences including sub tidal and intertidal art work.</li> <li>• Guided tours at a range of price points from basic to luxury.</li> <li>• Potentially some interest in longer iconic land or sea trail journeys with self-guided or guided options.</li> <li>• 4WD journeys.</li> <li>• Some interest in mountain biking.</li> <li>• Equipment hire and pick up and drop off opportunity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short walks on Cape Range and the coast for post-beach activities and when the weather precludes beach and water activity.</li> <li>• Walking or cycling to beaches from accommodation in Exmouth.</li> <li>• Cross range walking and cycling on class 3 trails for more experienced trail users.</li> <li>• Trail links from the town to a range of mountain biking trails including introductory trails for beginners. Bike hire.</li> <li>• Sea kayaking on Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo Coasts. Extended overnight inner reef experiences. Kayak hire. Guided products.</li> <li>• 4WD experience to Coral Bay and alternative options via Sandy Bay Track.</li> </ul>

Market Segment	Characteristics	Preferences	Potential in Shire of Exmouth
<b>Grey Nomads</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Retired couples aged from around 60 years and over from WA travelling north during the winter or from interstate on extended camping and caravanning trips.</li> <li>May be on fixed incomes and therefore budget conscious.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short and medium length trails for sightseeing and exploring land and sea areas on day trips and new experiences including sub tidal and intertidal art work</li> <li>Trails suited for people with limited mobility.</li> <li>4WD journeys accessible for camping rigs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short walks on Cape Range and the coast for post-beach activities and when the weather precludes beach and water activity.</li> <li>4WD experience to Coral Bay and alternative options via Sandy Bay Track.</li> <li>Walking or cycling to beaches from accommodation in Exmouth.</li> </ul>
<b>Cruise Visitors</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Range of domestic and international visitors of various ages, including retired couples and singles.</li> <li>Many cruises along the WA coast have a strong nature-based focus and may attract passengers with this interest.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short trails and tours to and through points of interest that can be done in the time available on shore from the ship.</li> <li>Experiences including sub tidal and intertidal art work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of shore tours are offered to passengers and include snorkelling, kayaking, vehicle and Cape Range National Park tours.</li> <li>New or enhanced trails may offer more options for shore tours.</li> <li>On shore opportunities at Exmouth are currently limited by the lack of vessel berthing. The need to ferry passengers ashore by boat affects the time available for activities and can lead to visit cancellation in adverse weather.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local and regional school groups on environmental or outdoor education excursions.</li> <li>Tertiary student groups on field trips or training courses.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A range of interpreted land and sea trails that illustrate key features of the area at range of difficulty levels.</li> <li>Challenging activities for outdoor education – hiking, kayaking, mountain biking, abseiling.</li> <li>Equipment hire and skills tuition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small market that may increase with the opening of the Ningaloo Centre.</li> <li>Guided sea kayaking on Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo Coasts.</li> <li>Extended overnight inner reef experiences.</li> <li>Environment education and outdoor education opportunities on Cape Range National park trails and a potential cross range trail.</li> </ul>
<b>Conservation Volunteers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People in a range of ages travelling as couples or singles.</li> <li>Volunteers for turtle monitoring under the Ningaloo Turtle Program.</li> <li>Strong interest in the environment and learning about the local area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities for relaxing or learning during free time, accessible from accommodation in Cape Range National Park and Exmouth.</li> <li>Equipment hire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small market for Exmouth that may grow if more volunteer programs are established particularly in relation to Ningaloo Coast World Heritage.</li> <li>A range of water and land based trails.</li> </ul>



Market Segment	Characteristics	Preferences	Potential in Shire of Exmouth
International Visitors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young to middle aged couples and singles with varying incomes mainly from Europe, the UK and US.</li> <li>• <i>Experience Seekers</i> - interested in discovering new places, immersive learning experiences, adventure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short and medium length trails for exploring land and sea areas on day trips.</li> <li>• Guided trail tours.</li> <li>• Potentially some interest in longer iconic land or sea trail journeys with self-guided or guided options.</li> <li>• Guided 4WD journeys</li> <li>• Equipment hire.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short walks on Cape Range and the coast for post beach activities and when the weather precludes beach and water activity.</li> <li>• Walking or cycling to beaches from accommodation in Exmouth.</li> <li>• Cross range walking and cycling on class 4 trails for more experienced trail users.</li> <li>• Trail links from the town to a range of mountain biking trails including introductory trails for beginners. Bike hire.</li> <li>• Sea kayaking on Exmouth Gulf and Ningaloo Coasts. Extended overnight inner reef experiences. Kayak hire.</li> <li>• 4WD experience to Coral Bay and alternative options via Sandy Bay Track.</li> </ul>

Image: 7 Lookout location Exmouth Gulf Coast Trail



## 5 Vision for the Future

### 5.1 Trail Vision

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Exmouth and the Ningaloo Coast WHA will be recognised as a destination that promotes engagement with the environment by promoting trails that encourage adventure, contemplation and education.

The ongoing development of a unique range of trails encourages local participation, community benefit and wellbeing.

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To achieve this vision, the Shire of Exmouth with other stakeholders will develop diverse trail opportunities including:

Unique trails that compliment and showcase the Ningaloo World Heritage Coast

A small number of short walks that add to the range of visitor experiences

A cross range shared use trail experience that connects Exmouth with the Ningaloo Coast

An Exmouth trail hub that connects people to events, places and activity

Trails that represent the culture, landscape and biological diversity of the Ningaloo coast through art and sculpture

## 5.2 Guiding Principles

Delivering the Vision is guided by the following principles.

### High Quality, and Diverse Trail Experiences

- Trails will contribute to a range of quality experiences through:
  - high quality sustainable trails, trailheads and information
  - consistency in trail standards and branding across tenures

### Consistent design principles for sustainable high quality trails

- Trails that suit a range of skills and abilities and encourage community use and activity:
  - a small number of outstanding experiences, rather than a larger number of mediocre experiences
  - trails that compliment and encourage sustainable tourism activities
  - trails that provide alternative activity when conditions constrain water based and other activities.

### Celebrate World Heritage and Cultural Values

- Exmouth is home to the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area, Cape Range National Park and the Ningaloo Marine Park including one of the longest fringing coral reefs in the world, spectacular rugged beauty and historical significance. Trails will:
  - protect, reflect, promote and enrich the World Heritage values including traditional Aboriginal culture and European heritage
  - reflect the Range to Reef experience.

### Sustainability

- Trails will be based on sound, realistic data and assumptions in relation to the long-term financial viability of building, managing and maintaining trails. Trails will be planned and built in a manner that:
  - contributes to environmental protection
  - meets the needs of the users
  - require little maintenance
  - minimise conflict between different user groups
  - provide the greatest return to the community, whilst recognising the limited resources available.

### Accessible and well connected trails

- Trails will connect people and visitors and be accessible.
- Trails will have trail heads, pathway connections and will be well marked.
- The Ningaloo Centre will be a key trail hub for locals and visitors and Exmouth will be a trail-friendly community.

### Good Governance and Strong Partnerships

- Good Governance arrangements that generate effective collaboration between the multiple land owners, partners and stakeholders will be required to ensure a high standard of trail management.
- Communication with stakeholders and the trail community will ensure great trail experiences continue to develop.

### Community Benefits

- Trails well planned and built to:
  - encourage social interaction and participation and contribute to improved physical and mental wellbeing
  - provide and encourage frequent, low cost and popular physical activity.

## 6 Trail Development

The Exmouth trails are planned for local community benefit or as infrastructure that provides visitor experiences strongly linked to the Outback and Coast themes and associated with products that provide economic benefit by increasing demand for services including accommodation.

The visitor focus on the reef, the climatic conditions (very hot summers) and distance from large population centres implies that the majority of future trail activities are likely to be of local and regional trail significance. For most visitors to the area, it is likely that trails will form part of the experience rather than the core driver for visitation.

To attract visitors any iconic trail would need to offer an outstanding experience showcasing the Ningaloo Coast's distinctive qualities and would need to be of high quality and provide a range of activities that form a unique part of the Ningaloo experience. One of the key principles of the plan is to celebrate World Heritage and cultural values, to combine these principles in traditional trail activity would be unlikely to be a core driver for visitation.

The development of an intertidal and sub tidal sculpture trail was explored as a unique experience that would both promote and celebrate the World Heritage and cultural values. A sculpture trail on the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area with strong links to other internationally renowned underwater sculpture trails would make Exmouth and the Ningaloo Coast a leader in diverse tourism opportunity. A classic sub tidal and intertidal sculpture trail was considered a trail experience that would be attractive to the global *Experience Seeker* market and similar domestic markets by providing a new and authentic experience linked to a destination and its people and through well-chosen themes the sculpture trail could provide associated learning opportunities through interpretation and storytelling.

The *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy* theme of Outback and Ocean Discovery encourages exposure to the environment and wildlife through activities such as sea kayaking, snorkelling, scuba diving and exploring on foot. The plan aims to deliver quality visitor experiences that immerse the visitor in the region's rugged, arid landscapes and the ocean. The plan supports the work undertaken by DBCA in developing a multi-day sea kayak trail inside the fringing reef and linked to camp sites, the sea kayak trail will be the Ningaloo Coasts key ocean discovery experience.

The Outback and Ocean Discovery theme and the community's desire for discovery land journeys is the basis for the inclusion of the 4WD trail along the Ningaloo Coast to Coral Bay. The proposed transfer of land on the eastern side of Cape Range to the public conservation estate provides opportunity for a new land journey that will complement the Ningaloo Coast 4WD trail. A regional drive loop which links Learmonth to the Yardie Creek Road provides a cross the range experience for 4WD vehicles, motor bikes and other road registered off road vehicles and will provide an alternative vehicle trail experience when access across Yardie Creek mouth is closed.

New short walks radiating from Exmouth, on Cape Range and at North West Cape have been recommended to complement the existing short walks and to provide an appropriate local and regional mix of experiences for locals and visitors that link the rugged arid landscape to the ocean and Exmouth Gulf.

New investment in the Ningaloo Lighthouse Holiday Park is likely to see increase in visitors to this area who will seek short walks and unique experiences which will include trails.



These short trail experiences have also been developed from a clear desire from the community and tourism operators for new experiences on those days when conditions aren't suitable for the traditional beach and ocean activities.

The growth of kayaking and other water based trail activities together with mountain biking, horse riding and trail running and the popularity of four-wheel driving have joined the more traditional walking and bushwalking as ways of experiencing the natural environment and the Ningaloo Coast. The Trails Master Plan has sought to provide the best value trails by picking up on developing trends and to provide a diversity of trails that will contribute to multiple health, lifestyle, social and economic benefit for the community.

Community consultation demonstrated a strong desire for trail activities that involve kids; this compliments the evidence that Exmouth has a relatively large number of children under 14. The community has expressed a desire for a strategic progression of mountain bike experiences and skills from a centrally located skills park to a range of mountain bike trails close to the town and then further afield.

This strategy has been included in the plan and reflects the priority to focus on developing kids and providing popular activities that encourage community activity and fitness.

A clear direction for this plan is to improve access and connectivity to the natural features for a wide range of people including residents and visitors. Reflecting this the plan recommends a series of trail loops that connect the town to the surrounding natural areas including the Cape Range to the west and Exmouth Gulf to the east and including a long sought after trail from the centre of town to the Gulf coast for all residents and visitors.

The rugged Cape Range, the Ocean, North West Cape the sheltered Exmouth Gulf provide a great mix of trail opportunity as presented in this plan. The culture and spirit of the area will be reflected in the proposed iconic Ningaloo Sculpture Trail and the range of activities across the range and seas.

Connections and linkages between these trails is important both physically on the ground, through promotion and information, and culturally and spiritually. It is proposed to link these experiences through the existing Baiyungu Trail (a proposed 320 km track along the coast from Quobba to Exmouth) which can draw the range of existing and proposed trails together and include future trail information presentation through Apps and digital technology including the Barke Stefano Shipwreck Trail and other new initiatives.

*Image: 8 Yardie Nature Trail*



## 6.1 Unique Trails Showcasing World Heritage

*It is proposed to develop two new unique trail experiences that showcase the outstanding features of the Ningaloo World Heritage Coast and that have the potential to become iconic trail.*

### 6.1.1 Multi-Day Sea Kayaking

#### Description

The Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area is a world-class sea kayaking destination offering shallow lagoons with extraordinary marine life sheltered behind one of the world's largest fringing reefs.

In 2005 DBCA commenced planning for a long distance sea kayaking trail in Ningaloo Marine Park. The purpose of the sea kayak trail is to provide an experience and challenge for user groups who appreciate the sea and for greater management of tourism activities within the park specifically the increasing numbers of recreational sea kayakers and commercial sea kayak operators.

The sea kayaking experience will build on the existing day use kayak trail experience by providing 12 well positioned camping sites on the shoreline of the lagoons for 45 kilometres inside the fringing reef<sup>30</sup>. The trail will provide a kayak camping experience for all level of sea kayakers from beginner to experienced. The distance between the campsites reflects the skill levels and abilities of the targeted users, being from 5 km to 12 km with a total length of the trail being 45 km.

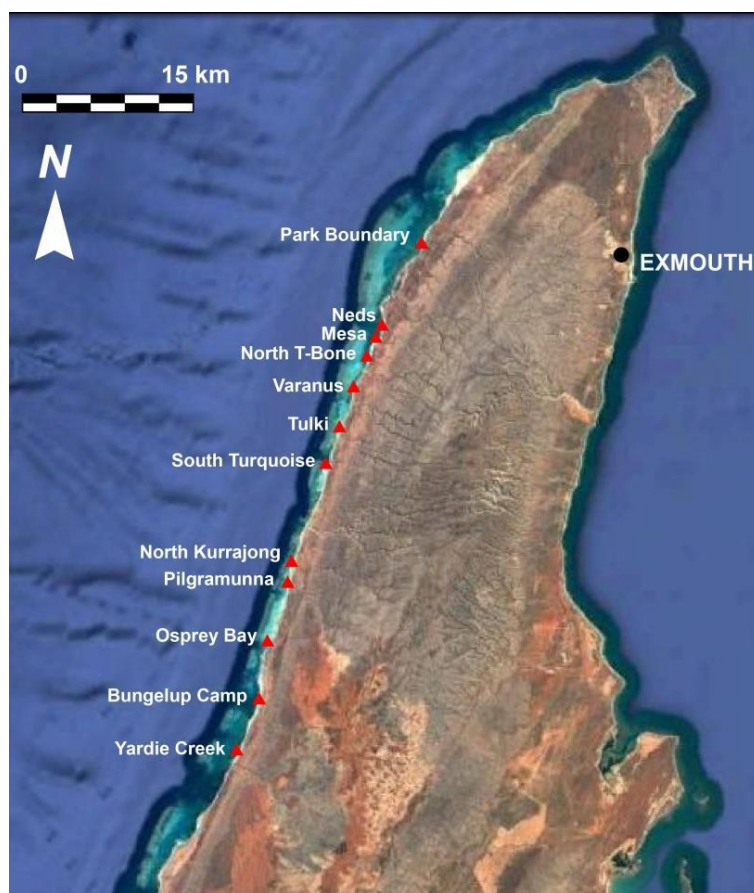
This multi-day sea kayaking experience has the potential to be an iconic trail that fits the Exmouth Ningaloo experience. Sea kayaking if managed correctly provides a low impact form of recreation suitable for sensitive wilderness areas.

Being totally within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area the sea kayaking trail will provide opportunity to increase visitor appreciation and protection of marine park values by exploring and learning about the

Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area. The trail will also provide increased opportunity for private sector involvement and commercial tour operators providing economic benefit to the community.

The proposed sea kayak trail is similar to other trails operating within Australia and overseas including Hinchinbrook Island in Queensland and the Te Ara Moana "Sea Going Pathway" in Auckland New Zealand.

The multi-day sea kayaking trail has been developed in a manner that integrates with other Exmouth experiences such as snorkelling and camping. There are also opportunities to integrate sea kayaking with other new and emerging experiences in the area including the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail (see section 6.1.2).



<sup>30</sup> DPaw (2016). *Overnight Sea Kayaking Trail for the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area – Yardi Creek to Tantabiddi*, internal DPAW document.

## Demand

The *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy* theme Outback and Ocean Discovery encourages exposure to the environment and wildlife through activities such as sea kayaking, snorkelling, scuba diving and exploring on foot. The plan aims to deliver quality visitor experiences that immerse the visitor in the region's rugged, arid landscapes and the ocean. The Ningaloo Sea Kayaking Trail clearly fits within the experience development priorities and themes of engaging the visitor in the unique Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area through quality visitor activities.

Demand for a multi-day sea kayaking trail will come from a range of local and visitor markets each of which seek distinctive Ningaloo experiences. Local people seek new experiences and access to new sections of the coast for camping and snorkelling. They are generally independent visitors with their own equipment whilst families with older children with some experience in kayaking will be attracted to this new multi-day experience because it takes place within lagoon area of Ningaloo Marine Park an area with minimal swell.

Younger and mid-life couples who are generally interested in discovering new places and learning about nature and the environment will be willing to try this activity within the safe access to lagoons and would provide their own equipment or hire equipment and may use guides.

School and educational groups would be active participants, particularly secondary and tertiary students that would use tour operators that provide guiding and equipment hire. International visitors, particularly back packers, will seek to undertake this adventure activity using hired equipment.

The Ningaloo Sea Kayak trail is similar to the Hinchinbrook Island sea kayaking experience being in the tropics, an overnight experience (Hinchinbrook approximately 7 nights), and located within a World Heritage area. Hinchinbrook Island sea kayaking is popular with independent and guided sea kayakers and there is a busy kayak hire business based around the peak cooler times of year May to October.

Exmouth however is constrained by remoteness, time and expense of travel whilst Hinchinbrook on the eastern seaboard is easier to visit.

The emphasis on the ocean and marine experience is the significant attraction for the Ningaloo Coast and the 12 day opportunity for sea kayaking will be a popular activity available across the range of kayaking experience.

## Why is it important?

As a unique experience the sea kayaking trail will increase the appeal of the Ningaloo Exmouth area as a distinctive destination and provide an opportunity to increase visitor appreciation and protection of marine park values by exploring and learning about the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area.

The sea kayak trail will connect people with the Ningaloo Coast and to the existing experiences including the current kayak trails, park facilities and to other trails including the proposed Ningaloo Sculpture Trail. The sea kayak trail through interpretation, information technology and signs will connect the user to the unique Ningaloo Reef experience.

The sea kayak trail provides community benefit and opportunity primarily by providing new, unique and sustainable visitor experiences within the internationally recognised Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area. The trail will provide increased opportunity for private sector involvement through commercial tour operators and equipment hire. Licensed tour operators strongly support this initiative and anticipate their business will grow with the sea kayak trail development

The multi-day sea kayaking trail reflects the Shire's philosophy to ensure development is sustainable, provides the greatest return to the community and ensures that future trail based tourism will be a feature.



## What is required to deliver the project?

DBCA are responsible for this project.

An environmental impact assessment was carried out by DPaW in 2005 which included environmental and cultural heritage. This assessment was reviewed and in 2015 some of the sites were no longer suitable. New sites have now been identified where there is likely to be little or no impact or disturbance.

Leave no trace principles have been developed which will be adhered to including a focus on management of human waste, garbage disposal and vegetation damage. DBCA as the management authority for the project will implement a Code of Conduct for recreational sea kayakers to minimise impacts on the coastal environment and ensure this activity is delivered sustainably.

The trail lies within the lagoon area of Ningaloo Marine Park where the water is sheltered and there is minimal swell. DBCA will be the agency responsible for delivery of this project and will provide pre trip safety, navigation, code of conduct and emergency evacuation information.

Interpretive information including maps and mooring information will also be developed for public information.

DBCA have proposed further expansion of the trail to the north and south of this 12 site proposal. Monitoring to measure satisfaction levels and popularity of the sea kayaking trails will be required to assist in future objective decision making.

The sea kayaking trail initiative is underpinned by strong stakeholder and partnership arrangements with the Shire of Exmouth, Tourism Authorities and Government Departments through the development of the proposal. Implementation will include product development, promotion and provision of interpretive information and general information through visitor centres and the Ningaloo Centre in Exmouth.

Strong partnerships will develop with those groups that have been consulted in the development of this proposal including a number of commercial operators who are licenced by DBCA, education groups, clubs and associations. Licensed tour operators are currently conducting successful overnight sea kayak tours in Ningaloo Marine Park.

This initiative clearly fits within the themes and priorities of the *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy*, has strong support from the existing water based tour operators, is likely to have support from existing and future visitor markets and the majority of the planning and development work, costing and financial approvals been completed by DBCA.

This project is ready to commence.

### Estimated costs

DBCA have approved and allocated funds for the estimated costs of developing the sea kayak trail infrastructure including camp sites at \$31,000.

Future costs for further upgrades including decking for tent sites and further upgrading of existing facilities \$90,000.



### 6.1.2 Ningaloo Sculpture Trail



Image: 9 Sculpture Example / Musa Isla Mujeres – the most magnificent underwater museum in the world [musaislamujeres.com](http://musaislamujeres.com)

#### Description

The shallow and protected Ningaloo waters provide an ideal setting for the development of a special experience to celebrate Ningaloo Coast World Heritage. The clear protected waters of one of the longest fringing reefs in the world would benefit from a bold initiative to enrich the spirit, environment and cultural heritage of Ningaloo.

To attract visitors any iconic trail would need to offer an outstanding experience showcasing the Ningaloo Coast's distinctive qualities and would need to be of high quality and provide a range of activities that form a unique part of the Ningaloo experience. One of the key principles of the plan is to celebrate World Heritage and cultural values, to combine these principles in traditional trail activity would be unlikely to be a core driver for visitation.

The development of an intertidal and sub tidal sculpture trail was explored as a unique experience that would both promote and celebrate the World Heritage and cultural values. A sculpture trail on the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area with strong links to other internationally renowned underwater sculpture trails would make Exmouth and the Ningaloo Coast a leader in diverse tourism opportunity.

A classic sub tidal and intertidal sculpture trail is a trail experience that would attract the global *Experience Seeker* market and similar domestic markets by providing new graphic and visually authentic experiences that are inked to a destination and its people and through well-chosen themes with strong connections to learning opportunities, interpretation and storytelling.

The proposal is for the placement of life-size sculptures that reflect the spirit of the Ningaloo Coast on the sea bed or in the intertidal zone of the shallow bays along the coast incorporated in a visually stunning sculpture trail.

Internationally renowned sculpture parks in aquatic settings have been developed at Grenada<sup>31</sup>, off the west coast of the Caribbean and Museo Subacuático de Arte (MUSA)<sup>32</sup> with its collection of over 500 sculptural works, submerged off the coast of Cancun, Mexico. These sculpture parks and the 'Rising Tide' (temporary) intertidal feature that emerged from tide on the banks of the Thames have been designed by the acclaimed British underwater sculptor and passionate conservationist Jason deCaires Taylor<sup>33</sup>. There is great opportunity to develop similar sculptures representing the Ningaloo Coast themes including environment, culture and history.

The sculptures are not only inspiring pieces of art they are able to represent key messages and they will assimilate with the ocean and over time develop into living coral reefs. If constructed from the correct material with a neutral pH, the structures would provide a substrate for coral and marine growth and provide the basis for coral reef ecosystems attracting a variety of marine species.

The Ningaloo Sculpture Trail features would be designed to be experienced on foot along the beach, on the water from kayaks and underwater by snorkelers and scuba divers.

The Ningaloo Sculpture Trail will by its nature connect with other trails, for example the Ningaloo Centre to the Exmouth Gulf Trail will have strong connections to sculptures with opportunity for terrestrial sculptures linking to the intertidal to subtidal and the Ningaloo Multi-Day Sea Kayak Trail will link to the sculptures providing attractions along the route.

It is proposed to establish three sculpture areas initially on the Ningaloo Coast, at North West Cape and on the Exmouth Gulf at the end of the Ningaloo Centre to Exmouth Gulf Walk. To get the most out of the sites it is proposed to have intertidal and subtidal features in the sheltered water sites and only intertidal at the North West Cape in the area of the SS Mildura Shipwreck. The themes will reflect the Ningaloo Reef, the culture of the Ningaloo Coast and the shipwreck theme at the SS Mildura site.

## Demand

To attract visitors any iconic trail would need to offer an outstanding experience showcasing the Ningaloo Coast's distinctive qualities would need to be visually stunning and of national significance. One of the key principles of this plan is to celebrate World Heritage and cultural values, to combine these principles in traditional trail activity would be unlikely to be a core driver for significant visitation.

A sculpture trail on the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area similar to other stunning internationally renowned underwater sculpture features would make Exmouth and the Ningaloo Coast a standout leader in diverse tourism opportunity.

The Sculpture Trail would be used by a whole range of visitors including locals who would watch the changing nature and succession of the subtidal marine growth. Visitors from all categories would be attracted to the trail including overseas visitors from backpackers to cruise visitors whether they dived or just observed from the shore.

Being totally within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area the sculpture trail needs to celebrate World Heritage and cultural values and would need to demonstrate how this project would enrich and contribute to the World Heritage values and have no impact.

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<sup>31</sup> <http://grenadaunderwatersculpture.com/>

<sup>32</sup> <http://musaislamujeres.com>

<sup>33</sup> <https://theculturetrip.com/europe/united-kingdom/england/london/articles/vauxhall-s-thames-horse-sculptures-make-a-statement-on-climate-change/>

## Why is it important?

International recognition of an exceptional series of life size sculptures immersed in the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage Area has the potential to develop a world-class 'must see' attraction that adds to the appeal of the destination. A well-developed trail will provide increased opportunities for private sector involvement and commercial tour operators thus leading to growth in the local visitor economy.

The Sculpture Trail can be used to relieve pressure on nearby reefs from overuse by attracting visitors to less used sections of coast and can be used to attract visitors to the waters of Exmouth Gulf adjacent to Exmouth and places easily accessible from the Ningaloo Centre.

## What is required to deliver the project?

The Shire of Exmouth is responsible for this project

The Ningaloo Sculpture Trail will require additional planning and design to attract investors and funding and suitable sculptures with the skills and the experience to successfully take on this visionary and ambitious project.

The delivery of this project will require planning and placement of the sculptures where they will:

- ▶ attract marine species to an area that is recovering
- ▶ be where the greatest number of people can experience the sculptures
- ▶ be located with qualities and stories that surprise and intrigue visitors.

Ideal locations would be in sandy bays where there is little existing substrate for coral attachments and on the Exmouth Gulf Coast on popular beaches such as Bundegi and the beaches adjacent to the town of Exmouth the end of the Ningaloo Centre to Exmouth Gulf Walk. Locations at existing shipwrecks such as the SS Mildura would provide intriguing intertidal historic and cultural representation.

The development of the sculpture trail would need to be of high quality and of a standard compatible with a unique, world-class experience in a World Heritage setting. To do this the best sculptors would need to be sourced to undertake the work.

Design of the sculptures will need to incorporate strategies to ensure long life span, robust construction and use of materials suitable to attract and allow coral and marine organisms to thrive.

The Shire of Exmouth would be the driver of this project with strong links to the Western Australian State Government through Tourism Western Australia. Funding for a significant project such as this could be obtained from a range of sources including grants, sponsorship and philanthropic organisations.

This is specialised art work and requires a high degree of further planning and public consultation to establish the themes and the exact location to ensure contribution to the reef environment is maximised.

An expert sculptor will need to be engaged to guide the process and ensure quality and the themes are well presented and the material is sustainable in the dynamic ocean and attracts and encourages reef and coral succession.

## Estimated costs

In the first instance, it is recommended to develop sculptures at three sites with two being intertidal and sub tidal and one intertidal only.

Costs yet to be determined.

## 6.2 Improved Ningaloo Coast Trail Opportunities

### 6.2.1 Cape Range and North West Cape Short Walks

Map 5 Proposed North West Cape Walk



#### Description

Cape Range provides a remarkable back drop to the Ningaloo Coast and reef where the harsh, rugged landscape beckons the visitor to explore the numerous gorges, exposed escarpments and coasts. Short walks if they are designed appropriately can provide the best the Ningaloo Coast has to offer to a range of users across a range of abilities. The existing range of short walks in Cape Range National Park provide good access to gorges on the western side of the Cape Range whilst the Badjirrajirra Walk gives the walker an experience of the eastern aspect to Cape Range.

These short trail experiences reflect a desire by the community and tourism operators for experiences and activities to be undertaken on the days when conditions aren't suitable for traditional beach and ocean activities.

To complement the seven existing short walks which are predominantly gorge walking activities, it is

proposed to provide an additional walk that provides locals and visitors with a North West Cape experience. To compliment the gorge walks the North West Cape

Walk would be a short 4 km return beach walk that includes the wreck of SS Mildura, easy beach walking to the oyster stacks and close views of the communication towers of North West Cape. This walk is partially on Defence land and approval to access has been sought.

It is recommended that one additional short walk should be added to make the eight short walk offering on the Ningaloo Coast and Cape Range (see map 6.):

- ▶ Mangrove Bay Bird Hide – Class 1, 10 minute walk on a boardwalk to a bird hide over Mangrove Bay
- ▶ Mandu Mandu Walk – Class 4, 2 hour walk along the creek bed and gorge rim with views over Ningaloo Reef
- ▶ Yardie Creek Nature Walk – Class 2, 40 minute walk on defined path along the edge of Yardie Creek with views of the gorge



- ▶ Yardie Gorge Trail – Class 4, 1 hour walk to high above Yardie Creek with views over Ningaloo Reef and the mouth of Yardie Creek
- ▶ Shothole Canyon Walk – Class 4, 15 minute walk to lookout over views of the canyon
- ▶ Jurabi Beach Walk – Class 2, 15 minute walk to the Jurabi Turtle Centre and the beach
- ▶ Badjirrajirra Walk – Class 4, 3 hour walk through rocky gullies on the top of the range with views down Shothole Canyon (this trail has been approved by DBCA as a shared use trail for walkers and mountain bikes)
- ▶ New Trail Proposed – North West Cape Walk – Class 3, 1 hour walk from North West Cape to the oyster rocks on the attractive beach below the communication towers with views of the wreck of SS Mildura.

Limiting the number of walks to eight ensures that quality is maintained and the impact on resources is manageable. The eight walks would provide a diversity of opportunities within the Class 2 to 4 ranges and would complement the Cape Range Crossing Trail and proposed walks radiating out from the Ningaloo Centre Trail Hub (see 6.2.2 & 6.4 below).

The existing short walks are generally return or loop walks and represent different experiences on Cape Range and the coast. They are accessible off the Yardie Creek Road and the Minilya Exmouth Road.

Potentially the Badjirrajirra Walk could be connected with the Shot Hole Canyon. However the cost of engineering a safe and sustainable trail in the gorge country would be high and may have limited benefit considering the numbers of visitors that would use this link.

### **Demand**

Demand for short walks will come primarily from visitors who wish to experience the features of Cape Range and those local people who seek exercise and outdoor recreation.

Families are likely to take up opportunities for short walks and Grey Nomads (one of the major visitors and campers on the Ningaloo Coast) are regular short walkers particularly those camping on the Ningaloo Coast. Short walks are likely to be attractive to international visitors particularly during the evening after water based activity or when the sea or beach is less attractive due to weather.

Investment and subsequent increase in numbers and the range of guests at the Ningaloo Lighthouse Holiday Park is likely to increase demand for short walks on the Ningaloo Coast and on Cape Range. There may be future demand for other experiences such as kayaking, and mountain biking with bike hire etc. on Cape Range trails.

There is some potential for short walk guided or self-guided experiences for cruise visitors if well-organised and linked to unique features such as the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail.

### **Why are the walks important?**

The majority of visitors come to Exmouth and the Ningaloo Coast to experience the attractive beaches and marine environment for diving, fishing and swimming and trails are generally not the driving force behind their reason to visit. Short walks will provide the visitor with a sample of the Cape Range experience and are well placed for visitors following their beach experience and when the day cools down.

Combined with the kayaking and Sculpture Experiences, improved short walks will provide a package of activities that showcase the different aspects of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area. They also add to the range of experiences in Exmouth and provide another way to explore its landscapes.

Through the Ningaloo Visitor Centre and other places visitors have expressed a desire for something to do when their beach or marine activities are interrupted due to the weather, at times strong onshore winds can blow for days and rainfall can put a stop to usual beach activity.

## What is required to deliver the project?

The Shire of Exmouth and DBCA are responsible for this project.

The majority of the existing walks have been developed by DBCA with appropriate and consistent way marking, trailhead signs and maintenance.

The trail alignment and rugged nature of the Badjirrajirra Walk has contributed to several eroded areas due to water running uncontrolled down the trail slope. Significant maintenance will be required to reroute sections of trail and incorporate grade reversals and other water management treatments to sustainably manage this trail and ensure the trail is fit for purpose and able to withstand the extremes of weather.

The future use of this trail as a solely walking experience changed with DBCA approving the use of the trail as a shared use walking and mountain bike trail. Changes will be required to ensure the trail is designed for the appropriate level of difficulty and that future mountain bike riders are clear as to the challenges and the level of difficulty (see 6.3 below). Walkers on this trail will also need to be informed that this trail will be shared use and to expect mountain bikes on the trail.

The North West Cape Trail is situated on land controlled by the Department of Defence and approval will need to be granted for trail access. The development and maintenance of this trail will be the responsibility of the Shire of Exmouth to develop and maintain.

The costs associated with the development of the North West Cape Trail will not be significant as there is already a formed car park and steps to the lookout and beach access. The main costs will be the purchase and placement of a trail head sign and way marking signs. Access to the beach will require a floating chained dune ladder or Dutch ladder to reduce erosion on the approach to the beach. The trail will follow the beach not requiring any trail construction other than the placement of way marking.

## Estimated costs

### North West Cape Trail

- ▶ Trail head way marking signs and beach access \$3,000

### Badjirrajirra Walking Trail upgrade

Repair of eroded sections through reroute, installation of grade reversals and restoration of closed sections of trail approximately 850 metres (not including modification to trail for shared use and mountain bike Trail Difficulty Rating System see 6.4 below) contractor rates \$28,000.

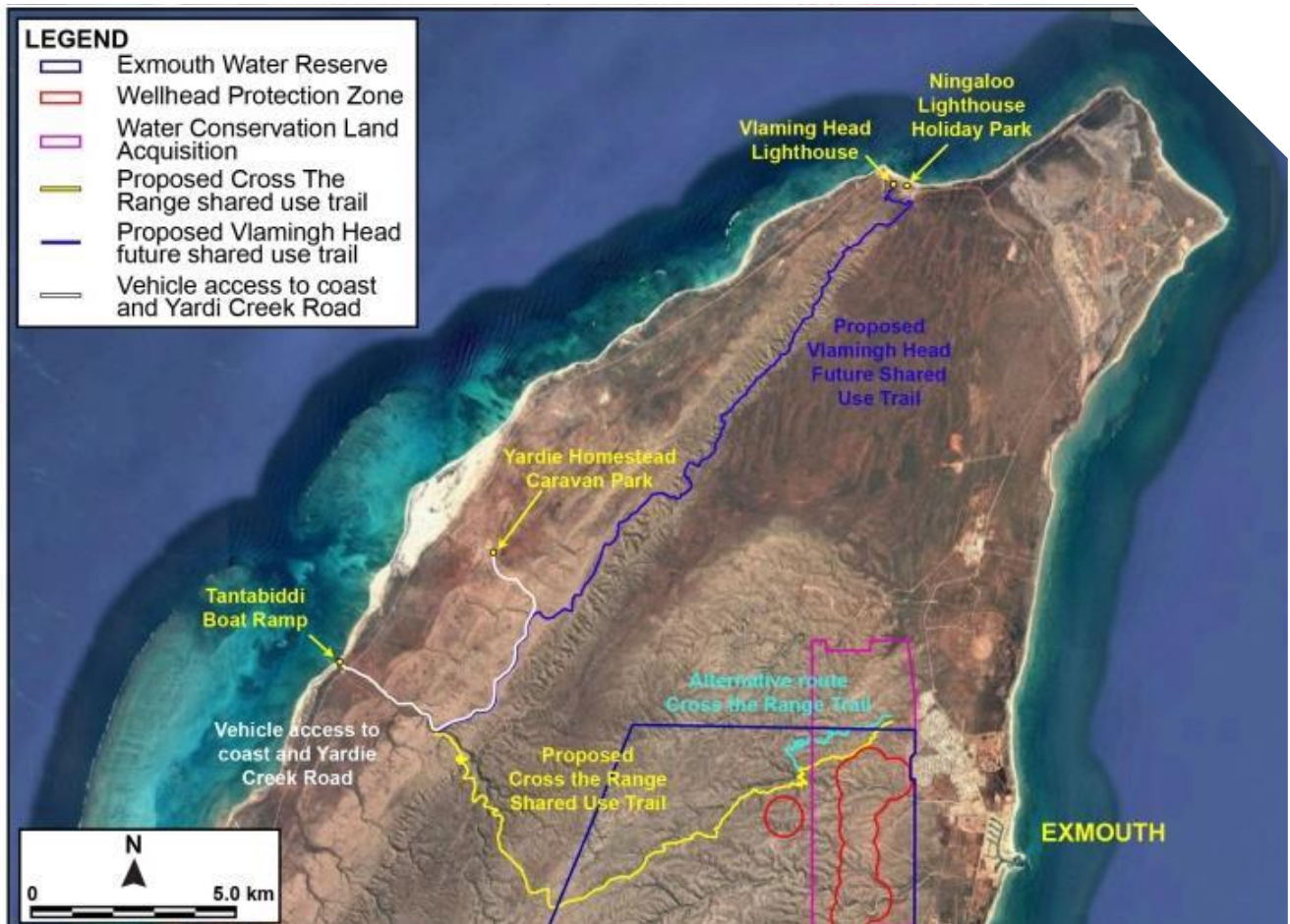
\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments would be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan.

Image: 10 Proposed North West Cape Trail



## 6.2.2 Cape Range Crossing Trail

Map 6 Proposed Cape Range Shared Use Crossing Trail Including Vlamingh Head Shared Use Trail



### Description

There is interest from the Exmouth community for a walking trail that crosses Cape Range starting in Exmouth and finishing at Tantabiddi on the west coast. There is no marked trail across this route although local people often walk it.

Interest is also apparent for a trail from the end of Charles Knife Road to the Yardie Creek Road (14 kilometres) and Milyering Discovery Centre (17 kilometres). Currently there are no marked trails across the rough terrain of the range; traditionally the crossing has been made by those with high level navigation and bushwalking skills – effectively a Class 5 bushwalking experience.

More recently there has been interest from the mountain bike community for a trail across Cape Range with connections to other mountain bike trails on the range. This will be discussed in the section Mountain Bike Hub (see 6.3 below) however there are advantages in developing a shared trail across the range (walking, mountain biking and in some areas horse riding).

Community consultation revealed a desire for an across-the-range trail to the north of the well protection zone (see map 4.).



A more direct route across the range and to North West Cape is influenced by the sand dune area that extends into Cape Range and makes the establishment of a trail directly across the range or to the north problematic. Therefore the Cape Range Crossing Trail needs to start on the northern end of Exmouth to avoid the Well Protection Zone and travel to the south west then west to avoid the sand dune area and exit Cape Range at the gorges east of Tantabiddi.

At the Exmouth start of the trail there is future opportunity to create a short loop trail utilising an existing vehicle track and the developed Cape Range Crossing Trail. This 5km loop could provide a popular short trail that will enable a people who do not have the skills or confidence to experience Cape Range from the town without doing the full trail.

The Cape Range Crossing Trail would finish in the area of Tantabiddi where drop off and pickups would be available. Pickups would be available for those with 4WD vehicles at the base of the range however it is recommended that this track be upgraded to allow a greater variety of vehicles in to pick up walkers and cyclists. The great attraction with this walk is the drop off and pick up opportunity including to and from the nearby Yardie Homestead Caravan Park.

The Vlaming Head Lighthouse and Ningaloo Lighthouse Holiday Park is a further 18 kilometres. Overnight trail users could utilise existing tracks on the range towards the lighthouse, this trail extension would suit experienced walker and would require some navigation skill (Class 5) the overnight trail users could stay at the Yardie Homestead Caravan Park. Increase in demand for this trail to Vlaming Head could see this shared use route developed to the equivalent of a Class 4 Standard walking trail with applicable way marking etc.

Further across the range options include from the end of Charles Knife Road to the Yardie Creek Road (14 kilometres) and Milyering Discovery Centre (17 kilometres). This option links to mountain biking experiences discussed for Charles Knife Road and Shot Hole Canyon. Walking is hard through this country and top of the range trail is described as the best option during warm weather where a breeze is welcome or a canyon walk when heat isn't an issue where the air is

still. Walking through this area is challenging and with minimal investment should be classed at Class 5 where there will be reliance on individual navigation skills as the trail would have limited or no way marking.

## Demand

There is a small group of local people who walk across the range on informal paths. A Class 4 walking trail on its own would be used by local people and visitors. Young families are unlikely to use the full trail but may be interested in doing a short loop trail. The full trail will be attractive to families with older children who have some bush experience (both walking and mountain biking).

The trail would be used by younger and mid-life couples who would utilise the drop off and pick up options for accessing the trail and it is likely that school groups would use this trail as part of education and recreation school programs. It is also anticipated that there will be interest from international visitors particularly backpackers who would benefit from the drop off and pick up opportunity.

The Cape Range Crossing Trail as a stand-alone walking trail would have limited regional and local interest and would be limited to the cooler months of the year.

To build this trail as a Class 3 trail which would attract a broader range of user would require significant investment up to \$1 million based on current contractor rates and would require significant maintenance to ensure the trail is retained at the Class 3 standard.

To develop the Cape Range Crossing Trail as a shared use trail would attract a broader range of users and the local mountain bike group have expressed a strong interest in an across the range trail to access mountain bike spur trails into the ranges. They have an interest in being involved in the construction and future maintenance of a Cape Range Crossing Trail.

Considering the anticipated level of use by walkers and the estimated cost of construction it is recommended that this trail be developed as a shared use trail at the equivalent Class 4 walking trail



standard limiting its safe use to those with an increasing level of bushwalking skill and self-reliance.

The small but enthusiastic horse riding community have been seeking riding opportunities across the range unfortunately they will not be able to ride on the Cape Range Crossing Trail as animals such as horses are prohibited from riding through any part of the Water Reserve. There may be opportunities for horse riding from the west on sections of the trail within Unallotted Crown Land however they will not be able to enter the Water Reserve.

There will be some interest from local people particularly for mountain biking on a trail along the range to Vlaming Head from the Cape Range Crossing Trail. The new investment in the Ningaloo Lighthouse Holiday Park is likely to create interest in the Cape Range from visitors for short walks to Cape Range and future longer distance drop off and pick up cycling and walking may become popular.

### **Why is it important?**

The cross the range experience if developed appropriately to a Class 4 walking standard would be a trail experience that showcases the Cape Range for locals and visitors. The gorges and views on the western end of the walk are special and contribute to the unique walking experience. However, this experience would be limited due to the skills required and because the walk is seasonal due to the risks associated with the heat of summer.

The Cape Range Crossing Trail adds to the visitor experience and provides opportunity for local people to recreate and to be active in the outdoors with health and wellbeing benefits.

The trail as a walking trail is unlikely to attract more visitors to the region but would be used by locals and visitors who would walk the trail as an activity whilst they are in the area attracted by the other Ningaloo Coast attractions.

The trail will provide limited opportunity for tour operators for trail guiding and there is more opportunity to be involved in drop off and pick up of trail walkers and cyclists.

### **What needs to be done to deliver the project?**

The Shire of Exmouth and DBCA are responsible for this project.

The Cape Range Crossing Trail is subject to approval from authorities:

- ▶ the Water Corporation and the Department of Water in relation to crossing the outer catchment area of the Exmouth Water Reserve
- ▶ the Department of Defence where the section of trail north to Vlaming Head Lighthouse and Ningaloo Lighthouse Holiday Park crosses Defence land at Pap Hill and the RAAF Radar site.

The responsibility for trail management and maintenance will rest with the Shire of Exmouth in partnership with DBCA. It is proposed that the community will have strong involvement with the ongoing maintenance, promotion and stewardship of the trail.

As a stand-alone walking trail the benefit is limited however when combined as a shared use trail with the mountain bike community there is added value. The cost of developing this trail for a broader range of walkers is prohibitive however if combined as a shared use trail it would be cost effective to combine the Class 4 walking trail a mountain biking trail.

Even considering the above the trail will require substantial planning and construction to ensure it meets Class 4 standard, is resistant to the extremes of weather and to ensure trail alignments will be sustainable through the steep sections of the range. Appropriate way marking, trail head signs and maintenance schedules based on keeping the trails up to the standard appropriate to the trail Class will be required.

The first section of the trail from Exmouth is planned to avoid the Exmouth Water Reserve wellhead protection zone but will be within the Reserve's outer catchment area. It is important for the sustainability of the investment and experience that there is long term access for this trail on the Exmouth Water Reserve.

The trail will be linked to the Ningaloo Centre as the trail hub for all trails radiating out of Exmouth. It will also be linked to the trails that loop around the town and being shared use will be linked to the mountain bike hub at the Recreation Centre.

Linked products and services include pick up and drop off arrangement for trail users which could be linked to the accommodation providers on the western coast including the Yardie Homestead Caravan Park.

### Estimated costs

Trail construction and maintenance costs correlate to the trail Classification. To construct this trail at a Class 3 walking standard (a formed trail suitable for most walkers) would cost from \$35,000 to \$65,000 per kilometre with total cost up to \$1million based on current specialised metropolitan trail construction contractor rates. Building the trail at the recommended Class 4 walking standard will reduce the establishment cost.

To produce this trail as shared use will require development of the trail to the appropriate mountain bike difficulty level for the targeted or anticipated users.

Construction as a shared use trail will have the benefit of combining the two trails but will still require trail building particularly close to Exmouth for beginner riders who will need to access the different spur trails close to town.

There may be opportunity for trail building skill development within the mountain bike community which will reduce costs of construction. It is common practice for mountain bike groups to develop trail building skills often from skilled contractors. Initial investment in trail construction should include an investment in training to enable future works to be undertaken on a staged and economical basis.

Cost estimates will vary based on the skills and level of involvement of the community in developing mountain bike trails. It is understood that there is a capacity within the Cape Range Riders to develop mountain bike trail within to IMBA standards. The building of mountain bike trails by recognised builders varies for \$35,000 to \$65,000 per kilometre depending on the terrain and location.

\*Estimates under this scenario

#### ► \$350,000 to \$500,000

Extending the trail from the Cape Range Crossing Trail Trail Head to Vlaming Head as a shared use trail to a Class 4 walking trail standard.

#### ► \$450,000

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments will be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan.

## 6.3 Mountain Bike Hub

### Description

The enthusiastic and growing Exmouth mountain bike community and the local club Cape Range Riders have expressed a commitment to developing mountain biking in Exmouth. They have a clear focus on training and development and seek facilities to make this happen including a Skills Park in the town with pump, jump and BMX tracks and trails outside of town in terrain that encourage the progression of skills from beginners on easy to moderate to more advance hard trails.

Community consultation reflected a strong desire for trail activities that involve kids, this compliments the evidence that Exmouth has a relatively large number of children under 14. Trail based recreation encourages the involvement of children and youth in activity and the proposal from Cape Range Riders to establish a mountain bike Skills Park in the Recreation Area would provide a clear focus for developing Exmouth as an active mountain bike town.

Mountain biking is anticipated to grow from a local experiences to future regional significance once new areas are developed and regional events and competitions take place between regional groups.

Within the Exmouth town area and on the Water Reserve to the west there are excellent locations for the development of a range of mountain bike trails including single track, cross country and downhill. Mountain biking has been approved by DBCA on the Badjirrajirra Walking Trail where riders now share the trail with walkers. The trail is challenging for riders and is limited to skilled riders with technical ability, modification to the trail and new trail head signs will need to be installed to avoid any future conflict and erosion issues on the trail will need to be addressed.

As discussed (see 6.2.2 above) Cape Range Riders have expressed interest in developing two trails across Cape Range one from Exmouth and one from the Badjirrajirra Trail area. There are synergies with the Cape Range Crossing Trail and the trail is being considered as shared use walking and mountain biking as the level of demand for the individual activities is considered moderate and there is benefit in sharing investment for the two purposes.

Cycling would be developed as an easy or intermediate trail with opportunity for more challenging spur trails and the mountain bike community are looking to develop a mountain bike hub on the range for differing cycling challenges. The development of the cycling hub would ensure that the cross the range trail would not need to be developed with specific mountain bike challenges.

### CASE STUDY

#### BEST PRACTISE MANAGEMENT: COBBLER CREEK RECREATION PARK

There is evidence that pump tracks and skills parks contribute to communities by providing a focus for family activity and reducing anti-social behaviour. Prior to the development of a pump track and mountain bike skills park, Cobbler Creek Recreation Park in South Australia was underutilised and often a focus for vandalism and antisocial activity. The new pump and jump tracks linked to mountain bike trails and playgrounds have attracted family groups and young people who use the facilities and the meeting area as a jumping off point for other trails throughout the park representing a remarkable turnaround in behaviour and support for the park.



The development of mountain biking is a popular and sustainable recreational activity within the community with real benefits. Based on community consultation the plan recommends the development of four key areas (see map 5) for staged development of mountain biking which include.

1. Integrating with the Exmouth Recreation Area and develop a Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Pump, Jump and BMX Tracks.
2. Combining with the Cape Range Crossing Trail for a shared use trail to the Ningaloo Coast.
3. Developing trails close to Exmouth in the Exmouth Water Reserve outer catchment and on Unallotted Crown Land that provide a range of skills and easy trails that branch out progressively to harder trails further into the range. These trails may radiate out from the Cape Range Crossing Trail.
4. For ease of bike access for children and adults linking trails to the Exmouth Recreation Area and the Ningaloo Centre.
5. Providing within the Unallotted Crown Land to the south of the town a level mountain bike area connected by trails to the town and the Ningaloo Centre for the development of trails that are easier to ride and contribute to skill development.
6. Expanding mountain biking opportunities in the Badjirrajirra Shared Use Trail area to include an across the range trail, additional trails around to the west of the Badjirrajirra Trail and future development of some downhill trails to the east from the range to the flat land.
7. Longer trails that are currently used and are supported include across the range and north to the Vlaming Head Lighthouse. These trails use some existing tracks and in the area of the Air Defence Radar Site near Pap Hill require approval from the Department of Defence.

### **Demand**

These future trails will be developed over several years in a staged manner and will be used by a small but growing mountain bike community and the Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club who will actively encourage the involvement of children and youth in activity.

Local people are likely to get involved for recreation and activity, with interest from the towns growing number of children in skill development. There are now over 40 members of the Cape Range Riders with half being juniors, further interest is evidenced by the over 1,500 followers on Facebook.

Individual riders from the town will cycle independently on the trails when established and parents will encourage children to undertake this activity particularly if it is safe and formalised. There will be a moderate interest from “Grey Nomads” who often carry their own bikes and there will be some interest for international visitors who may hire bikes and ride out from the Ningaloo Centre hire on established trails.

There is interest in mountain bike events within Exmouth from other mountain bike groups in the region and beyond. With suitable venues this is likely to grow.

It is anticipated that demand will increase in the early years and the resources of the mountain bike community will be initially limited, it is predicted that interest and demand will grow. It is important that trail and the mountain bike skills park areas are developed early to cater for demand, to encourage growth, to maintain interest and to encourage community stewardship and activity.

*Image: 11 The Bowl Pump Track SA compacted gravel*





## Why is it important?

There is great community benefit in the establishment of a range of mountain bike trails that have an emphasis on skill development and introduction to the new riders particularly children to the sport. Promotion of outdoor activity is an essential component of healthy communities. Community pride is also a benefit from the development of mountain biking experiences in and around the town.

Small scale regional mountain bike events are currently proposed but the lack of suitable venues limits future growth.

Mountain biking is unlikely to become a major visitor draw to Exmouth and there will initially be a small economic benefit from mountain biking. This however is likely to grow and services such as bike hire, drop off and pick up may result from a number of initiatives in this plan.

As the regional interest grows there will be opportunities for visitors to be engaged and leverage from the other attractions that draw visitors to this area.

## What needs to be done to deliver the project?

The Shire of Exmouth and DBCA are responsible for this project in partnership with Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club.

To ensure the roll out of the mountain bike activity and skill development initiative over a number of years approvals will be required (see map 5) including:

- ▶ The Shire of Exmouth and Department of Lands for trail access and future mountain bike access on Crown Land under the care and control of the Shire and Unallotted Crown Lands.
  - ▶ The Shire of Exmouth agreement in partnership with Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club for the establishment of a Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Pump, Jump and BMX Tracks within the Crown Reserve 50807 Exmouth Recreation Area.
  - ▶ Water Corporation and Department of Water for long term and sustainable access to sections of the outer catchment area of the Exmouth Water Reserve
  - ▶ The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) for an expansion of the existing approval for access to Badjirrajirra Walking Trail to include areas to the west of the trail and areas within Cape Range National Park individual projects will be subject to environmental, social and cultural assessment
  - ▶ Department of Defence for access (walking and cycling) to the track that runs through the disused air defence radar site near Pap Hill
- The Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Pump, Jump and BMX Tracks within the Exmouth Recreation Area will require specific specialised design by a recognised and skilled trail builder.
- The most sustainable Pump Tracks are constructed as a minimum from clean compacted crushed rock but the very best are capped with bitumen/asphalt. The bitumen capped tracks also allow for a greater variety of use including scooters and skaters.
- The mountain bike trails will require substantial planning and skilled construction to ensure all trails come up to appropriate International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA) standards, that is, to be attractive, fun to use, be resistant to the extremes of weather and to ensure the trail alignments will be sustainable through the steep sections of the range.
- Shared use trails will require modification and visitor information to ensure there are no conflicts between users.
- Appropriate trail head signs, way marking (including difficulty ratings), and maintenance schedules based on keeping the trails up to the standard appropriate to the trail difficulty rating will be essential. Trail stewardship should be a responsibility of the mountain bike community and trail users encouraged to have an active involvement in management.

The first section of the trail from Exmouth is planned to avoid the Exmouth Water Reserve Wellhead Protection Zone but will be within the Reserves Outer Catchment Area. It is important for the sustainability of the investment and experience that there is long term access for this trail on the Exmouth Water Reserve.

The community will be expected to have a strong involvement with the ongoing maintenance of the trail and the shared use aspect of the trail includes a commitment from all partners in the trails maintenance, promotion and stewardship.

Initial trail construction should be undertaken by recognised and skilled trail building contractors with suitable tracked equipment. It is common practice that mountain bike groups develop trail building skills often from skilled contractors. Initial investment in trail construction should include an investment in training to enable future works to be undertaken on a staged and economical basis.

Mountain biking may not be initially recognised as an activity that celebrates World Heritage however the cross the range trail provides great opportunity for a range of people to be engaged in the spirit of this special place and further understanding can be developed through education and interpretation.

### Estimated costs

Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling activity area including Pump, Jump and BMX Tracks within the Exmouth Recreation Area will require specialised input to the design and construction in partnership with Cape Range Riders.

The site needs to be designed in a manner that provides protection, comfort, recognises the extremes of climate and encourage year round use in this extreme climate. Site design should include shelters, BBQs, car parks, bike racks, water supply, and revegetation including shade trees. The design should allow for growing activity and future focus on events. A suitable landscape architect would need to be engaged to ensure the site is attractive, encourages use and functions effectively with a focus on sustainable design.

Cost estimates vary depending on size of the facility and material used. It is recommended for pump tracks that clean quarry rubble capped with bitumen be used.

Design and construction of a pump tracks is estimated at \$250m<sup>2</sup> for quarry rubble capped with bitumen.

*Image: 12 Cobbler Creek Pump Track South Australia, bitumen over compacted gravel. Popular with a wide range of kids and adults.*



Indicative costs:

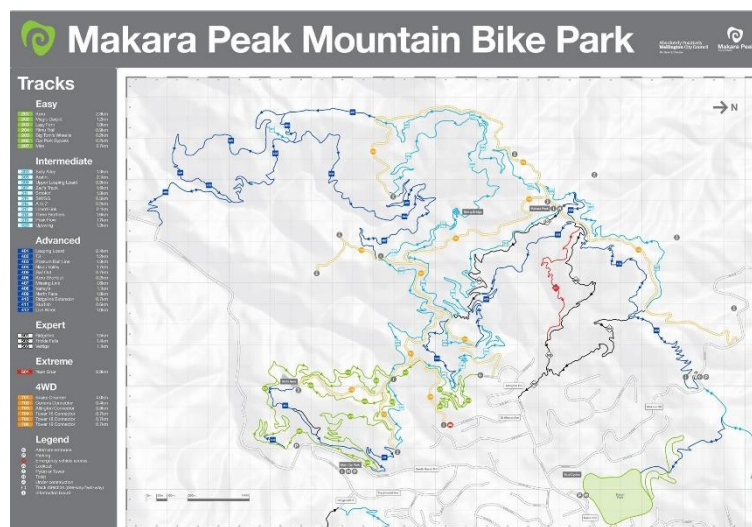
- ▶ Landscape design and engineering | \$40,000
- ▶ An average size pump track | \$100,000
- ▶ Linking, skills and jump tracks estimated 500m @ \$40per linear metre | \$20,000
- ▶ Site infrastructure shelters, car parks and facilities | \$100,000
- ▶ Landscaping, drainage and restoration | \$30,000
- ▶ Total Skills Park Pump and Jump Track \$290,000\*  
Plus contingencies for remote Total including 25% for remote mobilisation and contingency \$362,500  
\*based on capital city rates.
- ▶ Cost estimates will vary based on the skills and level of involvement of the community in developing mountain bike trails.

It is understood that there is a capacity within the Cape Range Riders to develop mountain bike trail within to IMBA standards. The building of mountain bike trails by recognised builders varies for \$35,000 to \$65,000 per kilometre depending on the terrain and location.

- ▶ Cape Range Crossing Trail – to be determined based on community contribution but estimated to be between \$350,000 and \$500,000
- ▶ Badjirrajirra Shared Use Trail – to be determined based on community contribution

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments will be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan.

**Refer to Exmouth North and Central Loop Maps in Appendix A**



## BEST PRACTISE MANAGEMENT: MAKARA PEAK MTB PARK

Makara Peak Mountain Bike Park, which is located just outside Wellington, New Zealand, is a 250 hectare reserve with a trail network of over 40 kilometres. More than 80,000 visits are made to the park annually by mountain bikers of all ages and abilities as well as hikers and runners (who constitute around 30% of visits).

The park is situated on Wellington City Council land and managed under a partnership between the Council and a proactive membership-based community organisation known as Makara Peak MTB Park Supporters. The group contributes more than 4,500 volunteer hours annually to park projects including trail maintenance and development and conservation work. Since inception in 1998 the Makara Peak Supporters have developed more than 40 kilometres of predominantly hand-built single-track; planted over 35,000 native plant seedlings; and contributed to pest plant and animal control, waterway restoration and bushfire risk reduction activities.

The group is also very active in fundraising to support the park through both donations and grants. They host events including corporate work parties, and promote the park and its use through their website, social media platforms and regular newsletters.

The park has received numerous awards, including the Wellington Airport Regional Community Awards 2014 and New Zealand Recreation Association 'Most Outstanding Park' 2010. *Source: [www.makarapeak.org](http://www.makarapeak.org)*

## 6.4 Ningaloo Centre Trail Hub

### 6.4.1 Exmouth Town Loops and Connections

#### Description

A clear direction from the community is for improved trail access and connectivity to the town and natural features around the town for a wide range of people including residents and visitors.

Exmouth is fortunate in that it has large areas of open space and a number of informal tracks and trails on the boundaries of the town and ephemeral water courses that pass through the town from west to east providing natural pathways. The town and community now also have a splendid new Ningaloo Centre that provides an important central meeting and information hub for the town and for visitors.

The numerous tracks and trails currently provide a series of random trail loops with some providing recreational trail access and connections to the coast. Many of these trails are run down and are not effectively sign posted, promoted or maintained to encourage locals and visitor to get on the trails and be active.

These tracks have been assessed for priority linkages and appropriate corridors from the suburbs to the town, to Cape Range, to the coast and a long sought after trail from the centre of town to the Gulf Coast for all residents and visitors (see 6.4.2 below).

Community consultation provided a strong desire for trail activity that involves kids, this is reflected in the evidence that Exmouth has a relatively large number of children under 14. The development of mountain bike experiences and skills development proposed for the Recreation Centre will be an obvious outdoor attraction for kids who should be able to get there safely by bike or foot.

It is proposed to identify the right tracks, trails and water courses that will provide popular shared use trail access for locals and visitors to link to the Ningaloo Centre and other important destinations in the town

such as the Recreation Area and the beach. A northern and central town loop and a coastal loop is proposed by defining the best tracks that circuit the suburbs and building trails through the existing water course to meet at the Ningaloo Centre. From the Ningaloo Centre or the town centre it will be a simple process to link to other points in the town.

The coastal loop picks up on the existing trails from the Ningaloo Centre, pass through the Recreation Centre, follow Willersdorf Road and pass the golf course to link up with the existing coastal trail that runs behind the dunes and links to several access points to the beach. This informal trail will cross the Exmouth Gulf Coast Trail and lookout (see 6.4.2 below) and progress to Town Beach.

Some trails will require nothing more than signage depicting a common Exmouth trail brand, theme and direction way marking whilst others such as the water course trail alongside the High School will require further planning, design and construction to complement the existing north south pedestrian paths and bridges. Other water courses such as adjacent to Griffith Way will require less complexity with a formed pathway placed on the levee bank.

Most trails should be developed equivalent to Class 2 walking trail standards which will generally be a modified or hardened surface greater than 2.5 metres in width. Within the town areas Class 1 equivalent trails will be required with broad hard surfaces suitable for wheelchair use. All the trails will be shared use.

Given the range, fitness levels and number of users that are likely to be attracted to an urban trail, safety considerations take on greater importance. Similarly, access for a wider range of user groups, including those with mobility impairments, is likely to have a greater influence on the design of the trail than would be the case in remote area. It is important that the more urban trails are designed in accordance with recognised traffic engineering standards<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> TRC 2015, Guidelines for trail planning, design and management prepared for Barwon South West Region, Victoria



An important consideration is safety particularly as in three areas pedestrians or bike riders will be required to cross the busy Murat Road. Options include pedestrian bridges, underpasses, pedestrian lights or a combination of traffic warning signs, pedestrian islands and traffic calming devices. These alternatives will need to be designed in accordance with recognised traffic engineering standards.

Horse riders many who live to the south of the Town seek a safe and permanent route from the southern beaches and McLeod Street to the Pony Club on Madaffari Drive, the Town Beach and access for riding on the beaches north of the marina.

The widening of the road verge within the Murat Road road reserve south of the town has provided a safe pathway for horses on the western side of the road. It is proposed that the road verge be recognised as a horse riding route by providing horse trail signs, appropriate surface treatment and traffic warnings for horses crossing on Murat Road. This will provide a long term and safe trail pathway for horse riding to the Pony Club and the beaches north of the marina. The horse riding community support this route for horse riding access.

The mountain bike trails to the west of the town can be easily accessed on the existing tracks that leave the Recreation Area on easy shared use trails and follow the Highway before crossing and linking up with the more challenging trails to be developed across the range. It is recommended this trail be sealed to enable road riders to access the cycle path to the Base.

The importance of the Ningaloo Centre as the Exmouth trail hub should be recognised through the development of a Ningaloo Coast and Ranges Trail Head with information and direction provided for the town, coast and Cape Range trails. There is opportunity at the Ningaloo Coast and Ranges Trail Head for interactive digital technologies (such as for smartphones and apps) and social media to access information about trails and record their trail activities.

## Demand

This mix of trails will be popular with locals and families who will get involved for recreation and activity and children will have safe access to the Recreation Centre and beach via the network of trails. Trail runners, bike riders and others will use the loop trails for exercise and to get to the beach and other locations around the town.

Visitors to Exmouth will be drawn to the Ningaloo Centre and to the Ningaloo Coast and Ranges Trail Head and be inspired to move around the town and the surrounding features on foot or bike.

## Why is it important?

The Shire of Exmouth Local Planning *Scheme* and *Local Planning Strategy for the Shire of Exmouth* identify the need for improvements to the pedestrian/cycleway network particularly within the town centre. The strategies also recommend greater connectivity between the town centre and the Exmouth Gulf foreshore through pathway upgrades and maintenance and the introduction of signage and wayfinding elements given the prevalence of tourists in unfamiliar territory.

The development of the trail loops and the promotion of trail linkages through the town and to the coast will deliver a number of benefits provided by trails. Benefits include encouraging more outdoor physical activity leading to improved physical and mental wellbeing particularly for the relatively large numbers of children in the town. The children will be able to access the loop trail on their bikes or walking and develop a growing sense of confidence and independence.

The trails will provide low cost recreation for the community particularly when linked to other activities such as mountain biking and the trail experiences will provide opportunities for social interaction and contribute to community identity and pride. The trails will over time contribute to Exmouth becoming a trail friendly town and a more attractive place to live.

There are likely to be some modest economic benefits derived from the town trails and links to other trail activities which could include the hire of bikes and provision of products and services.

### What needs to be done to deliver the project?

The Shire of Exmouth is responsible for this project.

The plan through discussion and mapping has identified alignments which may be suitable through the town (see map 5). These pathways have been checked against the draft Local Planning Strategy for *Shire of Exmouth*.

On the western side of the town on the central trail loop a small section of trail enters the Exmouth Water Reserve outer catchment area near Nimitz Street. This is only a small entry into the reserve on tracks that are regularly used by local people; approval for future access will be required from the Department of Water.

Access through sections of the town will require further technical assessment to ensure pedestrian and vehicle conflicts are minimised and the new alignments are as safe as they possibly can be. It is important that the more urban trails are designed in accordance with recognised traffic engineering standards particularly where the trail crosses the busy Murat Road.

Historical land use within the town boundaries may have included dumping of a range of materials in the proposed alignments. Assessment will be required to ensure the safety of contractors, residents and users and if potentially hazardous materials are found suitable mitigation strategies will need to be implemented.

The proposed shared use trails and trail hub will need to be developed of a high quality and reflecting the diversity of uses and sustainability. The coastal loop trail will utilise nominated existing tracks comprising compacted gravel, where trails enter the town centre and follow the water courses they should be developed to a Class 1 walking trail standard adjacent to the town centre with Broad, hard surfaced track suitable for wheelchair use and be well maintained.

### \*Estimated cost

#### North Town Trail Loop

- ▶ Around the western boundary Skipjack Circuit to Learmonth Street Reserve shared path 1.3 km 2.5 m width compacted crushed rock 3,250 m<sup>2</sup> = \$40,000
- ▶ From start of Base Cycling Trail to Ningaloo Centre via Recreation Centre base material and spray seal \$132,000 + \$220,000 = \$352,000

#### Coastal Loop

- ▶ Recreation Centre to Town Beach shared use path compacted crushed rock 2.8 km 2.5 m width compacted crushed rock 7000 m<sup>2</sup> = \$84,000

#### Central Town Trail Loop

- ▶ Learmonth Street Park to Griffin Way shared use path 3.2 km 2.5 m width compacted crushed rock 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> = \$66,000
- ▶ Griffin Way to Ningaloo Centre shared use path 1.3 km 2.5m width spray seal 3,250 m<sup>2</sup> \$39,000 + \$65,000 = \$104,000

Engineering and traffic advice

- ▶ \$40,000

Estimated Total Exmouth Town Loop Trails

- ▶ \$686,000

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments will be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan. Cost estimates do not include mitigation strategies if hazardous materials are found in the trail alignment.

Map 7 Exmouth Town loops and extension





## 6.4.2 Exmouth Gulf Coast Trail

Map 8 Proposed Exmouth Gulf Walk



### Description

For some years there has been strong interest from local people and visitors for a walking trail from the town to the beach. Visitors who stay in the town at caravan parks, backpackers, hotels and other accommodation near the town centre have had to drive or walk along several roads to get the beaches of the Exmouth Gulf.

Local people who walk, run and cycle have expressed a desire for trail access to the beaches of Exmouth Gulf and to be able to move around the town on trails rather than being exposed on roads and the main highway through the town.

The development of the Exmouth Town Loops and Connections (see 6.4.1 above) will provide trail access around the town and to the beach via the Coastal Loop however there is still a need for a direct pathway to Exmouth Gulf from a central town location.

The Ningaloo Centre with its central location provides an important central meeting and information hub for the town and for visitors and it is located adjacent to caravan and camping parks, backpackers, hotel and next door to the Recreation Centre.

The Ningaloo Centre as the proposed Exmouth trail hub (see 6.4.1. above) provides a recognisable starting point for a pathway to the beach. Between the Ningaloo Centre site and the beach is a sizable section of Unallotted Crown Land covered with coastal bush and bounded by the Golf Course and Truscott Crescent. The bushland spreads to the coastal dunes and beyond that is a sandy beach. Further to the north of the bushland are the town's treatment ponds which potentially aren't the best outlook from a trail but with the contiguous coastal vegetation and sand dunes the ponds can be simply screened from view.



Historical land use may have included dumping of a range of materials within the proposed Exmouth Gulf Coast Trail alignments. Assessment will be required to ensure the safety of contractors, residents and users and if potentially hazardous materials are found suitable mitigation strategies will need to be implemented.

From the Ningaloo Centre to the coastal dunes the land is mostly flat which would enable a pathway to be developed that would cater for people with a range of abilities and could include wheelchair access. From the top of the coastal dunes there are views of the town, Cape Range and Exmouth Gulf where during the whale season Humpback Whales can be viewed.

It is important that those locals and visitors who do not have the ability to climb sand dunes are provided with the opportunity to take in the view at the end of the trail. It is also very important that a busy trail such as proposed does not damage the coastal environment and create instability in the dune system. It is proposed to provide ramped access with landings to a lookout on the top of the dunes where people with all abilities can take in the view. From the lookout a further ramp will be provided to access the beach.

In addition to the trail, lookout and the beach it is proposed to include this part of the beach as a location for placement of intertidal and underwater sculptures as part of the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail (see 6.1.2 above). The Exmouth Gulf Trail could also include art work and design with an Exmouth theme along the 1200 metre long trail which has the potential to make the trail a feature in its own right.

The trail would be designed as a linear return trail however there will be opportunity for a longer loop experience by walking back along the beach and linking up with coastal loop near the Golf Club or walking or riding along the coastal loop trail behind the dunes and returning to the Ningaloo Centre.

The Exmouth Gulf Trail will need to be developed to a high standard and similar to a Class 1 walking trail being suitable for people in wheelchairs. The ramps to the lookout would need to be at a maximum slope of 1:14 (7.14%) and the path would need to be a broad hard surface at least 1200 mm wide and well maintained. It is anticipated that this trail would be popular and a broad trail would encourage use and it is recommended the trail be at least 2.5 metres wide and with the other trails around the town this would be shared use.

The trail surface should be attractive and reflect the coastal theme and should be hard wearing, low maintenance and easy to use for a range of people. Options include spray seal bitumen concrete or a concrete boardwalk design. The concrete boardwalk design can be carried through to the ramps, landings and the lookout.

## **Demand**

Visitors of all ages and abilities will have access from the Ningaloo Centre to the beach on the Exmouth Gulf Trail.

International visitors and potential new markets such as Cruise Visitors will benefit from the beach access trail with particular interest in the Exmouth Gulf lookout and the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail and to celebrate World Heritage and cultural values through art and a range of innovative interpretation.

The Ningaloo Centre and the proposed Ningaloo Coast and Ranges Trail Head are central to a range of accommodation and where the visitors are. The short 2.4 km return trail will be attractive to a range of people at all times of the day particularly during the morning and evening and during the cooler months.

The trail will be popular with locals and particularly kids who will be able to access the sea whilst avoiding roads.

### Why is it important?

It is important that the Exmouth community and visitors to the town have access to the Exmouth Gulf Coast by means other than driving a car. Many visitors stay at the central accommodation areas without vehicle transport and seek alternative ways to get to the coast; this trail provides those people with a clear alternative.

The town has never had a clear link to the coast and roads and trails do not go directly to the coast and from the centre of town at the Ningaloo Centre the view to the coast is of coastal bushland with no apparent access.

### What needs to be done to deliver the project?

The Shire of Exmouth is responsible for this project.

The access for the trail is through Unallotted Crown and this has been checked against the Draft Local Planning Strategy for any future development approvals or encumbrances.

Assessment will be required to ensure the safety of contractors, residents and users and if potentially hazardous materials are found on the proposed trail alignment suitable mitigation strategies will need to be implemented.

*Image: 1 Example Lookout Using Concrete Boardwalks*

### Estimated cost

\*The Exmouth Gulf Trail - From the Ningaloo Centre to the base of the coastal dunes shared path 1.0 km x 2.5 m width base material and spray seal bitumen \$40,000 + \$50,000 = \$90,000

- ▶ Ramped pathway with platforms and lookout, reinforced concrete decking 100 m x 2.0 m with deck and ramp to beach \$95,000
- ▶ Trail head sign, pathway art work, interpretation and way marking \$20,000

Engineering, survey and landscape architect advice

- ▶ \$40,000

Estimated Coast Exmouth Gulf Trail

- ▶ \$245,000

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments will be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan and during the shovel ready proposal. Cost estimates do not include mitigation strategies if hazardous materials are found in the trail alignment.



## 6.5 Four Wheel Driving

### 6.5.1 Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road

#### Description

The Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road provides a significant contribution to iconic 4WD experiences along the Ningaloo Coast. The bitumen road ends at Yardie Creek where the 4WD experience begins with the crossing of the sandy and tide influenced Yardie Creek mouth.

Once navigated the sandy track follows the coast to Coral Bay providing a unique coastal driving experience. The reliability of access across the mouth of Yardie Creek can be problematic for those using the trail requiring checks with DBCA and assessment of the river mouth to avoid a break in the journey or worse being stuck and vehicle damage.

This plan does not recommend any modification of the crossing at Yardie Creek due to the dynamic nature of the coast and estuary. The problems with the crossing are part of the challenges of undertaking a 4WD experience.

When the mouth of Yardie Creek is closed it is proposed that the Sandy Bay Track becomes an alternative 4WD option. The Sandy Bay Track is currently partially on park and lease hold land which is proposed for addition to the public conservation estate the track provides an alternative option to access the bitumen road to Coral Bay without returning to Exmouth.

Within Cape Range National Park off road vehicles use is permitted only in areas designated for this purpose and there are no other designated off road vehicle areas in Cape Range National Park.

#### Demand

The *Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy* focusses on development of experiences for the global *Experience Seeker* market and similar domestic markets – The Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road provides an authentic drive trail experience and is an important component of a regional drive loop between Coral Bay and North West Cape.

Grey Nomads and international visitors are potential user of the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road 4WD experience and there is future potential for tag along tours.

#### Why is it important?

Visitors stay relatively long periods in Exmouth and the Gascoyne Region and for this reason are likely to seek a variety of activities during their stay. The promotion of the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road 4WD experience provides an important regional experience linking the major attractions of the area Coral Bay and the Ningaloo Coast through an authentic 4WD experience.

#### What needs to be done to deliver the project?

- ▶ DBCA are responsible for this project.
- ▶ It is understood that all approvals including Defence have been received for the trail as it travels adjacent to Defence and near Bundera Coastal Protection Area.

#### Estimates Costs

- ▶ Trail head sign, interpretation and way marking \$15,000
- ▶ Ongoing maintenance

## 6.5.2 Sandy Bay Track

### Description

The Sandy Bay Track is an over the range route from Learmonth to Sandy Bay. The track follows ridges up through the gorge country of the eastern side of Cape Range crosses the plateau and then navigates the western gorge country overlooking the Ningaloo Coast with spectacular views.

The proposed transfer of land on the eastern side of Cape Range to the public conservation estate provides opportunity for this new land journey that will complement the Ningaloo Coast 4WD trail. A regional drive loop which links Learmonth to the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road provides a cross the range experience for 4WD vehicles, motor bikes and other road registered off road vehicles and will provide an alternative vehicle trail experience when access across Yardie Creek mouth is closed.

The track is rough in sections particularly on the west gorge country requiring high clearance 4WD or suitable registered off road vehicles. The track would be suitable for authentic and unique “off road” recreational experiences with opportunity for quad biking or similar activities subject to safety assessment and consideration.

### Demand

As discussed with the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road experience The Ningaloo-Shark Bay National Landscape Experience Development Strategy focusses on development of experiences for the global Experience Seeker market and similar domestic markets – The Sandy Bay Track provides the setting for authentic drive trail experience that compliments Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road experience and is an important component of a regional drive loop between Coral Bay and North West Cape.

Grey Nomads, international visitors, families and local people are potential user of the Sandy Bay Track 4WD experience and there is future potential for tag along tours, and quad bike tours along this track with its challenging driving conditions and spectacular views.

### Why is it important?

This 4WD experience is an important component of the Regional 4WD experience it provides an alternative and complementary experience to the Ningaloo Yardie Creek Road 4WD experience. It will also provide the opportunity for the development of new experience including tag along tours and quad bike tours.

### What needs to be done to deliver the project?

- ▶ DBCA are responsible for this project.
- ▶ Transfer of the land where the eastern portion of the track needs to take place prior to this project proceeding.
- ▶ Further assessment of the trail needs to take place prior to implementation for safety issues.
- ▶ Obtain consent and relevant approvals from the Department of Defence and the relevant pastoral lease holder.

### Estimated Costs

Upgrading of eroded sections of track \$50,000

\*cost estimates based on Perth contractor rates and for advice only, further assessments will be undertaken through the development of the implementation stage of the Trail Master Plan.

### Other options being explored

Several other options were explored in the development of the plan including the extension of the sealed cycle track from Exmouth to the Base to include Bundegi Beach. The direct route across land under the control of the Department of Defence was not permitted leaving access on the existing public use tracks as the only cycling and walking options.

The Baiyunga Cultural Track and the Barke Stefano Trail shipwreck trail occur within the study area, these trails as they develop will link with existing trails and locations and should not require any physical trail construction.



## 7 Implementation Plan

This Implementation Plan contributes to the design, construction, management and promotion stages of the Shire of Exmouth Trails project and includes the Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks within the Exmouth Recreation Area as a “shovel ready project”.

The Implementation Plan provides a number of stages (not necessarily placed in project timeline order) in the process to deliver the great trail experiences identified within the Trails Master Plan. The Implementation Plan should be considered together with the current policies and procedures of the Shire and trail partners and is backed up with more detailed implementation detail in Appendix A and B.

Stages	Rational	Implementation Actions
<b>Trail Project Priorities</b>	<p>Priority action for trails will be governed by the priorities of the Shire and linkages to other Shire initiatives such as activities of the Ningaloo Centre. It is proposed that the centre should include the Exmouth Trail Hub and the priority should focus on the trails that radiate out from and link to this hub. This would include the Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks.</p> <p>All trail projects proposed are considered vital to the Shire’s future trail program. Priority should be based on how individual trails link with other trails, trail user demand, community benefit, visitor experiences and public risk. For example there is significant further planning required for the visionary trail concept, the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail therefore it is important that this initiative is developed early.</p>	<p>Recommended Primary Trail Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks</li> <li>• The Exmouth Gulf Trail</li> <li>• Exmouth Town Loops and Connections</li> <li>• Ningaloo Sculpture Trail development planning</li> <li>• Multi-Day Sea Kayaking Trail</li> </ul>
<b>Business Case</b>	<p>The Trails Master Plan includes information and analysis of trends and strategic context including economic development, tourism potential, demand for trails and recommended trail development. The Trails Master Plan also includes estimated investment, implementation and maintenance costs. This provides background for a more detailed business case that the Shire will undertake as part of the Shire’s policy and procedures and funding submissions.</p>	<p>The Shire to consider the development of a detailed business case based on the Shire’s asset procurement procedures and as a requirement of funding submissions process.</p>
<b>Governance Approvals Partnerships</b>	<p>The trail proposals cross a range of lands with the majority on Crown Land under the care and control of the Shire. The trails proposed across the Exmouth Water Reserve will however require approval from the Water Corporation (approval sought during 2017). A succinct Trails Management Plan (see below) and the development of a MOU between the land managers and the Shire would clarify the asset, risk and management responsibilities of partners.</p> <p>The Trails Master Plan recommends access across lands designated for residential and tourism development within the</p>	<p>Seek approval from land managers for trail access including the Water Corporation and clarify partnership arrangements including asset management, maintenance and risk responsibilities through MOU.</p>

Stages	Rational	Implementation Actions
	<p>Exmouth town area. Trails will enrich and contribute to the experiences and investment in these areas, further site specific planning will be required to integrate these activities including key initiatives such as the Mountain Bike Skills Park.</p> <p>Assessment will be also be required to identify and mitigate any hazards that lie within proposed trail alignments resulting from past land use practices.</p> <p>Development approval will be required for the access and development of the lookout associated with the Exmouth Gulf Trail and its proposed placement on the sand dunes and within the coastal zone.</p>	<p>Undertake further site specific planning in areas of future residential and tourism to ensure the best fit and to ensure the best benefit from trails.</p> <p>Undetake assessment of trail alignments during the design and construction phases to identify and mitigate hazards.</p> <p>Seek development approval for the Exmouth Gulf Lookout.</p>
<b>Consultation Community Support</b>	Community engagement should continue following the adoption of the Trails Master Plan to maintain enthusiasm and support for the plans actions and to ensure community stewardship and volunteer contribution for trails.	Continue community engagement beyond the adoption of the Trails Master Plan.
<b>Funding Opportunities</b>	<p>The Shire could potentially seek funds from a number of funding sources that may be available for promotion and capital and maintenance works for the trail projects. This list includes all levels of Government, corporate sponsors, community-government programs and the use of community volunteers. Trails must be recognised as a valuable investment for the future that will deliver a wide range of tangible benefits. The trail projects have potential to bring and retain tourists and money into the Shire of Exmouth if they are well planned, built and promoted.</p> <p>Lotterywest, Department of Sport and Recreation, Federal Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Department of Culture &amp; Arts and Department of Regional Development are some funding sources that are currently available. This list should not be taken to be full and final, as there are no doubt other sources.</p>	The Shire will investigate a range of sources to contribute to all aspects of the Shire of Exmouth Program including promotion, capital and maintenance works associated with the trail projects.
<b>Landscape Design Engineering</b>	<p>The proposed trail infrastructure is innovative by design to ensure a high level of sustainability, environmental protection and great visitor experiences including access from the town to the Ningaloo Coast and Exmouth Gulf. The prefabrication and construction of an Exmouth Gulf Lookout will require landscape, geotechnical and engineering design to successfully integrate with the coastal dunes, Exmouth Gulf and the potential for future sculptures (linked to development approvals above).</p> <p>Bitumen trails will require some further detailed trail alignment and specifications depending on soil type and drainage and will require integration into the existing and proposed footpath and road network.</p> <p>Across the range trails will require further alignment planning, excavation of mineral earth trails and grade reversal and drainage detail (good trail construction contractors can do this during construction phase).</p>	<p>Provide additional landscape, geotechnical and engineering assessment to integrate the Exmouth Gulf Trail and lookout into the sand dunes and coastal environment of Exmouth Gulf.</p> <p>Refine the trail alignment for all trails prior to construction to maximise visitor experiences and minimise impacts from water flow.</p>

Stages	Rational	Implementation Actions
<b>Ningaloo Sculpture Trail</b>	The Ningaloo Sculpture Trail concept will require focussed planning to take the initiative to the next stage including development of a shared vision, identification of themes and technical assessment including environmental assessment and artistic input from suitable sculptures. The progression of this initiative would benefit from philanthropic and sponsor support to both ease the approval process and generate interest in funding contribution. The whole process from initiative to implementation would benefit from the development of a specific project plan developed with seed funding.	Drive the Ningaloo Sculpture Trail initiative through seed funding and the development of a project plan focussing on vision and theme development, technical and environmental assessment, support, funding and development approvals.
<b>The Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump Track I</b>	<p>The Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks Project has been recommended as a priority due to its strong active community and health and wellbeing benefits. The implementation of this project overlaps with many of the aspects identified in this plan and a more detailed approach to implementation identified in Appendix A.</p> <p>Key steps to ensuring a great end product include”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Commitment to the project including clear identification of who has responsibility for park assets, risk, governance, operation and maintenance</li> <li>▶ Sourcing budget and resources to project manage the process from inception to delivery</li> <li>▶ Obtaining suitable budget to deliver the park and commitment to maintenance</li> <li>▶ Commitment to ongoing engagement and review with users and stakeholders</li> <li>▶ Procuring an expert in trail design and construction with experience in skills park and pump track construction to work in partnership with the Shire and Cape Range Riders with links to community needs and desires.</li> </ul> <p>Detailed Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks alignments and siting and and environmental approvals</p>	<p>Develop Project Management approach to the Bike Park and Tracks through Shire development and procurement process including focus on the users, community views, the environment and great design.</p> <p>*See next stage below for more information</p>
<b>Design and – Construct The Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks</b>	<p><i>Shovel Ready Implementation see Appendix A below.</i></p> <p>Design and construction of a pump tracks is estimated at \$250m<sup>2</sup> for quarry rubble capped with bitumen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ An average size pump track will cost approximately \$100,000</li> <li>▶ Linking, skills and jump tracks estimated 500m @ \$40per linear metre = \$20,000</li> <li>▶ Landscape design and engineering   \$40,000</li> <li>▶ Site infrastructure, shelters, car parks and facilities   \$100,000</li> <li>▶ Landscaping, drainage and restoration   \$30,000</li> <li>▶ Total Skills Park Pump and Jump Track   \$290,000*</li> <li>▶ Total including 25% for remote mobilisation and contingency <u>\$362,500</u> *based on capital city rates.</li> </ul> <p>Cost estimates in the Trails Master Plan are based on Perth contractor rates. Mobilisation rates and 25% contingencies aproximately \$73,000 which is an additional project cost based on remote Exmouth site.</p>	<p>Investigate opportunities for local companies and employment providers to be involved.</p> <p>Consider opportunities to employ and train local workers and community groups in the development of all aspects of the trails program.</p> <p>Engage a skilled trail construction company to design and construct the Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump Track.</p> <p>Consider engaging a skilled and qualified trail builder to induct and train local workers in the</p>

Stages	Rational	Implementation Actions
	Investigation should be undertaken to establish cost effective local prefabrication and bitume contractors and employment suppliers. Future maintenance demands will be reduced through careful planning and good construction.	construction and maintenance of the cross the range and mountain bike trails.
<b>Trail Management Plans</b> <b>Maintenance Plan</b> <b>Water Reserve</b> <b>Water Quality Protection</b> <b>Stewardship</b> <b>Monitoring</b>	A clear, concise Trail Management Plan is recommended to direct critical trail resources including trail maintenance. Defining the level of service required to maintain a trail is an important component of a Trail Management plan. The Level of Service is the defined service quality for a particular class of trail against which service performance may be measured. A risk assessment process should measure the condition of the trail against the walking trail or cycling classification and level of service to ensure the trail meets the expectation of the user and the duty of care of the trail manager. It should also reflect the trail vision and contribute to the protection of the trail and environmental values. In the case of the Water Reserve it may include agreements for water protection measures. Trail maintenance costs vary depending on conditions such as weather, soil types, construction standards, usage patterns, type of trail and whether the maintenance is outsourced at full professional trail contractor rates. The recommended use of reinforced concrete boardwalks for the ramp and lookout would reduce future maintenance costs considerably. The total trail project would involve the construction of some 30 kilometres of trails (not including mountain bike trails yet to be determined and sculpture trails) at an approximate establishment cost of \$1.8 million. Maintenance costs of new trails varies considerably depending on whether professional trail builders undertook the work or Shire or DBCA or volunteers undertook the work. Approximate annual maintenance cost could be in the order of \$40,000. The Trail Management Plan should include specific management requirements such as, monitoring of trail use and user satisfaction and community engagement to encourage and support community ownership, maintenance and stewardship.	Develop a Trails Management Plan with a key focus on trail monitoring and maintenance including site specific issues such as visitor safety in the extreme environments to ensure the trails meet users expectations, encourage use and are sustainable.
<b>Trail Information</b> <b>Exmouth/Ningaloo Brand</b> <b>Trail Sign Plans</b> <b>Interpretation</b>	<i>Trail Information and Interpretation Detail see Appendix B below.</i> Visitors to the trails will seek signs and other media to direct, inform and to help interpret the surroundings. Important that the signs reflect a consistent Exmouth Trails image or brand. Signs are the most common form of communication with trail users, other forms of information technology through smart phones are becoming more available for trail information and interpretation. Trail information will only be effective if it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ is clearly written with a simple message</li> <li>▶ meets the primary needs of the visitor</li> <li>▶ is easily absorbed and understood</li> <li>▶ is aesthetically sympathetic</li> <li>▶ meets the needs of the Shire and the other land management agencies.</li> </ul>	Consider developing a Trail Sign and Information Plan to promote the Shire of Exmouth Trails, present a familiar image or brand and to provide a consistent approach for visitors and trail users. Consider with the Trail Sign and Information Plan an interpretation plan for the trails that integrates with the Shires Visitor Management Plans and reflects the special places and experiences on the range of Exmouth Trails.



# Appendix A. Shovel Ready Implementation

## Project Financing - Promotion, pitch and marketing – how to sell to government - what will change

Commitment to the project including clear identification of who has responsibility for park assets, risk, governance, operation and maintenance.

Sourcing budget and resources to project manage the process from inception to delivery.

Obtaining a suitable budget to deliver the Mountain Bike Skills Park and commitment to maintenance.

### Primary outcomes

The Mountain Bike Skills Park will contribute to:

- ▶ Environmental, social and economic benefits through activity linked to skill development; locals, visitors, children and youth connecting with the unique environment of Cape Range, Ningaloo and beyond and becoming advocates for healthy activity and promoters of the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area as a signature adventure experience.
- ▶ Increasing growth in Mountain Bike events and visitors staying longer to experience the park and the growing number of mountain bike trails. A positive and increasing benefit to the local economy is recognised together with a significant increase in community pride
- ▶ A high number of children under 14 and youth being involved in healthy activity in the park and through skills development becoming role models and taking the opportunity to experience the expanding mountain bike trails.
- ▶ Attracting visitors through skill development, fun and as a focus for mountain biking and encouraging small business activity including hire bikes, tours and shuttle services to Cape Range mountain bike trails.

- ▶ As the first of a series of significant trail based projects within the Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area The Mountain Bike Skills Park provides the opportunity for opening/launching and promoting the area and the experiences being developed within to a wide audience.
- ▶ The Shire exploring a number of funding sources available for promotion and capital and maintenance works for the trail projects including all levels of Government, corporate sponsors, community-government programs and the use of community volunteers.
- ▶ Lotterywest, Department of Sport and Recreation, Federal Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Department of Culture & Arts and Department of Regional Development are explored by the Shire and partners for the Mountain Bike Skills Park.
- ▶ The partners active in seeking support from philanthropic sources and from the community increasing the profile of mountain biking as a healthy and sustainable activity that contributes to the building of stronger communities.

## Governance benefit and agreements

The Shire of Exmouth in partnership with Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club will be responsible for this project. Arrangements will be required to clarify the asset, risk and management responsibilities of partners.

Approval will be required including lease or licence for access, permanent and non-permanent structures, development and operation of the Mountain Bike Skills Park and associated linking trails through the crown land Reserve 50807, within the recreation area and for semi-permanent facilities within the northern future tourism and tourism residential area 5.

The Cape Range Riders have arrangements including insurance for their members but this may not cover invitees and visitors to the Mountain Bike Skills Park. The success of this project will be measured on growing use by local people and visitors including events. Success will also be measured on riders using this facility as a jumping off point to experience riding elsewhere including on Cape Range.

Suitable insurance and public liability cover is important to enable this venture to grow, the partnership between the Shire and Cape Range Riders should include arrangement for reasonable insurance arrangements.

To ensure the roll out of the mountain bike activity and skill development initiative over a number of years approval will be required.

The Shire of Exmouth with Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club will need to come to an agreement through a memorandum of agreement or similarly establish the Mountain Bike Skills Park within the Exmouth Recreation Area to cover a range of responsibilities including and not limited to infrastructure and landscape planning, liability and insurance, services, asset maintenance and replacement, code of conduct and future use.

The Mountain Bike Skills Park will be well managed and all partners are aware of their responsibilities and liabilities.

### **Primary outcomes**

This will contribute to:

- ▶ Good governance and partnerships established through agreement have ensured long term success, sustainability and unencumbered growth in the success of the Mountain Bike Skills Park and cycling in the area.
- ▶ The Shire and Cape Range Riders Mountain Bike Club are clear in their understanding of roles, responsibilities and commitments including public risk and liability, insurance, asset maintenance and replacement, services such as power and water, publicity, marketing and promotion, revenue from events and any fee for service, sub-letting and any other responsibilities relating to this site.

- ▶ The partnership and shared responsibility has encouraged a sense of trust and pride and a culture of good communication at all levels which is evident to all partners, neighbours and users of the facility and is a model for future arrangements.
- ▶ Revenue generated from events or activities is returned to the site and is reflected in quality facilities and services and the partners are experts at applying for and generating grants for the upgrading, maintenance and servicing of the facilities.

## **Detailed Mountain Bike Skills Park and Pump and Jump Tracks alignment and specifications**

Procure an expert in trail design and construction with experience in Skills Park and pump track construction to work in partnership with the Cape Range Riders and with links to community needs and desires.

Consult on developing the concept and design with the partners Cape Range Riders, stakeholders and the community including local youth.

### **Primary outcomes**

This will contribute to:

- ▶ Professionally detailed plans and specification for the Mountain Bike Skills Park track works, maintenance and risk management including costs and priorities.
- ▶ The Skills park being recognised as an exceptional signature experience for a wide range of users, including kids and youth, and these users are expanding their activity and skills through cycling and new recreational activity in the park and the greater Exmouth, Cape Range area.
- ▶ Visitors enjoying challenging cycling experiences whilst recognising a practical approach to their safety.
- ▶ Jobs ready skill development integrated through construction.
- ▶ Minimised maintenance and maximised trail and facility sustainability established through high quality best practice trail construction.

- ▶ Capacity for future growth in Mountain Bike Skills Park visitors and event participation.
- ▶ Clarity regarding governance and responsibilities for asset management, risk, promotion, maintenance and stewardship.

## Environmental and cultural assessment and planning for Mountain Bike Skills Park footprint

Undertake assessment of the site to ensure infrastructure is positioned and placed with minimal disturbance to water flows, residue from previous land use, remnant vegetation, cultural sites and artefacts and conforms to Shire planning regulations.

Develop a professional landscape site plan that incorporate existing environmental features and introduce a revegetation strategy that provides shade, comfort and enriches the environment of the recreation area. Ensure the plan reflects wise use of space, flow, shade and facilities are appropriate, well used, reflect the Ningaloo Exmouth trails image, spirit and sustainability.

The development and future management of the Mountain Bike Skills Park will ensure environmental values are protected and enriched by following established Shire process for assessment and monitoring and the future of the site is designed to benefit the users, the recreation area, the town and the surrounding environment.

### Primary outcomes

This will contribute to:

- ▶ Minimised impact and improved natural environment of the site and surrounding area.
- ▶ Protection of water courses and uninterrupted water flow across the site.
- ▶ Mitigation of threats and specifically flooding, wildfire, weeds, erosion and residual materials left over from previous land practices.
- ▶ Better capacity to sustainably cater for increases in visitor numbers and events.

## Visitor, contractor risk assessment

Develop and document a risk assessment and mitigation process for Mountain Bike Skills Park visitors, volunteers, staff, contractors and assets linked to the parks maintenance plan.

### Primary outcomes

This will contribute to:

- ▶ The development of a documented risk assessment and mitigation process for trail visitors, staff, volunteers, assets and contractors.
- ▶ Visitors undertaking activities with a spirit of adventure, challenge and enjoyment whilst experiencing few incidents or accidents.
- ▶ Programmed maintenance undertaken on a regular basis with those responsible having a clear understanding as to what is required. The tracks and facilities receive wear and tear that is anticipated and is reflected in ongoing monitoring. There are little or no surprises, incidents, unexpected costs or track closures resulting from poor maintenance.
- ▶ The numbers of visitors and use increasing and being commensurate with continued enjoyable recreation and learning experiences.
- ▶ Staff, volunteers and contractors enjoying safe working and welfare conditions reflected in a growing volunteer involvement.

## Information promotion and signage will follow a trail style guide and design reflecting the Exmouth mountain biking brand

Visitors to the Mountain Bike Skills Park and other mountain bike trails will seek signs and other media to direct, inform and to help them get to the skills park and on to the surrounding trails. The information and signs need to be clearly linked to the Ningaloo Centre and reflect a consistent Exmouth Trails image or brand and link to the sport of mountain biking.

## Primary outcomes

This will contribute to:

- ▶ Pre-trip, orientation and post-trip information and communication maximising enjoyment whether children, youth, mature people, locals or visitors and enabling them to find the growing mountain bike trail experiences and links to features and safe rewarding cycling experiences.
- ▶ A recognised information style and standard for the trails and the Mountain Bike Skills Park reflecting the landscape and culture of Exmouth and the Ningaloo World Heritage area.
- ▶ Riders understanding the trail hazards and the level of ability that is required to use the trails and the skills park. Riders are confident in extending their skills and abilities
- ▶ Trail managers maintaining the trail information to an appropriate standard and using the agreed sign and information styles and standard
- ▶ There are very few incidents involving trail users.

Image: 13 Proposed site for Mountain Bike Skills Park including Pump and Jump Track





## Appendix B. Trail Management Plans

**A clear, concise Trail Management Plan is recommended to direct critical trail resources including trail maintenance.**

Defining the level of service required to maintain a trail is an important component of a Trail Management plan. The Level of Service is the defined service quality for a particular class of trail against which service performance may be measured.

A risk assessment process should measure the condition of the trail against the walking trail or cycling classification and level of service to ensure the trail meets the expectation of the user and the duty of care of the trail manager. It should also reflect the trail vision and contribute to the protection of the trail and environmental values. In the case of the Water Reserve it may include agreements for water protection measures.

Trail maintenance costs vary depending on conditions such as weather, soil types, construction standards, usage patterns, type of trail and whether the maintenance is outsourced at full professional trail contractor rates. The recommended use of reinforced concrete boardwalks for the ramp and lookout would reduce future maintenance costs considerably.

The total trail project would involve the construction of some 30 kilometres of trails (not including mountain bike trails yet to be determined and sculpture trails) at an approximate establishment cost of \$1.8 million. Maintenance costs of new trails varies considerably depending on whether professional trail builders undertook the work or Shire or DBCA or volunteers undertook the work.

Approximate annual maintenance cost could be in the order of \$40,000. The Trail Management Plan should include specific management requirements such as, monitoring of trail use and user satisfaction and community engagement to encourage and support community ownership, maintenance and stewardship. Future maintenance demands will be reduced through careful planning and good construction.

A maintenance plan for the cycling trail is an important consideration and should include as a minimum; maintenance programming and scheduling, resourcing, monitoring including risk assessments and reporting procedures.

Site establishment and transport logistics and costs for remote worksites require innovation and practical solutions. The majority of work sites will be remote from service trails however the majority of materials other than plant and equipment will be available on site such as rock and surface material. Heli-lifting may be required due to high and labour costs that may be involved in transporting plant and equipment.

# Appendix C. Trail Information

## Trail Sign Plans, Interpretation Implementation

The *trip cycle* is a useful way of placing the visitor in the visiting cycle when planning visitor information and interpretation.

The trip cycle consists of:

- ▶ Pre-trip – before leaving for the trail destination
- ▶ Orientation – while in the general area of the trail
- ▶ On-trail – while engaging in the trail activity
- ▶ Post-trip – after completing the activity.

Sign and information media classes include:

- ▶ Orientation
- ▶ Risk
- ▶ Management
- ▶ Interpretation

The provision of information and the consistent presentation of messages in a systematic way require a level of planning which should include the development of a sign plan for the range of Exmouth trails.

The general principles of a Trail Sign Plan include:

- ▶ **Major Trailheads** - located at central locations including visitor centres (e.g. Ningaloo Centre), car parks and visitor information centres. They communicate key trail information to visitors. Including trail grades, enabling selection of a trail best suited to the user's ability and interests and may provide interpretation.
- ▶ **Minor Trailheads** – are located to identify the start point for trails or can be used as sectional trail heads on long distance trails to signify and provide information for the forthcoming section. They communicate the distance, classification, duration, terrain and safety information to the user (as above for major trail head). The function of trailhead signs is to orientate visitors and help them select a suitable trail. They are not intended to be interpretive but should provide a guide to the challenges and expectations for the trail ahead.

- ▶ **Trail Markers** - provide the trail user with information about direction and occasionally include other information such as distance. Trail markers with trail information and direction signs across Australia need to comply with Australian Standards Walking Trail Classification and Signage (AS 2156.1). Mountain bike trail signs need to reflect level of difficulty and are detailed in the Draft Western Australian Mountain Bike Guidelines document.  
<https://parks.DPaW.wa.gov.au/connect/mountain-bike-guidelines-draft>
- ▶ **Risk Management Signs** - The trail manager in consultation with risk managers should decide if there is a need for the risk sign to be placed on the trail and the decision will be influenced by the grading of the trail. Risk signs can be basic standard recreational warning symbols (presented by a yellow triangle with black symbols and borders) or with increasing risk can be a more detailed sign using danger and warning headers with three potential messages to mitigate risk which include:
  - a signal (DANGER or WARNING headers)
  - a statement of the exact nature of the risk
  - how to avoid the risk (optional)
- ▶ **Interpretive planning** - for the Exmouth Trails should fit within the Shire's business, marketing or visitor management plans. It is recommended that a Exmouth Trails interpretation plan should include:
  - What are the objectives or what the interpretation seeks to achieve?
  - Who should be involved in the interpretive process?
  - What are you interpreting?
  - Who are you interpreting for?
  - What stories do you want to tell?
  - What media will you use?
  - How will your interpretation be implemented?
  - How will it be monitored and evaluated?
  - How will it be maintained?

# Appendix D. On Line Survey Summary

## Survey Summary Details

- ▶ The survey was sent via email to 63 number of people by the Exmouth team
- ▶ 41 people completed the survey

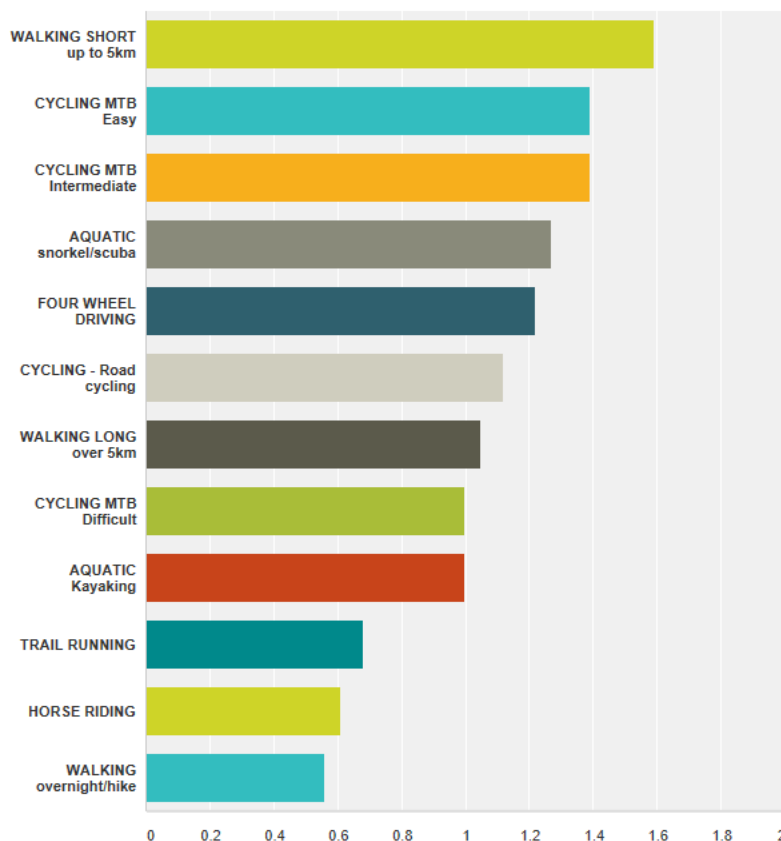
A summary of the results is below.

1. What types of trails and how often would you and members of your family use them if they existed in or near EXMOUTH?

As a weighted average where using the tracks daily for a particular activity scored 3 points, using them weekly scored 2, occasionally 1, with never scoring 0

### The top five activities are

1. Short walks (up to 5km)
2. Easy MTB
3. Intermediate MTB
4. Snorkel/scuba
5. Four wheel driving



### Daily top 5

1. Short walks
2. Intermediate MTB
3. Easy MTB
4. Difficult MTB
5. Road cycling/horse riding

### Weekly top 5

1. Easy MTB
2. Snorkel/Scuba
3. Four wheel driving
4. Difficult MTB
5. Short walks

### Occasional use top 5

1. Longer walks 5km plus
2. Kayaking
3. Snorkel/scuba
4. Overnight walks
5. Short walks

### Never use top 5

1. Horse riding
2. Difficult MTB
3. Overnight walks
4. Trail running
5. Road cycling

## The Vision

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The Ningaloo Coast World Heritage area within the Shire of Exmouth will be recognised as a place where all people can connect to the spectacular scenic and natural beauty of the marine and terrestrial environments through a network of unique and sustainable trails.

There will be ongoing development of a range of trails that offer distinctive Ningaloo Exmouth experiences that encourage participation resulting in community benefits and wellbeing.

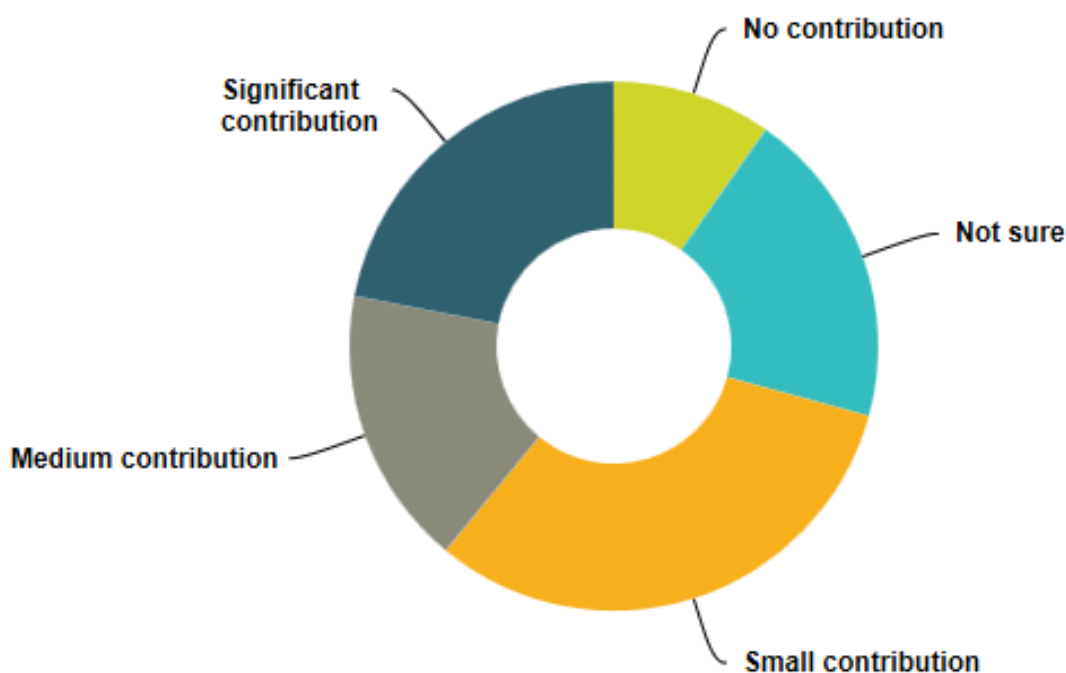
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When respondents were asked if the draft vision reflects their views regarding the future for trails with the Shire of Exmouth out of the 41 responses no one disagreed.

Most respondents agreed with some either strongly agreeing or moderately agreeing.

### 2. Contribution to trails

Of the 41 respondents 4 people could provide no contribution to trails with another 8 not sure. It is great to see that 29 out of 41 people were interested to contributing to trail in some way.



The types of contribution that people could offer to trails from most responses to lowest are:

1. Trail promotion (24)
2. Trail monitoring (23)
3. Trail maintenance (17)
4. Assistance with trail construction (16)



Other ideas for contributing to trails included trail planning and design, guiding or showing people trails and finding new trails.

### 3. Exmouth trails ideas and other trail experiences

Respondents are keen to see new land trails in the Exmouth region, ideas are listed below.

Experience/Idea	Summary
▶ Cape to Cape Walking Trail, Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leeuwin, Margaret River WA. Fantastic experience, breath taking scenery. Trail is well maintained by a group of volunteers and Parks & Wildlife. Trail info/maps are very helpful. Distances vary according to experience level. Margaret River also has a lot of other things to offer.	Experience other trail
▶ Walk on DofD land up behind lighthouse.	New land track idea
▶ Plenty of shelter stops/park bike/seats with fresh water to fill water bottles and toilet facilities. Location ID in case of emergency.	Facilities required
▶ As I have never done a trail in Exmouth or anywhere in the northwest my only suggestion would be to have seating with shade spread out through the trail.	Facilities required
▶ There are many trail sites around WA some have car parks, toilets etc and some have no facilities but are still fantastic trails to go on but you must be prepared yourself. When on my travels through NZ there are many exciting trails to go on and bike hire is readily available for travellers from around the globe. Horse trail businesses are doing well also.	Facilities required
▶ Kayak, Over the range trail.	New aquatic track idea
▶ Exmouth tourism is very marine focused but this is only half of our story. Trails could expose and provide access to areas the showcase the rugged beauty of the terrestrial landscape. The trail behind the lighthouse that runs south along the ridgeline provides great vistas over the ocean as well as back across the cape to the gulf. This trail could be extended to link back to town. The area around the Thomas Carter walk trail at the top of Charles Knife road also has potential for trails that would take in many points of interest. The gorges at the back of the watercorp allocated land offer some interesting views too. Developing land based trails will increase the options available to both locals and tourists and expose many hidden gems.	New land track idea
▶ Mountain biking or hiking through and across the Cape Range and gorges to untouched areas but also including existing trails within the National Park and water reserve.	New land track idea
▶ Mountain bike hub is a great idea.	
▶ Over the range walking and cycling trails.	New land track idea
▶ Range crossing rides plus skill based technical and flowing trail rides.	New land track idea
▶ East to West or West to East (Yardie Caravan to Town). Gets people to look around site seeing, towers, beach views (great for Whales jumping), sunrises, sunsets. Local bus company could do drop offs to Yardie for people to walk back to township (or vice versa). It could really work for Exmouth and tourists walking, riding etc. Could incorporate mountain bike riding at varying levels.	New land track idea
▶ Would be great to have a mountain bike trail in the national park along the range. Great outlook to the reef.	New land track idea
▶ Love boardwalks along the coast to enjoy the views and nature. Would love to see this done from Mantaray's Ningaloo Beach Resort to Bundegi Beach.	New land track idea
▶ Shelter/shade along trails.	Facilities required
▶ The Thomas Carter walking trail, with development to go to the west side around milering center. The west side trail which could start in town and go to the lighthouse and along ridge line to Wobirri and loop back to town. A small trail or skills track close to town, notably near the ovals that could be the hub and information centre of the trail network system.	New land track idea

▶ <b>The Cape to Cape trail (Augusta to Dunsborough) The Bibbulmun Track Various trails in Tasmania.</b>	Experience other trail
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There is support for good facilities along trails especially shade and seats, toilets and water fill stations.

#### 4. Other comments from respondents

There is a general feel that Exmouth has a large marine focus and people are keen to see the shift or inclusion of the landscape and areas around the marine to be part of the attraction of Exmouth.

An interesting comment from one respondent is:

- ▶ Need 5 trails to add to the Big 5 marine promo

Other comments	
▶	<b>If a horse trail was provided some tie up rails would be awesome at a seating area.</b>
▶	<b>For Exmouth to grow as a destination it needs to diversify from the predominantly marine based tourism that it currently has. Land based trails will open up a new range of attractions to both tourists and locals alike. Providing certainty of land tenure for future trails that could develop as a part of this process is paramount.</b>
▶	<b>Its exciting to know things are happening in and around Exmouth which is landlocked by different land owners. A mountain bike hub, pump track and any walk trails will benefit the community and its visitors forever.</b>
▶	<b>An area in/near town for a mountain bike pump track/skills park would be great for the kids of the town too.</b>
▶	<b>It will be awesome to have some longer hiking trails across/through the ranges and to have some BMX tracks. Margaret River has some awesome tracks and a strong association that builds and maintains them - they may have some advice and good ideas.</b>
▶	<b>As a journalist for national magazines they are always interested in new and exciting places to ride and promote. Without a formal MTB trail network there is nothing to endorse or write an article about. I wish you luck as it would be great to see some new experiences for locals and tourist alike.</b>
▶	<b>Connections to event planning for long term races.</b>
▶	<b>We need to cater for beginners and advanced riders also a skills park close to town accessible to kids, close to amenities. This would be used without a doubt all year round.</b>

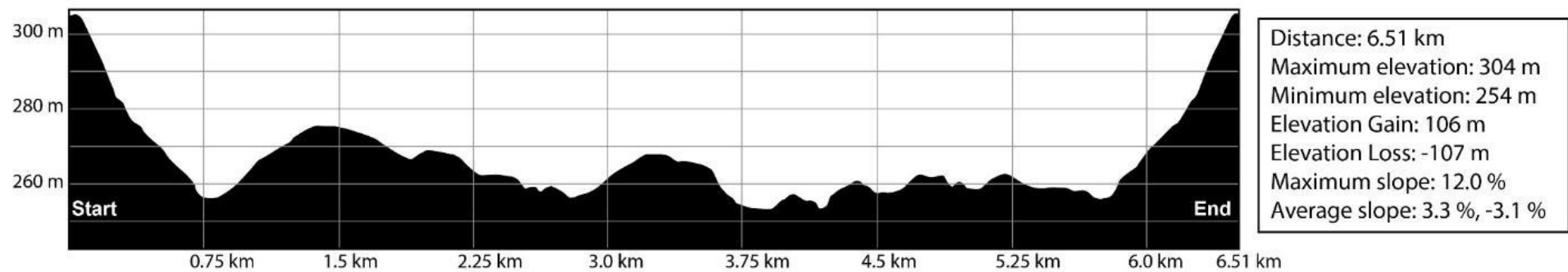
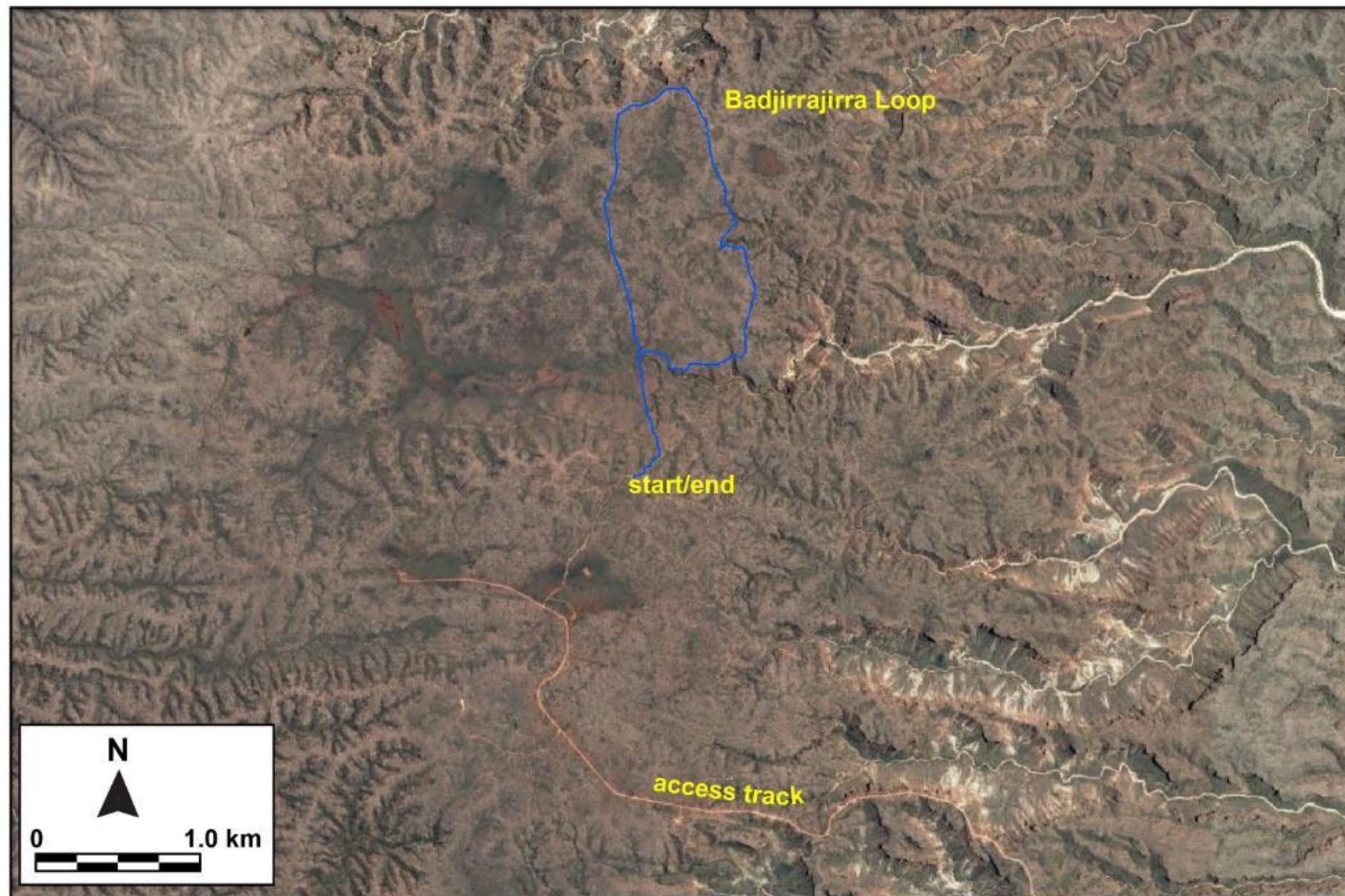
#### 5. SUMMARY

The survey shows that the respondents have strong support for the improvement and inclusion of new land trails around Exmouth.

There is a strong backing from respondents to include land trails as another attraction of Exmouth in addition to the current marine based focus that Exmouth currently has.

Respondents are excited to see a trail plan in place and have great ideas to share and believe investment in land trails will be beneficial to residents and tourist alike.

Map 9 Badjirrajirra Trail and proposed share use trail





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