

**Interviewee:** Ellen Blake

**Title:** Walker Advocate

**Interview Date:** 01/31/24.

**Interview Time:** 12:00-1:00 PM

Can you please tell us about your experience as a walker and your role within the walking?

Follow up: As a walker do you ever work with the GWRC?

- “I’m a part of the living street pedestrian advocacy group”
- “We are interested in making more friendly communities and trying to get people to walk more often”
  - o Just a matter of getting people to do that more
- Especially interested in everyday walking
  - o That is where the most impact is
- Coordinator for the wellington region

Do you consider yourself an advocate for the walking community?

- She is in the project design liaison group for Riverlink
  - o “It is a big urban design process that is part of making the Hutt a better place to live”
  - o Making it a shorter railway line
- “I was involved in RiverLink before the liason group was even started”
  - o She was interested in how it would improve things for pedestrians
- “Footpaths are pedestrian space which is really important”
  - o Riverlink
    - “They want to remove all the footpaths and there will be more traffic lights to cross. These are two key things”
    - Proposing having a shared path on one side
    - “Riverlink is not a pedestrian improvement”
  - o It is important that people feel safe
  - o “Walking is a normal everyday thing for people to do”
  - o “most adults (especially young people) feel more comfortable moving”
  - o For children its really unsafe

- “They will just jump on the road if there is someone big coming behind them. They don’t know better”
- “For older people and people with disabilities. They have issues with e-bikes, scooters or cars whizzing past them, its unsafe”
  - Have continuously been told that people won’t go out for these reasons
  - Everyone should be able to experience “feeling sociable and getting out”

Questions she started to ask:

“Why are we pushing commuter cyclists off the road? Who is pushing for them to go on to the corridor when they have a right and can safely travel on the road? And who is paying for that?”

Cyclists on road or path?

- “We need to have proper footpaths and proper cycle lanes”
- “We should be providing for cyclists on the main road”
- The riverbank has up till now been considered a recreational space
- Need to “provide proper good standard for cyclists in public spaces”

Can you explain how your experience as a walker relates to the Hutt River Corridor?

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

- “The numbers of people walking along it show that it's important to the community”
- “We have to look after them. It's really good for people to be out in the green and the blue”
- It can just be hanging out, splashing around
- “It should be you can go there and recreate in the way that you choose and be safe about it”

Do you believe the Corridor, in its current condition, is well-adapted for walkers?

- “I’ve never walked the whole length”
- “If its a hot day its really hot, if its windy its really windy, its really exposed”

- “Some of the walkways along the top of the stop banks are very narrow and if there are bikes on there it gets very narrow”
- “Sometimes the exists are too far apart, I don’t always want to be walking 2 km”
- It's not a great walking experience because there’s not enough trees/greenery
  - o The top of the stop banks are too narrow
  - o Sometimes it’s too long which poses a safety concern

What is your ideal situation for walkers within the River Corridor?

Follow up: what would it take to accomplish this?

- Having a separate path for walking
  - o “Having people walk dogs on lead is okay having them off lead is always a problem”
- Having places to stop and hangout
- “If there are going to be commuter cyclists then I definitely need to be away from them. Walkers definitely need to be away from them the speed difference is too much”
- “It would be nice to see more things for families”
- Need more seats
- “If you want people to be out there at night you need to think about lighting”
- “Things like having water fountains”
- “Places with a bit of shade that can help when its too hot or too wet”
- “When you pave it there would be an increase in motor vehicles going fast. Need to get the surface right. Lots of other surfaces that people can use that is not gravel but is not paved”

Are you a user of the Hutt River Corridor?

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

- Get off at melling station
- Walk around petone area
- Nice swimming spots up towards upper hutt

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

- “Yes shared path design is designing for conflict”
  - “It makes people crossed with each other”
  - “Even if you have a 5 meter wide track there will still be conflict”
  - People weaving in and out makes people uncomfortable
- “Good design means its easy for figure out what to do without having to figure the rules”

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

What is your opinion of dogs being on or off lead in the River Corridor which is a shared space?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- “Dogs if they are off lead should be in a fences area. It keeps dogs safer and it keeps people who don’t want to interact with them happy as well”
  - Also keeps them going to the bathroom in the same area

What is your opinion on cyclists using bells while passing other users?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- “They have no right to overtake anything, you have to wait your turn”
- “There is the whole issue of can you even hear them”
- “Asking people to take their headphones off is a step way too far”
- “You don’t get to pass just cause you are in a hurry, and you want to”
- Commuter route and the reason they should be on the road is its tidal
  - Some of them go really fast, 22km/hr avg for cyclists
- Don't design it for conflict

What is your opinion on visitors using headphones in a shared space like the River Corridor?

Follow up: how does this affect your use of the trail?

- Answered in last question

Do you believe the trails along the corridor should be expanded? If so, why?

- “Ask somebody who uses them more”
- “Some of them are way too narrow”

- “Need to see more on and off places or make it clear where those places are or how far it is to the next exit”

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

Follow up: Would this affect you, if so, how?

- “the river is a natural barrier, there are some people who want to go on the western side and some people want to go on the eastern side”
- “Perhaps there is a better route then the eastern side such as the road. It should be getting properly funded like every other transportation route”

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

What do you believe is the best way to go about adding a commuter route in the Hutt Valley, and is the River Corridor the space that should be used?

- “If we are going to make the river the main way for people to walk or commute, what do you do when it floods?”
- On the river it can be quite muddy
- “People who walk spend more time on the trail because they are moving slower, thats where the resources should be focused on”

You have mentioned that you used another track more, can you explain which one and why?

- Uses tracks in wellington more
  - o Based on convience