

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Report Title:	Bluff and Go Kart Track
Item No:	4.10
Date of Meeting:	19 January 2021
Author:	Brenton Daw, Manager Infrastructure and Regulatory Services
Attachments:	Land Agreement (DEW)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In about 2015, following the devastating 2014 Bangor Fire, District Council of Mount Remarkable Elected Member Mr Phil Heaslip, first touted the idea of opening up The Bluff to tourism as a way to revive the community and with it, reinvigorate the local economy.

Council has been considering development of a lookout facility for many years at the site of a communications tower (known as "The Bluff") on the ridge-top road known as the Go Kart Track, above the Wirrabara Forrest Valley, overlooking Germein Bay, Spencer Gulf and lands around Port Pirie. The Heysen Trail, a 1200 km long hiking route, traverses this breathtaking landscape. Wirrabara, and other locations along the mid-section of the route, sit within the District Council of Mount Remarkable.

The Wirrabara Forest is home to walking and riding trails, sections of natural plant species, the famous King Tree, walking and riding trails, the old Nursery, camping grounds and incredible views.

Forestry SA has had a rich history in the region and since the Bangor Fire the industry is now in decline. At its height, the nature of the industry meant that the forest had little to no public access. Opening this route will cement the region and this area on the tourism map.

Mr Heaslip, now Mayor, continues to champion the project and has been fundamental in the success of applications for third party funding to bolster Council's contribution to enable implementation of the project.

The funding and opening up of this area will allow access to the public which is currently closed to the general public.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. receives and notes the report;
2. approves "The Bluff" Project and associated works;
3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer and Manager Infrastructure & Regulatory Services to continue negotiations with the Department of Environment and Water for possible funding opportunities in relation to "The Bluff"; and
4. confirms the budget allocation for The Bluff as endorsed by Council in budget review #1 to complete "The Bluff".

3. RELEVANT CORE STRATEGIES/POLICIES

3. Growing Prosperity (Economic and Tourism Development)
5. Attaining Sustainability (Built and Natural Environment)
6. Developing the Foundation for Our Future (Infrastructure and Assets)

4. BACKGROUND

'The Bluff', as it is referred to, is located in the scenic Wirrabara Forest and accessed from the quaint town of Wirrabara. It is in the Southern Flinders Ranges, located on Horrocks Highway, a popular tourist route approximately 240 km from Adelaide.

The Lookout vantage point and platform will offer spectacular 360-degree views of the rugged scenery of the Wirrabara Forest, overlooking Germein Bay, Spencer Gulf and lands around Port Pirie, enhancing the 'Remarkable Experience' and further develop the Southern Flinders Ranges as a tourism destination.

The Wirrabara Forest is home to walking and riding trails, sections of natural plant species, the famous King Tree, the old Nursery, camping grounds and incredible views. However due to its Forestry SA history sections have never been accessed by the public, opening these sections will cement the regions and our area on the tourism map. Currently Tourism has an economic benefit of \$5.6 billion for South Australia, in the Flinders Ranges and Outback there is a visitor expenditure of \$304 million. Opening this attraction for the public will contribute to this and lead the way in the promotion of opening more sections of the forest for recreational (Adventure Tourism) use.

Further developing the Wirrabara Forest by opening the Bluff to tourism is a huge opportunity for the entire region, it will enhance our growing region as a popular tourism destination. The contribution tourism can have to townships and regions is significant. The regional economic impacts and social benefits that a project like this can have is recognised and valued by the Council.

The project proposes to upgrade and enhance an existing road and install a viewing platform to provide safe tourist vehicular access to the Lookout. The works include the sealing of the Go-Kart Track and Bluff Road passing bays, installing safety barriers, sealing a parking and turnaround area, constructing a viewing platform and a boardwalk from the carpark to the platform, line marking and traffic and interpretative signage.

This infrastructure is proposing to not only provide positive employment benefits during the construction phase, but ultimately, significantly increase tourism and economic opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industries locally. Additional indirect benefits include the attraction of people to the area, increased length of stay due to more attractions in the region and subsequent increased spend.

This project is expected to have positive impacts on social wellbeing and the economic environment of the Wirrabara Township and general region, this is timely after the negative affect that the decline of the forestry industry has had. These works will promote Wirrabara as a tourism destination and bring a positive focus on an opportunity rather than a continued focus on the negative things occurring in line with the decline of an important industry.

There are some key risks associated with this project and with providing public access to this land. Council will ensure the access will not be at the detriment of the existing site which provides the whole region with essential communications services. Council is working with

Broadcast Australia as the owner of the communications services and land, and already received 'in-principle support' for the project.

As part of this agreement and ensuring the viability, sustainability and safety of accessing the site, Council will ensure adequate procedures are implemented to enable security of the site, address all required road safety enhancements and implement a management plan for fire and flooding issues on high risk days.

This project aligns strongly with the District Council of Mount Remarkable Strategic Management Plan 2008-2020 as the project will encourage and facilitate tourism development and growth for the benefit of our communities.

Upgrading the access and developing a lookout aligns with 'Principle 7: Reinforce the region as a preferred tourism destination' as outlined in the Mid North Regional Plan a volume of the South Australian Planning Strategy.

Also by adding value to the Southern Flinders and Outback region we will be closely aligning with SATC's 2020 tourism plan. This project will assist in driving demand and enhancing promotions and attractions.

South Australia's Strategic plan makes reference to increasing visitor expenditure and the provision of a significant tourism attraction will have economic benefits for local businesses and fulfil this goal.

The Bluff Lookout has also been noted as a component of the Yorke and Mid North Tourism Strategy being currently developed by a range of stakeholders through the Department of Primary Industries & Regions South Australia.

The main goal and need that will be met through this project is the need to diversify and enhance the region and the District Council of Mount Remarkable as a growing tourism destination and further develop the 'Remarkable Experience'. The proposed works is an opportunity Council and the Southern Flinders Ranges Tourism Authority have been analysing for several years. This would also add to the \$10 million already allocated by Federal and State Governments to create a world class tourism destination with an international mountain bike track, updated trails for hiking and cycling and improved visitor facilities.

5. DISCUSSION

The upgrade and works is projected to have a total cost \$865,000 with Council being successful already in obtaining grants to the value of \$565,865 from SLGIP (LGA Funding) and the Federal Governments Infrastructure Program. The remaining funds, \$299,135 will be required to be funded by Council, and achieved through budget savings already made in 20/21 (Budget Review #1).

Council has obtained Land Owner consent and the appropriate licences and has worked with the Department of Environment and Water to finalise the vegetation clearances to enable commencement of the works.

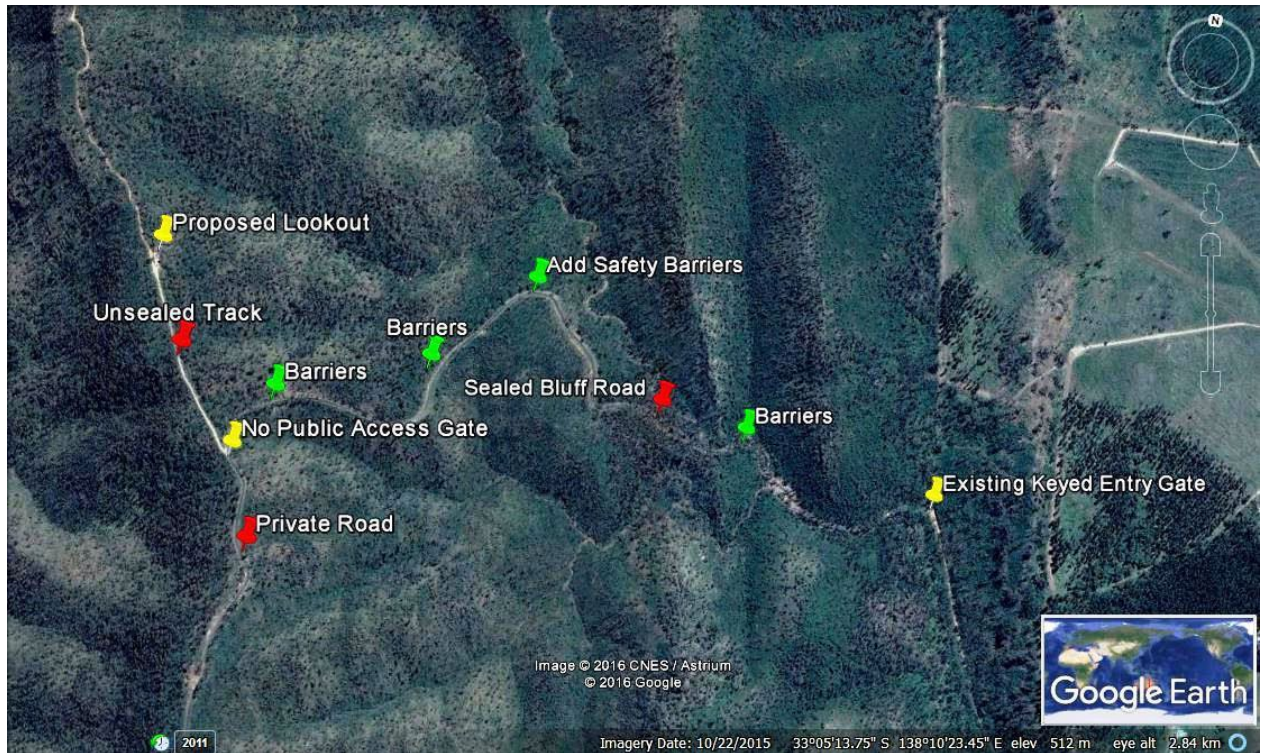
Council has undertaken a tender process through LGA Procurement in accordance with Council's Procurement Policy and using where possible local contractors and services and encouraging contractors outside the region to utilise local purchases where possible.

Post implementation, all additional assets will be added to Council's Asset Management Plans and subsequently into Council's Long Term Financial Plan to ensure ongoing maintenance and long term sustainability of both the asset and Council.

This project will increase the number of employment opportunities and provide jobs both throughout and after construction. This statement indicates the positive employment impact for the local region.

Discussion with potential contractors has been undertaken with a start date early in 2021 possible if Council approves the funding required to complete this project. Current funding received has to be spent by 30 June 2021 or funding will be lost. The project requires a build time of approx. 4-5 months so a clear decision is required on constructing in 20/21

Continued discussions concerning possible funding opportunities are currently being held with the District Council Mount Remarkable CEO, the Department of Environment & Water (DEW) and appropriate State Government representatives.



Existing Sealed Bluff road, Go Cart Track, Lookout Site, Access Gate and multiple Safety Railing Sites (indicative only)

As the principal project proponent, Council recognises that without robust stakeholder engagement an inclusive and positive and sustainable outcome may not be realised.

The Nukunu Wapma Thura - NWT (Aboriginal Corporation) Committee

There is a tapestry of stories across Nukunu Country and being inclusive of the indigenous voice in this project is vital.

Nukunu people possess native title over country that is predominantly in the upper Spencer Gulf, Southern Flinders Ranges and Willochra plains area. The Bluff is situated in the Southern Flinders Ranges, the ranges are known to Nukunu as Thartu. Nukunu are snake people and see the snake as forming the landscape within their country and seeing all life as descending from this creation ancestor, referred to in public as Wapma. Water ways including creeks, waterholes and aquifers are the embodiment of Wapma.

Nukunu continue to undertake caring for country initiatives in the region, including the revegetation of flora. As a consequence of attainment of Native Title, Nukunu wish to increase land-care efforts and look to find ways to mitigate damage to environment.

The Nukunu Wapma Thura - NWT (Aboriginal Corporation) Committee, representing the traditional owners, have been involved in discussions with the District Council of Mount

Remarkable from the project's inception. Their input and views have been essential in ensuring that matters of indigenous heritage, cultural significance and other social, environmental, and economic matters are considered.

Following a site tour in February 2020, NWT provided the Council with in-principal support of the project which included support for increased tourism and sustainable employment. A suite of questions was raised by the Committee and were subsequently addressed by Council.

6. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Option 1:

That Council:

1. receives and notes the report;
2. approves "The Bluff" Project and associated works;
3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer and Manager Infrastructure & Regulatory Services to continue negotiations with the Department of Environment and Water for possible funding opportunities in relation to "The Bluff"; and
4. confirms the budget allocation for The Bluff as endorsed by Council in budget review #1 to complete "The Bluff".

This option would see the project completed within the allotted time frames allowable with the existing project funding providers.

Option 2:

That Council:

1. receives and notes the report;
2. approves the Bluff Project and associated works based on receiving 100% funding for the project; and
3. authorises the Chief Executive Officer and Manager Infrastructure & Regulatory Services to enter into negotiations with the Department of Environment & Water (DEW) over possible funding opportunities.

This option would not allow the project to be completed within the allotted funding timeframes and would have Council funding 100% of project in future years or seeking funding from other sources.

Option 3:

1. receives and notes the report; and
2. does not approve the Bluff Project and associated works.

This option would see the project cancelled

7. RECOMMENDED OPTION

Option 1 is the recommended option

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Financial/Budget

The decision will require an increase in expenditure to the 20/21 budget of \$299,135, which has been addressed by Council in the Budget Review #1.

8.2 Legislative/Risk Management

Project management of The Bluff is considered to be part of the overall budget amount. The Contractor will be primarily responsible for the delivery of the project as defined in the project scope. Council staff will be responsible for ensuring the contract scope is delivered as defined within the project plans.

8.3 Staffing/Work Plans

The Manager for Infrastructure & Regulatory Services will be the primary contact and liaise directly with the preferred contractor.

8.4 Environmental/Social/Economic

Social benefits for a region may indeed cover increases in regional amenity, improving community connections and inclusion and providing opportunities for learning and knowledge creation. As the closely connected community of the Southern Flinders continues to recover emotionally, economically, and environmentally from the Bangor Fire* of January 2014, they are embracing "The Bluff" Project and wider Southern Flinders Precinct Project.

In the case of this Southern Flinders Community, the social benefits of implementing such a project goes deeper than improving tourism opportunities. It goes to bridging a gap left in the wake of drought, fire and flood and builds resilience around what is predicted to be a poor climate outlook on the back of a global pandemic.

8.5 Stakeholder Engagement

Nil

9. REPORT CONSULTATION

Council Leadership Team.

10. REPORT AUTHORISER

Sam Johnson	Chief Executive Officer
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