



Robe Trails Strategy 2026



Photo: South Australian Tourism Commission - Adam Bruzzone

Vision: A trail system that is low-impact, fit-for-purpose and uniquely Robe, offering diverse trail experiences that connect our landscapes, history and community for locals and visitors alike.

Acknowledgement of Country

The District Council of Robe acknowledges the traditional owners of the Land, the Boandik and the Meintangk people where we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We celebrate the stories, culture and traditions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander elders of all communities who also work and live on this Land.

Executive Summary

The Robe Trails Strategy 2026 provides a long-term framework for the development of a network of shared, non-vehicle recreational trails across the Robe region.

The strategy recognises the unique coastal, lake and conservation landscapes that surround Robe and identifies opportunities to connect these environments through a network of accessible recreational trails for residents and visitors.

The proposed trail network will support a variety of activities including walking, cycling, horse riding and canoe or paddle experiences. These trails are intended to provide low-impact recreational opportunities that promote health and wellbeing, environmental appreciation and sustainable tourism.

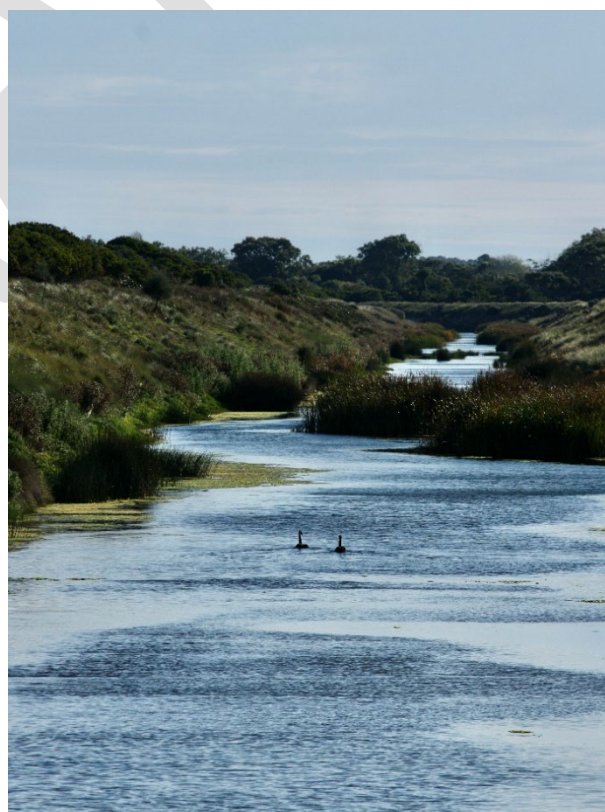
Through community consultation and the work of the Trails Project Team, several trail opportunities have been identified that represent achievable projects capable of delivering early community benefit while also contributing to a broader long-term network.

The strategy emphasises:

- Protection of environmental and cultural values
- Accessible and inclusive recreational opportunities
- Sustainable low-impact tourism experiences
- Strong partnerships with regional agencies and community groups

The strategy also recognises the potential for Robe to develop a reputation as a destination for nature-based walking and outdoor recreation within the Limestone Coast region.

This Strategy is a high-level framework intended to guide the development of recreational trails across the Robe region. Detailed planning, design and approvals will be undertaken through individual trail implementation plans. As projects are delivered, Council will continue to refine this Strategy based on community feedback, agency engagement and on-ground experience.



*Swans in Drain L, proposed Woakwine Trail
Photo: Alex Graham*

Introduction

Robe is uniquely positioned between coastal landscapes, lakes, wetlands, conservation parks and drainage reserves that collectively provide significant opportunities for nature-based recreation. These landscapes provide a setting for a diverse network of shared recreational trails that allow people to experience and explore the natural beauty of the region.

The Robe Trails Strategy 2026 identifies opportunities to develop and enhance a network of shared, non-vehicle recreational trails across the Robe region. These trails are intended to connect key landscapes and provide accessible outdoor recreation opportunities for residents while also strengthening Robe's appeal as a nature-based tourism destination.

The proposed trail network will support a variety of recreation experiences including walking and hiking trails, recreational cycling routes, horse riding trails where appropriate, and canoe or paddle trails along lakes and drainage corridors. Trails will vary in length and difficulty, ranging from short accessible community walks through to longer loop experiences that connect Robe with surrounding conservation areas and natural environments.

The Robe region is located on lands traditionally associated with First Nations traditional owners whose connection to Country extends across coastal environments, lakes, wetlands and waterways. These landscapes hold cultural and environmental significance and form part of the broader cultural history of the region.

This strategy builds upon community discussions and the work of the Robe Trails Project Team to identify realistic trail opportunities that can be progressively implemented over time. The goal is to create a connected network of recreational trails that enhance Robe's liveability, encourage outdoor recreation and support sustainable, low-impact tourism.



*A heron in Drain L, on approach to proposed
Lake Ling Trail
Photo: Alex Graham*

First Nations Engagement and Cultural Heritage

The District Council of Robe recognises that the landscapes within the Robe region hold deep cultural significance for First Nations traditional owners, including the Boandik and Meintangk peoples, whose connection to Country continues today.

Council has commenced early engagement with Traditional Owner representatives to inform the development of this strategy and acknowledges the importance of continuing this engagement as the strategy is refined and implemented.

There is an existing body of work across the South East that documents places of cultural significance. Future trail planning and development will be informed by available information held by relevant authorities, including State Aboriginal Heritage, the South Australian Museum and other recognised Aboriginal organisations.

Council is committed to ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners and relevant representative bodies, including but not limited to Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation, Native Title representatives and regional Aboriginal organisations, to ensure cultural values are appropriately recognised and respected.

This strategy does not seek to resolve site-specific cultural heritage matters. Instead, it establishes a framework that ensures:

- Cultural heritage considerations are assessed at the project planning stage
- Appropriate consultation occurs prior to any on-ground works
- Sensitive areas are identified and avoided or appropriately managed
- Opportunities for cultural interpretation and storytelling are led by, or developed in partnership with, Traditional Owners

This approach ensures that the development of recreational trails respects cultural values while creating opportunities for deeper understanding of Country.



*Drain L stone wall, proposed Woakwine Trail
Photo: Alex Graham*

Why Trails Matter

Recreational trails provide a wide range of benefits for the community, visitors and the natural environment.

For the community, trails provide accessible opportunities to be active, connect with nature and enjoy the outdoors. Walking, cycling and other recreational activities contribute to improved physical and mental wellbeing and support healthy lifestyles.

For visitors, well-designed trail networks can enhance the tourism experience by encouraging people to spend more time exploring a destination. Nature-based recreation is an increasingly important component of regional tourism, with many visitors seeking opportunities to walk, cycle and experience natural landscapes.

Trails can also help showcase the unique environmental and cultural landscapes of the Robe region, including coastal environments, lakes, wetlands and conservation reserves.

When carefully planned and managed, recreational trails provide low-impact ways for people to experience natural areas while supporting environmental awareness and stewardship.

By investing in a connected network of shared recreational trails, the District Council of Robe aims to enhance community wellbeing, support local tourism and encourage greater appreciation of the region's natural landscapes.

Trails also provide an opportunity to share the stories of place. Beyond physical movement, trails can connect people to the history, culture and identity of Robe through storytelling, interpretation and creative expression. This may include local history, environmental narratives and cultural knowledge developed in partnership with Traditional Owners. Over time, this presents an opportunity to develop “story trails” that add depth to the trail experience and contribute to a uniquely Robe identity.



*Spectacular views, proposed Woakwine Trail
Photo: Alex Graham*

Strategy Objectives

The Robe Trails Strategy seeks to achieve the following objectives.

- **Cultural Recognition & Respect** - Recognise that many landscapes within the Robe region have cultural and historical significance and ensure that ongoing engagement with Traditional Owners informs trail planning, design and delivery. Support opportunities for cultural interpretation and storytelling led by, or developed in partnership with, Traditional Owners.
- **Environmental Stewardship** - Ensure trail development respects and protects natural landscapes, biodiversity and environmental values.
- **Sustainable Low-Impact Tourism** - Support the development of Robe as a nature-based tourism destination by providing high-quality trail experiences that encourage visitors to stop, stay longer and explore the region while protecting environmental values.
- **Community Wellbeing** - Support opportunities for residents to enjoy healthy outdoor lifestyles and connect with local landscapes.
- **Accessible Recreation** - Provide recreational opportunities that encourage people of all ages and abilities to enjoy the outdoors and remain active.
- **Enhance Existing Trails** - Improve the condition, safety, signage and accessibility of existing trails.
- **Identify New Opportunities** - Progress new trail opportunities, particularly those that connect or showcase key natural, recreational and township locations.
- **Storytelling & Identity** – Support opportunities to incorporate local stories, history, culture and environmental narratives into trail experiences, contributing to a uniquely Robe trail identity.



Bird life on Lake Battye - Photo: Alex Graham

Accessibility & Inclusion

Council is committed to ensuring that the trail network is designed with accessibility and inclusion in mind.

Wherever practical, trails will incorporate design features that support mobility-impaired users, families with prams and older residents. Consideration will be given to surface treatments, trail gradients, rest areas and clear signage.

While not all trails will be universally accessible due to environmental constraints, the strategy aims to ensure that where feasible, trails provide inclusive and accessible recreational experiences.

Interpretation, Public Art, and Storytelling

The Robe Trails Strategy recognises the opportunity to enhance the trail network through interpretation, storytelling, and public art, building on earlier work undertaken by the Robe Arts Advisory Group.

A 2013 concept for a Robe Art Walk explored the potential for a walking trail linking Long Beach, the township, marina, Old Gaol and Obelisk, incorporating themed artworks, rest points and interpretive signage to highlight Robe's history, environment and community stories.

While not progressed as a standalone trail, the principles of the Art Walk remain highly relevant. Rather than creating a separate project, interpretation and storytelling are intended to be embedded across the broader trails network as it evolves.

This includes opportunities to share layered stories of place, from First Nations connection to Country, maritime and Chinese heritage, and Robe's role as a historic port, through to contemporary community identity and the natural environment. Interpretation may take a variety of forms, including signage, subtle trail markers, public art, digital content and rest points that encourage pause and reflection.

Importantly, this approach supports a staged and flexible delivery model. Interpretive elements can be introduced progressively as trails are developed or upgraded, allowing Council to respond to funding opportunities, partnerships and community input over time. It also enables local artists, historians and community groups to contribute to the evolution of the network, strengthening local ownership and authenticity.

Embedding interpretation and storytelling in this way will help distinguish the Robe trails experience — not just as a series of connections, but as a cohesive and engaging journey that reflects the character, history and landscape of the area.

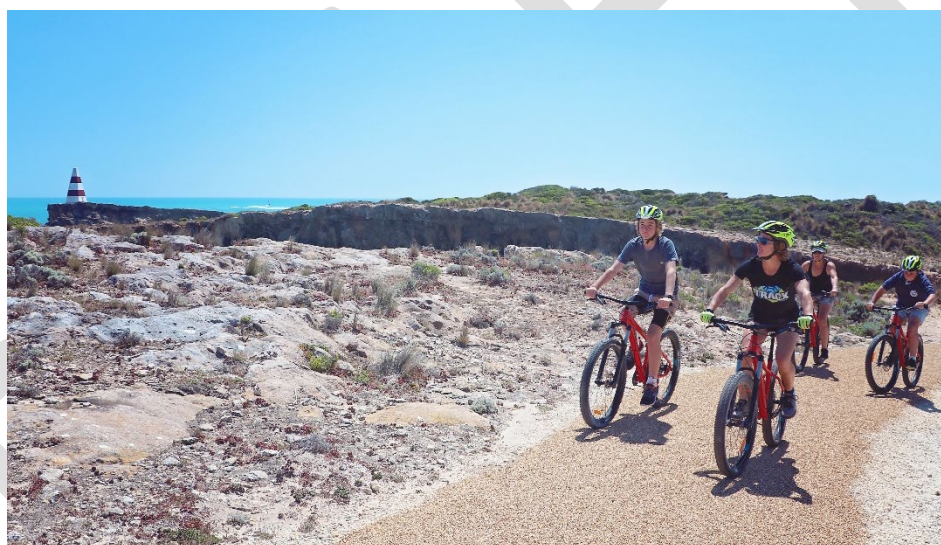
Governance & Partnerships

Implementation of the Robe Trails Strategy will rely on collaboration between multiple organisations and community stakeholders.

Key partners include:

- First Nations traditional owner representatives and relevant Aboriginal organisations
- Limestone Coast Landscape Board
- Department for Infrastructure and Transport
- National Parks and Wildlife Service SA
- Limestone Coast Local Government Association (LCLGA)
- Regional Development Australia Limestone Coast
- Walking SA
- Robe Mountain Bike Association (ROMBA)
- South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board (SEWCD)
- Local community groups and volunteers

Council will continue to build relationships with Traditional Owners and relevant Aboriginal organisations to support cultural heritage considerations, land management and opportunities for cultural knowledge sharing where appropriate.



Robe's popular coastal trail - Photo: Kristal Baker

Trail Prioritisation Approach

Council has identified two priority trail projects to be progressed in the first instance:

- Woakwine Trail
- West Beach Loop Trail

These projects have been prioritised based on feasibility, land access and their ability to deliver early community benefit. All other trail opportunities remain important and will be progressed over time subject to community feedback, funding, approvals and partnerships.

This Strategy is intentionally flexible and will evolve as projects are delivered.

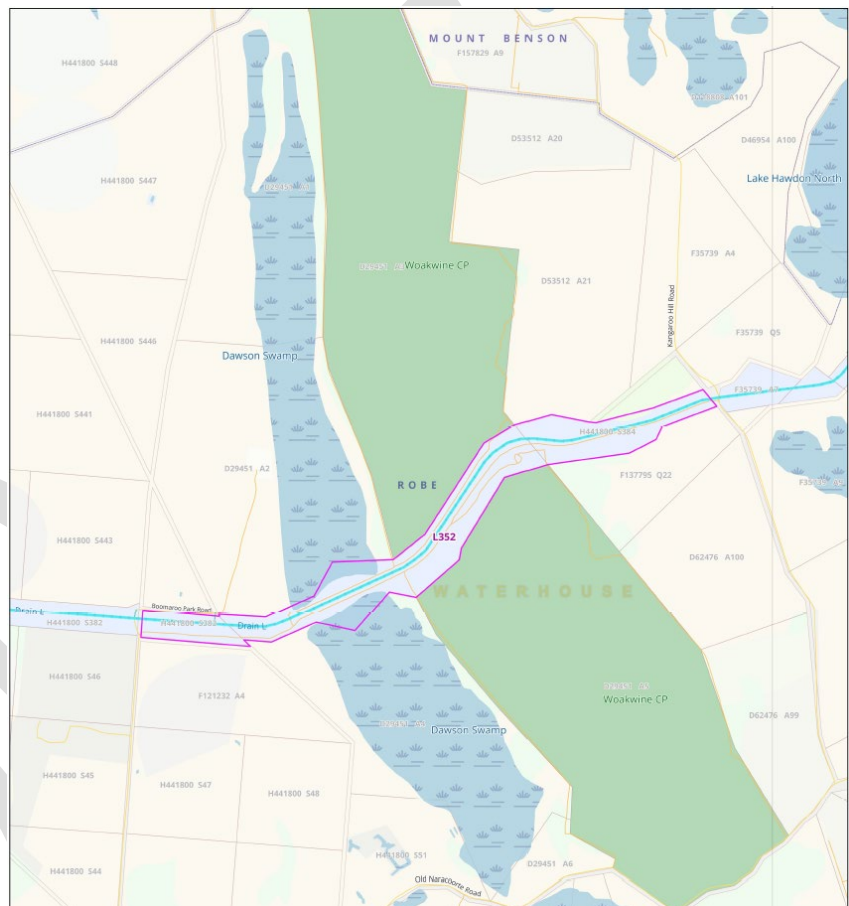
Trail Opportunities

Woakwine Trail

The Woakwine Trail represents an opportunity to formalise a shared-use recreational trail along the Drain L corridor, generally between Boomaroo Park Road and Kangaroo Hill Road. The trail will utilise an existing drainage reserve that is largely formed, providing a practical and low-impact opportunity for trail development.

The corridor offers an inland experience through a combination of drainage infrastructure, open landscapes and areas of environmental value. The trail is anticipated to be approximately 7.2kms in length, with potential to extend over time toward the Lake Hawdon system, subject to further investigation and approvals.

There are opportunities to incorporate interpretation that reflects the landscape, including environmental information relating to wetlands, water systems and birdlife, as well as the history and function of the South East drainage network. Cultural interpretation may also be developed in partnership with Traditional Owners. Together, these elements present an opportunity to develop story trails that connect users to the environmental, cultural and historical narratives of the corridor, with detail to be determined through implementation planning.



Council licensed area of Drain L for the proposed Woakwine Trail

The linear nature of the trail allows for flexible use, including shorter return walks and longer-distance recreational opportunities. Development will be supported by existing licence arrangements, with detailed planning to occur through a separate implementation plan.

The Woakwine Trail is identified as Council's highest priority project for initial implementation. The land tenure for the proposed Woakwine Trail has already been secured through a licence granted to Council by the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board. The community has already been engaged about this particular trail through the public consultation process undertaken to update the Robe Lakes and Drain L Community Land Management Plan.

West Beach Loop Trail

The West Beach Loop Trail, with a start and end point at the West Beach carpark, will provide an opportunity to formalise a coastal walking route through the West Beach area and surrounding coastal landscapes. The trail will build on existing informal tracks and access points, with a focus on creating a clearly defined and mapped loop experience.

The trail offers strong visitor appeal, including coastal views and access to beach environments. It is expected to cater primarily to walkers and support a range of loop options incorporating coastal and inland return routes.

The West Beach Loop Trail is identified as a priority project and represents a practical, low-impact opportunity to establish a well-defined recreational trail using largely existing alignments.

This trail is an important step in Council's broader objective to establish a continuous walking loop around Robe, connecting coastal, inland and township environments. While elements of the proposed Robe loop can currently be achieved using a combination of existing tracks, roads and informal routes, the formalisation of the West Beach Loop Trail provides practical steps towards the development of a complete town loop trail.

Detailed planning will occur through a separate implementation plan.



West Beach – proposed West Beach Loop Trail

Future Trail Opportunities

Lake Ling

This opportunity would formalise a short walking trail at Lake Ling, creating an approximately 1 kilometre return walk.

Accessible from the Southern Ports Highway, the trail would utilise existing informal tracks that currently provide a natural pathway through the landscape.

The trail would offer a short, picturesque walking experience that allows residents and visitors to access and enjoy the surrounding natural environment and views across the lake area.

Robe Lakes Canoe Trail

The Robe Lakes Canoe Trail presents an opportunity to establish a water-based recreational trail connecting key lakes including Lake Battye, Lake Nunan and Pub Lake.

The trail would allow residents and visitors to explore the lake system by canoe or kayak, providing a unique perspective of Robe's wetland and lake environments.

As part of Council's commitment to disability access and inclusion, consideration will be given to the installation of an accessible canoe launch or slipway to support safe entry and exit for paddlers, including people with mobility limitations.

This trail would enhance community access to these important environmental assets while also providing opportunities for Aboriginal Heritage, environmental interpretation and education about local wetland ecosystems.

Robe Lakes to Woakwine Trail Connection

A further trail opportunity has been identified to strengthen the connection between the Robe Lakes area and the proposed Woakwine Trail. This would involve exploring a link from Robe Lakes and Lake Ling along the Drain L corridor to connect with the Woakwine Trail.

This connection would help create a more coherent trail network by linking existing lake-based recreational areas with the broader Drain L and Woakwine trail opportunity. It would also support longer walking, cycling and nature-based trail experiences, while building on existing licence arrangements and the low-impact recreational uses contemplated for the Robe Lakes and Drain L Reserve.

Further investigation would be required to confirm land tenure, access arrangements, environmental considerations and any required approvals, particularly in relation to the Drain L corridor and existing South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board licence areas. This opportunity should be considered as part of the staged implementation planning for the broader trails network.

Woakwine Conservation Park Loop

A trail network circumnavigating the northern and southern sections of Woakwine Conservation Park could provide opportunities for nature-based walking experiences while complementing the proposed Woakwine Trail which runs between the two sections of the park.

The development of loop trails around the park would allow visitors and residents to experience the unique landscapes, native vegetation and wildlife of the conservation area.

Any trail development within Woakwine Conservation Park would require collaboration with First Nations traditional owners to ensure Aboriginal Heritage protection and alignment with state and commonwealth protection are managed. Additionally, with National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia to ensure environmental protection and alignment with park management objectives.

Lake Hawdon Regulator Trail

This project would explore opportunities to extend the trail network beyond the Woakwine Trail toward the Lake Hawdon North regulator and surrounding wetland landscapes.

The extension has the potential to provide a unique walking experience focused on the region's wetland environments and birdlife, with opportunities for nature observation and bird watching within the Lake Hawdon system.

The trail could also provide opportunities to interpret the region's water management infrastructure and the environmental restoration initiatives occurring within the Lake Hawdon wetlands.

Any future trail development would require further investigation and approval from the South Eastern Water Conservation and Drainage Board, as well as consideration of environmental values and site access arrangements.

Wrights Bay Coastal Trail

A coastal trail connecting Robe with Wrights Bay would provide a unique scenic route highlighting the region's coastal landscapes.

Further investigation is required to determine appropriate alignment, tenure arrangements, Native Title and Aboriginal Heritage protection and environmental considerations.

Little Dip Conservation Park Coastal Walk

This longer-term opportunity would explore the potential to create a defined walking experience within Little Dip Conservation Park using existing tracks and trails.

The focus would be on identifying and formalising suitable routes within the park to provide a continuous walking experience through coastal landscapes while minimising impacts on sensitive environments, including Aboriginal Heritage.

Little Dip Conservation Park also contains established camping areas, providing opportunities for walkers to undertake longer walks and potentially incorporate overnight stays within the park. This supports low-impact nature-based tourism and encourages visitors to spend more time exploring the Robe region.

Any future trail development or formalisation would require collaboration with National Parks and Wildlife Service South Australia to ensure alignment with park management objectives and environmental protection.



Old Man Lake Campground, Little Dip Conservation Park - Photo: Bush & Bay

Robe Day Walk

This aspirational trail concept explores the potential to develop a longer-distance day walk of approximately 25 kilometres, linking several of Robe's key natural landscapes.

The walk would begin in Robe and travel through the Robe Lakes area. Subject to securing appropriate access and any required extension or consolidation of Drain L licence arrangements, the route could follow the Drain L corridor to connect with the proposed Woakwine Trail.

From Kangaroo Hill Road, the route could continue around Woakwine Conservation Park before returning toward Robe via Roys Lane, passing the Robe Camel Farm. From this point, the return journey could either follow the coastline along Long Beach or utilise Riviera Drive to connect with the existing Robe Coastal Trail.

The Robe Day Walk has the potential to create a unique regional walking experience that showcases the diversity of Robe's lakes, wetlands, conservation areas and coastal environments within a single day walk.

As an aspirational project, further investigation would be required to confirm the final route, assess feasibility and explore land access arrangements.



Camels at Humpalicious Camel Farm, Robe

Supporting Tools and Resources

A marketing and style guide for signage, wayfinding and promotional materials is currently under development and will be delivered as a separate but aligned component of the overall trails program. This approach allows the Strategy to focus on planning and prioritisation, while ensuring a consistent and adaptable identity is applied across trail delivery and promotion.

Individual trail implementation plans will guide detailed design, approvals, staging, costings and delivery. These plans will respond to site-specific conditions, land tenure, environmental considerations and stakeholder requirements, and will be prepared as priority projects progress.

Monitoring, Review and Future Opportunities

Council will monitor progress and review the Strategy over time.

The Strategy may be updated to reflect community feedback, funding opportunities and changing conditions.

The prioritisation and sequencing of projects may change over time based on experience and emerging opportunities.

Conclusion

The Robe Trails Strategy 2026 establishes a practical and flexible framework for developing a connected network of low-impact recreational trails across the Robe region. It recognises the value of Robe’s coastal, lake, drainage and conservation landscapes, while ensuring that future trail development is guided by cultural respect, environmental care, accessibility and community benefit.

The Strategy does not seek to deliver all trail opportunities at once. Instead, it provides a staged pathway for Council to progress priority projects, respond to funding and partnership opportunities, and continue refining the network over time. Through detailed implementation planning, community feedback and ongoing collaboration with key agencies and Traditional Owners, Robe can strengthen its reputation as a distinctive nature-based trail destination.

Strategy Review & Version Control

Version	Date	Description of Changes	Endorsed By
1	13 May 2026	Initial draft prepared for Trails Project Team and Council consideration	District Council of Robe