



# BELAIR NATIONAL PARK

## Mountain Bike Hub

### Expression of Interest

14 NOVEMBER 2018 (EDITED 7/9/20 to remove sensitive details)

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# Executive Summary

**Escapegoat Adventures** is a South Australian owned and operated mountain biking business. Having operated since 2008, Escapegoat Adventures has extensive experience offering skills training, tours and bike hire to both local residents and interstate/overseas visitors.

The importance of mountain biking in the Adelaide Mount Lofty Region (AMLR) as an emerging driver of tourism in South Australia cannot be underestimated and has been recognised by both the current and previous governments. Significant resources have already been committed and expended to establish and improve trails in the AMLR. However, there is now strong competition within Australia for the economic benefits created from tourism due to the increasing growth and popularity of mountain biking. Many other states and regional areas have investigated, commenced or finalised extensive trail building in order to become Australia's next mountain bike destination to realise these economic benefits.

This proposal advocates relocating our offices to the recently vacated Golf Pro-shop/Clubhouse (Pro-shop) in the Belair National Park (BNP) golf course precinct. This building offers our business a unique location to open a new MTB shop offering bike hire, basic maintenance, bike accessories and suitable bike-friendly snacks and drinks on the doorstep of a National Park with shared-use trails. The location is central whereby most major MTB trails in the southern AMLR are easily accessible.



We propose building and developing new MTB trails and a dedicated Skills Park on part of the recently vacated Belair Golf Course. Consideration of our proposal will maximise the success of the whole precinct by creating something unique in South Australia and Australia. Upon completion, Escapegoat Adventures would conduct all MTB skills training sessions within the Skills Park. These skills sessions will be offered to adults and children of different abilities attracting additional visitors to the BNP precinct. In the longer term, we would actively promote the park and support the development of further trails in the area to create a thriving MTB zone.

We believe this proposal aligns with community feedback; opening a new area to bike riders and improving existing services. Both the Adelaide Hills Tourism Board and the Mitcham Council have recommended the creation of an MTB hub in this area, and we have the full support of the Mayor of Mitcham, Dr Heather Holmes-Ross, and various community groups. The Southern AMLR is unique in Australia due to its proximity to the city and by extension there are multiple accommodation options. The continued development of quality trails and facilities in BNP will increase tourist visitation including to the surrounding Belair and Blackwood regions. This proposal will create employment for at least one full time position (or equivalent), with a potential for multiple casual guiding/instructing roles, whilst meeting all the expectations of the community.

We will fully support and work with other businesses and proposals which complement our proposal for the land and precinct. Ideally, we would like to work with a suitable business keen to take over the Function Centre to offer a full community café, restaurant or meeting place, to create a vibrant community hub and we are prepared to work with other complementary businesses to amend and adapt our proposal if required.

Currently we **do not** support re-opening the Golf course as a full 18-hole course. We do not believe this is what the community wants, or the local environment needs, and question if it would be viable. It would also greatly limit community access to the area, and any future trail development.

## Detailed Proposal

### Background & capability

**Escapegoat Adventures** has been operating since January 2008, previously by Ian Fehler as a Sole Trader. The business was recently incorporated in July 2018.

From its inception, Escapegoat Adventures offered MTB skills training before offering MTB tours and bike hire in 2010, including in DEW Parks. We were the first business to obtain MTB access within Cleland Conservation Park in 2010 and have subsequently worked very closely with DEW to demonstrate that mountain biking is a sustainable and low impact activity in DEW parks. We have been operating skills training

in Sturt Gorge and Shepherds Hill since the shared use trails opened. More recently, we have included the bike trails of Onkaparinga River National Park on our MTB tours.

We are a local business currently based in Eden Hills, just 4km from BNP. We currently run our entire business from our home property. The increased demand for quality mountain bike hire has seen us offering bike hire from our premises which offers easy access to the trails in Sturt Gorge, Shepherds Hill, and BNP. We expect our business would continue to grow by moving to a more centralised location with better facilities.

## General Concept

Escapegoat Adventures previously submitted a proposal to DEW in July 2018 to establish a Mobile Mountain Bike Hub in the Southern Parks, as we flagged that no facilities at any trailheads were adequate for a permanent hub at that time. We consider the Belair Golf Course precinct now offers a suitable location for a permanent hub, and this proposal replaces our previous proposal.

Due to the layout of the various parks in the AMLR, and the expansive nature of the trail network, it has been difficult to pinpoint a perfect location for a hub to act as an entry point for all MTB users. We consider that the BNP Golf Course is the best potential site for an MTB hub, due to public transport links and the central location of the park, allowing access to other neighbouring parks with MTB trails.

Our proposal is to create an MTB hub offering bike hire, skills training and tours, with associated services and retail facilities (and some suitable refreshments) to operate from the vacant Pro-shop at the Belair Golf Course precinct. We intend to move our entire business including our office and bike hire fleet to this location.

To attract patronage, new trails will require development to excite and attract both locals and cycle tourists. We recommend the repurposing of suitable parts of the current golf course to both MTB and shared use trails. We would assist with the development and management of these new trails. At a minimum, we propose the creation of:

- **A purpose-built skills area**, to include a pump track, progressive drops and rolling obstacles, rocks and other challenges. This would be Adelaide's first dedicated MTB skills area; open to all but utilised as Escapegoat Adventure's skills training course.
- **A re-route of the final section of the Adventure loop trail**, to direct riders down through the golf course, to finish in the golf course precinct. Preferably a downhill flow trail to excite local riders which doubles as an area to coach and conduct skills sessions.
- **Modification of the existing trails on the golf course** to include some beginner-friendly trails and cyclocross suitable trails that link with shared-use trails within the National Park itself



There is huge potential for future investment in trails in this area. We will also work to create an "Urban Epic" MTB trail. This mapped and signposted route would take riders from BNP, via the Adventure Loop towards Sturt Gorge RP and finish at the Marion train station or back to BNP. This 30km+ trail would incorporate and link many of the great DEW trails already established in the area. While some level of Government funding may be required to complete this project, we believe the unique nature of this single-track trail including its length and proximity to a major city centre would attract cycle tourists from far and wide.

## Services on offer



- **Bike hire** including:
  - Kids MTB's & Hardtail MTB's
  - E-bikes
  - Dual Suspension bike for experienced riders
- **Basic maintenance supplies, parts and services.**
- **New and second-hand MTB sales.**
- **Bike wash** and stand for DIY maintenance.
- **MTB information**, maps and ride suggestions.
- **Coffee**, teas, soft drinks, cake and snacks for sale.
- **Skills training**
- **Guiding, social rides, Nature Therapy programs** and general **MTB community hub.**

Our business currently has a fleet of 25 bikes that are available for hire. Under this proposal, we intend to expand our fleet to incorporate more children's bikes and e-bikes to cater to families as well as experienced riders. We already offer skills training days at the Craighburn Farm trails and would move these to Belair once we have developed a suitable area.

There is also potential to attract several events to the site. The location would be perfect for both Cyclocross and XC racing. Our aim would be to host at least two races a year of the Cyclocross State Series and several local summer series XC races for the Adelaide Mountain Bike club and Port Adelaide Cycling Club. Please see attached letters of support.

Also, Deborah Fehler, one of the directors of Escapegoat Adventures is a qualified Social Worker and has most recently been specialising in **Nature Therapy**. She is also hoping to create some programs to operate under the Escapegoat Adventures banner from this location. See details in Appendix.

## Target Market and Marketing Plan

Our target market includes a wide range of customers; from families and total beginners to experienced mountain bike riders. Cycling and mountain biking should be inclusive, and our aim is to make it easy for people to try and access mountain biking and explore Belair NP and the surrounding area.

It is worth noting there is currently no bike shop in the Blackwood/Belair area. Our new shop would cater to this market by offering local bike support services, local riders may stop off to grab a tube or pump or try a test bike. We will provide another activity for families and/or children to undertake while visiting Belair NP who may decide to hire bikes and "try out" mountain biking. A dedicated shop and training area will greatly enhance the accessibility of all our services bringing repeat business and new clients. Accordingly, we intend to serve to a wide market:



- **Families and beginner riders (local and visitors)**, needing guiding, bike hire or support of some sort to get out onto the trails (we already service this market from our base, but feel it has much greater potential at this site)
  - **Experienced MTB riders from interstate or overseas** requiring a quality MTB (again we already service this market from Eden Hills)
  - **Newer or less confident riders** looking for skills training
  - **New park users** looking for different experiences and services
  - **Local riders** needing a spare tube or other basic bike services or repairs, or a coffee
- People wanting to improve their **mental and physical wellbeing** through our **Nature Therapy programs**. This includes vulnerable target groups such as people experiencing a diagnosed or undiagnosed **Mental Illness, Over 50's, Young People and their Families, Women who have lived experience of Domestic Violence, and Aboriginal Communities**.

Many of our customers may already be using our services but we feel a dedicated shop and training area will greatly enhance our offerings and bring new clients.

Currently we are very active with advertising and marketing for our existing tour and skills business and would adapt this to encourage people to visit us at Belair NP. We currently distribute brochures to all major hotels in the city advertising our tours and bike hire. This brochure would require updating to reflect our new location and additional services (see existing brochure in appendix). Note that we are currently rated the **#1 Outdoor Activity in Adelaide** on **TripAdvisor** and would update our listings etc. for our new services.

We also have a very committed group of followers on Facebook and Instagram. We intend to engage with them, the local community, and the MTB community to spread the word as to what we are doing, and when. We have excellent contacts in the media and expect to obtain some TV and other media exposure for our new services and location. For Example, 'SA weekender', and 'South Aussie with Cosi', who we have previously worked with for locals, and 'Flow MTB' to target the experienced Australian mountain biker.

From previous experience we know that local riders will always want to explore new trails. Accordingly, we will ensure that we work closely with trail builders and National Parks to create some new and interesting

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trails to bring locals to the park. The existence of an MTB hub with support facilities will ensure that these visitors become repeat customers. We would expect great excitement within the local MTB community regarding any new trails, and we would aim to maximise the impact by opening the new trails and new shop at the same time to heighten media and marketing opportunities.

## Being Culturally Connected and Relevant

As part of the opening of the Escapegoat Bike Hub we will explore ways in which we can connect with Kuarna peoples and traditions. We intend to:

- Invite local and interested Kuarna people to a consultation on how they see the space could reflect their enduring connection to land i.e. signage on the new trails, having an Aboriginal Elder facilitate a Welcome to Country as part of the opening of the space
- As part of any programs that occur in the centre, we will offer a genuine acknowledgement of country at the beginning of the sessions

Deborah currently works in an Aboriginal focused Children and Family Centre for Department of Education so will utilise her knowledge and connections to provide a culturally supportive space.

## Modifications and timeframe

In general, it should not take long to open the shop. Details of our timeframe and modifications can be found in our business plan attached. And below. Obviously for the MTB Hub to operate most successfully, the additional trails and skills features must first be constructed. Ideally, we would time this so that work is completed over Autumn/Winter and the shop and trails could be open in time for Spring; around September 2019.

Ian Fehler, Director  
Escapegoat Adventures Pty Ltd

## Appendices

- A. Case studies of similar projects
- B. Current Escapegoat Adventures hotel brochure
- C. 3-Way Financial Cash Flow, Profit & Loss and Balance Sheet Projections
- D. An introduction to Escapegoat Nature Therapy
- E. Letters of Support

# Appendix A

## Case studies of similar projects

### Study 1- Leeds Urban Bike Park, Yorkshire, UK.

<http://www.leedsurbanbikepark.com/>

In the UK it is clear that golf is a declining sport, with many private golf courses closing due to financial failure. Only well-known courses or long-established member-owned clubs continue to operate successfully but are finding new members hard to come by. It is regularly said that cycling is the new golf.

**Leeds Urban Bike Park** is a fantastic centre in the UK, that was opened on the former Middleton Park Golf Course, a municipal course which closed in 2016 due to massive financial losses and membership decline.

This £1.2 million development offers riding for all levels and disciplines. Upon opening, the park boasted 4x tracks, jump lines and pump track sections and now also includes a cross-country circuit through the woods. This new circuit isn't the final development either, there are still more sections being built.



The site includes a large cafe with a generous amount of indoor and outdoor seating. The outdoor seating conveniently overlooks the smallest pump track, great for parents wanting to keep an eye on the little ones. You can also hire bikes for any ages.

Having such a wide variety of tracks at varying levels makes it a great place to build up skills and confidence. For some, it's a chance to give a new style of riding a try.

The woodland trail is beginner friendly, well signposted and loops back onto itself allowing you to make your ride as brief or as long as you like. There are optional black lines of varying difficulty, some just steep and others with mandatory drops, so even the more advanced riders can find a new challenge.



Woodland trails



Massive pump track

Currently the park offers:

- Skills Area
- Jump Zone
- Pump Track
- Mini-Pump Track
- Duel Track
- Dirt Jump Area
- XC loops
- Leeds Urban bike Hub including cafe and bike shop
- Free car parking



Main jumps and pump area.

## Study 2 – Whinlatter Forest, and Cyclewise, Lake District, UK.

<https://www.forestryengland.uk/whinlatter>

<https://www.cyclewise.co.uk/>



Whinlatter Forest is a Forestry Commission site in the Lake District. In the last ten years it has gone through a major change, with the creation of an outdoor visitor centre offering a wide range of different activities for all.

The forest park currently offers:

- 9 walking trails
- 3 cycling trails, which are the longest purpose-built mountain bike trails in the Lake District
- Play areas
- Go Ape! (high ropes course and Segway tours)
- Café
- Bike hire and bike training through Cyclewise

The forest offers a wide range of activities for families and runs seasonal events. It is one of the most visited forest parks in the UK.



**Cyclewise** has been operating for 13 years, and is a diverse rider-owned business, who offer a range of services at 3 locations in the Lake District. 'Cyclewise Whinlatter' is their original site and their main MTB location. They have available to hire a premium range of mountain bikes and electric bikes so riders can enjoy riding the 3 amazing graded mountain bike trails. They also offer a large range of bikes and accessories for sale in their shop, deliver mountain bike skills and cycle maintenance courses, plus MTB leadership awards and are a British Cycling centre of excellence.

Cyclewise is owned By Rich Martin and Craig Scott, and the Whinlatter centre employs 10 staff across the bike hire, shop and their skills instructors and guides.

Ian from Escapegoat did his initial training with Rich and Craig back in 2006, and has visited them on numerous occasions over the years. We are able to ask for their advice and help if needed.