

**FINAL MINUTES FOR THE BELLS BEACH COMMITTEE
MEETING 20
28 February 2022, On site meeting, Bells
5.30 PM – 7.15 PM**



PRESENT:

Committee members: Jane Currie (Chair), Andrew Cherubin, Dave Matthews; Adam Robertson, Cr Mike Bodsworth, Cr Paul Barker, Cahill Bell-Warren, Corrina Eccles, Hugh Gorman, Graeme Stockton, James Deans

Supporting Officers: Rowan Mackenzie (Manager, Environment & Community Safety), Gabrielle O'Shea (Environment Officer, SCS), Nathan Geary (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning) and Leia Howes (Great Ocean Road Coasts and Parks Authority)

APOLOGIES: Leigh Irvine (Program Manager, SCS)

DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:

NA

1. **Welcome to Country** (Corrina)
2. **Minutes of meeting of previous meeting**

Welcome by Jane. Minutes of the meeting of 15 March 2021 were approved.

3. **Transition to GORCAPA**

Leia and Nathan gave a comprehensive update on the transition of Bells to GORCAPA management and the operations of GORCAPA generally. Matters discussed included:

- The timing for the transfer of Bells is September 2023. All land transfers must be completed by 2025. Working east to west with land transfer, easier parcels transferring in May 2022.
- Management after transfer – existing management plans will be honoured until due for renewal, existing licence arrangements continue and GORCAPA will manage with a 'whole of coast' perspective
- Funding – mainly derived from caravan parks, leases/licences. GORCAPA is self-funded. Grants assist
- Meeting Traditional Owner aspirations is enshrined in the GORCAPA legislation
- Marine management is a new area for GORCAPA and one they will need to grow their skills in.
- Management will be guided by a range of high level strategic documents such as camping strategies
- Future community involvement – currently GORCAPA is looking to understand the interests and needs of all parties interested in the various reserves, they want to continue to empower volunteers and build their capacity
- It may take time to embed management after transfer, GORCAPA asked for patience and understanding during transition.

Items raised by Committee members:

- Are there any anticipated impacts from the upcoming election? No – bipartisan agreement and support for GORCAPA.
- Will the Bells Beach Committee continue to exist (there have been no decisions yet but GORCAPA want to continue to support community involvement and encourage volunteerism)
- Sustainability of funding. Asset management will inform spending.
- Broader sustainability relating to visitor use

- Concerns with being part of a broader management area rather than a reserve with focused management
- Expression of sadness that SCS losing management of Bells.

Council Action: Write to GORCAPA and DELWP to invite relevant staff to continue to attend Bells Beach Committee meetings to assist with transition to GORCAPA management.

4. Works update

Leigh was an apology but Gabrielle gave an update on stormwater improvements on his behalf:

- Planning continues ahead of the proposed replacement of the stormwater pits in the lower car park.
- Water Insites have overseen a review of the pits with CCTV footage and a clean out in October. They recommended use of similar pits to those installed in the Winki Pop car park. They will trap litter and pollutants relevant to this type of car park. They should be able to fit into a similar footprint to the current pits.
- Plans finalised soon.
- Pits would be installed after the Rip Curl Pro if the necessary approvals are obtained.

Council Action: Leigh to circulate the plans for the proposed works once they are finalised.

5. Lodging of application to amend the listing for Bells on the Victorian Heritage Register

Rowan gave an update on the application to amend the heritage listing to remove the toilet block mural and recognise the Wadawurrung:

- The amendment application was prepared by David Rowe in consultation with Corrina and David Jones of the Wadawurrung
- The application was submitted in December 2021
- A Victorian Heritage Register representative has acknowledged receipt of the application and requested more background information

In the discussions, Mike raised possibility of listing Bells on the National Heritage List. Discussions on this suggestion included the following:

- Bells is part of the existing listing of the Great Ocean Road
- Would it help to attract funding?
- Would it increase protection?
- Does the national listing recognise Aboriginal heritage or is it like Victoria where Aboriginal values are protected via different legislation?
- What about intangible Aboriginal heritage such as landscapes? In Victoria this can be recognised under different legislation
- Would national listing just make basic management more difficult, requiring lengthy approvals to undertake maintenance?

In summary, there are pros and cons to any heritage listing. Further information required.

Action: Council staff to find out more information on the process, protections and requirements of the National Heritage List.

6. Rip Curl Pro Update

Adam gave an update on staging of the Rip Curl Pro in 2022:

- Looks like the comp will be going ahead this year
- The site build starts on 18 March

- Fencing and signage will be the same
- There will be some different structures in the car parks
- The same provisions for public access will be in place during the set up – inline with COVID requirements
- The temporary elevated pathway at Winki Pop will be put in early in the set up when the surf conditions are poor
- The WSL is looking at an environmental/planting/weeding comms opportunity as part of their PURE program

Action: If anyone has suggestions for the proposed planting opportunity send to Gabrielle

7. Other surfing events for 2022 including Jan Juc Boardriders request

Dates are in for the Rip Curl Pro, Surfing Victoria and Torquay Boardriders (attached). They will be posted on the website shortly. Hells Bells will be a Torquay Boardriders Club event this year so if it goes ahead, they will be shifting one of their aggregates.

Jan Juc Boardriders (JJB) have written to the Bells Beach Committee via Jane as the Chair, requesting a letter of support that they be granted permission to stage a surfing event. The JJB also included a petition using the website change.org

The following points were raised in the discussions regarding the request to review the events policy:

- Several Bells Beach Committee members are members of Torquay Boardriders Club and those interests were declared.
- Surfing Vic and Torquay Boardriders Club members have also met several times with JJB at their request, to discuss holding an event.
- Council officers provided a reminder of why an events policy was created, and the extensive consultation process undertaken to develop the policy - there is a sector of the community that do not support increasing the number of events.
- If there was a review of the policy (i.e. a change to the number of events permitted and the hosting organisations), an extensive consultation process is required. For example there are other organisations with an interest in holding a permit to stage an event at Bells (other boardriding clubs such as Otway, Longboard and Surfcoast Womens, other surf-craft clubs, local schools).
- It is not possible for committee members to speak accurately on behalf of the broader community about what they think is an appropriate number of surfing events and which organisations should hold the rights to host an event without extensive consultation.
- A review of the events policy should not be undertaken where it appears Council is taking sides (i.e. preferencing Jan Juc Boardriders over other clubs who also have a desire to stage an event at Bells/Winki).

Council officers gave some background including:

- The original Taskforce workshops and discussions that led to the current policy were open to any interested member of the public – they were advertised in local papers, via Council social media etc. This was a fair and transparent, exhaustive process.
- There was a 10-year commitment to managing the reserve in line with the directions of the Taskforce recommendations, and the approved the CMMP including the events policy.
- Council will not be managing Bells post 2023 (i.e. in 2025 when the CMMP and events policy is technically due for review). GORCAPA will have their own event management arrangements, events policies and decision-making processes.
- Terms of Reference for the Bells Beach Committee is to advise Council, not make decisions or vote on issues therefore it is not appropriate for the committee to have a specific position.

Considering the terms of reference, the Bells Beach Committee agreed that Council should formally respond to JJB - that if a review of the policy was permitted, an extensive consultation process must

be undertaken. Council officers reiterated that several responses have been previously provided to JJB.

Action: Council will clarify the policy and any decision relating to the request with Jan Juc Boardriders Club. Council officers will respond formally to JJB.

8. Geotechnical inspection

The annual geotechnical inspection will take place on 1 March 2022. This takes place every year prior to the Rip Curl Pro. This year we will be asking if any additional monitoring is required following recent cliff falls further south (though it is recognised that the areas of collapse have the softer dark layer exposed).

9. General business

Other items were raised and discussed in the agenda items above.

Meeting close: 7.15 pm. NEXT MEETING – TBC

Attachment 1. Surfing Events at Bells 2022

Event: Rip Curl Pro
Date: 7 to 20 April 2022
Organiser: WSL

Event: Australian Indigenous Surfing Titles
Date: 27 - 29 May 2022
Organiser: Surfing Victoria

Event: 50 Year Storm, Big Wave Event
Date: 1 June - 31 August 2022 (Event will occur on a single day in this event window when the conditions are suitable)
Organiser: Surfing Victoria

**Event: Hells Bells
Date: 18 June 2022
Organiser: Torquay Boardriders Club

Event: Torquay Boardriders Club Aggregates
Date: 16 July 2022 (contingency 17 July 2022)

Date: 13 August 2022 (contingency 14 August 2022)

Date: 10 September 2022 (contingency 11 September 2022)

***Note: As Torquay Boardriders Club are only able to stage a maximum of 3 events at Bells each year, if Hells Bells proceeds, then TBC will shift one of their aggregate events to a different beach. If Hells Bells does not take place, Torquay Boardriders will host 3 Aggregate events at Bells*