

Community Update

Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing

Winter 2023

Welcome to the winter 2023 edition of the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing Community Update.

The Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing is a proposed 57 kilometre walk through the Alpine region of Victoria, combining and upgrading an existing track network. The walk is planned to be a multi-day hiking experience through the unique alpine environment, from Falls Creek to Mount Hotham.

This newsletter provides information from community consultation, an update on Traditional Owner site visits, environmental assessments and approvals, and project timelines and scope. There is a link included to download community consultation data.

Community consultation findings

Community consultation findings from engagement in 2022 continue to shape the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing project.



In addition to the report previously released, all submissions and raw data from the 2022 consultation is now available for those who are interested. Personal information has been redacted in accordance with privacy and confidentiality requirements.

Visit [Engage Victoria](#) to download this detailed information or to read the summary report of the key findings.

Traditional Owner engagement and site visits

Onsite meetings and assessments are important to ensure that Traditional Owners are deeply involved in the project. Managing and protecting cultural heritage is essential and requires the input of Traditional Owners.

There are multiple groups who assert rights and interests as Traditional Owners in this area and who we want to consult with as part of statutory processes. We extended an invitation to all these groups and then met onsite with 12 representatives from various groups.

A visual and ground examination was undertaken with Traditional Owner representatives, Heritage Advisors and Parks Victoria staff. Further

consultation with all Traditional Owner groups is being held to discuss findings.

Environmental assessments and approvals

The environmental assessments and approvals being undertaken for the project are detailed and complex.

We have created an [infographic](#) to outline what we have already done and what still needs to be done. Parks Victoria will implement all compliance actions as directed by regulators.

The project area was assessed by a team of environmental scientists, including botanists, zoologists and geomorphologists over the autumn of 2022 and summer of 2022/23. This was to identify environmental values and constraints to help inform further planning and design, as well as further survey work.

Last summer was colder than usual, and snow stayed on the ground late into the season. This meant that some plant species could not flower, and some animals may not have been active, and were unlikely to be detected if they were there. To ensure environmental assessments are thorough and complete, further surveys (including targeted surveys for some species) will need to be undertaken this coming summer. While this will likely create a delay for the project, these surveys are essential to ensure we protect these special plants and animals.

Operating model

During community consultation, participants noted their concern about a privately operated service in a national park.

Following this feedback, Parks Victoria is now considering an operating model that allows people to book their walks with Licensed Tour Operators or by themselves. This would enable free and independent hikers to book their walks directly, and keep cost options as low as possible.

Our team met with eight Licensed Tour Operators in early 2023 to discuss different operating models. Parks Victoria has met with Licenced Tour Operators throughout the project, and will continue to do so.



Project timelines, scope and next steps

To make sure we're getting things right, Parks Victoria is undertaking thorough assessments including environmental and cultural heritage. We are assessing what is appropriate and viable to deliver.

Due to the landslide near Falls Creek (and restricted road access), and a colder-than-usual summer for environmental assessments, the previously scheduled completion date of 2024 is no longer achievable.

We anticipate that the project will be completed in late 2025 and will provide a detailed timeline for project completion as soon as we can. The timing will depend on environmental and cultural heritage assessments, project costings and possible changes to what can be delivered with the allocated \$15 million budget for the Falls to Hotham Alpine Crossing Project.

Please note, following community consultation there will be a reduction in the number and size of shelters.

Project costings are currently being undertaken, and the relevant statutory approvals are being sought.

Stay up to date

Parks Victoria will provide updates and information as the project progresses. To stay updated you can:

- [Subscribe](#) for email updates
- Phone 13 1963 or email engage@park.vic.gov.au
- Visit engage.vic.gov.au/falls-to-hotham

