

Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce

Meeting Date: Monday, 12 December, 2016
Location: Jervis Bay Rooms, City Administrative Centre, Bridge Road, Nowra
Time: 4.00 pm

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Agenda

1. **Apologies**
2. **Confirmation of Minutes**
Wednesday 30 March 2016
3. **Declarations of Interest**
4. **Reports**

SH16.1	Status update on the recommendations of the Taskforce.....	5
SH16.2	Occupancy rates - Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Holiday Park	10
5. **General Business**

Membership

Clr Andrew Guile - Chairperson
Clr John Wells
Clr Nina Cheyne
Clr Annette Aldrick
Mr Gareth Ward MP (Nominee – Mr Paul Eil)
Ms Jessica Zealand
Mr Graeme Philpott
Mr Allan Richardson
Mr Mike James
Mr Phil Guy
Mr David Lamb
Mr Bob Williamson
Mr Barry/Brian Allen
Mr Craig Peters
Mr Gerald Groom
Mr Stephen Short
Ms Robyn Flack

Quorum – Three: One (1) Councillor and Two (2) Community Members

Purpose

- Examine options for pursuing a partial or complete opening of Shoalhaven Heads
- Review Councils current Entrance and Estuary Management Plans for Shoalhaven Heads
- Report directly to Council

MINUTES OF THE SHOALHAVEN HEADS ESTUARY TASKFORCE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 30 MARCH 2016 IN JERVIS BAY ROOM 1&3, CITY ADMINISTRATIVE CENTRE, BRIDGE ROAD, NOWRA COMMENCING AT 4.02PM

The following members were present:

Clr Guile – Chairperson
Clr Kitchener
Clr White
Clr Kearney
Clr Wells
Colin Waller
Bob Williamson
Allan Richardson
Mike James
Jessica Zealand
Gerry Groom
Phil Guy
Steve Short
David Lamb
Barry Allen
Graeme Philpott

Others Present:

Kelie Lowe – Environmental Services Manager
Isabelle Ghetti – Natural Resources & Floodplain Manager
Ailsa Schofield – Senior Floodplain Engineer
James Bonner – Development Co-Ordinator
William Glamore – UNSW Water Research Laboratory (WRL)

Apologies

Apologies were received from Tim Fletcher and Clr Gash

Note: Members mentioned that the business papers were not received in the post.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Note: Graham Philpott advised that there was more extensive questioning in relation the marina and requested that the word ‘mooring’ be changed to ‘Marina’ in Item 2 - Study to investigate options for improving flows of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads page 2, last paragraph of the minutes.

MOTION

Moved: Clr Wells / Second: Jess Zealand

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting of the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce held on Wednesday 9 December 2015 be confirmed.

CARRIED

2. Presentation

William Glamore – UNSW WRL, provided a PowerPoint presentation outlining the findings of the investigated options for improving flows of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads.

REPORT OF GENERAL MANAGER

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

3. Study to investigate options for improving flows of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads-update File 9825E

MOTION: Moved: David Lamb / Second: Jessica Zealand

RECOMMENDED that:

- a) The Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce recommends through the creation of a permanent or a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads as it is the only way in which river flow and the maintenance of an essentially marine environment can be established at the Heads.
- b) The Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce concludes that the permanent opening would increase the amenity, recreational environment and economic development of the community and the NSW tourism initiative of the Grand Pacific Drive.
- c) A memo from Dr Will Glamore on the additional investigation be included as an appendix to the report 'Management Options for improving flows of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads'.
- d) Dr William Glamore be invited to a public meeting at Shoalhaven Heads to present the findings of his report.
- e) A brochure be sent to all Shoalhaven Heads residents and be placed on Council's internet outlining and incorporating the findings of the report by Dr Will Glamore and the Taskforce's recommendation for a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads.
- f) A media release be organised to present the findings of the report and clearly highlight the needs for Federal and private enterprise funding and include the Taskforce recommendation relating to the permanent or a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads.
- g) Progress on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the report be presented to the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce and to Council on a regular basis through its Natural Resources and Floodplain Management Committee
- h) That members of the Taskforce be thanked for their active contributions to this study.

CARRIED

Note: Clr White, Kearney and Wells left the meeting the time being 5.16pm

4. Boat Building Factory and Boat Mooring Facilities - 1178 Comerong Island Rd, Numbaa - Lot 2 DP 1077521 File DA84/2166

MOTION:

Moved: Consent

RESOLVED that the report regarding the Boat Building Factory and Boat Mooring Facilities - 1178 Comerong Island Rd, Numbaa be received for information.

CARRIED

GENERAL BUSINESS

5. Additional Item – Request for Additional Sand Adjacent to the Children’s Play Area File 2358E

Jess Zealand advised that the Community Forum discussed the sand being relocated to create beach area on a trial basis as the limited amenities for children include grass and mud. It was suggested that clean sand could be dropped in front of the play area and then monitored how long it stays for. She also stated the mangroves have started to establish there. It was mentioned that when the entrance is open, people are happy and when it is closed it becomes unattractive. Isabelle Ghetti mentioned that next time the dry notch is maintained sand could be placed in front of the playground. The cost of carting it there and it is unsure how long the sand would stay there for and this will need to be monitored. Isabelle advised that the recent survey of the notch indicated that maintenance works are not required. Next time maintenance works are required (and the transport of sand is affordable), Isabelle will contact the community and organise a trial.

6. Additional Item – Surveying over the Christmas Period File 45866E

Jessica Zealand noticed over the Christmas period there was a gentleman who told her he was surveying the erosion control behind the sand flat behind the pontoon along River Rd Reserve and he discussed secondary boating channels. Jessica requested if Council has any available additional information on this survey. It was suggested that this work could have been undertaken by Roads and Maritime Services as Council Staff were unaware of the work.

7. Additional Item – Holiday Haven Occupation & Entrance state File 41490E

Clr Guile noted that Kevin Sullivan (Tourist Parks Manager) had advised him that Holiday Haven Parks were ahead of budget. Clr Guile was hopeful that the Shoalhaven Heads Tourism was still thriving.

MOTION:

Moved: Consent

RESOLVED that a report on the Council Caravan Park usage at Shoalhaven Heads be provided to the next meeting by the Manager – Business and Property, in order to assess if the state of the entrance (open/closed) impacts on the tourists numbers.

CARRIED

There being no further business, the meeting concluded, the time being 5.28 pm.

Clr Guile
CHAIRPERSON

SH16.1 Status update on the recommendations of the Taskforce

HPERM Ref: D16/359037

Group: Planning & Development Services Group
Section: Environmental Services

Attachments: 1. Shoalhaven River Flow study brochure [↓](#)

Purpose / Summary

To provide an update to the Taskforce on the status of its last recommendations to Council.

Recommendation

That

1. Council review the membership of the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce and in particular Council staff to ensure the Taskforce has access to professional advice on matters related to tourism and economic development
2. Council in consultation with the Shoalhaven Heads Forum organise a public meeting at Shoalhaven Heads in March or April 2017 where Dr Will Glamore will present the findings of the Water Research Laboratory studies and Rafael Carvalho will present findings of his PhD research on the Shoalhaven River sediment compartment.
3. The Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce endorse the content of the brochure attached to this report for public distribution.

Options

1. As recommended

Implications: The recommendation of this report provides a way forward for the Taskforce.

2. The Taskforce could choose to amend the recommendation of this report

Implications: unknown

Background

The recommendations from the last meeting of the Taskforce were presented to Council on 19 April 2016 and Council resolved the following (min 16.283):

That:

- a) *Council notes that the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce recommends the creation of a permanent or a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads as it is the only way in which river flow and the*

maintenance of an essentially marine environment can be established at the Heads.

- b) The Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce concludes that the permanent opening would increase the amenity, recreational environment and economic development of the community and the NSW tourism initiative of the Grand Pacific Drive.*
- c) A memo from Dr Will Glamore on the additional investigation be included as an appendix to the report 'Management Options for improving flows of the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads'.*
- d) Dr Will Glamore be invited to a public meeting at Shoalhaven Heads to present the findings of his report.*
- e) A brochure be sent to all Shoalhaven Heads residents and be placed on Council's internet outlining and incorporating the findings of the report by Dr Will Glamore and the Taskforce's recommendation for a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads.*
- f) A media release be organised to present the findings of the report and clearly highlight the needs for Federal and private enterprise funding and include the Taskforce recommendation relating to the permanent or a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads.*
- g) Progress on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the report be presented to the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce and to Council on a regular basis through its Natural Resources and Floodplain Management Committee*
- h) That members of the Taskforce be thanked for their active contributions to this study.*

Status of part a) and b) of council's resolution

It is noted that the Taskforce focus for managing the entrance at Shoalhaven Heads is shifting towards tourism and economic development benefits. The Taskforce and Council are therefore encouraged to consider the membership of the Taskforce (Community and Council staff) to ensure expertise in these matters is available to the Taskforce.

Status of part c) of council's resolution

This is complete and as soon as the Taskforce agree on the content of the brochure the full report will be made available on Council's website.

Status of part d) of council's resolution

The Taskforce is invited to advise of a suitable date for a public meeting at Shoalhaven Heads. It is suggested that this meeting be held in March 2017, as this would also allow Rafael Carvalho to present some interesting finding from his detailed investigations of the Shoalhaven sediment compartment that he carried out for his PHD research at University of Wollongong.

Status of part e) of council's resolution

A brochure was drafted by Dr Will Glamore and Council staff and circulated for comments by email. Comments were received and informed the attached revised version of the draft brochure. As per the Taskforce recommendations and Council's resolution, the brochure is

'outlining and incorporating the findings of the report by Dr Will Glamore and the Taskforce's recommendation for a semi-permanent non-navigable river entrance at Shoalhaven Heads.'

Status of part f) of council's resolution

This will be organised once the brochure is finalised.

Status of part g) of council's resolution

The draft brochure provided in the attachment provides an update *on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the report.*

Council was recently informed that its grant funding application to the State Government Flood Program 2016/17 to review the Lowe Shoalhaven River Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan and associated entrance management plan was successful. A consultant brief to undertake the review is being finalised with input from Council's Natural Resources and Floodplain Management Committee.

Managing the Shoalhaven River at Shoalhaven Heads



Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce

The Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce (SHET) consists of Council staff, Councillors, the NSW Member for Kiama and eleven community members who work together to look at options for a partial or complete opening of the river at Shoalhaven Heads and to review Council's entrance and estuary management plans for Shoalhaven River.

The Shoalhaven River Flow Study

A key project driven by SHET was 'The Shoalhaven River Flow Study'; a study conducted by the Water Research Laboratory (WRL) throughout 2015, to address three areas of community concern at Shoalhaven Heads,

- Water quality
- Water circulation
- Sedimentation

The study looked at all the research and technological improvements relevant to the management of the river and the entrance that have occurred over the past 30 years.

Study findings

- Water quality at Shoalhaven Heads is generally 'fair' to 'good' (ratings based on ANZECC Guidelines and Water Quality Objectives NSW) and stable over time. Poor water quality readings are usually associated with rainfall events when contaminants can wash in from the surrounding catchment.
- Circulation is good. Berry's Canal accommodates the total flow and full tidal exchange of the river which is estimated at 50% in 2-8 days. This is sufficient to maintain normal estuarine processes. The area around the heads has become more estuarine over the last 30 years due to the lack of big catchment floods.
- The only way to significantly increase circulation would be with a constructed entrance, however, the study demonstrates that the estuary already has enough water circulation to maintain its health and functions. The cost of a constructed entrance was estimated at \$33,000,000.
- Sedimentation in the area varies due to natural processes. Sediments are carried offshore during floods and then transported back during dry times with wave and tidal action. Over the past 40 years there have been fewer floods which means that less sediments have been flushed from the estuary at Shoalhaven Heads.
- Following periods of heavy rain, Berry's Bay can experience elevated faecal coliform levels.
- Acid sulfate soils, and related low dissolved oxygen levels, are prevalent in the Broughton Creek catchment and impact on the health of the River.

Study recommendations

- Water quality concerns should be addressed from a catchment approach; The Shoalhaven River Flood Study and the Entrance Management Plan should be reviewed and updated.
- Water quality issues affecting the oyster industry in Berry's Bay should be addressed.
- A community education program should be rolled out, highlighting:
 - water quality at Shoalhaven Heads is of generally good quality
 - circulation is sufficient to maintain estuarine processes
 - the estuary undergoes cyclical processes which naturally open and close the entrance
 - shoaling and sedimentation is part of the natural opening and closing process
 - acid sulfate soils in the Broughton Creek floodplain can impact on water quality in the estuary following heavy rain
 - the community needs to be flood prepared

The [Flow Study](#) in full or the [executive summary](#) are available on Council's website.

What is being done to improve the health of the river?

Council, Local Land Services (LLS), property owners and community groups all contribute to the health of the River through various strategic and on-ground activities. These include:

- Fencing (to restrict cattle access) and restoration of eroded sections of river bank, including Berry's Bay.
- Shoalhaven Riverwatch is a volunteer community group committed to improving the health of the Shoalhaven River. They propagate mangroves and undertake foreshore restoration projects in partnership with property owners, Council and LLS.
- Improvements to floodgates to better manage run off from acid sulfate soils.
- A stormwater quality remediation plan for the lower Shoalhaven River and Crookhaven River catchments has been completed and priority works will be implemented over the coming years.
- Council is investigating the feasibility of connecting properties at St Andrews Way and Bolong Road at Berrys Bay to the reticulated sewage scheme and continues to work with property owners to improve on-site sewage management.
- Real time water quality monitoring buoys are now located in Broughton Creek and at Shoalhaven Heads. Council will soon install an additional water quality monitoring buoy at Greenwell Point. The Broughton Creek buoy helps to inform Council about the impacts of acid sulfate soils. The other two buoys will provide data to support the oyster industry.
- Council is committed to managing erosion along River Road at Shoalhaven Heads.
- Restoration works to repair levees along the river are expected to begin in 2017.
- Council and the State Government have committed funds to review the Shoalhaven River Flood Study and the Entrance Management Plan.

Overall, these projects represent millions of dollars of investment in the health of the Shoalhaven River.

What's next?

SHET and Council accepted the environmental findings of the Flow Study.

However, on the basis of social and economic aspirations, SHET has recommended that a permanent or semi-permanent, non-navigable opening at the entrance, continue to be pursued to create a marine environment.

It is believed that this will improve recreational amenity and, in conjunction with the NSW tourism initiative of the Grand Pacific Drive, boost the economic development of Shoalhaven Heads.

SH16.2 Occupancy rates - Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Holiday Park

HPERM Ref: D16/364334

Group: Planning & Development Services Group
Section: Environmental Services

Attachments: 1. Occupancy rates - Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Park [↓](#)

Purpose / Summary

To inform the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce on whether the state of the estuary entrance (open/closed) has any effect on the occupancy rate at the Holiday Haven Tourist Park, Shoalhaven Heads.

Recommendation (Item to be determined under delegated authority)

That the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce receive the Occupancy Rates – Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Holiday Park report for information.

Options

1. Adopt the recommendation as written.

Implications: none.

2. Provide further direction to staff and propose an alternative.

Implications: unknown.

Background

At the Shoalhaven Heads Estuary Taskforce meeting held on 30th March 2016 it was resolved:

“...that a report on the Council Caravan Park usage at Shoalhaven Heads be provided to the next meeting by the Manager – Business and Property, in order to assess if the state of the entrance (open/closed) impacts on the tourists numbers.”

Director Assets and Works (Property Services) provided the attached chart showing occupancy rates at Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Park for 2014 and 2015 and the following comment: ‘*There does not appear to have been any impact on the occupancy rates as a result of the August floods. Occupancy rates were trending up in March and April and the trend is in line with the previous year (refer Attachment)*’.

Average Occupancy rate
Shoalhaven Heads Tourist Holiday Park 2014 -2015

