

(draft) MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL BELLS BEACH COMMITTEE  
MEETING 21  
22 June 2022  
6.00 PM – 7.00 PM



**PRESENT:**

Committee members: Jane Currie (Chair), Andrew Cherubin, Dave Matthews; Adam Robertson, Corrina Eccles, Hugh Gorman, James Deans, Dave Matthews

Supporting Officers: Matt Taylor (Manager Economic Development, Arts & Tourism), Sarah Korakis (Coordinator Events), Kate Smallwood (Coordinator Environment), Gabrielle O'Shea (Environment Officer)

**APOLOGIES:** Cahill Bell-Warren; Cr Mike Bodsworth, Cr Paul Barker, Rowan Mackenzie (SCS)

**DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY INTEREST:**

NA

1. **Acknowledgment of Country**

2. **Welcome from Chair**

Welcome by Jane.

The special meeting was called at short notice on 17 June 2022 - as such everyone's time is thoroughly appreciated. Several members are unable to attend due to the short notice.

At the start of the meeting Committee members were advised that the meeting was subject to commercial in confidence and that the information was being shared in confidence.

3. **Confidential Event Opportunity**

Matt Taylor and Sarah Korakis gave a presentation to the Committee about a confidential proposed WSL longboard event at Bells. WSL is seeking a multi-year agreement for a longboard event to be held at Bells in the first week of September, commencing in 2023. WSL is proposing a five day bump in and two day bump out for the event. The event window and infrastructure will be significantly less than the Bells Beach Rip Curl Pro.

The proposal was being presented to the Committee for their consideration and advice, in accordance with Council's Events Policy for the Bells Beach reserve. The Events Policy specifically recognises the opportunity for WSL to host an additional event and provides that if such an opportunity was to arise, an event proposal would be submitted to the Committee for consideration and advice, including on the event and the use of surf breaks.

Discussion

Adam mentioned his conflict of interest as an employee of Surfing Victoria. Dave noted his life membership of Torquay Boardriders Club.

Committee members' views were varied, with some members opposed and others seeing benefits. Members also had various questions and suggestions regarding event logistics.

Key concerns:

- Council, WSL and Surfing Vic should be prepared for backlash from some segments of the community regarding this event.

- Boardrider clubs who are interested in a surfing event permit for Bells are likely to be unhappy about the announcement.
- The scale and popularity of the event is likely to be larger than described.
- The event is likely to negatively impact recreational surfers by attracting more surfers to a break that some members believe is already at capacity. There may also be flow on impacts to other surf breaks.
- While the Events Policy does provide for an additional WSL event, an event of this size and length may not have been envisaged at the time the Policy was developed.
- Scheduling events on weekends is an issue for recreational surfers who surf at Bells.
- There should be consultation with the broader community about the event.
- Is it possible to add the event to the Easter event?
- Crowd control was flagged as a major concern.
- It was suggested the event could be at another location such as Torquay Point where the 1956 Olympic event was held – a tourist draw.
- The addition of this event could result in other watercraft users also wanting events at Bells, resulting in Bells becoming a contest venue not a location for recreational users.
- Surf conditions are not ideal in Spring for an international event. But conditions have not been ideal in the past 12-18 months due to La Nina.

#### Key opportunities:

- There is a large longboarding community and multiple title holders in Victoria. The event will provide a potential pathway for these people to participate in the highest standard of competition.
- Longboarding is very popular and there has been real growth in longboarding, including with indigenous people and at the Indigenous Titles.
- Great opportunity to increase surfing diversity within the reserve (different sport/watercraft – not a shortboard event).
- Late August - early September is a quiet time for local business. The event could be positive for the local economy.

Adam confirmed that Surfing Victoria would elect not to stage their full quota of five events in the years the additional WSL event is held. The maximum number of events at the reserve will therefore remain at nine.

Given the short notice of the meeting, Committee members were also invited to provide a written submission or additional feedback by email.

#### Council decision

The decision to support/not support the event would be made by Council. The Committee was reminded by SCS officers of the Committee Terms of Reference and the Committee's role as an advisory body to Council. The date for Council decision was unknown at the time of the Committee meeting.

Specific suggestions about event logistics if the event was supported by Council:

- Shorten the proposed bump in/bump out period for the event.
- Ensure measures are in place from the outset to protect cultural heritage and the vegetation. These measures should be included in the Event Management Plan for the event.
- Consider holding the event at another location, like Torquay Point, which could be a more popular location with the community. Point Impossible was not seen to be an appropriate location given the cultural heritage significance.
- Ensure the 10 day minimum gap between events is maintained. Torquay Boardriders may have an event already scheduled in September.

**Action: Committee members to provide any additional feedback by email to Kate and Gabrielle.**

**Council Action: Council staff to share Committee members' feedback with Councillors.**

#### **4. Other Business**

##### **Winki stairs update**

Gabrielle provided an update on repairs being made to the Winki stairs, which had been damaged at the base in a recent storm.

##### **Update on meeting with Jan Juc Boardriders Club**

Kate advised that a meeting had been scheduled with the Mayor, the General Manager Placemaking & Environment and Jan Juc Boardriders to discuss their event request.

##### **Graeme Stockton recognition and thank you**

The Chair advised the Committee that she had purchased a gift for Graeme in recognition of his significant contribution to the Committee and to the reserve over many years. Committee members confirmed the gift could be given to Graeme by the Chair on behalf of the Committee and thanked the Chair for organising the gift.

**Meeting close: 7.15 pm. NEXT MEETING – TBC**