

Community and Environment Advisory Committee Minutes



Meeting held: 4:00pm, Thursday 25th June 2015 at the Education Pod (Summerlands)

1	Welcome & Apologies		
1.1	<p>The Chair declared the meeting open at 4:05pm, acknowledged the traditional custodians of this land and paid respect to the elders past and present.</p> <p>Attendance / Apologies are listed below:</p> <p>Environment Committee: Andrew Paxton (CHAIR and Board), Tania Maddigan, Joel Geoghegan, Mike Cleeland, Stephen Fullarton, Bessie Tyers, Tim Ealey, Gavan O'Connor.</p> <p>Community Committee: Stella Axarlis (CHAIR and Board), Stephen Davie (Board), Michael Whelan, Pauline Taylor, Patsy Hunt, Margaret Hancock, Anne Davie, Christine Grayden, Jan Fleming.</p> <p>In Attendance: Jeff Floyd (Board Chair), Kevin Love (Board), Alan Gostelow (Board), Matthew Jackson (Chief Executive Officer), Mark Merryfull (Coasts and Wetlands Senior Ranger), Hayley Smith (Executive Assistant - Minutes).</p> <p>Apologies: Dr Roz Jessop (Environment Manager), Deirdre Griepsma, Jane Daly, Paul Smith, Cr. Kimberley Brown, Penny Manning, Derek Hibbert, Deborah Holland, Lois Gaskin.</p>		
2	Proposed Trial Release of Eastern Barred Bandicoots to Churchill Island	ACTIONS	STATUS
2.1	<p>Amy Coetsee (Threatened Species Project Officer), Zoos Victoria provided a presentation to the group. The presentation included profile of the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, population statistics (history and current), causes of population decline and conservation reserves and projects currently in place, including monitoring and proposed trial releases.</p> <p>Committee members viewed a live, (captive-bred) Eastern Barred Bandicoot brought to the meeting by representatives from Zoos Victoria.</p> <p>Committee members noted details of the proposed trial release of 20 Eastern Barred Bandicoots on Churchill Island for a two-year trial, commencing in August 2015. (See 'Nature Notes' distributed to committee members via email).</p> <p>Comment: Michael Whelan asked if it is an 'introduction' or 're-introduction'</p> <p>Response: Introduction.</p> <p>Comment: Tania Maddigan enquired regarding the bandicoots origin.</p> <p>Response: The bandicoots were sourced from a captive breeding program at Mt Rothwell breeding facility and Melbourne Zoo.</p> <p>Comment: Mike Cleeland enquired regarding natural predators of the bandicoot and the possibility of overpopulation.</p> <p>Response: Bandicoots regulate their own population. The highest density observed is 2.5 per hectare.</p> <p>Comment: Christine Grayden enquired regarding possible impacts on the gardens at Churchill Island garden due to possible encroachment by the bandicoots. She also asked regarding interps/signage.</p> <p>Response: There will be interpretation provided for visitors regarding the bandicoots. The bandicoots move around and make new nests as they go (nests not obvious).</p> <p>Comment: Christine Grayden asked if there is concern regarding bandicoots going into the car park.</p> <p>Response: Bandicoots are nocturnal (not out during the day) so this is low risk.</p> <p>Comment: Pauline asked if the bandicoots are territorial.</p> <p>Response: Bandicoots are solitary, but will fight.</p> <p>Comment: Stephen Fullarton asked if the project will be promoted.</p> <p>Response: The project will be promoted including partnerships already in place, project information and investment involved, and benefits going forward.</p> <p>Comment: Tania Maddigan raised concern regarding events on the grass area disturbing nests.</p> <p>Response: There is no tussock grass in the event area. Natural vegetation on the island has been considered and will be appropriately managed throughout the project.</p> <p>Comment: Christine Grayden highlighted importance of grasslands, including on Summerland Peninsula.</p> <p>Comment: Mark Merryfull enquired as to how many bandicoots would be released.</p>		

	<p>Response: 20 (10 female, 10 male).</p> <p>Comment: Mike Cleeland discussed three endangered plant species on Churchill Island and that previously it was thought that bush rats were restricting the Moonah trees. Mike enquired regarding possible conflicts with rats/bandicoots.</p> <p>Response: the three rare/threatened plants on Churchill Island are mangroves, moonahs and yellow sea-lavender. We will be mapping the distribution of these on the island prior to the release and monitoring the movements and activities of the bandicoots in relation to these for the first six months. In addition we will be using exclosure plots to look at effects on vegetation generally.</p> <p>Comment: Mark Merryfull enquired regarding the method of release and research into possible impacts on survival depending on the method used.</p> <p>Response: Research has been undertaken and it was found that the method of release used had no impact on survival.</p> <p>Comment: Bessie Tyers asked regarding food sources for bandicoots on Churchill Island.</p> <p>Response: Bandicoots are not fussy and feed on invertebrates mainly.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Zoos Victoria their attendance and informative presentation on the project.</p>		
3	Minutes from Previous Meetings	ACTIONS	STATUS
3.1	<p>The minutes of the Community and Environment Advisory Committee meeting held 30th April 2015 were accepted as a true and correct record.</p> <p>Moved: Anne Davie Second: Margaret Hancock</p>		
4	Matters Arising from Previous Minutes	ACTIONS	STATUS
4.1	<p><u>Swan Lake Viewing Areas (shutters)</u> (FEBRUARY 2015)</p> <p>Comment: Steve Davie suggested instructions for visitors to Swan Lake regarding the shutters in viewing areas (whether they should be left open or closed). Members agreed.</p> <p>Response: (ACTION) The CEO advised that he would follow up (the shutters should remain closed as birds live inside).</p>	CEO to follow up regarding instructions for shutters in viewing areas at Swan Lake.	Complete. New signs stating "please close the shutters" have been installed at the site.
4.2	<p><u>Vegetation removal (Justice/Ventnor Road)</u> (FEBRUARY 2015)</p> <p>There was general discussion about the vegetation removal at the corner of Justice Road and Ventnor Road where road works have been occurring to upgrade the intersection for a housing development. Members felt that there was more vegetation removed than necessary to cater for the new turning lane.</p> <p>Response: Deirdre Griepsma advised that she would check the planning permit.</p> <p>UPDATE (Bass Coast Shire Council): The removal is consistent with the planning permit. There is a requirement for Native Vegetation offset planting consistent with the planning scheme and regulations.</p>	Deirdre Griepsma to follow up regarding recent vegetation removal at the corner of Justice Road and Ventnor Road.	Complete. See left.
4.3	<p><u>2015 Short-tailed Shearwater Program</u> (APRIL 2015)</p> <p>This year's breeding season has been positive and numbers are up again to original levels. 185 birds have been rescued off the roads, and 185 have been found dead so far. The bridge lights are being turned off for 10 days this year. Committee members noted that a debrief will be provided at the next advisory committee meeting.</p> <p>UPDATE: Graeme Burgan will provide a full overview of the short-tailed shearwater program at the next meeting (**currently overseas).</p>	Ranger in Charge to provide a debrief on the 2015 Short-tailed Shearwater Rescue Program at the next advisory committee meeting.	December 2015 Meeting.
4.4	<p><u>Signage Strategy for Rhyll and Observation Point</u> (APRIL 2015)</p> <p>Response: The Nature Parks must comply with the regulations applicable for the area. (ACTION) Ranger in Charge will further discuss speed limits in the Observation Point / Rhyll Inlet with Parks Victoria. Committee members showed support for the area to have a speed limit of 5 knots.</p> <p>UPDATE JUNE 2015: Discussions with Parks Victoria are still in progress. Observation Point has been a strong focus of discussions.</p>	Ranger in Charge will further discuss speed limits in the Observation Point / Rhyll Inlet with Parks Victoria.	In progress. UPDATE: See left.

4.5	<p><u>Dead Penguin at Flynnns</u> (APRIL 2015)</p> <p>Comment: Pauline Taylor raised concern regarding a dead penguin she had seen above the shoreline at Flynnns Beach that morning which appeared to have a puncture mark on its body.</p> <p>Response: Ranger in Charge will investigate. (ACTION)</p> <p>UPDATE: Awaiting return of Environment Manager (currently on leave).</p>	Ranger in Charge to investigate report of the dead penguin at Flynnns Beach.	In progress. UPDATE: See left.
5	Phillip Island Nature Parks Update	ACTIONS	STATUS
5.1	<p><u>General Nature Parks Update - CEO:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitation has again reached record numbers over the 2014-15 financial year. International visitation remains strong, domestic is flat. Many incentive groups visited over the year, including Tupperware Indonesia. Penguin Parade reached 608,000 visitors (vs. 575,000 last year) to which is a record. There were 131,000 visitors to Churchill Island (vs. 127,000 last year). KCC visitation has also increased to 201,000 (vs. 189,800 last year). Nobbies visitation is was 317,000 (down 8,000). Overall visitation to the Nature Parks attractions was 940,289 paid visitors (1,257,999 including the Nobbies). • At its June meeting, the Board approved the final draft Churchill Island Conservation Management Plan. Open community information sessions regarding the plan will be held on Monday 27 July at the Koala Conservation Centre (Chisholm Room, 3:30-5pm and 6-7:30pm). The Board commended Lovell Chen, consultants who developed the plan on the quality, comprehensive review of Churchill Island. • The new Nobbies attraction (Antarctic Journey Nobbies Ocean Discovery) is progressing well and on track for its opening in December 2015. The demolition stage is complete and fitting and interps is now in progress. • The new Penguins Plus is also on schedule for its opening, in November 2015 in partnership with RACV who helped fund the project (\$1M). • The Nature Parks received a "Special Commendation" in this year's World Environment Day Awards. • At its June meeting, the Board also approved the 2015-16 Budget. Highlights include the Woodlands and Wetlands Key Area Plan (includes KCC, Five-ways, Ventnor Koala Reserve, Oswin Roberts Reserve and Rhyll Inlet) and a Cape Woolamai Foreshore Master Plan. <p>Comment: Bessie Tyers asked if the plan will include Rhyll Transfer Station.</p> <p>Response: Yes.</p> <p>Master planning (in collaboration with Council) for the Cape Woolamai foreshore will follow, including a full stakeholder engagement and submission process.</p>		
5.2	<p><u>Environment Update – Coasts and Wetlands Senior Ranger</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rangers have been busy with weed work at Cape Woolamai focusing on inkweed and boxthorn. Magiclands to Pinnacles is now free of boxthorn. <p>Comment: Mike Cleeland asked if this includes the cliff areas.</p> <p>Response: Yes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of volunteers including International Student Volunteers, Green Army, university and work experience groups have assisted with revegetation work over the period. • Rangers have also been busy at Scenic Estate working on revegetating the coastal strip. This project is in collaboration with Council. The site opens to the public on 1 July 2015. • Fox control rangers are currently focusing on the airstrip near Cape Woolamai where a fox was recently sighted and also on Princeton Avenue and on Cape Woolamai itself, where fox activity has been detected. • 141 cats have been removed from the Nature Parks over the 2014-15 year. <p>Comment: Christine Grayden asked if the above number includes domestic cats and if the Nature Parks has responded to the Commonwealth Government Cat Plan.</p> <p>Response: Feral only. Only very rarely are domestic cats trapped. Yes the Nature Parks made a submission to the Feral Cat Threat Abatement Plan and have had follow up meetings with Minister Hunt and Threatened Species Commissioner, Gregory Andrews, to discuss greater control of cats on Phillip Island.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nature Parks and Friends of Koalas President Patsy Hunt met regarding 'Koala Futures' to discuss future strategies for the KCC. This is in preparation for a broader discussion with external parties including the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria and the Koala Technical Advisory Group which will feed into the Woodlands Key 		

	<p>Area Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wildlife Rescue staff responded to 154 calls over May and looked after a shy albatross which has now been successfully released. A small ecological burn was conducted at KCC in April. <p>Comment: Mike Cleeland raised that he had seen wedgetail eagles nesting at Cape Woolamai and asked if they are being monitored by the Nature Parks.</p> <p>Response: Nature Parks' rangers have seen the birds. There is no monitoring happening at this stage.</p> <p>Comment: Margaret Hancock asked if the Green Army are an enthusiastic group.</p> <p>Response: Yes, they are very helpful.</p>		
6	Rhyll Transfer Station - Revegetation Update	ACTIONS	STATUS
6.1	<p>Coasts and Wetlands Senior Ranger Mark Merryfull provided a presentation to the group regarding progress of rehabilitation of the Rhyll Transfer Station site. The presentation included before/after photos of rubbish and weed infestations, planting stages over the project and habitat outcomes (including increase in native vegetation), and methods used to overcome challenging aspects of the project.</p> <p>Comment: Stephen Fullarton enquired regarding progress of previous issues around emission of gasses from in the ground.</p> <p>Response: It is a requirement that Council complies with high standards of environmental monitoring which are being undertaken in line with the EPA approved Post Closure and Rehabilitation Plan.</p> <p>Comment: Gavan O'Connor enquired as to whether some species of plant were removed due to risk.</p> <p>Response: Yes some were removed resulting in ongoing challenges, monitoring and maintenance. The site can be opened when it is confirmed that it is safe for public use.</p>		
7	Matters Arising and Advice from Committee Members:	ACTIONS	STATUS
7.1	<p><u>Letter to the Editor - Landcare</u></p> <p>Mike Cleeland (President, Phillip Island Landcare) discussed a recent letter to the editor which appeared a local newspaper containing misinformation that weed control through Landcare would not be ongoing. He advised that a replacement staff member is now in place and weed control is ongoing and will be strengthened.</p>		
7.2	<p><u>Eco-Boat Tour Feedback</u></p> <p>Comment: Mike Cleeland provided positive feedback regarding the new Eco-Boat tour which he recently attended and congratulated the Nature Parks.</p> <p>Comment: Pauline Taylor who had also taken the tour recently provided positive feedback also, including the great viewing experience due to amount of pups, which interact with boat.</p>		
7.3	<p><u>Phillip Island Conservation Society</u></p> <p>Christine Grayden (Secretary, Phillip Island Conservation Society) advised that the Port of Hastings held a public meeting to discuss oil spoil response where it was advised that an oil exploration rig will be parked at Rhyll Inlet for around 6 months (possibly up to 2 years). The rig would have 10-12 staff, be powered by a small generator (omitting less noise than the previous rig) and minimal lighting. Discussions are in progress regarding locating the rig closer to French Island.</p>		
7.4	<p><u>Churchill Island</u></p> <p>Comment: Christine Grayden (Secretary, FOCIS) advised that the new Churchill Island gardener is settling in very well. Volunteers also assist in the garden where many plants are currently in flower.</p>		
7.5	<p><u>Vale John Swan</u></p> <p>Christine Grayden advised of the death of Professor John Swan, original member of Victorian Conservation Trust who passed away in June (91 years). Professor Swan was also a devoted conservationist and environmentalist.</p>		
7.6	<p><u>Plastic segments on beaches</u></p> <p>Jan Fleming discussed the large amount of small pieces of plastic found on beaches around her area. She raised concern for</p>		

	<p>small birds and asked if there is anything that can be done to help.</p> <p>Response: The Nature Parks photographs all beach pollution incidents (and reports to DELWP) and also funds beach cleaning. Please report any areas of significance. Committee members raised that Surf Beach and Colonnades were bad areas for plastic, and suggested raking.</p>		
7.7	<p><u>Preserve Westernport Action Group (sub-group of Phillip Island Conservation Society)</u></p> <p>Anne Davie Preserve advised that the group will be submitting to Infrastructure Victoria regarding the importance of Western Port. The role of Infrastructure Victoria is central for the decision on the location of a second container port. Detailed submissions will be sought and the Government will then decide and legislate on the location before the next State election.</p> <p>Comment: Margaret Hancock flagged that the Patrick lease over Port of Hastings expires in 18 months and the surrounding waters could become administered to another party. Opportunity to change the lease area was flagged.</p>		
7.8	<p><u>Phillip Island Tourism Strategy 2035</u></p> <p>Anne Davie advised that Council had agreed to establish a Phillip Island Tourism Community Reference Group for development of the Phillip Island Tourism Strategy 2035, and her support for representation by local groups.</p>		
7.9	<p><u>Friends of Koalas</u></p> <p>Patsy Hunt (President) reported on the Koala Futures meeting which was a positive, informative day. Key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group does not agree with koala handling. • The need to develop a story about the history of the KCC including what was there previously and what is there now (many species of animals and birds). <p>There was key discussion around koala breeding strategies to address the declining population.</p> <p>A Silver Spade Day was held recently which raised \$400 for the Barb Martin Bush Bank.</p>		
7.10	<p><u>Signage at Swan Lake</u></p> <p>Comment: Patsy Hunt enquired regarding progress of signage at Swan Lake.</p> <p>Response: Commenced and currently in progress.</p>		
7.11	<p><u>DAMP Committee (Domestic Animal Management Plan)</u></p> <p>Patsy Hunt advised that there are discussions regarding possibly commencing compulsory de-sexing of cats and a night-time cat curfew by next registration period. This would lead to a 24-hour containment policy.</p> <p>Comment: Andrew Paxton advised the since the cat curfew commenced in the Yarra Ranges area, less cats were being brought in to Council.</p>		
7.12	<p><u>Phillip Island Wallabies and Landcare</u></p> <p>Mike Cleeland discussed the high cost of effective wallaby-proof fencing (around \$20 per meter). He advised that Landcare can contribute \$6.00 per meter and farmers can also plant trees to help, however wallabies have eaten trees which were planted at Scenic Estate.</p> <p>Response: An update by the Nature Parks' wallaby project PHD student can be organised for the next available committee meeting (ACTION). By June 2016, a population estimate will be available. The study will also provide a variety of other information on wallabies including stomach content, roadkill locations, and much more data.</p>	Update by the Nature Parks' wallaby project Research student will be organised for the next available committee meeting (December 2015).	December 2015 Meeting.
8	Other Business		
8.1	<p><u>New Nature Parks Board</u></p> <p>The term for current Board members expires in September 2015. A decision regarding the new Board will be made by Government in late August. Committee members will get to meet new Board members.</p> <p>Committee members were invited to an Afternoon Tea on Thursday 27 August at 4:00pm at the Education Pod (last Board Meeting for committee chair, Stella Axarlis who is retiring from the Board). **Please RSVP to Hayley.</p> <p>Stella Axarlis was given a gift of flowers and acknowledged for her contribution over the past 12 years by committee members.</p>	Executive Assistant to email committee members details of the Afternoon Tea on 27 August. Committee members to RSVP.	

9	Next Meeting		
9.1	<p>The Chair and CEO thanked committee members for their contribution. The meeting was closed at 6:52pm. Committee members noted the date of the next meeting which is Thursday 17th December 2015. **Afternoon Tea on Thursday 27 August 2015, 4pm at the Education Pod.</p>		