Planning Officer's Report – LDCA 21 AUGUST 2025

APPLICATION	**2025/57 –** Construction of a Single Staircase & 10 Boardwalks
PERMISSION SOUGHT	Full Permission
REGISTERED	14 July 2025
APPLICANT	ENRP, C/o Myra Young
PARCEL	DPRR0170
LOCALITY	The Peaks National Park
ZONE	Green Heartland
CONSERVATION AREA	The Peaks
CURRENT USE	National Park
PUBLICITY	The application was advertised as follows: ▪ The Independent Newspaper on 18 July 2025 ▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.
EXPIRY	1 August 2025
REPRESENTATIONS	None Received
DECISION ROUTE	~~Delegated~~ / **LDCA** / ~~EXCO~~

A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

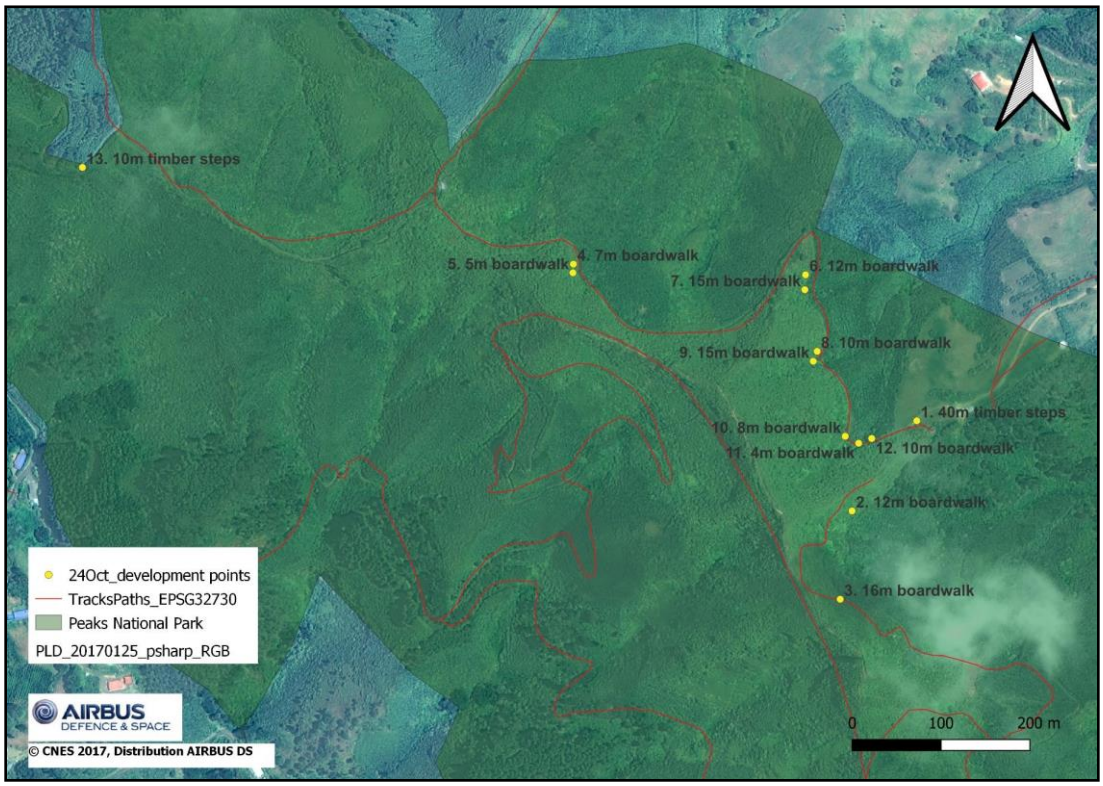
1.	Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2.	Energy Division	No Response
3.	Fire & Rescue	No Objection
4.	Roads Section	No Response
5.	Property Division	No Objection
6.	Environmental Management	No Objection – Comment
7.	Environmental Health	No Response
8.	Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9.	St Helena Police Services	No Response
10.	Aerodrome Safe Guarding	No Objection
11.	Economic Development	No Objection
12.	National Trust	No Response
13.	Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14.	Heritage Society	No Objection
15.	Maritime	Not Applicable

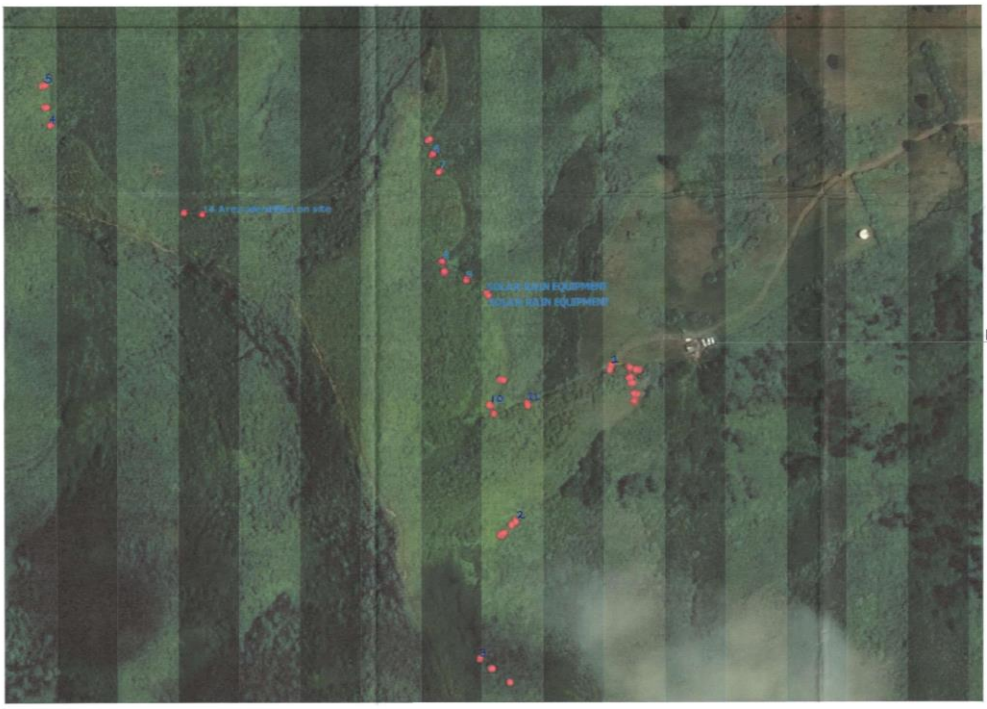
B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

LOCALITY & ZONING

This plot is located within The Peaks National Park where the site is designated within the Green Heartland and within The Peaks Conservation Area.

Diagram 1: Location Map/ Site Plan





MAP OF PEAKS AREA

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

This proposal seeks to reduce the transference through infected soil (mud) of the plant pathogen *Phytophthora* and other soil and water-borne pathogens across *The Peaks National Park* through the installation of ten boardwalks and one staircase.
The installation of these facilities will occur across sections of the path network where, due to climatic conditions, the path remains continuously wet throughout the year and therefore increases the risk of transference of the pathogen.

The work comprises of the following two tasks:

1. Construction of 40m of timber steps to lift people's feet off the surface and prevent the transfer of mud. See Diagrams 2, 3 and 4 for reference.

2. Installation of 11 boardwalks to lift people's feet off the surface and prevent the transfer of mud. The total length of all 11 boardwalks is approximately 114m. *The individual length of each boardwalk is shown in the list of trail upgrades. All the boardwalks are 900mm wide. See Diagram 2, 7, 8, 9 and 10 for reference.

As shown in the Table in ***Diagram 2** below, it details a ***List of Trail Upgrades Needed***; 11 sections of horizontal boardwalks will be needed on the lower trail between *Taylor's Hut* and *Cuckolds*. See map for exact locations. These 11 boardwalks will lift people's feet off the surface and prevent the transfer of mud. The total length of all 11 boardwalks is approximately 114m. The individual length of each boardwalk is shown in the list of trail upgrades. All the boardwalks are 900mm wide.

Minimal site preparation will be required. Some shifting of soil and digging of holes will be needed but the trails are regularly maintained and clear of most vegetation. Any soil moved during works will be placed on sheeting and return to its original location or placed under the structure on completion of the works. Movement of soil will be minimized.

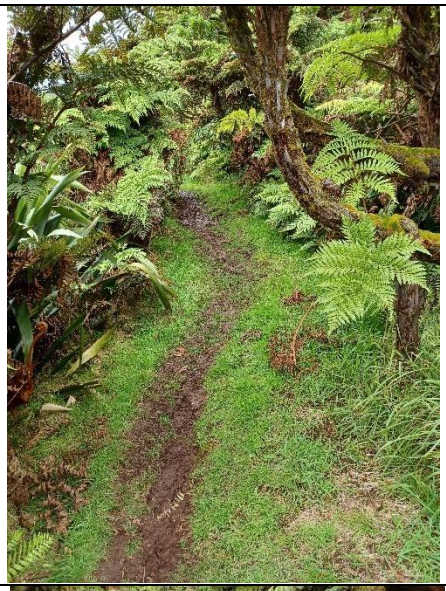
The running surface will be constructed from pre-constructed, purpose-made, ridged plastic boards. These boards are suitable for outdoor use and will not degrade in sunlight. The surface is nonslip as the boards are formed from a grid that will drain immediately and dirt will drop through the structure and not remain on the surface. This material is ridged enough to ensure it can safely support foot traffic, without any significant flex. Existing boardwalks of this design are performing well. The running surface is supported by 10cms (4") diameter treated timber support beams. Warning signs will be installed to make trail users aware that they need to duck under branches where boardwalks pass under low branches from overhanging trees.

Conservation staff will mark all locations for construction prior to commencing works.

Diagram 2: Table Showing List of Trail Upgrades Needed, Locations, Notes and Photos

Upgrades Required on Circular Peaks Trail				
Location No.	Construction required	Length (approx.)	Notes	Photos of area on 25/9/24
1	Timber steps	40m	This area is an area of high footfall. Although the slope is not steep it is sufficient to cause soil to be exposed. Clockwise on trial, near black gate.	
2	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	12m	Short section of exposed soil below black cabbage tree.	
3	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	16m	Short section of exposed soil below black cabbage tree.	

4	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	7m	Short section of exposed soil below black cabbage tree.	
5	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	5m	Broken ground along wet section.	
6	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	12m	Broken ground along wet section.	

7	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	15m	Section of wet ground below tree ferns.	
8	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	10m	Broken ground along wet section. Extending existing boardwalk.	
9	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	15m	Broken ground along wet section. Extending existing boardwalk.	

10	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	8m	Broken ground along wet section.		
11	Plastic boardwalk plus supporting structure	4m	Broken ground along wet section. Extending existing boardwalk.		

Diagram 3: Plan Layout for No. 1 Timber Steps

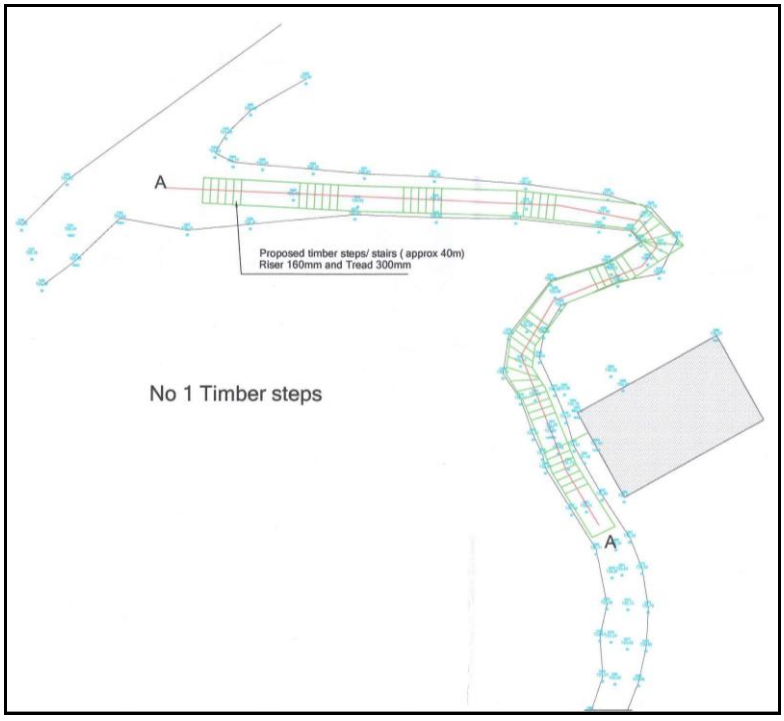


Diagram 4: Site Section A-A

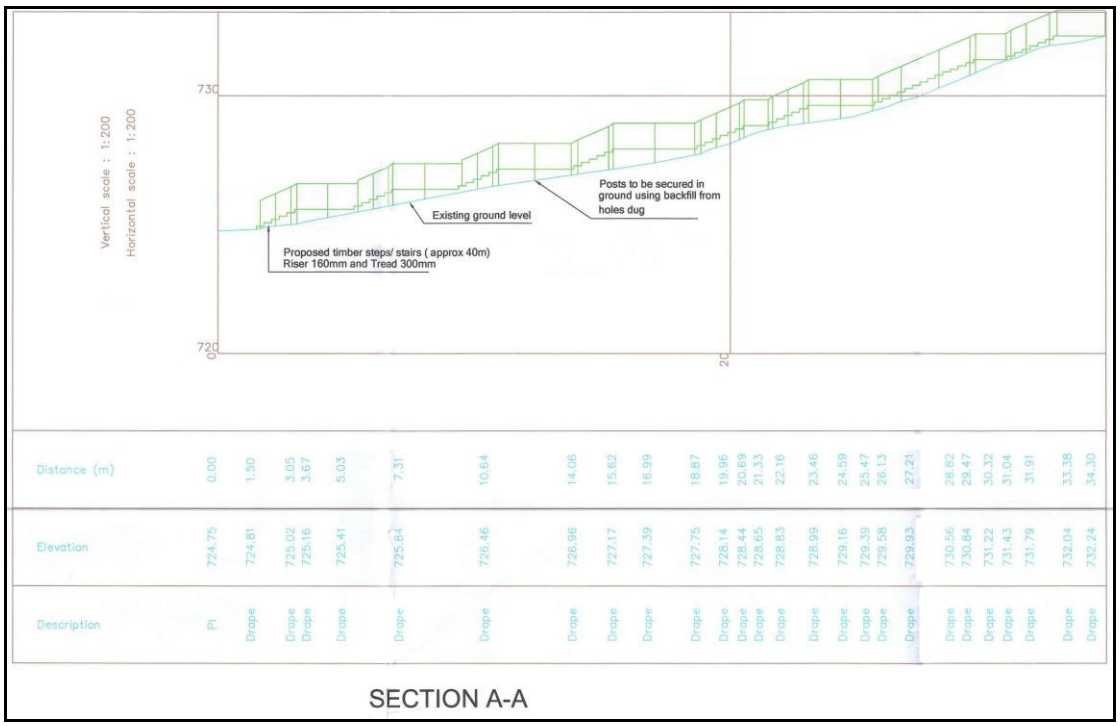
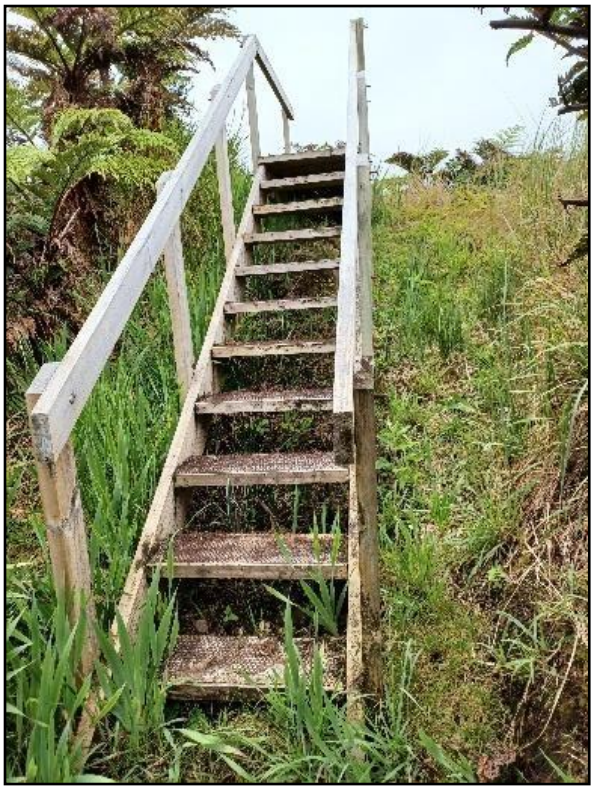


Diagram 5: Photograph Showing Example of Similar Step Design



To be installed near the Black Gate entrance (Location No. 1)

Diagram 6: Side Elevation of Step Design

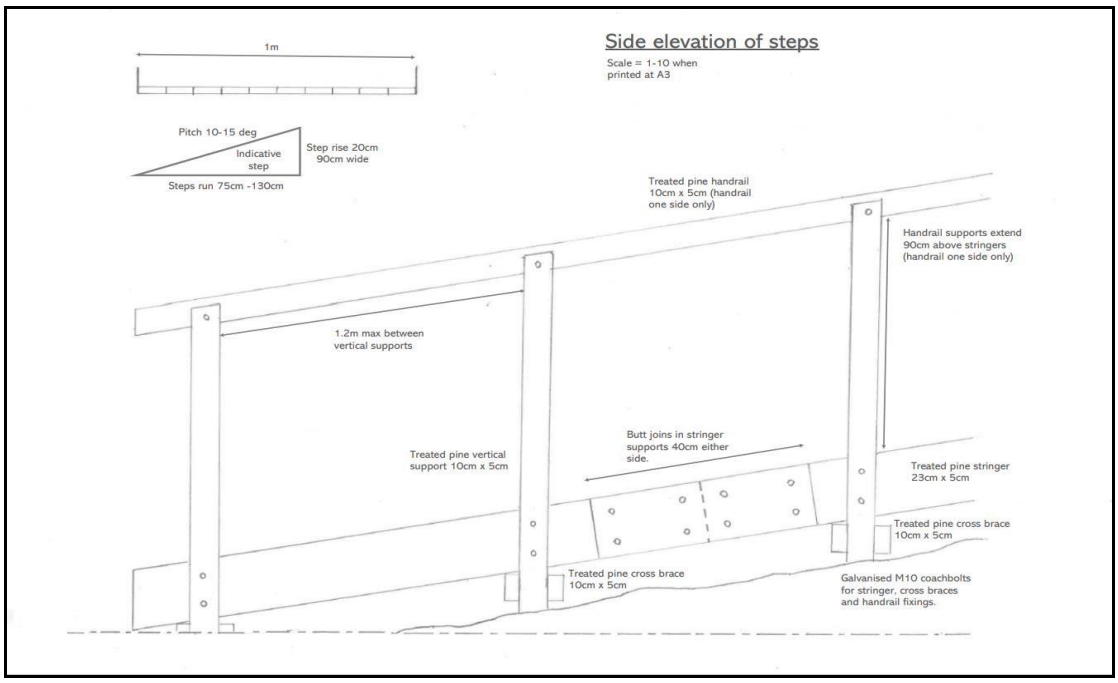


Diagram 7: Schematic of Typical Grate Walkway/ Boardwalks

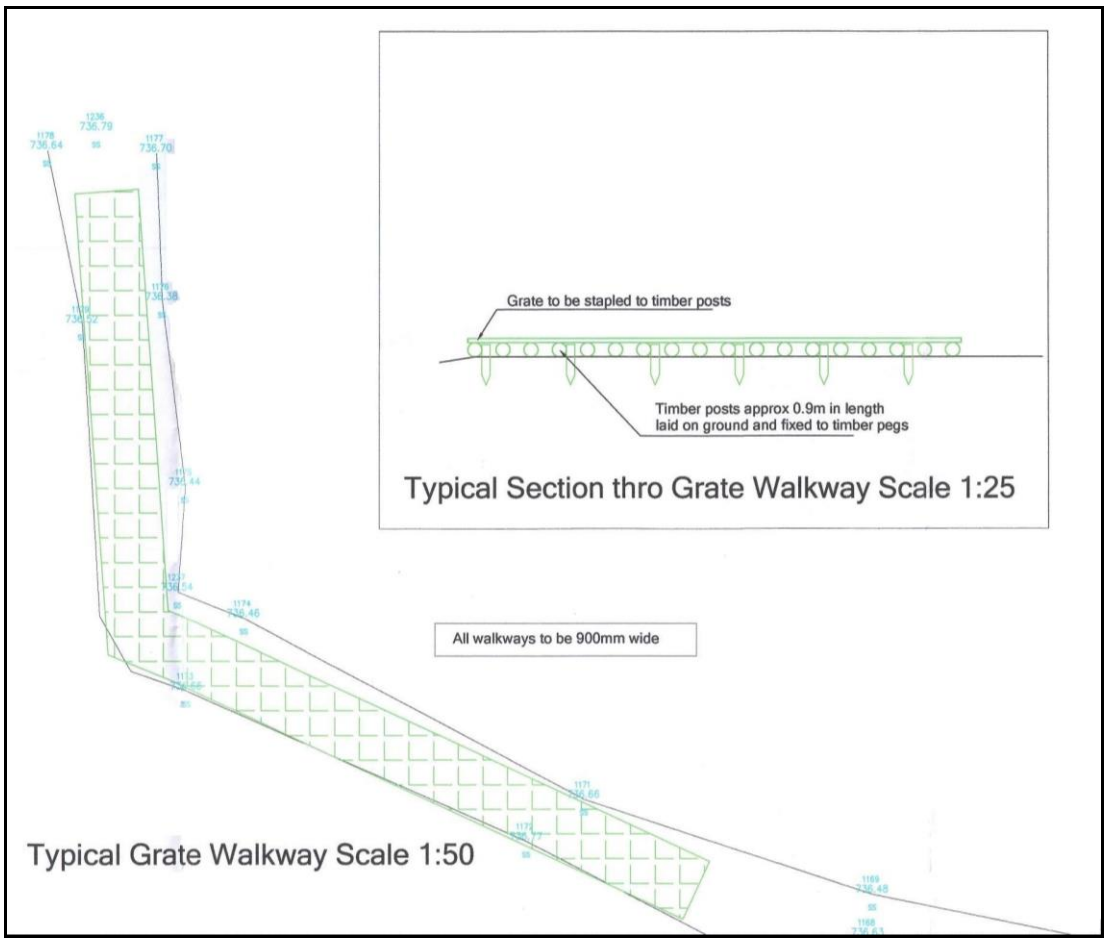


Diagram 8: Photograph Showing Example of Similar Boardwalk Design

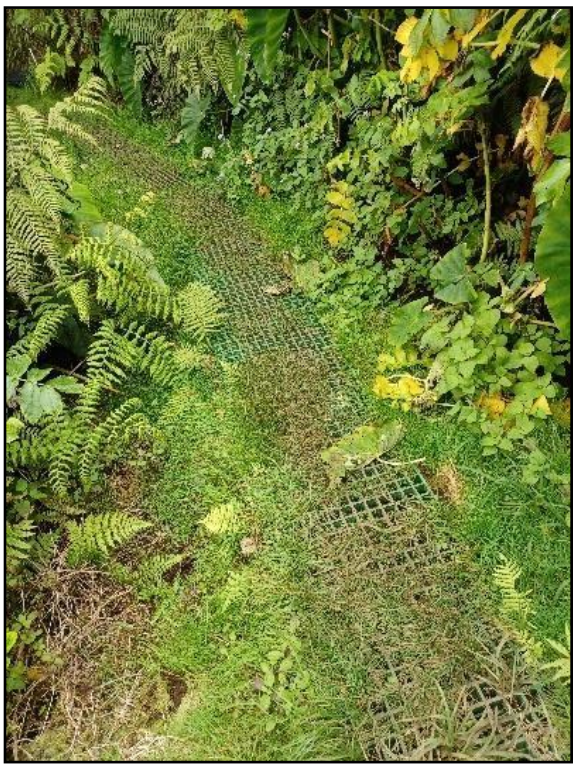


Diagram 9: Photograph Showing Example of Green Grate (Fibreglass)

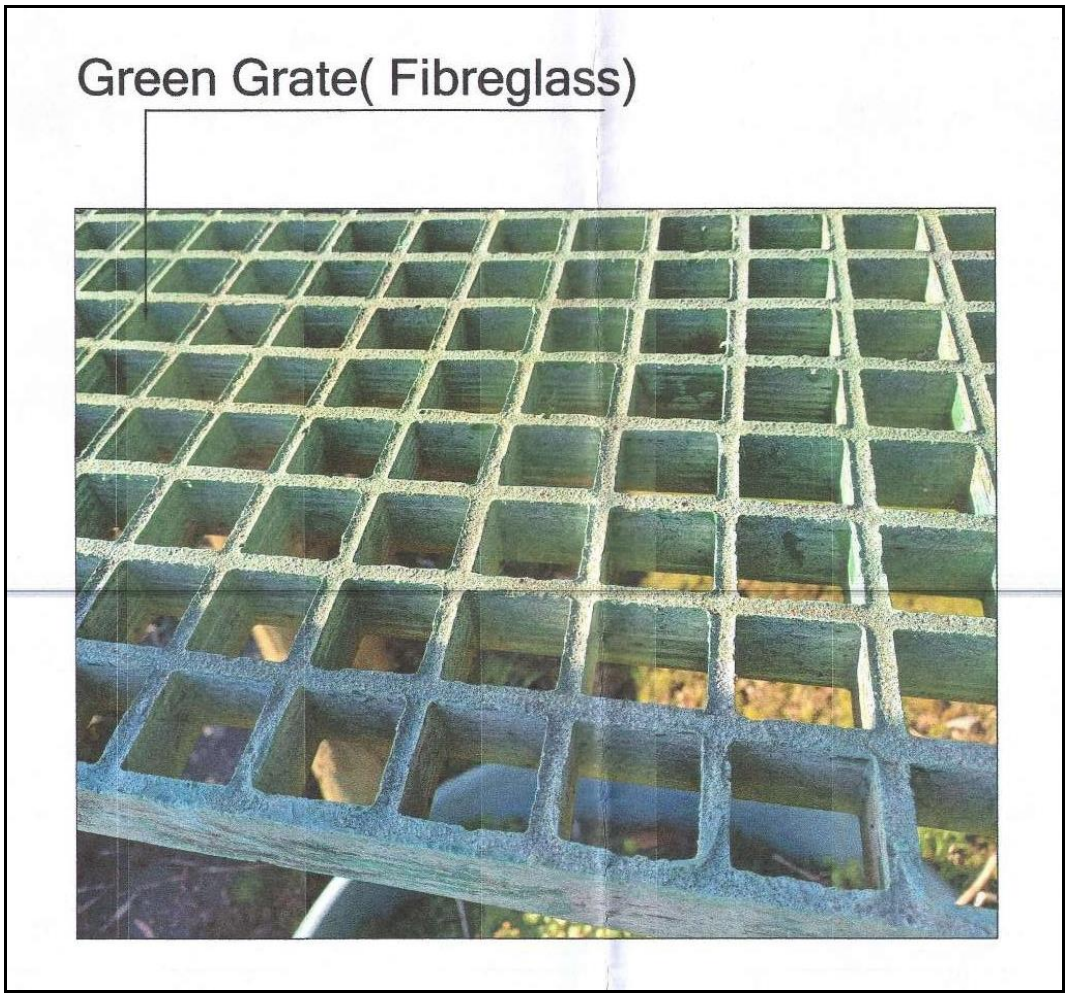
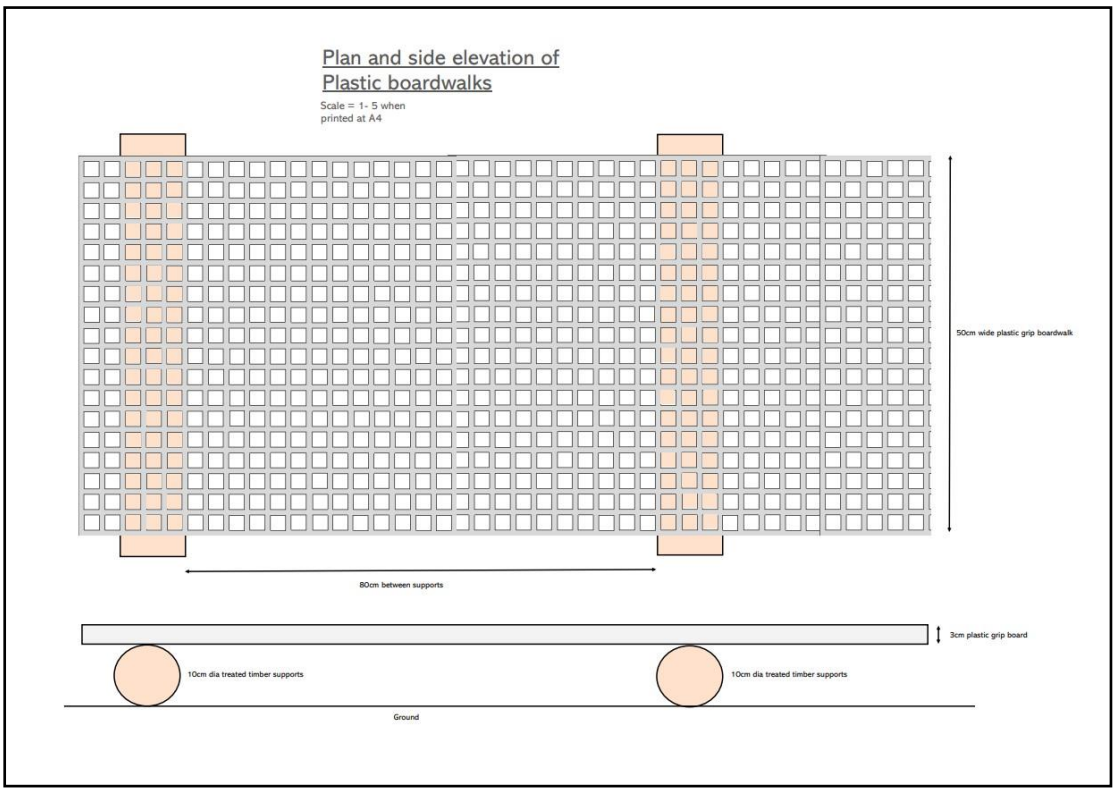


Diagram 10: Plan and Side Elevation of Plastic Boardwalks



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS

There were no representations or objections received from stakeholders or any members of the public. However, the following comment was received from Environmental Management—

Environmental Management

Noting that this is an ENRP application.

This development is supported and is in keeping with the types of development within a National Conservation Area that is permissible under LDCP policies NH1 and NH2. The boardwalks and staircase are necessary to minimise the threat to *The Peaks National Park*'s species and habitats from plant pathogens. These pathogens particularly *Phytophthora* are known to be transported in mud and soil on footwear. The installation of boardwalks and staircase will minimise the risk of infected soil movement by conservation workers on the Peaks and others with authorised access permission. It is also one of a number of measures being put in place in preparation for if and when the Peaks National Park is opened to the public.

LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

The relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP 2012 - 2022) that are applicable in the assessment of the proposed development are set out below:

- Green Heartland Policies GH1, GH2 a), GH.5, GH.6
- Natural Heritage Policies: NH1, NH2, NH3
- Tourism Policies: T1

OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT

St Helena has claim to one third of the total endemic biodiversity recorded for all of Mainland UK and her Overseas Territories. The cloud forest of the Peaks National Park alone supports 17% of this total.

However, many of these unique plant and invertebrate species hover on the edge of extinction and are under continual pressure from a plethora of introduced invasive flora and fauna. The presence of a pathogen suspected of killing many of the trees has further increased the challenge of the protecting this important place.

The pathogen likely to be causing the death of trees within the cloud forest is a water mould infecting the roots. The tree roots lie very close to the surface and so when this mould produces spores from the roots in wet weather, they are picked within damp soil adhering to people's footwear. The mould is then carried along the path to other trees, which then become infected. To prevent this source of infection it is important to prevent people's footwear coming into contact with muddy sections of the path.

The steps and boardwalks are a very important element in the management plan for soil-borne *Phytophthora* species that has been drawn up. This management plan involves an integrated approach that includes understanding the pathogen, assessing the risk, and implementing management strategies which include improving infrastructure. The installation of additional steps and boardwalks has been recommended by scientists from the *Centre for Agriculture* and *Bioscience International*, CABI. CABI is an international, intergovernmental, not-for-profit organization that improves people's lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment.

Consequently, as part of the ongoing management of *The Peaks National Park* the *Environment, Natural Resources and Planning Portfolio* is looking to install additional structures that will help control the spread of the pathogen there. The primary purpose for this development is to protect the endemic trees present by preventing the spread of mud on people's footwear, and is therefore an essential part of managing and mitigating this risk. It also increases the efficiency of the existing Phytosanitary protocols operated at *The Peaks* by both project and recurrent staff who access this path network daily. This measure will also enhance the visitor experience (should the decision be taken to reopen *The Peaks*) by making access easier and safer. The works will add to existing steps and boardwalks and will improve access for visitors to *The National Park*. These installations will be built

using the specifications as outlined in the proposal, to suit the terrain at each location.

The proposed development will, while protecting the endemic species, be of either natural materials or at ground level such that they will blend into the natural environment and not have any significant adverse impact while enabling tourism and local people to use walking paths which can then be opened up again to visitors for recreation purposes. Overall, the development is in compliance with the relevant Green Heartland Zone, Natural Heritage and Tourism policies, and therefore can be supported.