

# The Rise of Blue Derby

Case Study



Blue Derby in Tasmania is a case study for the success of mountain bike tourism in achieving economic benefits for local communities. The Tasmanian Cycle Tourism Strategy aims to establish Tasmania as the cycle tourism capital of Australia, and is backed by a \$6 million fund.

After suffering a decline in traditional mining and forestry industries, the rural township of Derby has been revitalised by the investment in more than 80km of purpose built mountain bike trails. Offering a range of experiences through pristine bushland on the town's doorstep, the 'Blue Derby' mountain bike tourism destination is widely regarded as the mountain bike capital of Australia, its closest rivals located across the ditch in New Zealand. In 2017, the Blue Derby trails were voted by professional mountain bikers as the best in the Enduro World Series (EWS) competition. This was the first time a stage of the EWS was held in Australia.

The \$3.1 million, 80km network is reportedly attracting more than 30,000 visitors every year, who spend four to five nights in Derby then another five nights elsewhere in Tasmania. The return on investment has been estimated at \$30 million per year. A \$2.5 million Federal Government grant enabled the project, aiming to develop a new industry to help the region recover from the collapse of the forestry industry.

Further investment is planned for Stage 2, a 66km network south of St Helens, including an iconic Bay of Fires Descent Trail.

The township of Derby has largely embraced the opportunities provided by mountain biking, with the development of new food and beverage outlets, accommodation and bike stores.

Programs have been established to provide local disengaged youth the opportunity to experience mountain biking in Blue Derby. The experiences have been transformative for young people in St Helens, who have limited alternative options for recreation.

The programs provide them with an appreciation of the natural environment, personal health and wellbeing benefits, as well as career options in adventure guiding, mountain bike maintenance and tour guiding.

While there has been immense success in terms of economic longevity of the town, some local residents have expressed their concerns and fears that the new mountain biking culture has displaced the more traditional values of the town and its people. The case has highlighted the importance of community engagement and consultation in the development process, to ensure old and new industries can co-exist harmoniously.

Building on the success of Blue Derby, Stage 1 of the \$4.1 million, 100km+, Wild Mersey Mountain Bike Development in the North West of Tasmania, catering for more beginner and family experiences, commenced construction in 2018. The North West is predicted to attract over 138,000 new visitors, and create 51 full time jobs, contributing \$6.88 million to the economy.



## Planning and Development

Partners	Planning	Funding
Multiple State Government Departments	2002 – Trails Tasmania Strategy	2013 - \$2.45 million funding towards mountain bike trails in North East Tasmania – Australian Government’s Regional Development Australia Fund.  \$550k investment from other project partners.  2017 - Funding for Blue Derby Stage 2 announced. \$2.5M Federal Government, \$600k Local Government  2017 - \$6 million for cycle tourism in Tasmania – Department of State Growth  2018 - Funding for Wild Mersey Stage 1 announced: \$300k Federal Government, \$600k State Government, \$200k Local Governments  2018 – Labour Government commitment to \$4 million statewide Tracks and Trails Community Grants Program
	2004 – Northern Tasmania Regional Recreation Trails Strategy	
Multiple Local Government Agencies	2005 – Mountain Biking in Tasmania: A summary of current trends and future opportunities	
	2005 – Cycling Tourism in Great Western Tiers	
Private sector	2007 – IMBA Hollybank Concept Plan	
Mountain Bike community	2008 – Mountain Bike Tourism – Market Profile for Tasmania	
Event promoters	2009 – Tasmania Mountain Bike Plan	
	2009 – Tasmania Mountain Bike Marketing Strategy	
	2011 – Mountain Bike Tourism Potential in Northern Tasmania	
	2012 – North East Tasmania Trail Development Region Planning	
	2012 – North Eastern Mountain Bike Development Project Discussion Paper	
	2013 – Potential for Mountain Biking in North Eastern Tasmania	
	2013 – Hollybank Mountain Bike Facility Master Plan	
	2013 – Blue Derby Concept Design	
2013 – North Eastern MTB Development Business Case		
	2015 - Opening of Blue Derby Stage 1	
	2016 - Opening of Blue Tier descending trail, Derby	
	2016 - Planning and Economic Modelling, Blue Derby Stage 2	
	2017 – Tasmanian Government Cycle Tourism Strategy	
	2018 - Wild Mersey Mountain Bike Trails Development	

"The \$3.1 million, 80km network is reportedly attracting more than **30,000 visitors every year**, who spend four to five nights in Derby then another five nights elsewhere in Tasmania."

