

Interviewee: Simon Kennett

Title: Cyclist Advocate and previous GWRC Employee

Interview Date: 01/26/24.

Interview Time: 9:00 – 10:05 AM

Can you please tell us what your relationship and/or role with the GWRC is?

- Worked at the GWRC from 2009-2015 as a Road Safety and Active Transport Coordinator. He now works at the NZTA.
- He was also a witness at the Te Awa Kairangi Council meeting.

Can you explain how the work you have done relates to the Hutt River?

- Used to run the regional active transport forum.
 - o Included Hutt Valley.
 - o Brought together council men and advocates.
 - o When starting the Corridor, they could do 2.2 meters for 1 kilometer or 3 meters for 5 kilometers.

Can you explain how flooding affects the Hutt River Trail specifically?

- There had been many repairs done due to previous floods.
- The long-term effect of the earthquakes and floods is that the trail changes heights along the paved sides. Therefore, it is not as easy as it used to be for bikers to hop on the grass whenever there are people walking due to the height change.

Do you believe recreational use of the River Corridor is important, why or why not?

- Yes, he thinks the trail is quite important.
- It is a nice place to go, has nice vegetation, it is nice to run into other users, the river is nice (used to go kayaking there).

Do you believe all the trails along the corridor could be expanded? If so, how much?

- “The usual minimum for a multiuse trail is usually 2.5 meters, 3 meters is the general.”

- Older people need more space when being overtaken so they do not get as nervous. (Team should check the data from surveys to check this sort of trend in survey responses).
- Do you believe the GWRC could pull the funds to do so and how quickly?
- Usually, the process progresses the following way:
 - Desire line in the grass.
 - 1-meter-wide gravel.
 - More people use it, so it gets widened.
 - Then, older people want it smoother for their knees or mobility scooters.
 - Then, cyclists want it paved or sealed.
- In the past Hutt City has administered funds to widen and seal some parts of the Hutt River Corridor. Sometimes NZTA has also chipped in.
- GWRC has mostly paid for bridges recently.
- Regarding a timeline, Simon believes it would take 3 to 6 years to widen the path.
- Projects need to be presented to the NZTA to get funds from them and sometimes certain projects don't get picked and keep getting delayed.
- It might take 10-20 years to pave all the paths in the Hutt River Corridor, but he believes that in that timeline it will have reached all of Upper Hutt.

Are you a user of the Hutt River Corridor?

- Yes, he uses it for recreational purposes mostly, but sometimes commutes to visit his brother that lives near the corridor or to visit the Saturday market.

Follow up if yes: What activities do you use the corridor for?

- Only cycling but used to kayak in the river a long time ago.

Do you believe there is conflict between the users of the Hutt River Corridor?

- Yes

Follow up if yes: What do you believe could be a solution for the conflicts between users without excluding any user?

- Widen the path.

- Separate paths for cyclists and pedestrians.
- Gravel paths for slower cyclists and pedestrians and paved paths for those faster cyclists possibly commuting.
- Signs saying to keep the leash on the dog in tight places or corners.
- Putting markings near blindside corners. This could be slow down signs or double yellow lines on the pavement.

What are your thoughts on adapting the corridor for increased commuter cyclists use?

- It would be a good thing because it would get cyclists off the highway. Therefore, preventing fatalities.
- Much safer if on shared paths, only 3 deaths in 20 years on trails, on roadways it is 50 deaths a year for walkers and cyclists.

Do you believe providing more transport opportunities for commuter cyclists is important?

- Yes

How did your career in cycling begin?

- "I was born in Christchurch, which has a big cycling culture and offered a lot of freedom in that sense."
- He then moved to a place where cycling was not common, and he noticed he missed it, so he opened a business with his brother related to cycling.
- He mentioned 400 people bike on the highway a day.

Would bell signs help?

- There are different opinions on bell use.
- It would be difficult to pinpoint where exactly bell signs should be put.
- Many pedestrians do not appreciate being belled at therefore I don't use it and opt to call out and wave.

Would center lines help?

- These can be helpful, so pedestrians know where to move to when a cyclist comes and keeps people separated.
- They can be counterproductive because cyclists feel like they can speed up if there are lines.

Improvements Simon suggests for the Hutt River Corridor:

- Riverlink is already widening some parts, he'd like to see it throughout though.
- He believes it would be good to separate cyclists and pedestrians whenever possible.
- Lighting along the trail would be nice, especially because cyclists cannot see pedestrians without lights at night and can be scared whenever they get close and think no-one was there.
 - o This could also increase the number of people who use the trail at night and in winter when it gets darker faster.
 - o It would be good to start lighting below bridges, under forest canopies, and intersections.