



MOUNT GLEN ROCK

ASSESSMENT OF ECONOMIC POTENTIAL, CONSTRAINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2021

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Somerset Regional Council is investigating the potential of Mount Glen Rock as a multi-use recreational facility. The working draft vision for the site is to:

“DELIVER A UNIQUELY SOMERSET OUTDOOR RECREATION EXPERIENCE, THAT CONNECTS THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND SCENIC BEAUTY OF MOUNT GLEN ROCK TO A VIBRANT COMMUNITY”

Council purchased 127 hectares of the western face of Mount Glen Rock in October 2020 with the intent of developing it as a multi-use recreational facility. Council believes that the site possesses suitability for the development of hiking and mountain bike trails, as well as rock climbing and abseiling.

This preliminary assessment was undertaken in 2021 by TRC Tourism to consider the value of investing in the site to enable these activities.

This assessment aims to inform Council’s approach to further investment into the site either directly, or through grant funding, while also encouraging investment by commercial operators.



THE OPPORTUNITIES

There are several recreational activities that could co-exist on Mount Glen Rock and if these are carefully planned and coordinated, they have the potential to make the Mount Glen Rock Recreational Precinct an attraction for walkers, mountain bikers and climbers.

WALKING

Formalising walking tracks in the precinct and constructing them to an appropriate standard would open good opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy the area.

The summit of Mount Glen Rock is about 160 metres above Esk and has extensive views over the surrounding landscape. A good quality walking path would make the summit accessible to a broad cross section of the community.

Council have recently secured funding for a track to the summit and this project allows for the clearing of an area at the summit to create a lookout.

Further assessment of the summit should be undertaken to analyse visitor risk and the opportunity to create an enhanced experience at the location. This could include an elevated or cantilevered platform to improve views and provide a rest spot and interpretive signage.

An attractive walk to a spectacular summit lookout would be used by existing visitors and cyclists from the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail.

MOUNTAIN BIKING

A previous assessment by World Trail (Feb 2020) estimated there was potential for approximately 10km of mountain bike trails on the freehold land recently purchased by Council. This included a ride to the summit with a separate descent. Extrapolating across the balance of Council managed lands there may be potential for a total of 15 to 20kms of trails.

For a trail destination to be of state or national significance it would need to have 60 to 80km of trails. Because the Mount Glen Rock site is constrained by adjacent land tenures it would not be possible to achieve this length of trail.

Although Mount Glen Rock does not possess the capacity to develop a regionally significant mountain bike destination there may be opportunities to differentiate the development and offer a unique mountain biking experience. Mount Glen Rock has great views of the Esk Township, Brisbane Valley, Lake Wivenhoe and surrounding natural scenery. A trail network incorporating lookout areas would be unique amongst the current SEQ offerings.

A well-designed and constructed trail network capable of operating in wet weather would also offer a different experience. The site is predominately located on freehold land owned by Council and this allows greater scope in construction methodology (i.e. importation of surface materials to the site). The proximity of the trails to the Esk township is also a unique offering.

It is unlikely that mountain bikers would travel to Esk specifically to access this trail experience. The mountain biking facility will encourage longer stays by some existing visitors to the town and extended stopovers by trail users on the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail. There is potential demand for these groups to rent suitable bikes to explore the trail network as part of their visit.

ROCK CLIMBING

The Australian Climbing Association (Queensland) has identified the Mount Glen Rock crags as a high-quality sport climbing site. Sport climbs have fixed climbing aids and the rock type and the cliff face at Mount Glen Rock is well suited to this activity.

The cliff face near the old rubbish tip currently includes 15 routes with potential for approximately 30 routes. Other suitable faces on the mountain are known to ACA (Qld) and they consider it likely there may be potential for up to 100 routes to eventually be established on the mountain.

Because of the quality of the rock, relative accessibility of the crags and proximity to Brisbane, ACA (Qld) think the area has potential to be attractive to climbers nationally and internationally and to attract overnight stays.

Developing the site as a sport climbing site would attract a wider range of participants because sport climbing (with permanent aids in the rock face) is a transitional activity from indoor gyms to the more traditional outdoor climbing disciplines.

OTHER ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES

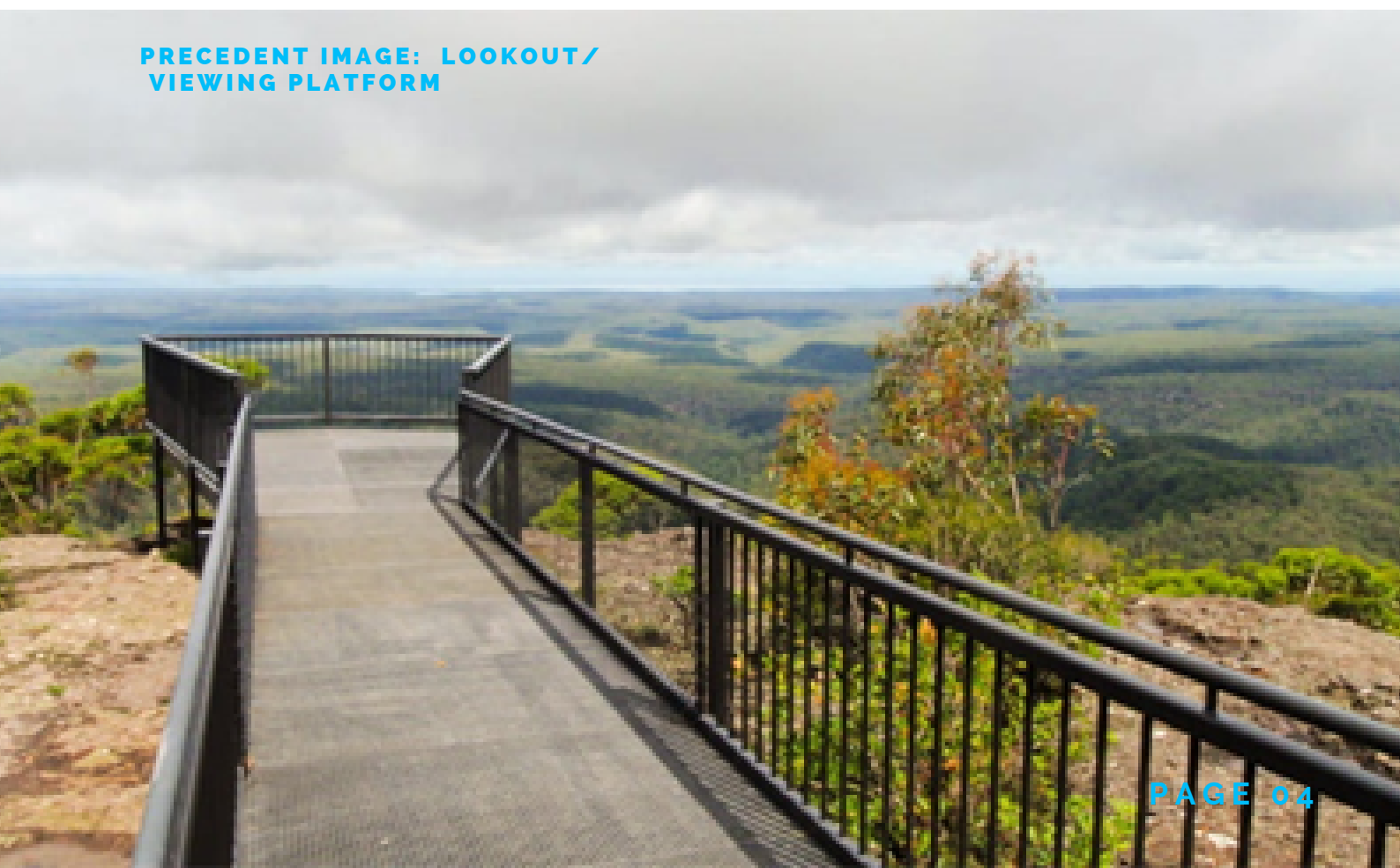
Mount Glen Rock would also be attractive for outdoor based activities such as orienteering and rogaining. These sports usually are conducted as events and do not need any infrastructure such as tracks or trails.

They do need an accessible event village base location, and this would ideally be in town and on the eastern side of the Brisbane Valley Highway, so participants do not need to cross this road to access the bushland.

TRACK HEAD

Good track head facilities will be required to support activities on the mountain, and these should include car parking, wayfinding signage and toilets. These should be located at the three main access points on the western side of the mountain adjacent to town. The identification of an area suitable for use as an event village would facilitate event-based activities on the mountain.

PRECEDENT IMAGE: LOOKOUT/ VIEWING PLATFORM



CONSTRAINTS AND LIMITATIONS

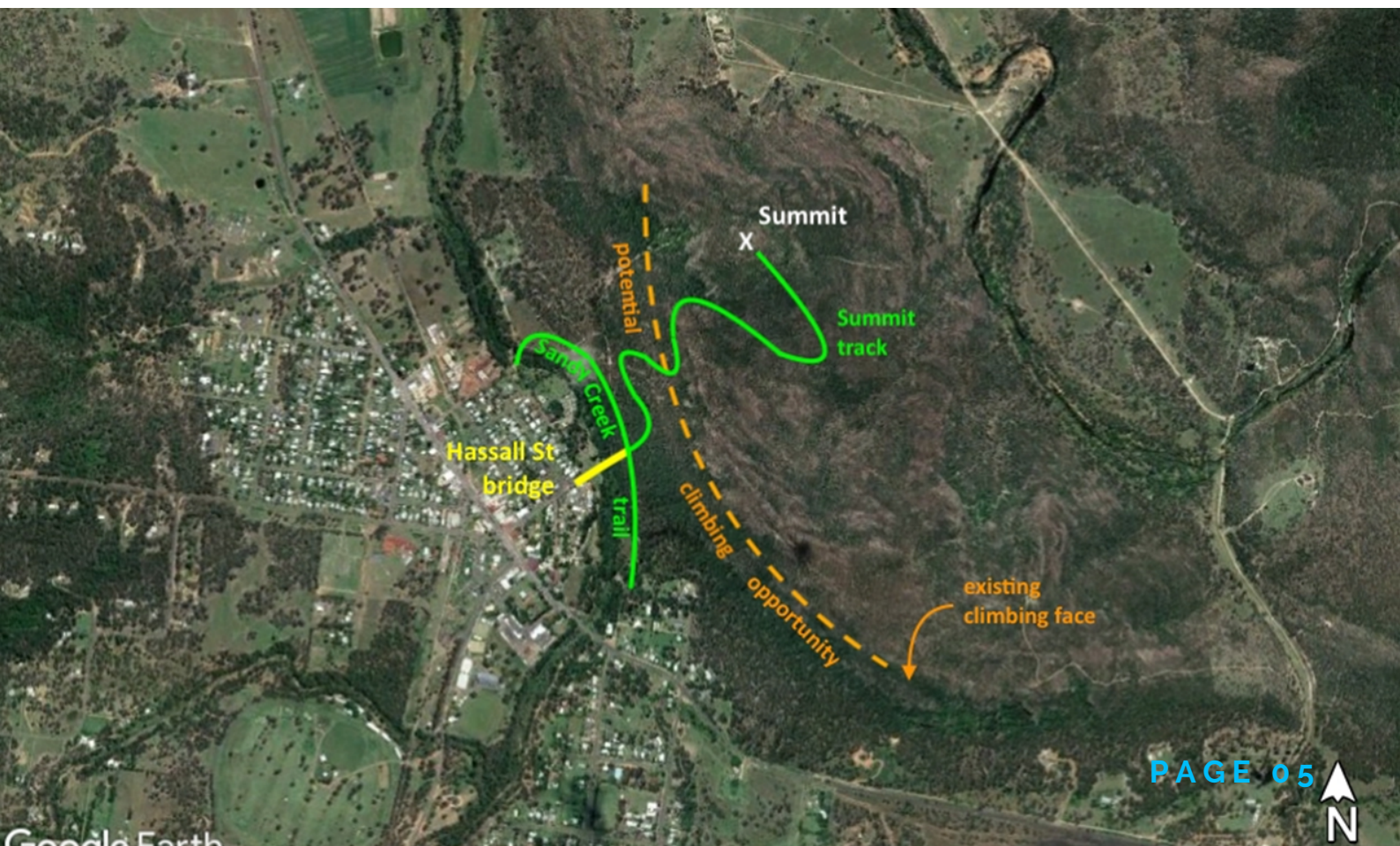
While a range of opportunities exist for Mount Glen Rock some limitations and constraints need to be recognised.

The extent of Mountain Biking trail assumed possible in the current freehold land and reserve area is well below the amount required to be regionally significant and attract visitors from across southeast Queensland.

There are many options for mountain bikers in SE Queensland and this area is unlikely to attract destination bikers.

The rock climbing opportunity will be reliant upon Council finding a suitable governance and risk management arrangement to safely build on current activities.

HIGH LEVEL OUTLINE OF OPPORTUNITIES



THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS

ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- The development of Mount Glen Rock as a recreational hub is consistent with several regional and state strategies and plans.
- The proposed summit walk, and mountain bike opportunities, will likely increase the length of stay for existing visitors to the town and people using the rail trail.
- Economic analysis shows that under a low visitation scenario (10% of existing visitors stay an extra half day) there is an increased annual expenditure of \$387,000 in the town. Over a ten-year period, this amounts to some \$3.8 million in additional economic activity.
- If 30% of existing visitors stay an extra half day, there would be increased spending of \$1.161 million each year, more than \$10m over a ten-year period.
- Cost estimates for these projects are \$120,000 for the summit track and approximately \$400,000 for 10 km of mountain bike trails. Including a lookout platform at the summit, signage and trail head facilities (an additional estimated \$720,000) brings the total potential development cost to approximately \$1.24 million.
- Under the low participation scenario there would be a positive return on this investment within four years. Under the higher, 30% participation rate, a positive return would be achieved in just over a year.
- The potential increase in local economic activity generated by developing Mount Glen Rock as a sport climbing site could be significant. The Australian Climbing Association has estimated that with around 100 climbing routes established on the mountain up to 10,000 climbers could use the site each year. They estimate a daily spend of \$50 per head based on a mix of day and overnight participants. This analysis is based on extrapolation from other climbing sites near Brisbane.
- Establishment of the area as a sport climbing site could occur with little additional infrastructure expenditure by Council apart from access tracks and risk management arrangements.
- Similarly, orienteering and roganing could be facilitated on site with benefits arising from events conducted perhaps four times each year. These events could attract around 100 participants each as well as their family and friends. Events conducted over several days would attract overnight stays in Esk. Again, little additional infrastructure expenditure would be required by Council to realise these benefits.
- Detailed assessment of the climbing, orienteering and roganing opportunities would be required before further assessment of the financial impacts of these activities could be undertaken.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Walking and cycling for transport offer a range of public policy benefits in terms of population health, greenhouse gas emissions, congestion relief and urban liveability.

Use of recreational trails and climbing can offer many social, health-related and cultural benefits to residents and visitors alike.

While it is difficult for these benefits to be quantified in market economy terms, typical benefits include improvements in long term health, leisure, family and community wellbeing; societal benefits which are shared by all.

The proposed developments on Mount Glen Rock will primarily provide active recreational opportunities for locals, increasing social morale as well as providing health benefits for the local population.

An increased profile for the region may also contribute towards enhancing regional pride within the local community. Other regional locations in Australia have successfully increased community participation and spirit through similar tourism-related projects.

Recreational attractions can assist in connecting people to places, and people to people, bringing new residents into small rural communities and enhancing social interaction.

An increase in visitation and economic activity in the region will likely support increased investment and development of service and support industries such as in hospitality, giving residents more choice and variety of cafés or restaurants.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT FOR CYCLING PROJECTS IN QUEENSLAND (SOURCE: TMR STATE OF CYCLING REPORT 2017-2027)

\$1 / \$5

On average, for every \$1 invested in cycling infrastructure returns almost \$5 to Queensland in health benefits, reduced traffic congestion and other benefits.



CYCLING TRENDS AND BENEFITS IN QUEENSLAND (SOURCE: TMR STATE OF CYCLING REPORT 2017-2027)



8/10

cyclists in Queensland ride regularly for recreation

#1

Health is the motivation for men and women



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