



Virtually on Track

The Virtually on Track project is a unique partnership between the regional Department of Conservation (DOC) office, Sport Bay of Plenty and Sport NZ with supportive alliances with Bay of Plenty Regional Council, Tauranga City Council, Western Bay of Plenty District Council, Rotorua District Council, Kawerau District Council, Whakatane District Council and Opotiki District Council.

Virtually on Track came about with the increasing evidence of the importance of social participation and changing life/work patterns. The project aims to enhance connections of people with each other and increase engagement in recreation locally. The Bay of Plenty region is rich with beautiful parks, spaces and reserves; however local people don't necessarily know where they are or how they can be used.

Virtually on Track is aimed at:

- 👁 Beginner level adult participants
- 👁 Participants involved in one adventure sport who potentially might adopt another
- 👁 Current users of the local gem recreation sites, involving users in technology
- 👁 Communities based around and with access to the local gems

Virtually on Track is focussed on developing significant recreation hubs at eight local gem sites under DOC classification across the Bay of Plenty. The community partnering and collaboration between sport and recreation clubs, providers and groups to improve the delivery and utilisation of the local gem sites is the heart of the project and also the key to sustainability.

The local gem recreation sites are located:

1. Lower Kaimai and McLaren Falls
2. Waihi Beach/Orokawa Bay/Bowentown
3. Ōtānewainuku/Kaharoa
4. Pāpāmoa Hills/Summerhill/Kaiate Falls
5. Mōtū Area
6. Toi's Track and Ōhiwa Harbour
7. Whakarewarewa Forest and Rotorua Lakes
8. Kawerau/Tarawera

Virtually on Track is designed to connect these natural resources with regular recreation activities and adventure sport such as orienteering, geocaching, climbing, mountain biking, kayaking, waka ama and much more. It also helps to provide opportunities for a broad range of the community across the Bay of Plenty – recognising differences in culture and socioeconomic status amongst different communities.

The project embraces a variety of different technologies such as an interactive website, smartphone apps with the goal to connect people with each other, providing opportunities for members of the community to engage in adventure sport/recreation activities, connect people with local gem recreation sites in the Bay of Plenty and create exciting new ways to explore the local gems.



Kayaking on the Wairoa river

Users can engage in virtual adventure challenges such as dedicated Virtually on Track Strava bike/run/walk courses, Geoteering courses (a combination of geocaching and orienteering) using free GPS apps and compete online against other adventurers. Corporate challenges are another great way to get outside and earn "virtual km" for your team by running, walking, cycling or swimming.



BOP Polytech geoteering at McLaren Falls Park

Virtually on Track has recently been announced as one of three finalists in the 2016 Sport New Zealand Sport and Recreation Awards in the Innovation Excellence category. An evaluation report is due June 2016 that will report back to the partners on the impact and outcomes of the project.

For further information please contact:

Kate Clark

Virtually on Track Project Leader, Sport Bay of Plenty

07 578 0016 ext 842

katec@sportbop.co.nz

www.virtuallyontrack.co.nz