

26 October 2018

Mr Jason Jacobi
General Manager
Parks and Wildlife Service
GPO Box 1751
Hobart TAS 7001

Dear Jason,

Comments: Draft Site Plan 2018

Cockle Creek Precinct

Recherche Bay Nature Recreation Area and South West National Park

The Tasmanian National Parks Association (TNPA) recognises that the Cockle Creek Precinct has long-standing issues of environmental degradation, spread of litter and human waste, pressure on existing facilities, conflict and anti-social behaviour, and escalating management costs for the PWS. Also that the precinct, which is the 'gateway' for a number of walking tracks, including the South Coast Track, needs to upgrade facilities to reflect the recent increase in visitor numbers.

The TNPA supports the recommendations of the Draft Site Plan and proposed new site plans for camping and other visitor-related sites but notes that the current proposals represent the limit of what can be achieved by making better use of currently disturbed areas. The TNPA would be unlikely to support further expansion of visitor facilities into currently undisturbed areas; i.e. if visitor numbers continue to increase, an alternative approach is likely to be needed.

Priorities

The TNPA also recognises that the Precinct has been visited regularly, during summer and Easter holidays, by family and other groups, some of whom have been coming for generations and are concerned that proposed changes will bring restrictions to what they have been used to doing. While many of the locals who were surveyed support proposed changes, or at least some of them, it is important that what is planned is not seen as putting the interests of other user groups e.g. 'grey nomads' and 'Mainlanders', ahead of those of locals.

However the TNPA is concerned that this cautious approach could ultimately be at the expense of the natural and cultural values of the area if more proactive management measures are not introduced soon: see Guiding Principle 1:

Conservation of significant natural and cultural values has primacy over all other matters. (Section 2.2.4, p.27)

This Principle is not reflected in the priorities for implementation of the proposed site plans. While measures related to human safety must of course be given priority it is

also vital that protection of natural and cultural values is urgently addressed. If nothing is done soon, further damage will continue to occur, perhaps irreparable in the long (e.g. ten year) term.

Resourcing of the PWS

The Draft Site Plan states that:

A robust management intervention by PWS is required if sustainable management outcomes are to be achieved and a quality experience of the place is to be provided commensurate with the area's natural features. (Section 2.2.2, p.25)

However as the Draft Site Plan also states:

Implementation is dependent upon the outcomes from Parks and Wildlife internal assessment processes and the availability of funds to undertake the proposed works. (Section 3, p.55).

If the proposed changes are to occur (and the TNPA believes they should) it is imperative that the PWS be given the necessary additional funding to carry out the measures proposed in the draft Site Plan. The TNPA emphasises that without the necessary funding and without a sense of urgency for the implementation of the proposed changes, there will be further degradation of the area and the losers will be the Precinct's natural and cultural values, the visitor experience and Tasmania's 'brand'.

The Draft Site Plan points out that the Cockle Creek Precinct will be vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, including expected sea level rises and increased coastal hazards. As the Draft Site Plan states:

PWS and other agencies will also need to ensure that current site planning and design exercises account for likely impacts (of sea level rise) to lessen the need for expenditure in the future to further protect areas against inundation. (Section 2.2.2, p.26)

The PWS must also receive adequate funding for this essential long-term planning.

Monitoring and Evaluation

It is very important that appropriate monitoring and evaluation, as stated in Section 1.3.1, p.10 accompany the proposed changes.

Again, the PWS must be given the necessary resources to carry this out.

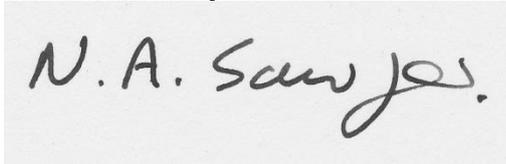
Camping Fees

While recognising that there will be resistance from users who have been enjoying free camping at Cockle Creek for many years, the TNPA supports the introduction of camping fees, both for the purpose of recovering some of the cost of PWS' management of the Precinct and also for reminding users that our parks and reserves are precious assets that the PWS manages on behalf of all Tasmanians, present and future – and that this costs money.

Conclusion

The TNPA supports the proposals made in the Draft Site Plan, including the introduction of camping fees, but emphasises that these will be effective **only** if the PWS is adequately funded to 'do the job properly' and that the proposals are implemented with greater urgency than recommended.

Yours sincerely,

A rectangular area containing a handwritten signature in black ink that reads "N. A. Sawyer." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Nicholas Sawyer
President, TNPA