

25 May 2021

Brian Warburton

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Tēnā koe Brian

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation, received on 27 April 2021 in which you asked for information on locations on the “conservation estate” with bookable huts or campsites that are lawfully accessible by mountain bike, both those with an electric motor and those without.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. How many locations within the ‘conservation estate’ are recorded by DoC as having ‘booking huts’ and/or ‘bookable camp-sites’.

Response: There are 214 huts and campsites on public conservation land that are bookable. Each bookable hut and campsite can be regarded as a separate location.

2. Of those locations recorded by DoC has having ‘booking huts’ and/or ‘bookable campsites’, which (and how many) are lawfully accessible by using a ‘mountain bike’ that is not fitted with an electric motor.

Response: There are 98 of the 214 locations that have a bookable hut or campsite that are lawfully accessible using a mountain bike that is not fitted with an electric motor. These are listed in the attached spreadsheet (DOC-6651313). Of these, 4 are backcountry huts, 75 are campsites accessible by road and 19 are Great Walk huts and campsites (those on the Heaphy and Paparoa tracks).

3. Of those locations recorded by DoC has having ‘booking huts’ and/or ‘bookable campsites’, which (and how many) are lawfully accessible by using a ‘mountain bike with electric motor’.

Response: There are 77 of the 98 locations listed in 2 above that are lawfully accessible by using a ‘mountain bike with an electric motor’. These are the huts and campsites **not** highlighted in the spreadsheet referred to in 2 above. The two backcountry huts are accessible by road or by tracks not on public conservation land.

The 75 campsites listed are all accessible by road. Vehicles, including electric bikes, can lawfully use roads.

4. If the number of locations in (2) is different from the number in (3), what is the reason for this discrepancy.

Response: The two backcountry huts that are lawfully accessible by mountain bikes, but not electric bikes, are on the West Coast. The Conservation General Policy requires places where use of mountain bikes is allowed to be set out in the conservation management strategy for the area. The 2010 West Coast Conservation Management Strategy was approved following extensive public consultation. Tracks leading to Kirwans and Big River huts are listed in the strategy as ones that can be used by those with mountain bikes but not bikes with electric motors.

The other two places where mountain bikes are permitted but electric bikes are not are the Heaphy and Paparoa tracks. Both are Great Walks through what is predominantly national park. The national park management plans for Kahurangi and Paparoa national parks were each partially reviewed over recent years to specifically permit mountain bikes on these two tracks over the whole year (Paparoa) or part of the year (Heaphy). These reviews were carried out with wide public consultation. The review process concluded that electric bikes should not be permitted on either track.

5. If the number of locations in (2) is more than the number in (3), does DoC believe this could be construed as being discriminatory against persons who (for physical reasons) are unable to access certain locations without using a motorised mountain bike.

Response: No

6. If the answer to (5) is no, please provide an explanation why the DoC holds this view.

Response: The process for determining where, on public conservation land, mountain bikes and electric bikes can be used is a statutory one. They, along with other vehicles, can access places off-road only where a conservation management strategy and (in the case of national parks) a national park management plan permits it. The statutory processes followed on the West Coast, the development of the 2010 conservation management strategy and the more recent partial reviews of the Kahurangi and Paparoa national park management plans, determined that electric bikes were not permitted off-road in these places.

The West Coast Conservation Management Strategy was approved by the NZ Conservation Authority and the management plans by the Authority and the West Coast Conservation Board as well. The Authority and Board are independent of DOC and are appointed by the Minister of Conservation. A wide range of views from the public and all interested parties were taken into account before the Strategy and plans were approved.



Item	Date	Document description	Decision
	6 May 2021	Bookable huts and campsites lawfully accessible by mountain bike – DOC-6651313	Prepared for this response

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) and enclosed documents may be published on the Department's website.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Brian Dobbie on 027 201 3721 or by email bdobbie@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

Steve Taylor
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai