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P R O P O S A L F O R R E G I O N A L S T R U C T U R E P L A N

THE LEEUWIN NATURALISTE RIDGE

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T.P.D.

C & E

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The region defined by the Busselton Shire coastal zone and the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge to Gracetown, an area of great natural beauty and high current tourist and recreational use, is of interest because it is subject to numerous development proposals.
- 1.2 The region is recognised both locally and throughout the State for its importance and values in relation to heritage, tourism, recreation, conservation, viticulture and agriculture.
- 1.3 There are several motivations for change in the region. They include the current rating system which some farmers consider reduces farm viability, a concern that inadequate facilities and opportunities have been developed to cater for tourist needs, and a general feeling that the development potential of the region has been far from realised. These motivations are matched by concerns that the values of the area may be altered or even lost if inappropriate or insensitive development occurs.
- 1.4 This paper is prompted by the following concerns:-
 - (i) The pressure for the establishment of more intensive uses without regional planning objectives to guide decision makers.
 - (ii) Inadequate processes for the assessment of development proposals within a regional framework.
 - (iii) Lack of a regional perspective. This problem is compounded by limited environmental information which mitigates against the identification of development opportunities and constraints.

- (iv) An inadequate knowledge of land use impacts and relationships which has the potential to complicate and retard the resolution of land use conflicts.
- (v) Community concern and dissension on major issues, which is in part encouraged by the lack of common objectives for the region.

2. ISSUES

- 2.1 Inadequate information and the absence of a regional planning context prevent a proper analysis of individual development proposals which in turn may limit the economic and social benefits of proposals.
- 2.2 The complexity of issues and interactions reflects both the diversity of the environment and the high level of interest in the region.
- 2.3 It is considered that the range of opportunities for various uses and the benefits obtained will be enhanced by co-ordinated planning.

The following are the main issue areas:

(i) Heritage

Attention has been drawn to the area's heritage value by the National Trust of WA's classification of the Cape region following a detailed assessment. Parts of the area were previously registered as part of the National Estate. The Trust bases its landscape and conservation assessments on 12 criteria, all of which were found to be relevant to the Cape region. These are a unique blend of man-made and natural values. Specifically the Cape's primary heritage value lies in the uniqueness, diversity and beauty of its landscapes, (based on landform and biological variety) and resulting high tourism and recreation values. It also has educational and historic values, as well as being of scientific importance, containing rare species, fragile and diverse communities, and occupying a unique geographic position.

(ii) Conservation

As indicated the area is of considerable conservation value. A number of issues including the need to understand coastal processes so that erosion costs can be reduced are of pressing concern.

There is also a need for protection of important ecosystems through rationalisation of National Park boundaries and involvement of local authorities and residents in park planning and management.

Further development of National Parks including roads, parking areas and walking trails is required. There is a requirement for the purchase of additional areas for integration into National Parks so that meaningful planning and management processes can be established. Such developments in improving the area can result in higher visitor levels and economic benefits to the region.

There are areas of the region which are affected by dieback and protective measures are required to prevent further spread.

Incentives for private landowners to conserve areas of importance are needed as an alternative to regulatory controls.

(iii) Primary Production

A number of factors that influence primary production need consideration, including farm viability, lot size and rating

approaches; clearing of land and consequential loss of amenity as well as the affect of pesticides and herbicides on adjoining land uses and the environment.

(iv) Tourism

The area is of high value to the community because it is environmentally unique, and has diverse attractions which are both natural and man-made.

Tourism has the potential to be of substantial economic benefit to the region but ad hoc developments may actually reduce that potential.

As the region is within proximity of the major urban areas of the State as a weekend destination the numbers of users are increasing dramatically.

It is estimated that there were 80 000 visitors to the region in the March quarter of 1984. Studies indicate that Busselton is surpassing Albany and Bunbury in growth rates for tourist arrivals.

The region also has a diversity of more recent man-made attractions such as wineries and arts and craft workshops as well as a partially developed infrastructure for tourism.

(v) Recreation

The opportunities to recreate are diverse and the unique quality of resources such

as the surf, caves, wildlife, protected water, marine environments and clean beaches highlight the need for conservation and preservation.

There is a high current recreational use compared to other regional centres in the State.

There is the potential for conflict between user groups such as surfers and other beach users or off-road vehicle users and bushwalkers.

Overuse can and has resulted in the degradation of natural resources and hence a decline in their value.

Management is vital and resources are required to maximise recreational use while minimising degradation of the attraction of the Region.

(vi) Infrastructure

There are numerous infrastructure requirements which could commit the State and Local Governments to considerable capital as well as ongoing cost, therefore necessitating careful planning.

These include, the supply of potable water for urban and recreational/tourist development, the treatment and/or removal of effluent and rubbish, the provision of safe and convenient road access, power, telephone and communications, car parks, beach access, change room/toilets, camping and picnic facilities, as well as boat ramps, marinas and associated facilities.

3. DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT MAJOR DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The natural attributes of uniqueness, diversity and beauty as well as the existing service infrastructure and the relatively close proximity of the region to major urban areas, are factors which make the region very attractive for investment in various forms of development.

Such valuable resources require careful planning and management to ensure the maximum economic and social benefits to all people. The Busselton Shire Council has acknowledged the importance of the landscape by designating the ridge as a Landscape Value Area under its District Zoning Scheme.

There are currently several major development proposals which are under consideration by State and Local Governments and it is expected that many more will be forthcoming in the short term.

The implications of the current major proposals are summarized as follows:

3.1 Boat Harbours and Associated Facilities

A boat harbour is proposed at Point Picquet and a boat harbour and canal development is proposed approximately four kilometres north east of Busselton town. The former is the subject of an Environmental Review and Management Programme and the latter a detailed Notice of Intent. Both proposals have been mooted for several years, however no reference is made to the need for two such facilities in close proximity; one of which is to be funded and maintained with public money. A third proposal for a boat harbour landing facility and associated land based development has previously been suggested adjacent to the Busselton Jetty.

The Point Picquet proposal may increase demand for infrastructure to service the harbour and has the potential to create demand for urban expansion in the immediate area. The effect of the harbour on the Cape area may conflict with recreational and tourism usage values. Environmental conflicts and loss of landscape values may also be a consequence of the development.

This could mean that a decision to proceed with the Point Picquet proposal could be made without consideration being given to all other alternatives which may bring about the same benefits at possible less cost.

3.2 Yallingup - Sugarloaf Rock Road

Planning for improved access to the coast is essential. However, the current proposal to construct a road conflicts with the established coastal management principle of avoiding construction of roads parallel with the coastline. It is also at variance with National Park development and management practices of no 'through' roads.

Although access may be improved for some tourists a parallel 'through' road could adversely affect views and have a negative impact on an extremely fragile section of the coast. This would reduce the attractiveness of the area to other tourists.

The exposed nature of this area and susceptibility to degradation is expected to cause problems in design and high costs for construction and maintenance.

3.3 Other Roads

Proposals to widen Caves Road, south of Yallingup and to provide an alternative access to Meelup and Eagle Bay may result in a loss of scenic amenity through the clearing of vegetation, reduction in roadside points of interest, increase in the numbers of vehicles, higher vehicle speeds and degradation of habitats.

In the case of Caves Road, the need for such action is questioned given that a major road (Bussell Highway) which runs parallel, is in close proximity. This further highlights the need for assessment in the context of a regional planning strategy.

3.4 Bunker Bay Development and Subdivision

The development of a small 'town' at this location would encourage the proliferation of urban uses and cause severe management problems for the adjoining National Park. Such areas require services such as water, upgraded or new roads, electricity, comprehensive drainage and telephone networks. As the area develops, the demand is generated for schools, shops, bus services, garbage collection and other community amenities.

The introduction of urban uses on the scale proposed will change the character and amenity of the Cape Naturaliste landscape with a consequent loss of heritage value. This may result in a reduction in the attractiveness of the area to tourists and outdoor recreation users.

It must be recognised that the high level of current usage which is increasing rapidly is based upon the existing character of the landscape.

3.5 Eagle Bay Urban Expansion

The same comments as stated for the Bunker Bay proposal apply for the proposal to expand the Eagle Bay urban area.

It is contended that focussing development proposals on existing townsites where infrastructure is already in place will reduce community costs and assist in maintaining the integrity of natural areas.

3.6 Ad Hoc Subdivision of Rural Land and Special Rural Zones

Although there is no current major proposal for the subdivision of rural areas (other than referred to above), the cumulative effect of many small subdivisions may result in more intensive land use through increased housing, roads, power lines and the clearing of vegetation. Increases in feral animals, exotic plants and fire risk are problems generated by such subdivision and development.

The maintenance of natural ecosystems is, as a result, very difficult. It is also expected that the overall character and amenity of the region will be changed, perhaps to one less attractive to visitors.

4. CURRENT DECISION MAKING

- 4.1 Planning and development proposals are subject to review by the environmental assessment process and also under the Town Planning and Development Act. However, such reviews tend to be project or issue specific and not placed in a regional context.
- 4.2 As there are a large number of agencies with involvement and responsibilities in the region, decisions affecting the region are generally made in isolation in the absence of a regional planning approach.
- 4.3 Furthermore the agencies with responsibilities have quite different roles, some to promote development, others to initiate planning, others to conserve resources and others to manage resources.
- 4.4 This range of responsibilities without a means of bringing issues and development proposals together on a regional basis increases chances of making inappropriate decisions as well as increasing the probability of conflict between the various bodies involved.
- 4.5 The absence of a forum to bring agencies together to formulate shared goals and objectives for the region results in a lack of integrated planning and means that the greatest benefits may not be gained for the region.
- 4.6 The following is a list of local and State Government authorities, organisations and other groups which have a direct interest in the region:

- . Augusta-Margaret River Shire Council
- . Busselton Shire Council
- . Department of Conservation and Land Management
- . Department of Conservation and Environment
- . Environmental Protection Authority
- . Town Planning Department
- . Town Planning Board
- . Department of Marine and Harbours
- . Department of Agriculture
- . Department of Lands and Surveys
- . Department of Fisheries
- . Main Roads Department
- . Bush Fires Board
- . National Trust
- . Western Australian Water Authority
- . South West Development Authority
- . Commissioner for Soil Conservation
- . Leeuwin Naturaliste Rural Land Owners Association
- . Land Resources Policy Council
- . Tourism Commission
- . Cape Naturaliste Association
- . Vasse Conservation Committee

4.7 Many of the authorities and organisations mentioned in 4.6 above have undertaken research and/or produced plans or reports to satisfy statutory requirements or to meet the specific needs of their organisation or special interest group.

4.8 Examples of research studies, planning reports and statutory documents existing or in progress include:

- (i) Land Use Assessment and Development Proposal for Landowners on Cape Naturaliste (Hames Sharley (WA) Pty Ltd).
- (ii) Town Planning Schemes (Local Authorities and Town Planning Department).

- (iii) Coastal Management Plan (Department of Conservation and Environment).
- (iv) National Park Management Plan (National Parks Authority).
- (v) Report on the Planning and Management of the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge (Leeuwin Naturaliste Working Group).
- (vi) System 1 Environmental Report (Environmental Protection Authority).
- (vii) Point Picquet - Environmental Review and Management Programme (Public Works Department).
- (viii) Port Geographe - Detailed Notice of Intent (John Holland Group).
- (ix) The Uncut Jewel - Tourism Report (South West Development Authority).
- (x) Report on Yallingup/Sugarloaf Rock Road (David Dale & Associates).
- (xi) Sedimentation in Geographe Bay (Public Works Department/University of WA).
- (xii) Geowest - Environmental Report (Enright and Valentine).
- (Xiii) Land Capability Assessment - Cape Naturaliste.

5. TOWARD A PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1 The foregoing discussion has summarised the wide ranging issues which affect the Busselton and Leeuwin-Naturaliste region and attempted to highlight its potential for optimum development and conservation. There is widespread acceptance of the importance of the region with various values being identified by local residents, tourists, fishermen, pastoralists or developers. The recent classification of Cape Naturaliste by the National Trust has also highlighted the natural and man-made heritage values not only to local residents and the West Australian community but to Australia as a whole.
- 5.2 If the current approach to development and project assessment continues there is a high probability that the existing character of the region derived from the interaction of its historic land uses and unique environmental features may be lost. Sustainable, planned development is essential to the progress of the State and the well being of the community and this is particularly true of the Busselton and Leeuwin-Naturaliste region. However, if development is allowed to continue in a piecemeal manner the very values which are being promoted, and upon which major industries (especially tourism) depend will be downgraded or perhaps destroyed.
- 5.3 The opportunity now exists for the Government to play a key role in the development of the region by supporting the implementation and promotion of a regional planning framework in which development and resource conservation can be integrated. Specifically, the potential benefits to be derived from a regional planning process include:

- (i) providing for compatible land uses and transport system within a regional context;
- (ii) focussing the multi-purpose objectives of government and private organisations in a cost effective manner;
- (iii) early consultation between interested parties to minimise conflict and reduce polarisation within the community;
- (iv) increasing appreciation by the community, local government and State government agencies of the effects of one land use on another and of the value of multi-disciplinary planning;
- (v) improving information exchange and sharing of resources by agencies involved in planning, development and management;
- (vi) ensuring the best economic return from all resources;
- (vii) making best use of existing (costly) infrastructure;
- (viii) reducing ongoing management costs of public amenities, eg - National Parks, beaches and marinas;
- (ix) directing and supporting appropriate developments;
- (x) identifying suitable sites for tourism and other developments;
- (xi) integrating conservation and development;

- (xii) retaining heritage values;
- (xiii) reserving options for the future;
- (xiv) maximising suitable uses while minimising negative impacts.

Although information exists on various aspects of the region there is considerable variation in such aspects as scale, age of information, and relevance to current issues. Accordingly, information and data needs to be collated in the following areas:-

- * tourism resource assessment;
- * caves management survey;
- * recreation resource and capability assessment;
- * historical and archaeological sites survey;
- * user and usage data on tourism and recreation;
- * agricultural potential;
- * land/soil capability;
- * socio-demographic analysis;
- * infrastructure assessment;
- * mineral and base metals;
- * coastal processes/geomorphology;
- * marine environment;
- * landscape assessment;
- * vegetation survey: dieback, rare species, etc;
- * geology and hydrology.

6. RECOMMENDATION

- 6.1 That this paper form the basis for a joint Cabinet minute from the Hon. Minister for Planning and the Hon. Minister for Conservation and Land Management and the Environment and the Hon. Minister for Regional Development.
- 6.2 That the minute include the following recommendations:-
- (i) Endorse the production of a structure plan for the region and allocate \$100 000 or staff resources necessary. This being subject to local authority (Busselton and Augusta-Margaret River) approval and support and consistent with recommendations of the Committee of Inquiry into Statutory Planning regarding the conduct of regional studies outside the metropolitan region.
 - (ii) The Land Resources Policy Council be instructed to oversee the regional study and provide broad aims and objectives for a multidisciplinary steering committee.
 - (iii) Establish a multidisciplinary steering committee comprising representatives of the Busselton Shire, Augusta Margaret River Shire, South West Development Authority, Department of Regional Development, Department of Agriculture, Department of Town Planning, Department of Conservation and Environment and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. This committee to conduct the study by supervising the staff and/or

consultants appointed. The prime responsibility for the study being with the Town Planning Department.

- (iv) The regional structure plan to be complete within six (6) months of commencement and that approvals for development of major environmental significance await the acceptance of the regional structure plan apart from those for which an Environmental Review and Management Programme has been initiated.