

Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands Technical Reference Group

Minutes: 23 May meeting held at Edithvale Bowling Club

Meeting opened at 7:15pm

Independent Chair: John Arup, Arup Environmental and Planning

Minutes: Toni Meek, Melbourne Water

Attendees: Jacquie Sheppard (Birds Australia), Tania Ireton (Bird Observers Club of Australia), John Ronke (Ward Councillor, City of Kingston), David Danner (local resident), Salyana Williams (Melbourne Water), Michael Walker (local resident), Greg Bain (Melbourne Water), Mark Juler (City of Kingston), Wayne Charlton (Melbourne Water), Paul Minifie (Minifie Nixon), Joyce Stewart (Friends of Edithvale-Seafood Wetlands, standing in for Les Williams)

Guests: Bryon Cunningham, Cunningham Martyn Design, Manel Samarakoon and Anne Brady, Department of Environment and Heritage, Canberra

Observer: Michael Ryan (local resident)

Apologies: Les Williams, Gillian Macdonald (Melbourne Water), Jane Satchwell (Mordialloc Schools Cluster)

Welcome and Introduction:

John Arup welcomed everyone and introduced guests

Minutes of the last meeting:

Everyone present confirmed the minutes of the previous meeting. A copy of the revised Terms of Reference for the Technical Reference Group was circulated incorporating a change suggested at the last meeting.

Bryon Cunningham (Cunningham Martyn Design)

Gave an overview of the interpretive elements of the discovery centre which is designed to give a range of different experiences for people who come to the wetlands including experiences that provide perspectives from the various forms of wildlife at the site for example, birds, frogs, kangaroos etc.

Michael Ryan suggested it would be important for children to be able to appreciate wildlife from their eye level.

Wayne Charlton/Paul Minifie (Melbourne Water/Minifie Nixon)

Gave a presentation on buffer distances. Melbourne Water will do some more work on this in preparation for the review of the Ramsar Management Plan (presentation attached)

David Danner asked when the work would be completed. Wayne said it would be over the next four weeks or so and he would be consulting the Department of Environment and Heritage (Canberra) and the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Michael Ryan asked where water would be sourced for a proposed lake in the concept plan drawing presented. Michael mentioned there was a drain in the vicinity, the Chelsea Heights Drain. Wayne and Paul said this could be a possible source.

David Danner (local resident representative)

Gave a presentation on an alternative site for the car park and picnic facilities. This alternative provided better amenity for the nearest neighbours and could potentially reduce incidents of anti-social behaviour. David and Michael Walker door-knocked approximately 36 houses in the Aspendale Gardens area about the proposed sites and alternative suggestions. David said only one resident was unhappy about the alternative proposal and they were generally unhappy about the whole project.

Wayne Charlton asked what kinds of anti-social behaviour they experienced. David said it was motorbikes and people from the nearby hotel. At Thames Promenade near the school there is a shop that sells alcohol and people then go into the open area and drink. There was discussion about the potential for the proposed picnic area to attract anti-social behaviour and John Ronke said that any new facility tends to provide a new meeting venue for people to frequent.

Wayne Charlton said that Melbourne Water will incorporate the suggested changes into the design. Wayne indicated that a concern might be the road crossing and Melbourne Water would need to consult Kingston Council and VicRoads. Wayne also said the Ramsar Plan requires a 120 metre setback with things like parking areas which may be an issue with the alternative proposal.

Feedback from reference group members

Paul Minifie said that the proposed picnic area was not intended to be a public area but would be there for school groups. Paul also said that the picnic area needed to be close to the discovery centre to ensure close supervision of the students. Salyana Williams mentioned that there would only be small groups at a time visiting the centre.

Michael Ryan said picnic and BBQ facilities were not appropriate for an education centre.

John Ronke said that protecting amenity for the surrounding community was paramounts and that the alternative suggestion looked promising. John also said the less adverse the effect, the less the need will be for the council to advertise the planning permit application.

Wayne Charlton thanked Michael and David for their efforts. David said they would continue to liaise with local residents about the project.

Michael Ryan suggested Edithvale Common as a better location. John Arup reiterated that location of the proposed centre was not part of the terms of reference for the group.

Manel Samarakoon and Anne Brady (Department of Environment and Heritage)

Gave presentations on the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act* approvals (presentation attached)

Discussion and questions

Wayne Charlton said that Manel and Anne had been invited to provide context for the project.

John Arup asked how Melbourne Water will deal with Ramsar requirements. Wayne said it was hoped that the local, State and Federal government requirements could be addressed in unison. It was Melbourne Water's intention to be able to determine the right level of design required before a referral was made.

Manel Samarakoon asked about the completion date for the project. Wayne said it was December 2007. The timing of the project tasks was also dependent on such things as ensuring bird migration times were taken into account with the construction schedule.

Manel Samarakoon said factors such as the ecological character of the area was another key consideration and such things as opening/closing times of the car park might be important so as not to disturb birds. Manel also said it would be important that a submission with mitigation measures would expedite the process.

David Danner asked if there would be simultaneous applications made to the various government bodies and Wayne said that was the intention.

Michael Walker asked if that would fast track the process. Manel said there would be advantages in putting in an early referral the Department of Environment and Heritage.

Bryon Cunningham asked if there would be any implications with the planned interpretive trail. Manel and Anne said it would depend if it were part of a larger action or as a stand-alone project. What already exists at the site is a benchmark of impact. Manel said that interpretive trails could have direct, indirect or facilitated impacts and these would be considerations.

John Ronke expressed his thanks to Anne and Manel for their presentation.

Michael Ryan expressed concern about visitor numbers and how they would be managed. He said there was potential for many more visitors to come to the site than was envisaged and gave examples of other places where this had occurred.

Wayne Charlton said the intention was for the centre not to be totally open to the public, that visitor numbers would be strictly limited and that there was no intention of increasing visitor numbers.

Michael Ryan expressed concern that the buffer areas would be open to the public. Paul Minifie said that these areas were not intended for specific public access.

John Ronke said that hours of operation would be part of the planning process.

Michael Ryan also asked about natural lighting in the building and that it would become a conference centre. He said he would prefer no lighting at all.

Paul Minifie said that sustainable design principles would guide the building construction and that there was no intention for the building to be used as a conference facility but that community groups may use the building for meetings. Wayne Charlton said the building would require lighting for occupational health and safety/security requirements.

Bryon Cunningham said that the building would be designed so that it would provide a non-classroom educational experience and that the various interpretive/educational experiences would be developed so as not to increase impacts at the site.

John Ronke said it was his impression that most visitors would arrive by bus.

Michael Ryan said he considered the building to be high impact.

Michael Ryan then asked if water birds were considered part of the ecological character of the site. Anne Brady said they would be. Michael said he thought that water levels could change and affect listed species. Anne said these factors would be considered, indicating that the ecological character description will naturally change over time.

Michael Ryan then asked whether water allocation was part of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act* and whether there were going to be changes to the Act to incorporate this. Manel said she was not aware of this being considered. Anne and Manel also clarified that the Ramsar members not the Australian Government determine ecological character.

Michael Ryan asked if disturbance distance to birds would be considered. Greg Bain said they would be.

Other Business:

Wayne advised the committee of some new guidelines on construction of wetlands centres. The web address is www.wli.org.uk. Wayne said further information on this would be circulated with the minutes. Wayne also referred people to the web site of a new wetlands centre in Hong Kong: www.wetlandpark.com

Next Meeting: no date was set but it was agreed it would be good to meet once the buffer issue was resolved. Members requested they be given three weeks' notice.

Meeting closed at 9:20pm