

Key Findings of Annual Inspection

1. Key Findings (Condition, Maintenance and Performance)

Grounds: Re-vegetation areas and amenity planting are in good condition across the network with regular seasonal maintenance, fertilising and weed control. Turf is generally in good condition although weeds are a problem in some picnic areas at Queen Elizabeth Park. These areas may require treatment.

Buildings: Generally buildings are in sound and tidy condition. Routine cleaning and maintenance is ensuring a good standard - repainting the roofs on the Kaitoke facility buildings and Battle Hill houses has significantly improved their appearance. The Battle Hill homestead foundations were renewed and the interior was renovated in 2002.

Capital works projects for 2001/02 included toilets at Tunnel Gully and Queen Elizabeth Park to replace old structures. Some toilets (because of their age) still have a low condition grading at Queen Elizabeth Park, and at Kaitoke Regional Park (Farm Creek and at the Weir). Replacements are scheduled in the capital works programme over the next five years.

Facilities: Facilities – seats, picnic tables, gates and signs – have been maintained in good condition. Many of the signs are now 10-12 years old and due for programmed updating and renewal. The old picnic tables at Queen Elizabeth Park are being replaced progressively – 20 new tables were recently installed.

Bridges: All bridges are in safe and tidy condition with regular inspections and monitoring taking place. Footbridges that were assessed with high safety risks or were reaching the end of their useful lives (at Belmont Regional Park, Tunnel Gully, Queen Elizabeth Park and Battle Hill) have been replaced to the new standards. The historic bridges on the Rimutaka Incline are progressively being restored – the Ladle Bend Bridge restoration was completed in March 2002 and the five 3-metre bridges were completed in April.

Utilities and Services: Most water supply systems in the parks have recently been upgraded and are performing well. Septic tanks are in good operating condition across the network. Frequent leaks from the water pipes at the Paekakariki end of Queen Elizabeth Park required replacement work during the past year.

Roads: All roads and car parks are in good order. Reseals and second coat seals were completed at Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill and Kaitoke Regional Park. The metalled roads at Rimutaka Railway were graded, vegetation was controlled and water tables maintained. Unsurfaced farm and forest roads have also been maintained and drains cleared to avoid surface wear and erosion. Vegetation was cut back and a bulldozer was used to re-grade and improve drainage on many roads in the Akatarawa Forest.

Tracks: Tracks are generally in good condition across the network. The Swingbridge Track at Kaitoke was upgraded to KiwiWalk standard. Sections of track at Queen Elizabeth Park, Battle Hill, Cannon Point Walkway and Kaitoke have also had programmed re-metalling. In addition to flood damage in Korokoro Valley, some sections of tracks, particularly in Belmont, are beginning to show signs of surface wear and erosion because of increasing use (including mountain bikes). Metalling and upgrading is programmed for high use tracks close to park entries.

Land Management: Weed surveys and control programmes have been established across the parks and forests, including farming areas. We are undertaking a comprehensive study of weed problems on the coastal dunes at Queen Elizabeth Park before developing control and revegetation programmes. Fences have been upgraded to protect revegetation areas and facilitate stock management where appropriate.

2. Lessons and Improvements Identified

The annual inspection proved valuable for discussing and resolving design and maintenance issues. We noted the need to review and confirm the track hierarchy and standards across the network. This will provide clearer direction for track maintenance and upgrades to avoid problems and complaints from users.

Similarly, reviewing and completing interpretation plans and development concepts for all parks and forests will assist Rangers working with community groups and with maintaining and improving signs, facilities and planting.