

# Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018

Developing the Destination  
*... it's in our nature*

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:**

The development of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Master Plan 2018 (the Master Plan) has been facilitated by the Central Coast Council. The process brought together representatives from the community, natural resource management, local business and the Council.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Central Coast Council (the Council) needs a proactive planning framework to guide strategic decision making, sustainable development and use of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley area, also referred to as, the destination. Strategies and initiatives were mapped by a Working Group as part of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Review (the Review). The Review considered the values, pressures/challenges and opportunities for the Leven Valley and Leven Canyon in a balanced and place-based approach that integrated perspectives of residents and key stakeholders. The Review's collective and whole-of-place approach enabled opportunities to be explored and helped to ensure the Master Plan identified appropriate strategic directions and potential initiatives to guide future developments.

According to the consultation carried out through the Leven Canyon Interpretation Plan 2007-2010 (Housego, 2006) 'Communicating the Call of the Canyon', the Leven Canyon is "a wild, dramatic and natural oasis among local farmland and settlement". This is the point of difference, or unique selling point, and what sets it apart from other attractions in the minds of potential visitors at the Canyon.

Sustainable tourism may be regarded as basically the application of the sustainable development idea into the tourism sector. That is, Tourism development that meets the needs of the present without

compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It can also be defined as tourism that wisely uses and conserves resources, such as the Leven Canyon, in order to maintain their long-term viability.

In line with these definitions of sustainable tourism, reviewing the 2006 Leven Canyon Master Plan seeks to provide social, economic and environmental benefits for Central Coast. Social benefits include building a source of community pride in the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley and increased recreational opportunities for locals and visitors alike. Enhanced visitor experiences and awareness of the Leven Valley as a tourism destination can provide economic benefits to the local community, flowing on to the broader Central Coast area in the form of increased tourism-related cash receipts and employment opportunities. Environmental benefits can be achieved through effective Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Canyon management.

The Leven Valley currently plays a vital role in the 'Caves to Canyon' tourism precinct/cluster and a significant role in contributing to Central Coast's visitor economy. The Leven Canyon is important for tourism operators in the Gunns Plains, Nietta and Preston localities. The destination is integral in attracting tourists to Central Coast that has flow-on effects for other businesses in the broader area and region.

## USES

Visitor recreational opportunities and activities/experiences at the Leven Canyon include:

- . Bushwalking (easy to hard levels) -
  - . Cruickshanks Lookout Walk from car park – 25 minutes return
  - . Circuit (1.2km via lookouts) - 45 minutes
  - . Leven Canyon Floor Walk – 30 minutes
- . Picnics and barbeques
- . Open space recreation, i.e. family cricket or football
- . Viewing scenery, geology, flora and fauna
- . Photography
- . Fishing, swimming and kayaking.

## VALUES

Values of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley include: natural, social (includes cultural and recreational), economic, heritage, visual and educational. These values were the foundation of a review for exploring opportunities and building on (or creating new) initiatives and developments for the destination.

## LEVEN CANYON MASTER PLAN 2006

The Council has developed the Leven Canyon guided by the Leven Canyon Master Plan 2006, which was a staged development. Funding was secured through the Cradle Coast Authority's Sustainable Regions grant. Around \$17,000 was spent updating tracks/toilet and \$50,000 on branding and an interpretation plan. An amount of \$5,000 from Tourism Tasmania (a grant from 2004) was expended on developing visitor interpretations. Funding from the State Government's Tourism Promotion Plan in 2006 (matched by Council contribution) enabled stages two and three of the Master Plan to be developed. This included: track and facility upgrades, implementation of interpretations and development of a second lookout. Around \$0.5m of work was completed at the Leven Canyon by 2011.

## OUTCOMES

The Review and this Master Plan contributes to key outcomes in the Central Coast Strategic Plan 2014-2024, including: socio-economic well-being, economic prosperity and resilience, healthy community and healthy lifestyle, healthy environment, and a sustainable and effective Council.

## SCOPE

The scope of the Review and this Master Plan is to explore and identify new sustainable development initiatives and opportunities for the destination applying whole-of-place thinking.



## SITE DEFINITION

We are applying a broad lens for the Master Plan in a holistic approach that applies ‘whole of place’ thinking for the destination. Key areas of the Master Plan include the Leven Canyon and Preston Falls that are discussed in sections following. The Master Plan also refers to the Leven Valley, an area colloquially used to describe the destination, which includes Gunns Plains and surrounding areas. Figure 1 depicts the broad Central Coast landscape that could be undertaken in a day-journey by a Central Coast visitor.

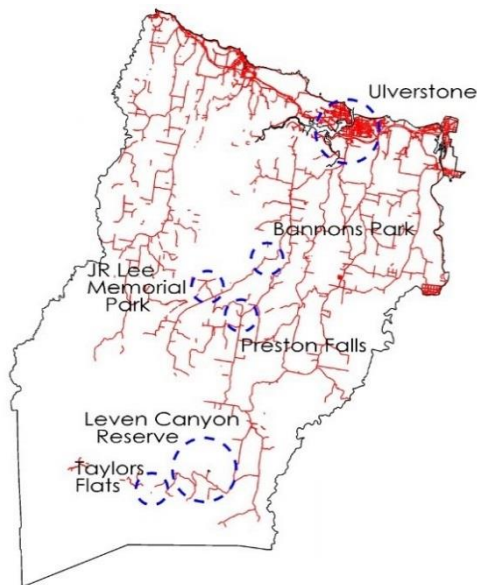


Figure 1: Central Coast Council Local Government Area

## LEVEN CANYON – PICNIC AREA AND WALKING TRACKS

The Leven Canyon is located in the North West of Tasmania, approximately 42 kilometres south of Ulverstone. The 5,000ha parcel of land was declared a Reserve in 2011 and is one of the largest protected areas in Central Coast. The Leven Canyon area is shown in Figure 2, which also depicts the Leven Canyon Floor Walk track. The Council currently leases around 3,000m<sup>2</sup> from Crown Land Services. Lease boundaries and land parcels owned by the Council are defined red and purple in Figure 2.

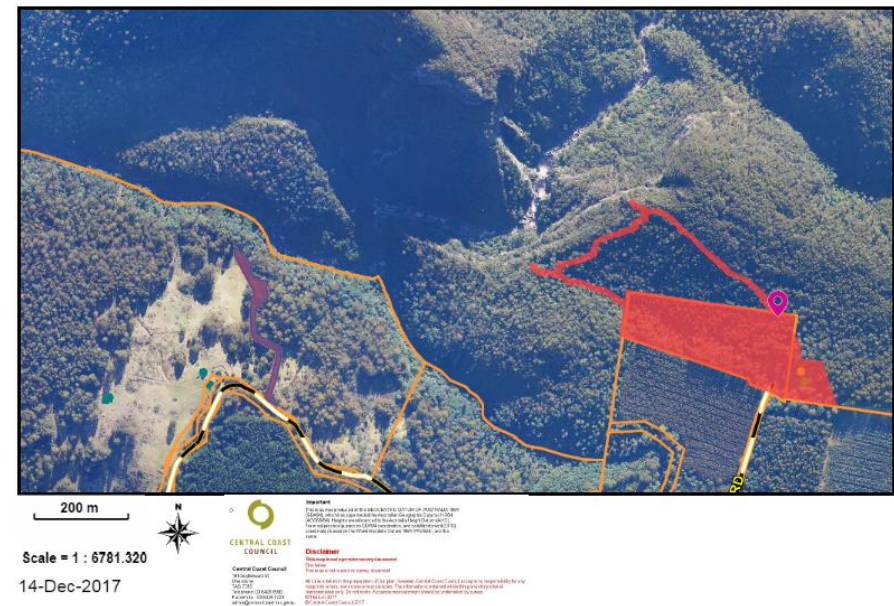


Figure 2: Leven Canyon Reserve Lease Boundaries and Land Ownership

The geoheritage value of the Leven Canyon is significant and the site is biodiverse. The Canyon is a spectacular limestone gulch where the Leven River has gorged its way through the hills, leaving raw limestone cliffs and revealing uplift and geological folding of rocks that is thousands of years old. The vegetation in the Canyon consists of mainly two types of forest; Wet Eucalypt and Dry Sclerophyll. A number of threatened fauna has been identified at the Leven Canyon and surrounding area, including: the Spotted-tail Quoll, Wedge-tail Eagle and Giant Freshwater Crayfish.

The Leven Canyon is popular with bushwalkers and is promoted by Parks and Wildlife Service as one of 60 Great Short Walks in Tasmania. The Leven Canyon features four walking tracks and a large, open barbeque/picnic space. Cruickshanks Lookout Walk ascends to the lookout from the picnic area and offers visitors views 275 metres above the Leven River. The Forest Stairs, featuring 697 stairs, is a linking track and was formerly known as the Link Track. The Forest Stairs were significantly upgraded in Stage 1 of the Leven Canyon Master Plan development (2006). The Fern Walk track (Lower Track) provides access to the Edge Lookout. The section of the Fern Walk track to the lookout was constructed in 2006. The Fern Walk meanders through a forest of large Man Ferns returning visitors to the picnic area.

Amenities and facilities at the Leven Canyon include car parks, picnic tables and seats, barbeques, visitor information, toilets, shelter facilities and visitor interpretation panels. The site is relatively secluded and dense vegetation surrounds the open space picnic area.

The Leven Canyon Floor Walk track entrance is not located in the Reserve but allows visitor access to the base of the Canyon. The Leven Canyon Floor Walk track is accessed from Loongana Road and traverses downhill to a footbridge within the Reserve and over a section of the river known as the Leven Splits or Hells Gates. Devils Elbow is a ninety-degree bend in the Leven River, located around 30 minutes walk from the footbridge. This site offers spectacular views of river rapids and waterfalls in winter, the Canyon wall and the Canyon lookout.

The Leven Canyon Floor Walk forms part of the Penguin-Cradle Trail. The 80km Penguin-Cradle Trail passes from the Leven Canyon along Brookes Track to the summit of Black Bluff and links the coast at Penguin with Cradle Mountain. The trail has been identified as one of Tasmania's Eight Great Walks.

## PRESTON FALLS

The Council considered developing Upper Preston Falls in 2016. Developments included installation of limited mobility access and a viewing platform at the Upper Preston Falls to take advantage of the 8m plunge waterfall that is set in a rainforest microclimate and features volcanic geology. The site is approximately 70m from Raymond Road and 550m upstream of the Preston Falls, see Figure 2. Investment in visitor related infrastructure at Preston Falls is based on a sound business case that presents substantial community benefit.



Figure 2: Locations of the Three Preston Falls and Property Boundaries



A funding application was made to the Tasmanian Community Infrastructure Fund – Minor Grants. The application was successful, and a consultancy arranged to undertake a study and determine feasibility of improved access developments.

The Top Preston Falls Public Access Tracks and Viewing Platform consultancy report by Tasmanian Consulting Service considered and created designs (as indicated in Figure 3) for the following components:

- (a) Car parking and appropriate signage in compliance with relevant Australian Standards and Local Government Association standard drawings.
- (b) A Grade 1 track (wheelchair compliant) from the car park to the main viewing platform located on the western side of Preston Creek.
- (c) A Grade 2 or 3 track from the western side viewing platform to a viewing platform on the eastern side.
- (d) An alternative Grade 2 track from the car park to the main viewing platform located on the western side of Preston Creek.

Detailed concept plans of the Top Preston Falls public access tracks and viewing platform can be arranged to view by contacting the Council.

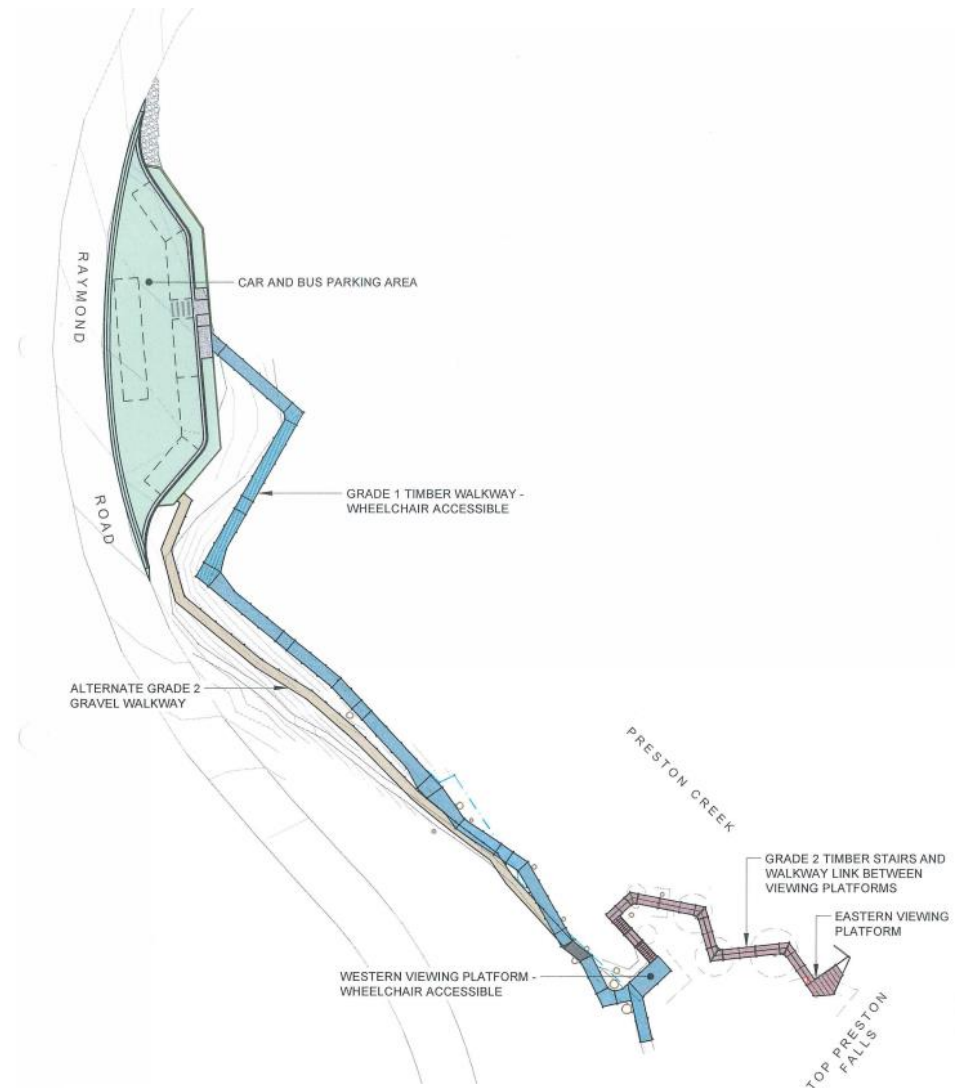


Figure 3: Upper Preston Falls Development Sketch

## APPROACH

The Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Review (the Review) adopted a 'whole-of-place' thinking providing for a more connected and holistic approach. Working closely with local people to look broadly at issues, needs and opportunities for the destination has created longer term solutions to increasing the area's tourism potential.

The collective impact co-design/co-production methodology of the Review and this Master Plan is designed to assist the Council to work as equals with local people to plan, deliver, and improve opportunities, support and services that enable people to have a good life and enjoy all the destination has to offer. A number of principles guide the approach:

- . Involve people from the beginning to end of the process;
- . Listen to people and make it safe to speak up;
- . Work on issues that are important to people;
- . Clarify how decisions are made;
- . Use people's skills and experiences in the process of change;
- . Make meetings, materials and venues accessible to people; and
- . Evaluate progress by looking at the actual change.

The collective impact (co-design/co-production) approach adopted aims to:

- . Build reciprocal relationships between the Council, professionals and local people where power is shared;

- . Do with the community, not do to or for the community;
- . Facilitate more than information giving, token involvement, consultation or delegation;
- . Involve and motivate people through decision making and increasing ownership, sharing responsibility and building trust;
- . Achieve better outcomes for individuals, flowing to groups and communities increasing social capital; and
- . Develop a greater range of knowledge and understanding:
  - . Increasing competitiveness; and
  - . Shifting power and control to local people.

## VISION

The vision is a summary of the strategies that underpin the Review and this Master Plan:

### 1 UNIQUE VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Providing a high level of interest and amenity to create safe, functional, memorable and unique places and visitor experiences.

### 2 COHESIVE AND FUNCTIONAL TRAILS

Reinforcing the structures and legibility of Leven Canyon/Leven Valley through safe and clear trail hierarchy that provides cues (including visual) for visitors.

### 3 IDENTIFIABLE PLACES

Building upon the existing assets and strengths to create places for visitors and everyone in the community to gather, explore, celebrate and relax.

### 4 ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED PRESTON FALLS

Developing a linked track connecting Upper Preston Falls waterfall attraction with low mobility users that provides disabled-friendly areas and safe visitor amenity.

### 5 BEAUTIFUL AND SUSTAINABLE AREAS

Maintaining the economic, social and environmental role of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley in the region, while promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development and management.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following principles will guide the work and approaches of the Council and stakeholders towards achieving positive change for the destination.

### SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

- . Tourism development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs
- . Conserving and maintaining our scarce resources
- . Exploring new nature-based and adventure tourism visitor experiences.

### COLLABORATION

- . Using a shared vision and purpose
- . Building on existing assets and strengths
- . Aligned and networked efforts.

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE

- . Taking action
- . Positively influence visitor numbers to the area
- . Doing with, not doing for.

### INNOVATION

- . Working together to develop place-based solutions to local needs and opportunities
- . Identifying new and improved ways of working
- . Using the Master Plan to align efforts across the Council's policy and service domains.

### A FOCUS ON THE DESTINATION

- . Developing unique/enhanced visitor experiences
- . Aligning actions with local place values and local identities
- . Showcasing local attractions and businesses
- . Maximising tourism potential for the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley.

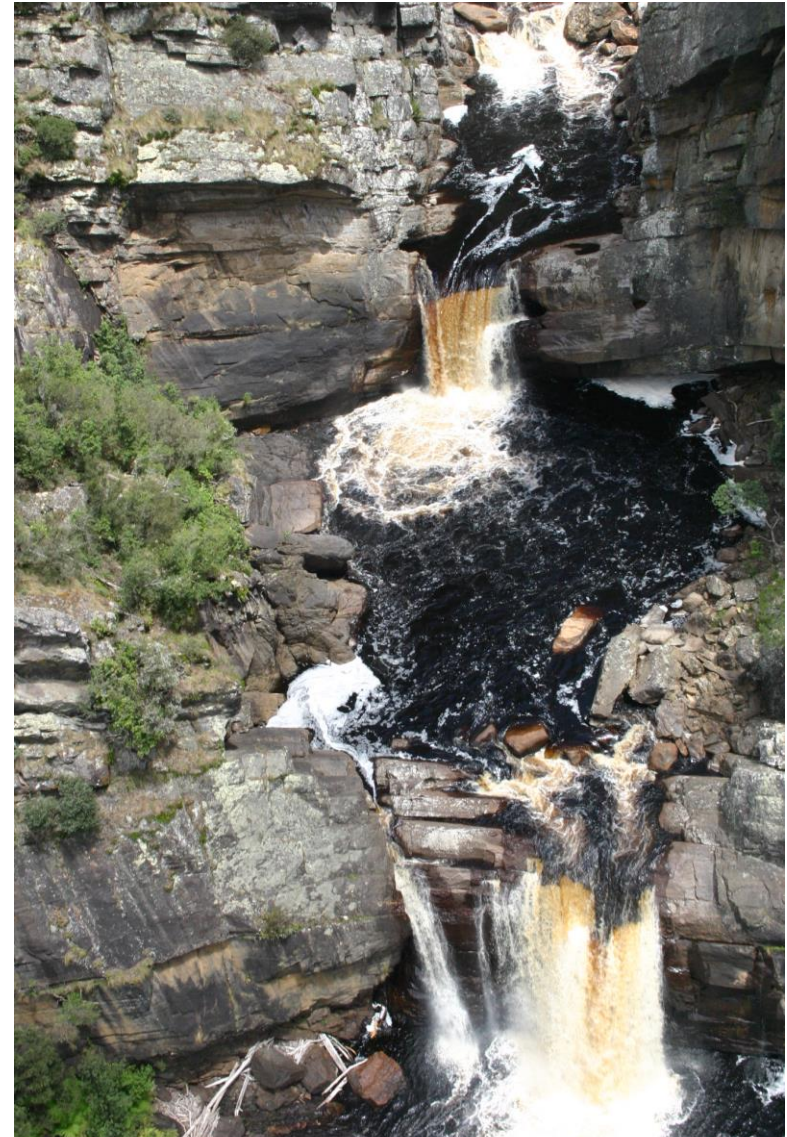
## STRATEGIES AND INITIATIVES

Located around 45 minutes drive from Ulverstone, the nature-based/adventure attractions at the destination are relatively easily accessible. The precinct has a cluster of tourism attractions including Gunns Plains Caves, Wings Wildlife Park, Kaydale Lodge Gardens, Leven Valley Vineyard, Preston Falls, Delaneys Falls, Upper Preston Falls and the Leven Canyon.

The destination offers rich, nature-based/ adventure visitor experiences that significantly contribute to the visitor economy in the area flowing onto the broader Central Coast. A Feasibility Study for developments at Upper Preston Falls has recently been completed. Anecdotally, the peak visitor season for the destination is between the months of October-April.

Forming part of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley Review, 'Enhancing What Works, Are We There Yet?', local residents and stakeholders assisted the Council to explore and broadly identify the strengths, opportunities and needs at the destination.

The following is an overview of the five strategies that underpin the Master Plan and form the collective vision. These strategies are framed as future outcomes. The five strategies are designed to enhance what works in the destination and seeks opportunities to improve what doesn't work. An objective for each strategy is identified and potential initiatives that comprise each strategy are outlined. Together with the community, we can reach the very real tourism potential of these areas.



## 1. UNIQUE VISITOR EXPERIENCES

*Providing a high level of interest and amenity to create safe, functional, memorable and unique places and visitor experiences.*

### 1.1 Develop infrastructure:

- . Investigate feasibility of creating a new 'Leven Canyon Pinnacle Lookout' on a rocky outcrop above Cruickshanks Lookout:
  - . Increase visitor capacity (comparable to Cruickshanks Lookout)
  - . Explore opportunities for disabled-friendly access
  - . Create new visitor interpretations
  - . Provide expanded views of Leven Canyon
  - . Explore viewing point for waterfall, north of current view.
- . Review visitor facilities at destination:
  - . Explore opportunities for Bannons Park
  - . Explore opportunities for JR Lee Memorial Park
  - . Explore opportunities for Taylors Flats
  - . Explore opportunities for George Woodhouse Lookout
  - . Consider ease of river access.

### 1.2 Adventure experiences:

- . Create ropes experience/s
- . Investigate feasibility of tree-top walk at Leven Canyon
- . Explore opportunities for experiential activities.

### 1.3 Visitor learning:

- . Explore provision of guided tours
- . Review, update and create new visitor interpretations
- . Investigate creating virtual tour pod casts.

### 1.4 Visitor amenity:

- . Review provision of rubbish collection points
- . Lobby for improved phone service/coverage
- . Investigate provision of Wi-Fi at visitor points, where possible
- . Ensure safe road surfaces to key visitor points.



## 2. COHESIVE AND FUNCTIONAL TRAILS

*Reinforcing the structures and legibility of Leven Canyon/Leven Valley through safe and clear trail hierarchy that provides cues (including visual) for visitors.*

### 2.1 Leven Canyon Floor Walk:

- . Access to Devils Elbow from bridge (in accordance with class rating, Tasmanian Track Standards and Australian Standards):
  - . Create designs
  - . Install metal steps and railing as needed
  - . Develop new platform
  - . Provide new visitor interpretations.

### 2.2 New tracks:

- . Investigate opportunities for Penguin to Cradle Trail
- . Investigate development of river walk/s
- . Explore development of long forest walk/s
- . Create 'picnic platforms' on appealing track sections.

### 2.3 Accessible tracks:

- . Upgrade Leven Canyon Floor Walk track (in accordance with class rating, Tasmanian Track Standards and Australian Standards)

- . Create options for different user groups and ability levels
- . Investigate opportunities to upgrade/improve Penguin to Cradle Trail
- . Investigate providing access to different user groups on Penguin to Cradle Trail, i.e. for mountain bikes (linking to Dial Range)
- . Upgrade Upper Preston Falls track.

### 2.4 Track management:

- . Correct grading and surfacing, particularly for Leven Canyon Floor Walk
- . Provide directional/warning signage according to class rating
- . Maintain Upper Preston Falls track.

### 2.5 Planning:

- . Apply a whole of area approach to planning
- . Install a 'people counter' at the Leven Canyon Reserve
- . Research visitor demographic profile
- . Research and identify visitor use of Cruickshanks Lookout and Forest Stairs compared to Leven Canyon Floor Walk
- . Identify a Leven Valley visitor target and indicators to measure
- . Review layout of Leven Canyon circuit for connectivity improvement/s
- . Investigate Leven Canyon Floor Walk car park layout.

### 3. IDENTIFIABLE PLACES

*Building upon the existing assets and strengths to create places for visitors and everyone in the community to gather, explore, celebrate and relax.*

#### 3.1 Place/precinct signage:

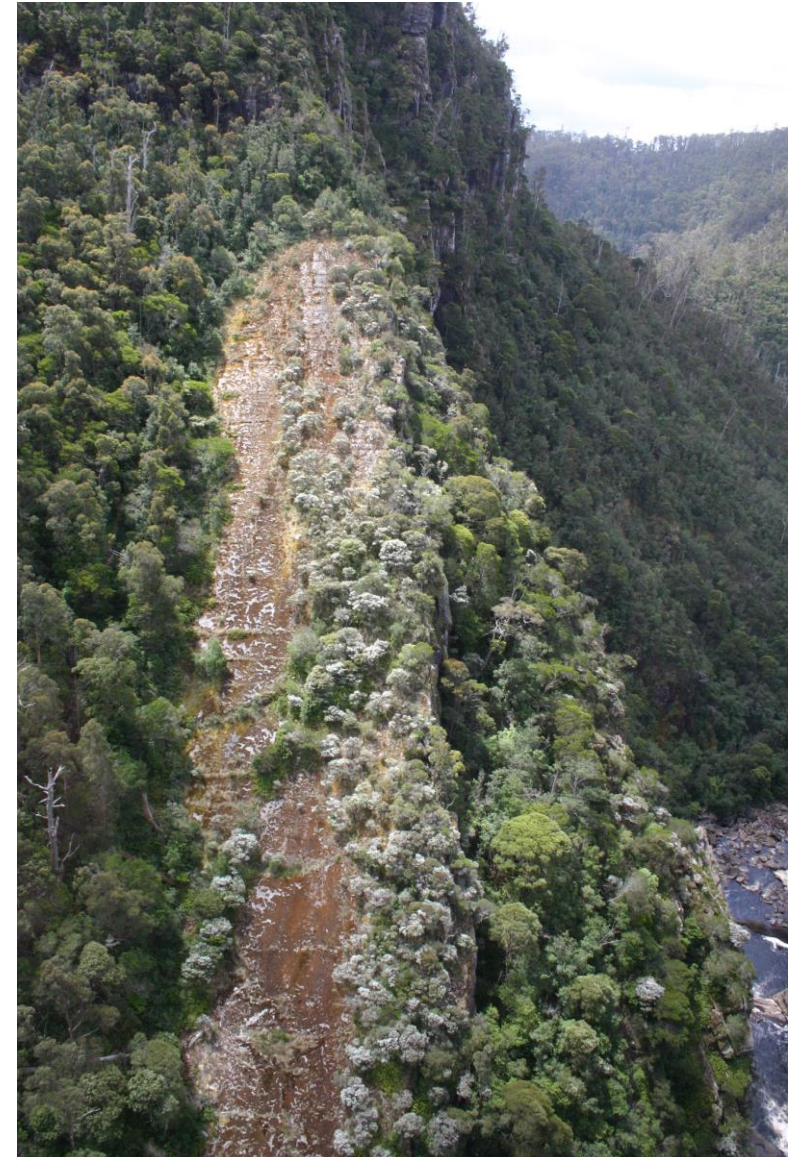
- . Review directional/wayfinding signage
- . Develop drive tours and roadside maps
- . Integrate local business, attractions, amenities and facilities.

#### 3.2 Marketing:

- . Create a positioning statement (message)
- . Update promotional material including brochures
- . Develop promotions/marketing campaigns
- . Market locally
- . Proactively encourage visitation, i.e. tourism-based/community events
- . Develop the Leven Valley tourism cluster.

#### 3.3 Community:

- . Increase value of assets to residents
- . Raise local awareness
- . Enhance vibrancy of places.

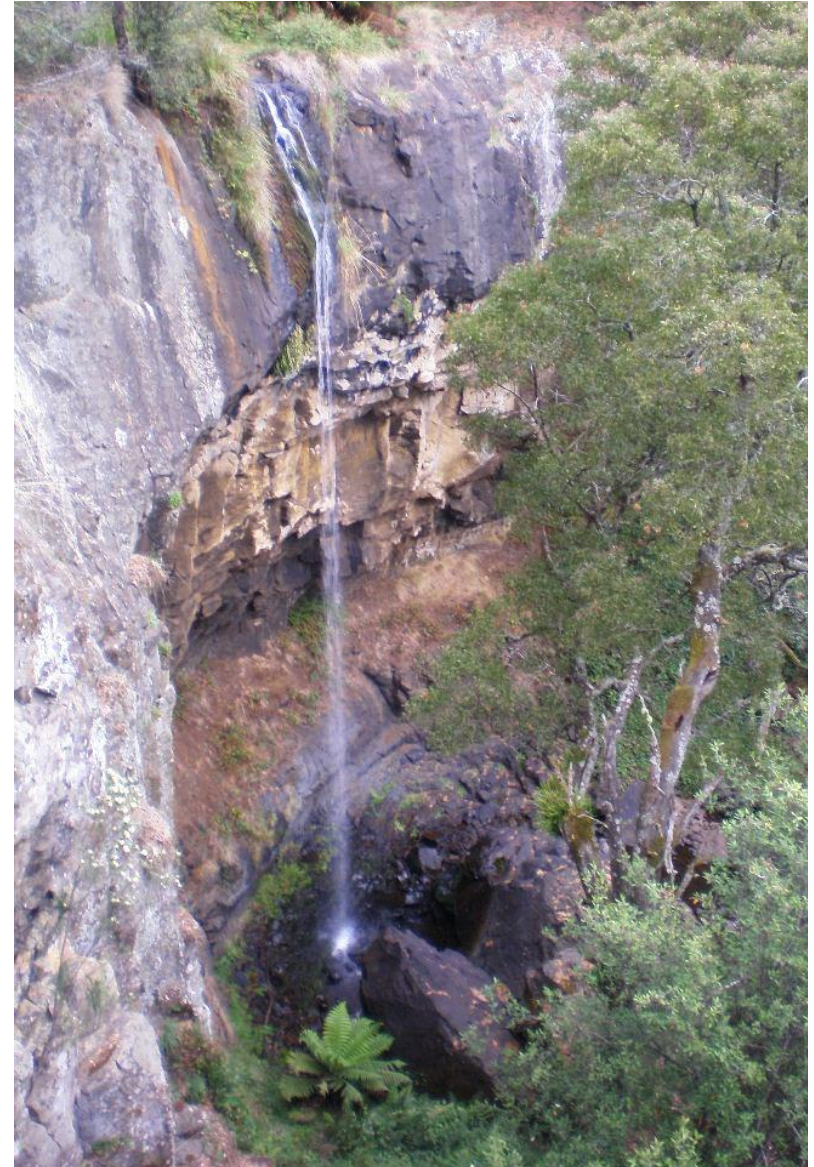




## 4. ACCESSIBLE AND CONNECTED PRESTON FALLS

*Developing a linked track connecting Upper Preston Falls waterfall attraction with low mobility users that provides disabled-friendly areas and safe visitor amenity.*

- 4.1 Safe access:
  - . Provide safe access to Upper Preston Falls
  - . Create access opportunities for low-mobility user groups
  - . Explore developing Preston Falls circuit trail, connecting waterfalls.
- 4.2 Development funding:
  - . Investigate sources.
- 4.3 Visitor car parking:
  - . Investigate options for Upper Preston Falls
  - . Provide safe car parking.



## 5. BEAUTIFUL AND SUSTAINABLE AREAS

*Maintaining the economic, social and environmental role of the Leven Canyon/Leven Valley in the region while promoting a holistic approach to sustainable development and management.*

### 5.1 Landscaping/plantings:

- . Create features, i.e. roads lined with Waratah
- . Plan to update and landscape picnic areas
- . Review landscaping (and visitor amenity) at Leven Canyon, JR Lee Memorial Park, Taylors Flats, George Woodhouse Lookout and Bannons Park.

### 5.2 Accommodation:

- . Explore options for sites and accommodation types near the Leven Canyon and surrounding areas, including camping.

### 5.3 Design:

- . Modern, environmentally-friendly facilities/amenities
- . Sympathetic designs, in keeping with natural surroundings.

### 5.4 Resource conservation:

- . Protection of Reserve values
- . Sustainable tourism development
- . Facilitate formation of Leven Valley Wildlife Friends group.

