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| Committee: | ENVIRONMENT, ECONOMIC & COMMUNITY |
| Section: | Strategic & Economic Planning |
| Date: | 10 July 2012 |
| Item: | 12.103/12 DRAFT WOOLI COASTAL ZONE MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE |

REPORT SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the progress of the draft Wooli Coastal Zone Management Plan since it was exhibited for public comment.

OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATION

That Council endorse further refinement of the draft Wooli Coastal Zone Management Plan consistent with the direction outlined in this report with a view to finalising the draft Plan by the end of 2012.

RECOMMENDATION BY COMMITTEE

Williamson/Howe

That the Officer's Recommendation be adopted.

Voting recorded as follows:

For: Comben, Howe, Hughes, Williamson

Against: Nil

**COUNCIL RESOLUTION – 12.103/12
(Crs Howe/Tiley)**

That

Council endorse further refinement of the draft Wooli Coastal Zone Management Plan consistent with the direction outlined in this report with a view to finalising the draft Plan by the end of 2012.

Voting recorded as follows:

For: **Councillors Williamson, Comben, Dinham, Howe, Hughes, McKenna, Simmons, Tiley and Toms**

Against: **Nil**

BACKGROUND

The draft Wooli Coastal Zone Management Plan was exhibited for comment during September-October 2010. The draft Plan incorporated a review of the potential coastal hazard using more up to date climate change assumptions and identified a range of potential management options to address the identified hazard. The suite of management options recommended by the draft Plan included:

- Dune and vegetation management
- A voluntary land swap for further investigation
- Development controls for new development
- A servicing strategy in case current critical infrastructure is threatened
- An emergency action plan

The draft Plan facilitated formal consultation with the community and Government Agencies and as such, none of the management options presented are set in concrete but need to be reviewed following that feedback. For example, the “land swap” option was presented as a theoretical approach that could be feasible but would obviously require further investigation, significant community wide discussion and sign off from the public and the Agencies involved. Finalisation of the Plan first requires Council’s endorsement and then that of the State Government.

ISSUES

Whilst some time has passed since formal exhibition, refinement of the draft Plan and associated elements has progressed. Importantly, there has been extensive on-going consultation with the Wooli community, particularly the Wooli Coastal Communities Protection Alliance (Wooli CCPA), to work through some of the challenging issues raised during consultation.

Some of the actions undertaken since exhibition include the following, a number of which actually implement likely management options of the final plan and have widespread support:

- Beach and dune surveys to establish baseline data for future monitoring
- Housing inventory to help inform development controls and to integrate with other planning objectives
- Further development of draft DCP controls
- Beach monitoring (in partnership with the Wooli CCPA) including funding from NSW Government
- Monitoring cameras – installed by the Wooli CCPA with Council commitment to maintenance and reporting
- Adoption of an Emergency Action Sub-Plan

CONSULTATION

There was significant feedback on the draft Plan following exhibition, which is to be expected for such a complex and challenging issue such as coastal erosion and its potential impact on private property rights. A full summary and analysis of each submission will be provided when the amended draft Plan is presented back to Council for consideration.

In summary, there were 5 Agency submissions and 109 community submissions. The key issues raised in the community submissions can be broadly summarised as:

- Land swap (65 submissions) – generally not supportive of that aspect of the planned retreat option
- Dune rehabilitation/management (43) – generally supportive and seeking greater emphasis be given to the draft plan’s recommendations in this area
- River dredging for sand nourishment (35) – suggesting further investigation of this as a mitigation/protection option
- Training walls (32) – requesting that they be modified or removed on the presumption that they adversely impact on sand supply on the beach
- Sandbagging/beach scraping (31) – supporting increased priority to these as protection/mitigation measures
- Social & economic impact (26) – concerned about these adverse impacts from the draft Plan’s recommended measures on the Village as a whole, and individuals
- Sea wall & beach nourishment (25) – proposing this as a protective measure
- Detailed research (20) - requesting that further information and research is required on beach dynamics and processes before long term responses are adopted
- Sea level rise thresholds (19) – questioning the sea level rise assumptions in the draft Plan

On-going consultation with Agencies and the Wooli CCPA has continued in order to try to resolve some of these issues. Consultation with the Wooli CCPA in particular has been very productive to further clarify and refine potential management options in a way that is acceptable to all parties and

interests. This on-going consultation has identified that in broad terms, the community opinion is that:

- There is recognition that a coastal erosion issue exists
- There is lack of support for a land swap for a number of reasons including the social impact that it would have on the Village community
- There is a need for further information and investigation to better define the erosion hazard and to inform potential responses
- There is support for further consideration of both “soft” and “hard” mitigation options

Council staff accepted an invitation from the Wooli CCPA to meet with them on Saturday 9 June. This meeting, attended by 30-40 members of the community, generally confirmed the above concerns and indicated general support for a way forward as discussed in the following.

Way Forward

While many aspects of the exhibited draft Plan are soundly based, it is clear that some components have little community support (eg land swap and the terminology “planned retreat” has been seen to be divisive). There is concern that some options may have been prematurely discarded and warrant further consideration with the benefit of further data collection. This is a product, in part, on the resources made available for the draft Plan.

It is also recognised that the challenge for the draft Plan is to accommodate community view, the best available technical information and hazard assessment, the practicality of management options, and the legal and statutory framework including Government requirements. While these issues are at times competing, the need to complete the draft Plan is acknowledged in order to provide certainty and clarity to the community and to establish a framework for development decisions and for funding opportunities.

In consideration of the community feedback, a revised draft Plan based on the following principles is considered appropriate:

- A greater emphasis on an on-going, evolving rather than a static plan based on continual data capture
- A greater emphasis on structured and on-going data collection and analysis to inform beach processes and option development (similar to above)
- On-going assessment of a wider range of management options with specific options being discarded or embraced based on the data collection and other merit considerations
- Confirm dune management and rehabilitation as on-going management options
- Implementation of the emergency action plan
- Refinement of development controls that:
 - Recognise the hazard
 - Applies to new development
 - Provides greater clarity and certainty
 - Minimises individual and community exposure to risk
 - Integrates with broader planning objectives
 - Monitored and revised over time

SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT

Ecology

Ecological issues are relatively minor in this instance however, management options that impact on the marine national park and coastal dunes need to be considered.

Economic

Management options proposed need to be cognisant of their affordability as well as the potential for impact on the local economy.

Social & Cultural

The revised draft Plan will recognise the social impact on the Wooli community as raised in the consultations to date and address how it can be safeguarded notwithstanding the identified risk.

Human Habitat & Infrastructure

The draft Plan addresses risk to the urban environment and to essential infrastructure.

Governance

A revised draft Plan will provide clear direction to the community.

Risk Management

A significant objective for the draft Plan is to manage the identified risk to property and assets thereon.

Guiding Sustainability Principles

The following guiding sustainability principles are relevant to this issue:

- Supporting social and intergenerational equity.
- Encouraging community involvement and awareness.
- Taking a precautionary and anticipatory approach.
- Focusing on continuous improvement.

OPTIONS

1. That the revision of the draft Plan post-exhibition proceed based on the principles identified in this report.
2. That the draft Plan not be amended and Council proceed to finalisation based on the exhibited draft.
3. That Council take another course of action.

Option 1 is recommended. The formal exhibition process and the subsequent on-going dialogue with the Wooli community has raised a number of valid issues. The proposed approach slightly re-emphasises the draft Plan away from a more traditional plan that has a defined suite of preferred management options to one which is more evolving over time, with an emphasis on gaining more information on the nature of the coastal processes and hazards before determining what management actions are or are not worth implementing.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The recommended approach will require commitment from all parties – Council, the State Government and the community – to resourcing the recommended data collection and further, more detailed assessment of potential management options. Existing partnership arrangements with the Wooli CCPA, such as the beach camera monitoring project, suggests that a collaborative approach is possible and very productive.

Des Schroder

DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER – ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC

Prepared by staff member: David Morrison
Approved/Reviewed by Manager: David Morrison
Section: Strategic & Economic Planning
Attachment: Nil