

MARIA CREEK SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP



MINUTES

Meeting Held

Tuesday 9th February 2021 at 5.00pm

Kingston District Council Chamber, 29 Holland Street Kingston SE

1. Welcome

Welcome by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nat Traeger

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and pay respects to the Meintangk/Moandik people, the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we gather on.

We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the Meintangk/Moandik people to country and respect and value their past, present and ongoing connection to the land.

2. Attendance

Name	Representation	Present / Apology
James Braithwaite	Commercial Fishers	Absent
Brett McLaren	SE Drainage Board	Present
Eddy Lindner	Dredging Volunteers	Present
Craig Richards	Business	Absent
John Clarke	Business	Present
Robert Taylor	Ratepayer	Present
Scott Gluyas	Ratepayer	Present
Graham Usher	Upper SE Recreational Fishers	Present
Matthew Wright	Upper SE Recreational Fishers / Business	Present
Robyn Campbell	First Nations	Absent
Kay Rasheed	Mayor	Present
Chris England	Deputy Mayor	Present
Tim Harding	Elected Member	Present
Jeff Pope	Elected Member	Present
Nat Traeger	Chief Executive Officer	Present
Dave Worthley	Manager Assets & Infrastructure	Present
Chelsea Burns	Team Leader Sustainability & Projects	Present
Brad Smith	Wavelength Consulting	Present – Zoom
Mark Booth	BRM Advisory	Guest Presenter – Zoom
Bill Armfield	Elected Member	Observers
Jodie Gluyas	Elected Member	
Rick Wingard	Elected Members	
Alicia Bastiaans	Financial Services Co-ordinator	

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3. Previous meeting

As agreed at the previous meetings, the following actions were progressed:

- Installation of Faun Trackway at Johnston Ave (Nat/Dave)
 - Review of reduced product procurement (30m due to availability and no attachment) at a cost of \$78,000 as opposed to \$214,000
 - Manually deployed on 11 January 2021 with Rohan James of Forward Defence on location during installation. First non-military deployment in Australia.
 - Likely won't progress the additional 20m and loader attachment at this time.
 - *Brett raised some community concerns around the drop off at the end of the concrete ramp in the water* (response that the latest storm event seems to have reduced that slightly and minimised that drop off).
 - High level media interest and other coastal councils, generally positive feedback from the community and increased use by general community (including 2WD).
- Removal of floating pontoons
 - As noted in the minutes of the meeting of 21 September 2020 *Temporary removal of pontoons at Maria Creek; Group considered the temporary removal of the pontoons currently installed at Maria Creek in an effort to preserve the pontoons, as well as to allow the trapped seagrass to mobilise where possible. If pathway is to progress reinstatement of facility, then would need to be removed anyway. Recommendation of Community Focus Group to remove and store at Council depot.*
 - These pontoons have been removed recently as per the previous discussions and will be cleaned and stored at the depot. May be some community concern around this action, however does certainly not reflect any decision but is in an effort to preserve those pontoons under stress from the seagrass accumulation. Some mobilisation of trapped seagrass already observed since installation.
- Minutes/notes and Wavelength Presentation from meeting held Monday 30th November 2020 provided to Community Focus Group members and made available to the community via Council's website;
- Council report to ordinary meeting held on 15th December 2020 for Community Focus Group progress update and budget variation for progression of business case; and
- Engagement of Mark Booth of BRM Advisory to develop business case.

4. Submissions received

No community submissions were received to be tabled at this meeting.

5. BRM Advisory Presentation on Business Case

Mark Booth from BRM Advisory presented (via Zoom):

- Outcomes and key findings of the business case;
 - High management costs of existing coastal assets;
 - Key objectives of the Maria Creek Sustainable Infrastructure Concept Study;
 - Progress of the CFG to the hybrid concept which was used in the business case;

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- Community consultation undertaken and feedback received;
- Tourism, Caravan Park and Second homes;
- Financial impact – Can Kingston afford this?
- Project viability.

A copy of the presentation is made available to the community as a separate item.

The draft Maria Creek Business Case February 2021 was provided to all Community Group Members and will be made available to the community on Council's website.

6. Questions / Discussion

The following matters were raised by Community Focus Group members in response to the business case presentation:

- Further explanation of the 'average' increase in council rates and how that works over 20 years (Kay);

Response (Mark): Council rates need to be set each year in an effort to achieve a financially sustainable position. The components of this project that would go into setting of the council rates would be the operational maintenance costs, depreciation and interest on the loan (does not the principal repayments on the loan).

Interest: In the early years of the loan borrowing, the interest component will be higher than that in the later years. The average over the term of the loan (20 years) would be 18%, the increase would be more likely around 20% in the early years based on that higher interest component whilst the principle loan is at its highest. Whilst interest rates are currently very low, there is no guarantee that they will remain low and interest risk/financial sensitivity analysis has not been taken into account in this business case.

Depreciation: This component (around \$192,000 per year) is a cost that must be funded by the council in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and based on the estimated useful life of the assets.

Operational maintenance costs: This is the cost of sand bypassing and seagrass management for the concept on an ongoing basis as identified in the Wavelength Technical Note. Whilst these are reasonable based on the current data, there is no guarantee that these might increase into the future given the nature of the coastal environment.

7. General Business

The following matters were raised to Community Focus Group members for general discussion:

- Where to from here (Nat); Council has a meeting next Tuesday where it will receive the business case and consider how it will communicate with its community. Do any of the community focus group have any thoughts on how it may wish to proceed based?
- Biggest issue will be ratepayers agreeing to pay the significant increase (Brett);
- The financial ratios in the business case (page 16 onwards) show in graph form what it will do to council's financial position if there is no rate increase and basically council couldn't continue to operate in such a significant deficit. It shows that council will have no cash by 2022/23 unless council applies the significant increase. It would have a detrimental and significant

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negative effect to the point where council would have to borrow to operate and function, however we would have already borrowed such a high amount that it would be unlikely that we would be able to access further borrowings to fund the general operations of the council or even lend for the project based on the findings within the business case (Nat);

- The LGFA would consider lending to the council if it could show that it was committed to increasing council rates and/or significantly reducing costs. If council weren't doing those things, they would be very cautious for any lending where there is a prolonged deficit period. This has been seen first hand in other councils (Mark);
- If we go ahead with improving the jetty, not much point with all that sand under it (John);
- Review of the removal concepts contained within the concept study – refer to Brad (Nat);
- Concept 4 of the concept study highlighted the 'removal' option for the most improvement of amenity at the jetty. Initially in the first couple of years, there may be some quite rapid movement of sand mobilising north (estimated 50m beach width reduction at the jetty). However, this mobilisation would slow over time as the shoreline adjusts to the removal of the breakwaters and realigns, with it taking up to 40 years to fully re-establish. The identified cost for full removal of both breakwaters was in the amount of \$2.4m and very high chance of improvement to the beach width at the jetty (Brad);
- There would also be various options for staging of the removal such as the removal of the 80m seaward extension of the southern breakwater 'to the elbow' which would likely improve the beach width at the jetty by 50m over a couple of years. However, any removal of those breakwaters would be committing to the launch facility being unusable and would have to rely on Cape Jaffa/beach for launching (Brad);
- There is also the option to 'do nothing' in the concept study, which would result in further accretion of the shoreline and accumulation at the jetty. Given the saturation of the breakwater the accretion is currently slow at the breakwater themselves, but if left in place there would be approximately 15m of accretion at the jetty. However, a benefit has been seen in seagrass wrack mobilising naturally due to the full saturated breakwater and council not having to undertake that manually (Brad);
- If we take the groynes away, will we end up being back like 10 years ago with huge build of seaweed in that area? The saturation has improved the look of the beach and wouldn't want it to build up again like it used to (Scott);
- There isn't the seagrass out at sea like there used to be (Robert);
- There has been natural mobilisation of large seagrass wrack accumulations in 2019 and 2020, in Nov/Dec which is slightly later than historically. Even if the leg of the breakwater is removed, there is still that saturation of the southern side and connection bypass for seagrass to naturally mobilise, it is just that the saturation alignment would be 80m landward compared to current (Chelsea);
- In 2020 it was estimated to be 8,000m³ of seagrass to remove for amenity purposes, and in one storm event it was mobilised and very little management was required. In 2019, there was a significant mobilisation of the accumulated seagrass trapped within the saturation area, estimated to be 200,000m³ (Chelsea);

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- Years ago, when Morgy's boat washed up in the area between the breakwater and jetty, that landed into a pile of seaweed as council didn't remove anything from that area in the past and it just naturally accumulated (Tim);
- Council didn't have a licence to remove seagrass from the area between jetty and breakwater until 2020 (Dave);
- If that seagrass had of been removed like I told them 10 years ago, we wouldn't be talking about this now (John);
- Its not just the seagrass that has been building up, from the day it was put in, something should have been done about the build up and the lessons we now know (Tim);
- If that catchment area had of been kept clean, many years ago we did a month work of work for nothing to prove a point and it stayed clean/open, and the year after there was no money to remove from that side and it just kept building up every year. I was right 10 years ago and no one wanted to listen (John);
- There has also been an increase in sand mobilisation and some significant events in 2016-2018, where previously we might have seen average 15,000m³ a year mobilising down the coastline, now it is more like 40,000m³ or 50,000m³. So there is other factors that need to be taken into consideration when we talk about historical works (Dave);
- Ultimately it comes back to the fundamental of what we have been talking about, about creating and maintaining that buffer (Chelsea);
- On the jetty side of it, has there ever been any costings on repairing the jetty as its in a pretty bad way (Eddy);
- In 2017 there was a condition assessment done on the jetty and identified what needed to be done. Would likely include a full deck refurbishment at a cost of \$2.0M, diagonal cross bracing of \$570,000 and some piles to be replaced as well. Currently talking to WGA for a gap analysis and progress more detailed costings to enable council and DIT to be collaboratively 'shovel ready' for funding when its available. DIT are supportive of council's approach to try and get some funding to get work done on the jetty (Dave);
- Is it a state owned jetty? (Eddy);
- There is a 99 year lease to council on the jetty. Whilst we don't own it, there needs to be a shift in thinking because the community keeps telling us that it is their number one priority. We have been pushing back on it being under our care and control because of the huge costs involved but overwhelmingly the feedback is that the community want to see money invested in the jetty and the sand accumulation addressed (Nat);
- We are responsible for capital and maintenance on the jetty, whereas some other jetties are fully managed by the state (DIT) such as Adelaide metro jetties or commercial jetties (Dave);
- When the lease was taken on (2001ish) there was a lot of communities in a similar position that were handed over recreational jetties from DPTI in order to retain them (Eddy/Kay/Dave);
- DIT has a significant amount of work lined up for jetties under their care and control, there is only a handful of contractors qualified to do the works required as it is so specialised (Dave);
- Getting back to the boat ramp, if you go to the community with a 15% rate rise then they won't be in favour of it. But if the report says that you can't go ahead without a rate rise, but spoke to a handful of keen amateur fishermen who said they wouldn't be in favour of such a high rate increase (Scott);

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- It would be a ratepayer based communication to ensure that those who will pay get to have their say, because if you go to a broader group who don't have to pay for it as non-ratepayers, they will have an emotional response and don't care about the cost because they don't have to put their hand in their pocket. Does the CFG think that council should go to a community survey based on the information in the business case or should council make a decision based on the business case (Nat);
- Need to at least let the community know what the options are (Brett);
- At council's meeting next week, it will likely endorse the business case and require administration to come up with a community engagement strategy based on the business case to be provided to ratepayers (Nat);
- From a ratepayer perspective, the other option would be to include the current cost to continue to clean it out as it is and what the rate increase would be just to make it usable (Brett);
- It's the saturation of the southern side that is the issue, before we got to that point it was ok to clean it out once a year but we won't get it open just doing that anymore because its fully saturated right to the end (Tim);
- People are going to want another alternative. If this community group can't find any other option (Brett);
- This focus group has exhausted all other option. We have looked at other proposals and other locations and there isn't an option that would provide an equal offering for a lesser cost (Nat);
- What if we spent \$1M with the dredge and just took some of it, how long would that last? How much would you have to take out to make it useful for 4 or 5 years until it was saturated again? (John)
- The main problem is that the sand isn't just collecting in the area adjacent to the jetty but accreted all the way back to about 3km south. If you cut a pocket to the south of the breakwaters, all of the sand accumulation to the south is out of alignment of the pocket of sand removed and will fill in so rapidly that 100,000m³ (\$1M worth) would fill in within a year most likely. Anything less than 300,000m³ is likely to be ineffective because there isn't enough to create a buffer and disconnect the flow, as well as still needing the annual 30,000m³ – 50,000m³ bypassing. The minimum is 300,000m³ which is \$3M worth and then there is an additional \$2.0M (approx.) to get your amenity at the jetty. \$1M would likely not even get it open for a year and would have spent a lot of money to have it open for a year and back to square one. Unfortunately, its not as simple as doing a small bandaid campaign that isn't guaranteed to work (Brad);
- It is important in that scenario of \$1M, that there is 35,000m³ (\$350,000) of sand and seagrass within the channel and surrounds that needs to be addressed, as well as the essential repairs on the breakwater that would need to occur if you dredge on the southern side and expose that breakwater that is reaching the end of its useful life. The works have a domino effect and can't be segregated, essentially that \$1M would only result in 65,000m³ on the southern side and 35,000m³ within the channel, without any crucial breakwater repairs (Chelsea);
- Remember that when Clarkes removed 24,000m³ on the southern side in 2019 and it filled in within 9 days (Dave);
- Aren't you digging a hole at Jaffa though, doing exactly the same thing? (Matt);

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- There isn't the accumulation back 3km there, totally different set of circumstances. Still a big problem and still a big dredging campaign. That is set at 100,000m³ a year for the next 4 years at least and we are committed there (Dave);
- Just thought could try to save some of the jetty as well by taking some of the sand away but not an easy fix (John);
- Only other scenario is go to the government and see how much they are willing to give you in grant funding. Ask for more than 50%, 75% or 80% (Bill);
- Would make very little difference in the ongoing operational expenses that contribute to the rates increase (Nat);
- Even if it is 100% funding and that initial capital campaign is fully funded, it is still over \$600,000 in operating expenses each year thereafter that would need to be funded from the ratepayer base (being the \$434,000 for sand bypassing and \$192,000 for depreciation of the breakwaters), as the only thing that would change would be the recovery of the interest component and the principle repayment on the loan isn't included in the rate increase (Chelsea);
- How do those sand pumps work, like a hopper system, like Cape Jaffa was meant to have? Wouldn't you look at something like that instead of having to do sand bypassing each year? (Scott);
- We have looked and presented on other bypassing options such as a slurry track or sand tracker system, which mixes sand with water and pumps it but the cost was similar to the dredging rates used. The challenge with them is they don't work well when there is seagrass mixed with sand, so in this location there would need to be filter as well and very difficult to achieve cost effectiveness. Did also consider carting using trucks which had a higher cost and community issues, so broadly speaking dredging is the most cost effective way of bypassing large volumes (Brad).

8. Summary / Next Steps

Based on the discussion and key items, the following matters will be progressed:

- Final update to Maria Creek Business Case to reflect relevant points of discussion of meeting;
- Council to formally consider business case at its meeting of February 2021.

It was reiterated to the Community Focus Group that all documents and supporting information is available on the Council website for community to access.

9. Next Meeting

To be confirmed.

10. Closure

Meeting was closed at 6.00pm.