

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER
STRATEGY AND ASSETS COMMITTEE
TUESDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2015

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY

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| 1. | Draft Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Management Plan | File 9929E |
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SECTION MANAGER: Kelie Lowe

PURPOSE:

To recommend to Council to place the draft Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Management Plan on public exhibition for an extended period of time.

RECOMMENDED, in accordance with the Committee's delegated authority from Council, that

- a) The draft Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Management Plan be placed on public exhibition from 15 December 2015 to 15 February 2016 and advertised in the newspapers;**
- b) During exhibition submissions be invited on suggested vegetation management options ie. who, how, when and funding models.**
- c) Groups identified in the Collingwood Beach Dune Community Engagement Strategy be notified of the public exhibition;**
- d) Persons who have provided feedback forms and an email address be notified of the exhibition; and**
- e) A report on the outcome of the public exhibition be presented to Council.**

OPTIONS

- 1. As recommended.**
- 2. Do not place the draft Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Management Plan on public exhibition.**
Implications - This would delay the implementation of any vegetation management actions on the dune.
- 3. The Committee may choose another option such as make further amendments to the draft Vegetation Management Plan and then place on exhibition as recommended.**

DETAILS

At its meeting on 9 December 2014 (D14/328336), the Policy and Resources Committee resolved under delegation to:

- a) *Adopt the recommendations and management objectives developed by the Collingwood Beach Reference Group;*
- b) *Investigate and consider funding through the budget review process with the aim of:*
 - i) *developing a dune vegetation management plan by experts in dune restoration, coastal processes, graphic representation and community engagement; and*
 - ii) *allocation of \$15,000 over 5 years for a part time project officer to be responsible for overseeing this project, implementing the works in collaboration with community members, monitoring and documenting the impacts of the 5 year trial.*

Planning and Development Services reallocated \$30,000 savings to implement part b i) of the resolution. A consultant's brief was developed with input and review from the Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Reference Group (CBRG).

Following assessment of consultants' proposals to develop a dune vegetation management plan for Collingwood Beach, members of the CBRG recommended that NGH Environmental be appointed by Council to undertake this task.

A community engagement strategy, as well as community engagement material on the options available, to manage the dune vegetation at Collingwood Beach were developed by the consultant. The documents incorporate consideration of the recommendations and management objectives developed by the CBRG and adopted by Council. The documents also reflected feedback received by the CBRG during their development.

All community engagement materials, including options and fact sheets used, can be found on Council's website at:

<http://shoalhaven.nsw.gov.au/Environment/Coastal-Landscape/Collingwood-Beach-Dune-Vegetation-Management>

A 'kiosk' event was held over two days to engage with the broader community, at the end of Berry Street, Vincentia, on:

- Friday 6 November 1pm to 7pm; and
- Saturday 7 November 8am to 11am.

On Friday, four Council staff and two NGH Environmental consultants were present to discuss the project with the community. On Saturday, three Council staff attended.

To advertise the event:

- A media release was issued;
- A letter box drop was distributed in Vincentia and Huskisson;
- A mail out to non-residents along Collingwood Beach was conducted;

- Email notifications were sent to the Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Reference Group;
- Email notifications were sent to the identified interest groups;
- Email notifications was sent to Central NRFMC members;
- Information was posted on Council's website;
- A poster was placed on the community notice board at the Vincentia shopping centre;
- 8 signs along the cycleway were installed 1 week prior to the event;
- Signs/banners on the beach and cycleway were installed during the event; and
- Banners were placed at the intersection of Berry St and Elizabeth Drive, Vincentia during the kiosk.

Approximately 190 people attended the event (Friday 6 November approx. 95, Saturday 7 November approx. 95). Attendance was relatively spread out during the event, allowing individual conversations to focus on issues of interest to the attendees.

Attendees included near neighbours, cycle path users, local residents and visitors to the area. Some polarisation of viewpoints was noted during the event, specifically regarding the amount of tree cover that attendees thought was suitable. Strong feelings were noted, regarding tree vandalism, signage and litigation regarding tree vandalism. Other issues and questions noted were:

- *what would happen with the dead trees and dead wood;*
- *willingness of some attendees to be involved in management actions (such as hedging); and*
- *the need for seats and potentially viewing areas along the cycle way.*

It was evident that the issue of dune management is of great interest and that many people feel strongly regarding the management of the area. The foreshore area, including the cycle way, appears to be well used and valued by the community.

Feedback forms were disseminated at the event and made available at the Council website. The feedback forms intended to gauge the acceptability / popularity of three broad management options. The options centred on management of the overstorey (thinning, pruning, hedging) to allowing varying degrees of bay views from the cycle way and residences.

There were 107 feedback forms submitted by the close of the event on Saturday. An additional 181 additional forms were submitted by individuals (either by email or by mail) by Friday 13 November; the closing date for submissions. An additional group of 131 forms were handed back to Council staff by a resident and member of the Collingwood Beach Preservation Group on 13 November. Many of these represented multiple copies of identical forms related to the same households (eg. 20 forms from one family household). Overall there were a total of 419 feedback forms received. Some feedback forms were incomplete and therefore the consultant only recognised 394 forms.

A copy of all feedback forms and a detailed table that collates all of the submissions, is available in the Councillor's Room for review.

All of the feedback forms were sent to the consultants for their consideration in developing the draft plan.

A briefing of Councillors by the consultant followed by a briefing of the Collingwood Beach Dune Vegetation Reference Group was undertaken on the 3 December 2015.

At the briefing the consultant provided an overview of feedback received from the community and outlined how submissions have been incorporated into the draft plan and explained content of the draft plan.

It is recommended that the draft plan be placed on public exhibition from 15 December 2015 to 15 February 2016.

The draft plan includes a review of the implementation of the plan after the 5 year trial implementation period, in accordance with Council's resolution.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The total implementation of the draft Dune Vegetation Management Plan cannot be accommodated through Council's existing budget and will require additional funding from Council or potentially a special levy. Other options to reduce costs could also be considered, such as the establishment of an alternative form of Foreshore Management Group, which would be actively involved in maintaining the reserve in accordance with the adopted plans and draw on the resources of local residences under staff supervision.

Existing budgets can continue to be used for weed control works and public risk management, however will not be sufficient for the additional actions identified in the draft plan.

Targeted bush regeneration activities may attract funding by State Government grants. The implementation of the draft Dune Vegetation Management Plan would not be consistent with the existing Bushcare program which objectives are ecological restoration and maintenance of biodiversity. A new structure would need to be considered with specific objectives related to the implementation of the adopted management plan.

It is unlikely that the implementation of the plan will be able to attract grant funding from State Government as they also have general objectives in line with ecological restoration and maintaining or improving biodiversity.

Council will need to consider allocating funds to implement the plan for the length of the 5 year trial period in association with consideration of alternative structures facilitating resident involvement.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

A community based Reference Group has worked with Council staff and the consultant to prepare guiding principles and input to the draft plan. The kiosk event has proven to be very successful in engaging the broader community.