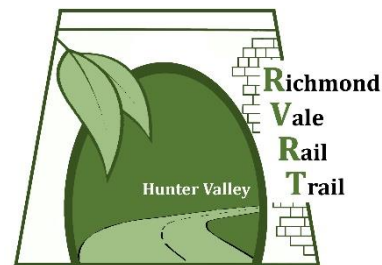


RVRT – Western Section

“Stockrington to Kurri Kurri”

Lake Macquarie & Cessnock LGAs

May 12th
2022



Review of Environmental Factors (REF)

On Exhibition

Update #1

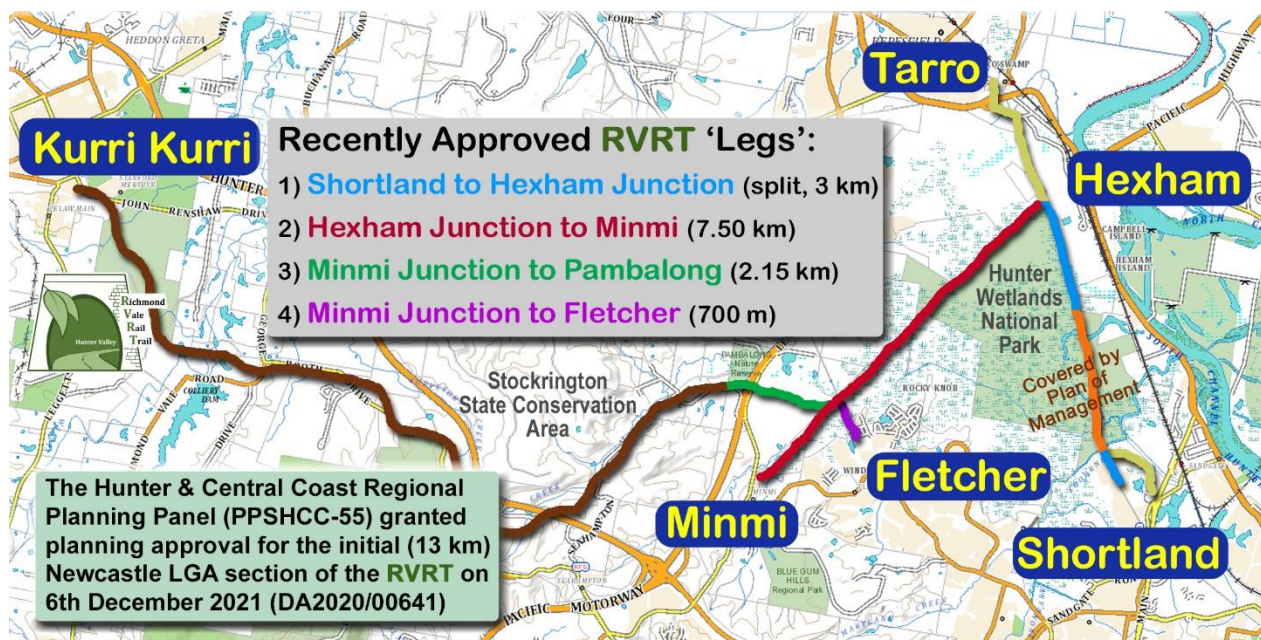
Produced by RVRT Supporters' Group. Contacts: W: <https://www.richmondvalerailtrail.org.au/>
F: <https://www.facebook.com/richmondrailtrail/> E: rvrt.inc@gmail.com T: 0433570920

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Trail Overview: “Connecting Hunter Region communities, tourism and conservation areas”

- The 32km RVRT (40km with connections) will be a **unique, shared pathway** running from Shortland (near the Hunter Wetlands Centre) to Kurri Kurri (Log of Knowledge Park), connecting 13 state suburb areas and four LGAs (Newcastle, Lake Macquarie, Cessnock and Maitland).
- The RVRT runs primarily along the former Richmond Vale **railway alignment**, as well as utilising Hunter Water Corporation **pipeline corridors** (e.g., Shortland to Tarro segment and Fletcher connection).
- It will be a **multi-purpose trail**, supporting a **broad range of user groups** (e.g., commuting and recreational cyclists, walkers, runners, bird watchers, reduced mobility users, family and social groups).
- In addition to cycling safety, health and lifestyle, and economic and tourism benefits, the RVRT will: foster linkages between **metropolitan and rural communities** and their attractions; facilitate access to **multiple high conservation value areas** that were previously inaccessible (e.g., Hunter Wetlands National Park, Pambalong Nature Reserve, Stockrington and Werakata State Conservation Areas); enhance our cultural and heritage awareness and appreciation; and provide opportunities for **future regional network connections**, effectively becoming **the spine** that links an array of Hunter communities, cycleways & trails.



Planning Stage: Obtaining planning approvals for all sections of the trail is the current goal (i.e., being 'shovel ready'), which will facilitate co-ordinated funding, construction, management & promotional strategies.

As illustrated in the Figure, planning approval was granted in December 2021 for the initial (13km) 'coastal wetlands' section of the trail within Newcastle LGA (Shortland to Hexham and Minmi/Fletcher). The 17km RVRT Western Section within Lake Macquarie and Cessnock LGAs (Stockrington to Kurri Kurri), shown in **Brown** in the Figure, requires a comprehensive **Review of Environmental Factors (REF)**, which is currently **On Exhibition**.

Some Useful REF Information:

The *Review of Environmental Factors (REF)* [March 2022] presents **Concept Design Plans** ([Appendix A](#)) for the **RVRT Western Section**, together with key trail features and benefits, environmental assessments, legislative and management considerations, and potential mitigation measures. Based on the feedback received and other considerations, **the two Councils need to separately determine whether this proposal for the RVRT Western Section should proceed largely as outlined in the REF.**

This is a critical stage in RVRT approvals; however, it is only the beginning: **“Extensive ongoing consultation is and will be undertaken during the future design, construction and operational stages of the proposal. This would include negotiation with affected landowners, other stakeholders and the community”** (REF, page 48). **“The final design and management of the Richmond Vale Rail Trail on National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) managed lands will be required to comply with relevant NPWS standards and policies”** (REF, page 19).

REF-related Trail Features (Preferred Options)

- Typically, the path will have a **3m wide flexible sealed pavement** (e.g., granular material overlaid with asphalt or concrete), primarily following existing **disused rail alignments** (Lake Macquarie LGA: 2.7km; and Cessnock LGA: 14.4km). [Eastern trail section - Newcastle LGA: 14.9km, including pipeline corridors]
- Restoration and repair of **three historic brick railway tunnels** (two in Lake Macquarie LGA).
- As the majority of the trail is on publicly owned land (Crown Lands, NPWS), over time, there will be **enhanced public access** to Pambalong Nature Reserve, Stockrington & Werakata State Conservation Areas; **appropriate access agreements and operational plans** will also be negotiated with all landowners, together with **mitigation measures**, where required (e.g., fencing, screening, signage, management measures).
- Construction of **new concrete bridges** and demolition of existing dilapidated timber bridges (and possible repurposing): 15m two-span bridge at Surveyors Creek; 70m single-span bridge at Wallis Creek; and diverted short culvert crossing at Werakata Creek.
- Four **at grade local road crossings**: Dog Hole Road, Stockrington; Quarry Access Road and Hunter Expressway construction yard (off George Booth Drive), Richmond Vale; and Pokolbin Street, Kurri Kurri.
- Provision for **new car parks, other amenities** (e.g., toilet and shelter areas, bike facilities, water fountains, potential picnic sites), and **construction related facilities** (e.g., compound and stockpile areas) at various access points (illustrated in [Figure 3-1](#)), together with **exploration of additional access locations** within Stockrington State Conservation Area (e.g., mid-trail precinct).
- Plans to build a **high quality shared trail** will also be advantageous from a variety of perspectives: minimising ongoing environmental impacts; encouraging a wide range of users, including those with reduced mobility; and **reducing longer-term maintenance costs** to Councils and other stakeholders.
- **Potential negative impacts** on the local environment are also considered to be **relatively minor and manageable**, mainly because the RVRT uses existing embankments and previously cleared areas.
- Importantly, initial development approval for this trail section will **add to previous approvals** within Newcastle LGA, helping to facilitate **integrated trail development** across the Hunter Region; after all, the many regional benefits of the trial will only be fully realised when all of the key segments are in place.
- A trail **construction timeline** of 12-18 months is currently anticipated (after receipt of required funding).
- As noted in the REF, a broad range of trail features will be **‘determined/confirmed during detailed design’** (e.g., pavement type, parking & amenities layouts/inclusions, fencing, landscaping) – but if you have **any specific suggestions**, raise them in your submission (in addition to acknowledging the RVRT’s benefits).

REF Documentation (See page 4 in this REF Update for Document List & Links)

- Documents currently on exhibition comprise: **RVRT Western Section Specific Information & Assessments** (REF main text, Appendices A, F & K) and **Assessments Covering the Whole Trail** (Appendices B to E, and G to J), which were also exhibited by Newcastle City Council during August-Sept., 2020.
- If you don’t have time to read these documents, we have also collated a 50-page **“Extracted Summaries & Recommendations”** document ([website link](#)), which includes the REF Executive Summary & Conclusion and Conclusions and/or Recommendations from Appendices B to K. The REF also summarises most Appendices.
- The Executive Summary to [Appendix G](#) (*Socio-economic Impact Assessment*) also provides a **good overview of the whole trail and its regional context**, while **Table 5-2** from that Appendix (pages 54 to 60) illustrates the broad range of potential **‘Trip types and users’ experiences**. As detailed in [Appendix G](#), the estimated **benefit cost ratio** for the project (**BCR = 2.40**) **“... indicates that the level of expected benefits provided by the RVRT is close to two and a half times the level of expected costs”** (page 79).

How You Can Help:

Please “Have Your Say” & Help Make the RVRT a Reality!

The REF for the “Stockrington to Kurri Kurri” (Lake Macquarie & Cessnock) trail section is currently **On Public Exhibition** by Cessnock City Council, on behalf of both Councils (who will then undertake their own approvals processes). Direct link to Cessnock City Council’s “[Have Your Say](#)” page.

We Still Need to Demonstrate Strong Community Support for the RVRT

Written submissions should be titled: “Richmond Vale Rail Trail REF” and addressed to **The General Manager**. They can be submitted via Email, Post, or In Person.

Email: recreation@cessnock.nsw.gov.au
Post: PO Box 152, Cessnock NSW 2325
In person: 62-78 Vincent Street, Cessnock NSW 2325



Everyone is encouraged to send emails/letters supporting the RVRT (regardless of where you live), including personal and organisational submissions. **All contributions are valued and appreciated.** You are also encouraged to **tell other people and groups** about the current exhibition period.

Draw on your own personal knowledge and experiences, based on the current documentation and/or what you already know about the RVRT or similar community pathways elsewhere (e.g., as a cyclist, walker, bird watcher, fun-runner, wheelchair user, Fernleigh Track consumer, family member or carer, etc).

- The **Possible Talking Points** below are provided only as a guide.
- A detailed submission isn’t necessary. Focus on what is **most important and/or relevant to you** and, preferably, **use your own words**.
- Please **clearly indicate your overall support for the RVRT** at the beginning of your submission.
- Areas that you **might like to mention** include: What the RVRT **means to you and your family** (personally); **likely RVRT-related benefits** for your local area and the Hunter Region; future local and regional **opportunities** arising from the RVRT; and any **specific suggestions** that you have (relating either to the **Lake Macquarie & Cessnock** Section or the whole trail) – please try to be constructive.

Thanks

Possible Talking Points to Consider:

The RVRT ... **Health and Lifestyle Benefits**

... **promotes active lifestyles**, which will have positive physical and mental health benefits;
... will benefit a **broad range of users**, across all age groups;
... encourages locals and visitors to actively **explore an array of Hunter Valley landscapes and attractions**;

Community Access and Connection Benefits

... provides a **safe, pleasant pathway between communities**;
... thoughtfully considers **users with reduced mobility**;
... **strengthens Hunter recreational opportunities** & promotes connections between **metropolitan and rural communities**;
... will foster **precinct development** and a **mixture of cycling & other activities for families** (encouraging return visits);

Cycling-specific Benefits

... **increases safety** via alternatives to road network usage;
... **facilitates daily bicycle commuting**, reducing emissions and road congestion;
... will promote increased **recreational cycling** by casual riders, as well as those who enjoy a longer group ride;
... will add to the other dedicated local cycleways (e.g., Fernleigh & Tramway Tracks), encouraging **multi-day regional cycling visits**;
... will improve the Hunter’s **image as an active lifestyle and**

cycling destination;

... will **expand the Australian rail trail network**, which already contributes positively to many communities;

Environmental and Heritage Benefits

... improves accessibility to a **host of environmental attractions** adjacent to the RVRT (e.g., coastal wetlands, nature reserves, and national parks);
... includes well-constructed **bridges and boardwalks**;
... promotes **biodiversity and habitat protection** (through education, specialised groups & community participation);
... increases access to local environmental, **cultural and heritage features**, promoting **community appreciation** (including indigenous, mining and rail heritage);
... **minimises potential negative impacts** on the local environment, by using previously cleared areas;

Economic, Tourism & Other Regional Benefits

... is **clearly cost effective (BCR = 2.4)**, so the sooner we build it, the better;
... will **support local businesses & new initiatives** (e.g., trail side coffee shops, bike hire, fun-runs, guided walks);
... will further stimulate **local economic growth & diversity**;
... will provide the **spine for future regional network connections** (e.g., to the Newcastle Cyclesafe Network, BGH Regional Park, other Maitland and Cessnock trails); &
... has such **obvious merits**, it should have already been built.

RVRT – Review of Environmental Factors (REF) - Cessnock & Lake Macquarie LGA
Section: May 2022 REF Document List & Links (Filenames, Sizes, and Coverage)

| Key Documents (in Sequence) | Document Filename (Linked to RVRT Inc. website) | File Size | Coverage (& Document Year) |
|--|--|--|---|
| Works & Infrastructure Report (WI15-2022) to Council | Doc01 - Works and Infrastructure Report WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri | 1.1 MB, 9 pages | Cessnock City Council Meeting (April 20 th 2022) |
| Review of Environmental Factors (REF) – RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri: | | | |
| REF – Complete document, including Appendices | Doc02 - Complete REF Document - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri | 164.9 MB, 1,644 pages (Too large for our website) | Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs (March 2022) - NEW |
| REF – Main text: Sections 1-5 | Doc03 - REF Sections 1-5 without Appendices - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri | 11.8 MB, 59 pages | Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs (March 2022) - NEW |
| REF – Main text: Sections 6-10 | Doc04 - REF Sections 6-10 without Appendices - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri | 4.5 MB, 90 pages | Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs (March 2022) - NEW |
| Appendix A – Design drawings | Doc05 - Appendix A - Design Drawings - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 40.3 MB, 35 pages | Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs (March 2021) - NEW |
| Appendix B – Hydrology and hydraulics assessment | Doc06 - Appendix B - Hydrology and Hydraulics - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 1.79 MB, 51 pages | Whole Trail (March 2019) |
| Appendix C – Geotechnical assessment | Doc07 - Appendix C - Geotechnical Assessment - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 24.8 MB, 284 pages | Whole Trail (April 2019) |
| Appendix D – Phase 1 Contaminated site assessment | Doc08 - Appendix D - Phase 1 Contaminated Site Assessment - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 9.6 MB, 116 pages | Whole Trail (March 2019) |
| Appendix E – Traffic and transport assessment | Doc09 - Appendix E - Traffic and Transport Assessment - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 1.6 MB, 36 pages | Whole Trail (March 2019) |
| Appendix F – Flora and fauna | Doc10 - Appendix F - Flora and Fauna - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 17.7 MB, 203 pages | Cessnock and Lake Macquarie LGAs (Sept. 2020) - NEW |
| Appendix G – Socio-economic impact assessment | Doc11 - Appendix G - Socio-economic Impact - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 5.5 MB, 131 pages | Whole Trail (Sept. 2019) |
| Appendix H – Visual impact assessment | Doc12 - Appendix H - Visual Impact - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 6.1 MB, 41 pages | Whole Trail (June 2017) |
| Appendix I – Aboriginal archaeological survey report | Doc13 - Appendix I - Aboriginal Archaeological Survey - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 9.8 MB, 153 pages | Whole Trail (March 2019) |
| Appendix J – Statement of heritage impact | Doc14 - Appendix J - Heritage Impact - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 24.6 MB, 354 pages | Whole Trail (March 2019) |
| Appendix K – Strategic Options and Engineering Heritage Assessment Report | Doc15 - Appendix K - Strategic Options and Engineering Heritage - WI15-2022 - RVRT - Stockrington to Kurri Kurri - REF | 8.9 MB, 91 pages | Cessnock LGA - Surveyor’s Creek and Wallis Creek Bridges (June 2017) – NEW |
| Extracted Summaries & Recommendations | REF Executive Summary & Conclusion and Conclusions and/or Recommendations from Appendices B to K | 6.3 MB, 50 pages | Collated Document (RVRT Inc. website) |
| <i>Note: NEW – Not part of the exhibited documents for the Newcastle LGA section of the trail (August-Sept. 2020).</i> | | | |