

# PUTTING COLLIE ON THE MAP:

gearing up for new  
mountain bike  
and hiking trails







A \$10 million investment to create 180 kilometres of hiking and mountain bike trails in and around Collie will put the south-west town on the map as Western Australia's premier trail town, and boost the local economy.

by Stuart Harrison, Rod Annear, Paul McCluskey and Rhianna King.





Located 213 kilometres from Perth's CBD and 60 kilometres from Bunbury, Collie has long been popular for adventure camping, water skiing and outdoor activities. Now, thanks to a \$10 million State Government investment, Collie is set to become a 'Trail Town' and home to a world-class network of trails that will attract mountain bike riders and bushwalkers from across Australia and the world.

## INTUITIVE INVESTMENT

In 2015, the *South West Mountain Bike Master Plan*, which was prepared by WA's peak cycling body WestCycle, with support from the then Department of Parks and Wildlife, was released. This document identified five future

mountain bike development opportunities in the south-west – at Margaret River, Pemberton, Dunsborough, Nannup and Collie. Each area was selected for its ability to provide visitors with a unique experience – Dunsborough for its magnificent coastline, Margaret River for its proximity to 'gourmet' experiences, Nannup for its rolling hills and Pemberton for its tall trees. Collie was already popular among mountain bike riders and hikers for its stunning river valleys, deep gorges, granite outcrops and diverse vegetation types, and the opportunity was identified to capitalise on these natural features and develop it into an internationally significant trail destination.

In April 2019, a significant step in realising Collie's potential as a premier Trail

Town was taken, with the announcement of the Collie Adventure Trails initiative, which will see \$10 million invested in mountain bike and hiking trails for the area. A key outcome of this initiative is to grow and diversify Collie's economy, create jobs across a range of industries and maintain a vibrant community.

The construction of the trails will generate local employment opportunities. And it is estimated that more than 30 jobs will be created in the tourism sector to cater to the more than 11,000 additional visitors to the area each year, of whom 6901 are expected to stay overnight. Financial modelling predicts that these visitors will inject \$3.78 million per year into Collie, which will generate \$6.92 million per year in the wider community.

### *Nuts and bolts of building the trails*

Constructing and managing the trails will be led by DBCA with support from a project reference group, made up of representatives from the Shire of Collie; Tourism WA; the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries; Collie Chamber of Commerce; Department of the Premier and Cabinet; and the South West Development Commission. Advice and input will also be sought through WestCycle and the Collie Mountain Bike Club.

The trails will be constructed in line with the *Western Australian Mountain Bike Management Guidelines* released in August 2019 at the Trails Forum. These guidelines inform the methods for site assessments, and outline relevant environmental legislation and methods of managing flora, fauna, Aboriginal and other heritage considerations, and other issues such as weeds, pests and dieback. As part of this best-practice approach, there is also a disturbed approval system, which comprehensively assesses values that need to be considered and protected.

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**Main** Mountain bike riding grows in popularity each year.

**Inset left** 180 kilometres of mountain bike and walking trails are set to be created.

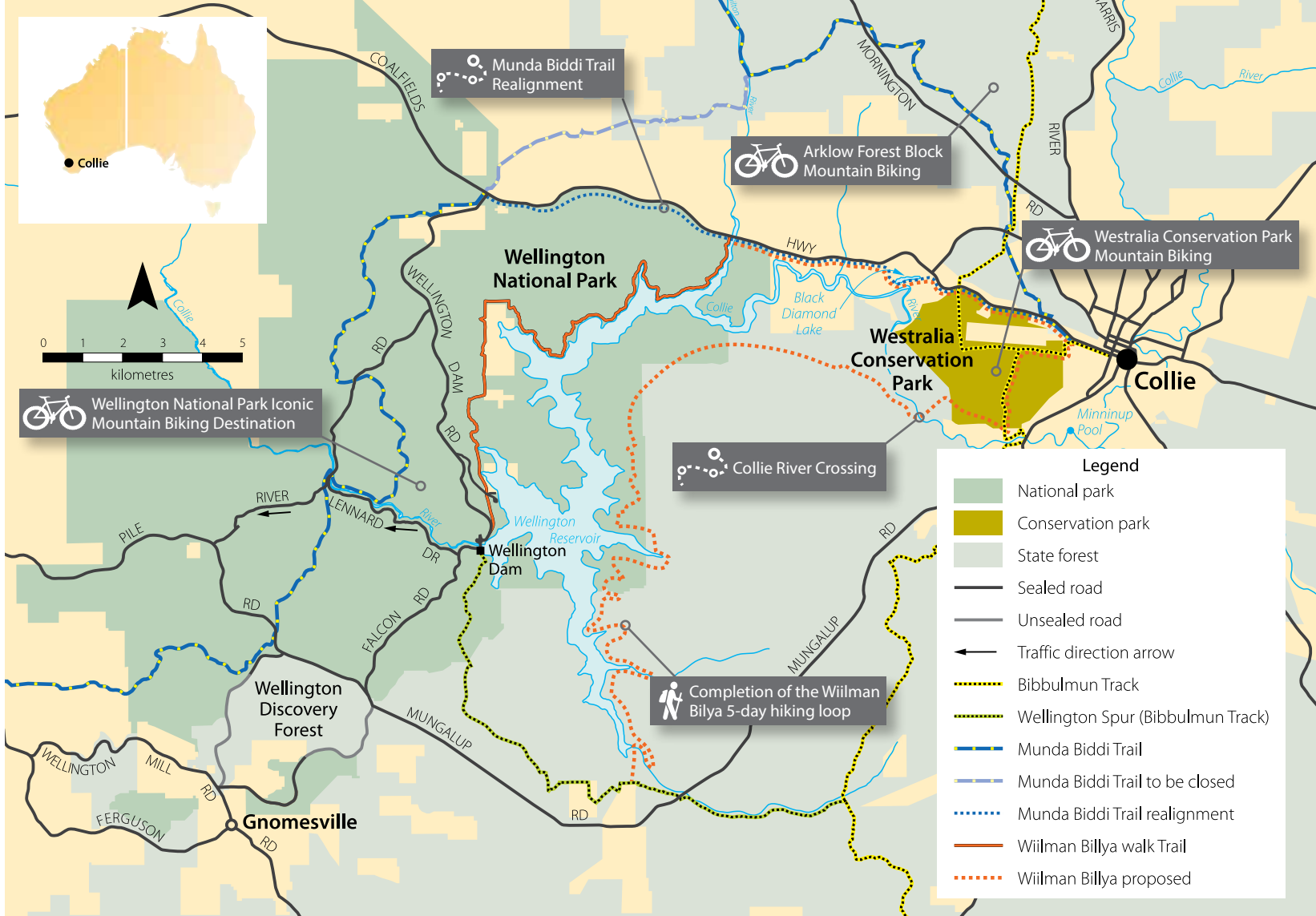
*Photos – Rod Annear/DBCA*

**Inset right** The Bibbulmun Track passes through Collie.

*Photo – Bibbulmun Track Foundation*

**Above left** Wellington National Park.  
*Photo – David Willcox*

**Above** Mountain bike events attract local, national and international visitors.  
*Photos – Rod Annear/DBCA*



This will build on the already growing popularity of Wellington National Park among visitors who travel there to enjoy recently upgraded campground facilities, toilets, barbecue shelters, roads, paths and day-use areas, as well as ‘glamping’ opportunities (see also ‘Too posh to pitch’, *LANDSCOPE*, Summer 2016–17). These facilities are the result of a \$5.2 million investment in the Collie–Wellington area since 2013–14. A further \$6.8 million is earmarked to improve tourist roads and establish Lake Kepwari as a water-based recreation destination.

### ON YA’ BIKE

Mountain bike riding is one of the world’s fastest growing recreational, sport and tourism activities and mountain bike tourism is becoming increasingly popular. It is estimated that more than 120,000 mountain bikes are sold in Western Australia each year and almost

half a million Western Australians own one. But it’s not just getting out on the trails that is increasing in popularity; crowds at mountain bike events draw competitors, spectators and families and events often sell out quickly.

Collie’s topography and landscape provide mountain bike riders with an array of landscapes to enjoy and challenges to tackle. The spectacular Collie River, which stretches from the town through Westralia Conservation Park and Wellington National Park; imposing granite outcrops; lush vegetation; and steep and varied natural features create an ideal foundation on which to build the world-class trails network.

The cornerstone of the Collie Adventure Trails initiative is a 65-kilometre network of high-quality, dedicated mountain bike trails in Wellington National Park, including ‘epic’ standard trails, which will suit for



**Above** A 35-kilometre trail network in Westralia Conservation Park will link Collie with attractions such as Minnipup Pool. *Photo – David Wilcox*





hosting national and international events. The area chosen for the trails will guide users through spectacular scenery and offer height differences of up to 240 metres along the valley. Concept planning has been completed for these trails and it is expected that some trails will be opened in 2019–20 with the rest opened in stages over the next four years.

The development of a 35-kilometre world-class trails network at Westralia Conservation Park is another feature of the strategy. Located on the western fringe of Collie, riders will be able to access the trails right from the town centre. From there, the trails will take riders past some of the most iconic scenery in the region, and link to Black Diamond Lake and Minnipup Pool.

A river crossing at Westralia Conservation Park will support the local mountain bike and walk trails by enabling trails along both sides of the spectacular Collie River Valley. It will also provide opportunities for improving the alignment of the Bibbulmun Track, which currently detours to the road to cross the river.

A new five-kilometre section of mountain bike trail at Arklow Forest Block – located north of Collie – was opened in September 2019. A further 11-kilometre section of trail at Arklow Forest Block is planned for 2019–20. These additional trails will complement recently built trails and now provides users with more than 20 kilometres to explore.

The trails here are suitable for a range of riders – from beginners to advanced – as well as for adaptive mountain bikes, including hand-cycles, leg-cycles, tandem and gravity bikes. This provides

opportunities for people with disabilities to access the trails.

Another component of the Collie Adventure Trails initiative is the realignment of the Munda Biddi Trail – the 1000-kilometre trail that runs from Mundaring to Albany. Currently, the 50,000 riders who use the Munda Biddi Trail each year do not pass directly through Collie. However, a 20-kilometre realignment will link Wellington National Park with Collie and divert the trail off sealed roads and into bush areas, enhancing the off-road experience. This will provide opportunities for multi-day cycling loop tours and encourage users to take advantage of the local tourism opportunities.

## TAKE A HIKE

WA's premier walking trail – the Bibbulmun Track – journeys 1000 kilometres from Kalamunda to Albany and attracts 303,000 hikers each year. Collie is one of the towns that the track passes through, but walkers will have one more reason to visit the area when a 50-kilometre addition to the Wiilman Bilya walk trail is complete in 2020–21.

The extension of the existing 20-kilometre trail will provide hikers with a five-day hiking loop, or shorter day options, that start and finish in the Collie town centre. The trail, which is named after the traditional Noongar group (Wiilman) and the Noongar word for 'river' (Bilya), travels along the Collie River into Wellington National Park and

### Trails WA mobile app

For access to information about WA trails, download the free *TrailsWA* app. You can filter searches for information about:

- location
- trail type
- level of difficulty
- time needed
- wheelchair accessibility
- dog friendliness
- WA's top trails.

Each trail description contains information about:

- facilities on site
- road access
- directions to the start
- best time to undertake it
- how long it will take.

The app was developed in partnership between Trails WA and the then departments of Parks and Wildlife, Regional Development and Sport and Recreation.

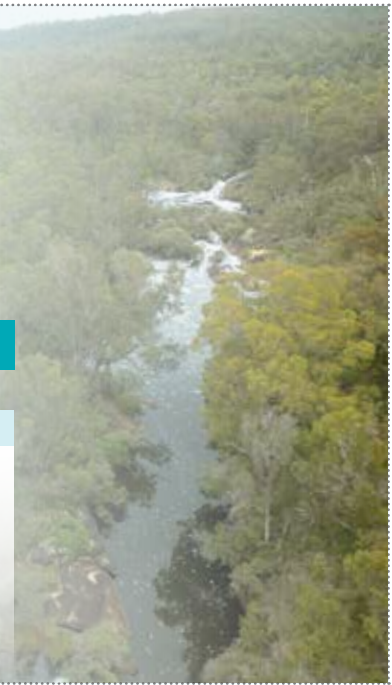


**Above** Natural features challenge riders.  
*Photo – Rod Annear/DBCA*

**Above right** The Bibbulmun Track attracts 303,000 hikers each year.  
*Photo – Paul McCluskey/DBCA*

## Anticipated timeline

Works	Works	Works	Works
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain bike trails in Wellington National Park and Arklow forest block</li> <li>Wiilman Bilya walk trail</li> <li>Trail Town marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain bike trails in Wellington National Park and Westralia Conservation Park</li> <li>Collie River crossing</li> <li>Trail Town marketing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain bike trails in Wellington National Park</li> <li>Collie River crossing</li> </ul>	
↓	↓	↓	
<b>2019/20</b>	<b>2020/21</b>	<b>2021/22</b>	<b>2022/23</b>
↑	↑	↑	↑
Projects completed	Projects completed	Projects completed	Projects completed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Trails in Arklow Forest Block</li> <li>Some trails in Wellington National Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wiilman Bilya walk trail</li> <li>Some trails in Wellington National Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mountain bike trails in Westralia Conservation Park</li> <li>Extension to Munda Biddi Trail</li> <li>Trail Town marketing</li> <li>Some trails in Wellington National Park</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All mountain bike trails in Wellington National Park</li> <li>Collie River crossing</li> </ul>



then around the Wellington Dam – the largest reservoir in the south-west. Users are guided by a walking boot symbol through stunning jarrah, marri and yarri forests, across a series of bridges to Nyingarn – a group campsite, which can accommodate groups up to 25.

Those who would like to add a bit more adventure to their experience will be able to swap their hiking boots for their kayak or canoe, and paddle between Nyingarn and future campsites within Wellington National Park.

### CENTRED ON COLLIE

While much of the work of this initiative will be in developing the trails themselves, a key aspect will be to establish Collie as a Trail Town. As home to the primary Trail Town facilities, Collie will house bike hire and repair facilities, trail information, toilets and showers. By providing these amenities, Collie will be an attractive destination for mountain bike riders and hikers to begin and end their journey, and as a mid-way pit stop. By creating a network of trails around the town centre, Collie will be put on the map as an attractive ‘multi-night stay’ destination. This will benefit local businesses who service the visitors, and provide facilities that make the region a more attractive place to live.

The new trail network will also provide opportunities for new businesses to cater to adventure and eco-tourism in the area, such as a commercial bike hire business in Wellington National Park. There will also be training, employment, heritage interpretation and business development opportunities for the local Aboriginal community.

### ONWARD JOURNEY

The new trail network will be completed in stages over the next four years and DBCA is exploring options for new events on the trails. Events have the potential to accelerate the exposure of Collie as a world-class trail destination and showcase what this magnificent area has to offer visitors from around the world.

Broadly speaking, these trails will play a role in arresting the trend of Australians becoming increasingly inactive, overweight and screen obsessed. Research has shown it is especially important for kids to spend time outdoors in natural areas for healthy development and wellbeing, and to foster an appreciation of the environment. Mountain bike riding and bushwalking are activities that the whole family can enjoy, and by encouraging a new generation onto these trails and into our natural areas, we are shaping the advocates of the future.



Top A new bridge will cross Collie River.

Above There will be trails for the whole family to enjoy.

Photos – Rod Annear/ DBCA

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