

PHILLIP ISLAND CONSERVATION SOCIETY INC



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Incorporation No: A 11396

ABN: 48 392 256 921

16 October 2020

The Hon. Richard Wynne MP, Minister for Planning

The Hon. Ben Carroll, Minister for Public Transport, Roads and Road Safety

Ms Jordan Crugnale MP, Member for Bass

cc:

Ms Monique De Carli, Acting Manager Communications and Engagement, RRV Eastern Region

Ms Ali Wastie, CEO, Bass Coast Shire Council

Dear Minister Wynne, Minister Carroll, and Ms Crugnale

Re: Proposed Phillip Island Road upgrades and need for integrated transport planning

We write to draw your attention to heightened community concern regarding the Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) proposals to upgrade Phillip Island Road at Newhaven¹ and San Remo². We request your assistance in advocating for an integrated transport planning study for the Phillip Island road corridor between San Remo and Cowes before these or other corridor works are further planned or funded. We believe this approach will, in the long run, be cost effective and deliver what our community, visitors and the environment needs.

PICS members have decades of high-level experience in major road planning in Victoria, together with detailed involvement in the 2014 Phillip Island Integrated Transport Strategy (PIITS) development committee and development of the 2016 Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035 (Visitor Economy Strategy).

While we understand the desire to improve Phillip Island Road to cater for a projected increase in tourism visitation, this must be done holistically, collaboratively, and in an integrated manner to preserve the natural environment on which our tourism economy depends. Phillip Island is a unique tourist destination because of its natural assets and

¹ <https://regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/eastern-improvements/phillip-island-road-newhaven-proposed-upgrades>

² <https://regionalroads.vic.gov.au/map/eastern-improvements/phillip-island-road-proposed-upgrades>

abundant wildlife. There is a limit to the amount of vehicle traffic that is sustainable without destroying its environmental value. Narrowly focussed, road-widening solutions that are designed to facilitate ever-increasing traffic volumes, or planned on a disjointed basis, without regard to other transport options will have unintended adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts.

Community consultation for the road-widening plans for Newhaven and San Remo closed on 5 October 2020, and we attach our submission to RRV and copies of local media coverage to illustrate the level of anxiety over the proposals. As you will read, PICS and many community members are concerned that the proposed road widening at these locations will have significant negative impacts, while simply moving bottlenecks to the next unwidened sections of road and providing little benefit. There is concern over the following aspects of RRV road planning for Newhaven and San Remo:

- Its disjointed approach, planning separate sections at a time, with potential adverse outcomes.
- Lack of consideration of Bass Coast Shire Council reviews and strategies relating to transport—including the PIITS, Visitor Economy Strategy, and Cowes Activity Centre Plan. These reviews and strategies have repeatedly identified that traffic on Phillip Island is increasing unsustainably, creating an urgent need for demand management during peak times and actions to reduce the domination of private cars and improve access for visitors, while retaining environmental values.
- Lack of consideration of the upcoming speed limit review on Phillip island, which may improve safety and traffic flow, negating the need for road-widening.
- Lack of transparency in community consultation that seeks skewed results.
- Adverse environmental impacts, including:
 - Reclamation of a section of San Remo coastline that is part of the Western Port Ramsar site and adjacent to the “San Remo marine community”, which is listed under the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act. *PICS considers that this would warrant referral under the Victorian Environmental Effects Act and Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act.*
 - Destruction of mature canopy trees, including historic golden cypress trees that are listed on the National Trusts of Australia Register of Significant Trees.
 - Loss of the vegetated edge of the Richard Grayden Memorial Reserve, an important area of green space, which is not only scarce in Newhaven, but fundamental to the environmental character of the entry to Phillip Island.

PICS and others are also concerned that proposed road-widening at San Remo and Newhaven will simply lead to further plans to widen the corridor between Newhaven and Back Beach Road on Phillip Island, and eventually beyond to Cowes. We have seen RRV drawings to this effect for the section between Newhaven and Back Beach Road, although they have not been put to the community for formal consultation at this stage. The environmental and amenity impacts of such widening would be substantial, including loss of

farmland and damage to view corridors to Churchill Island. This outcome would be inconsistent with the declaration of the Bass Coast as a Distinctive Area and Landscape (DAL) and pre-empt the DAL statement of planning policy, which is under development. Road widening on this scale would add to the destruction of wildlife on Phillip Island's roads, which is already at such a magnitude that it causes anguish for residents and visitors.

For these reasons, we seek your assistance in advocating for an integrated transport planning study for the Phillip Island road corridor from San Remo to Cowes before any corridor works are further planned or funded. This study should encompass a holistic examination of the transport needs of Phillip Island and San Remo and plan sustainable, integrated solutions—including peak demand management, park-and-ride, public transport, cycling and pedestrian pathways, and council's Active Bass Coast and inspirational shared path plans—rather than focusing simply on road-widening and motor vehicles. It should take into account the recommendations of key reviews and strategies relating to transport, including the PIITS, Visitor Economy Strategy, Cowes Activity Centre Plan, and the upcoming review of speed limits on municipal roads and DAL statement of planning policy.

The overall integrated transport plan arising from the study should be subject to an environmental effects statement to ensure that the environmental, social, and economic impacts are transparently assessed. We look forward to your advice on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Nottle", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Nottle
President, Phillip Island Conservation Society

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Monique DeCarli

Acting Manager Communications and Engagement – Eastern Region

Eastern Victoria

Regional Roads Victoria

Monique.Decarli@roads.vic.gov.au

5 October 2020

Dear Monique

As part of Regional Roads Victoria community consultation, thank you for the opportunity to input into the proposed upgrade of the road at Newhaven. While the Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS) understands the Government's desire to improve the Phillip Island road in light of the expected increase in tourism in coming years, this must be done carefully and collaboratively in order to preserve the natural environment on which the Island's economy and tourism depends.

Phillip Island is a unique tourist destination largely because of its wonderful wildlife and environment. There are predetermined limits to the amount of vehicle traffic that is sustainable without destroying its environmental value. Urban "off the rack" traffic solutions do not fit with this environment without full and proper consideration of unintended impacts.

Integrated Transport Island Road Corridor Planning Study with an Environmental Effects Statement

PICS members have decades of experience in major road planning in Victoria together with detailed involvement in the PIITS strategy development committee and in the development of the Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy 2035.

We consider that rather than an ad hoc piecemeal approach to road upgrades, an overall Integrated Transport Island Road Corridor Planning Study (*the Planning Study*) should be developed from the bridge to Cowes before any further corridor works are planned.

PICS consider that *the Planning Study* should be subject to an Environmental Effects Statement (EES). This process will enable an independent Inquiry and Advisory Committee

to be established by the State Minister for Planning under the Environment Effects Act 1978 and as an Advisory Committee under the Planning and Environment Act 1987.

Such an inquiry would transparently assess issues including any proposal to widen the roads, introduce roundabouts or duplicate the bridge based on evidence provided by RRV and other transport specialists.

We believe such an independent process would unite the community in establishing a vision of what is required for sustainable transport and stop ad hoc works occurring that are not cost effective and do not meet the needs and aspirations of residents' visitors and local businesses. The EES inquiry would seek to provide recommendations on integrated transport solutions including the Island's unique visitations patterns whilst preserving the Island's unique and prized environment on which the economy depends.

The scope of the EES Inquiry could consider key issues including:

- Any proposals to widen the roads or duplicate the bridge;
- Any adverse environmental impacts of road improvement proposals;
- Integrated transport options including pedestrians, cyclists, buses and park and ride; and
- Demand management during peak holiday times including traffic limitations; user pays suggestions, signage for estimated travel times on South Gippsland highway.

Strategic Transport Planning and Demand Management

PIITS is the current transport strategy development committee within the local community that has representatives from the community and various stakeholders and has dedicated many hours to considering and discussing transport issues on Phillip Island.

Strategic documents have repeated the theme that traffic on Phillip Island is increasing and there is an urgency to introduce demand management solutions to reduce the impact of private cars. The main studies include: PIITS – Phillip Island Integrated Traffic Strategy, VES – Visitor Economy Strategy, CACP – Cowes Activity Centre Plan.

A key theme is that every decision should be based around reducing the domination of private cars and improving access for visitors while retaining the natural environment.

Current Newhaven Purpose and Justification

The justification for duplicating a section of the road at Newhaven is not evident. There are no tangible benefits provided by RRV to justify the current proposal. The Phillip Island road capacity is limited by the two lane bridge and two lanes along the whole of the corridor. Upgrading the capacity of this limited section of road at Newhaven serves no apparent purpose and is not consistent with the capacity of adjoining sections, one of which (the bridge) will be significantly constrained for many years to come. Because the proposed works will have a significant impact on local visual and social amenity, particularly on the mature golden cypress plantation, it cannot be justified unless it is in the context of an

overall Intergrated Transport Island Road Corridor Planning Study from the bridge to Cowes that has been through the EES process.

The current plans are a road design over-kill. They are not cost effective, and they would have a very significant impact on the Newhaven character and the gateway to Phillip Island. The provision of a wide, paved outer-separator on the north side of the road is totally out of character, and the provision of the large parking areas on the southern service road is totally inappropriate. Other options should be examined to meet parking needs for the adjoining commercial premises.

Other Options

Improvements to through traffic flow are justified, but this does not require a four lane treatment. Judicious provision of slip lanes and turning lanes would be far more appropriate.

Traffic flow data and modelling are required to explain the intended purpose and identify other options that could be considered to better achieve this.

Cost Benefit analysis has not been provided. This must be undertaken to consider any expected benefits against the costs to the environment, amenity, road safety and other road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, bus stop users, as well as loss of trees and impact on wildlife roadkill.

Specific Issues with the Newhaven Proposal

PICS is committed to sustainable, environmental visitation and does not support the Newhaven proposal to increase a small section of the road for no apparent benefit, whilst imposing considerable amenity, environmental and road safety concerns.

The duplication of the road at Newhaven is inconsistent with the environmental and conservation significance of Phillip Island.

It is noted that the RRV community engagement survey is flawed and forces respondents to rank the top 3 benefits with no provision for listing issues and adverse impacts.

Trees

PICS support the concerns of the National Trust regarding the classified significant cypress trees as well as the impact on visual amenity. The destruction of mature canopy trees, including the iconic cypress, is of major concern. Together with the loss of the edge of the Newhaven park this will significantly change the environmental character of the Island entry inconsistent with conservation and its image of being a natural attraction.

With most of the island cleared for agriculture and housing developments, there are few mature canopy trees remaining, with most rows of trees along the roadsides of existing

roads. Road widening negatively impacts on roadside vegetation, which provides the last remaining wildlife corridors and habitat for native birds and wildlife.

Planting “offsets” does not achieve the same function because they take many decades to grow to the same size. It is important that significant roadside vegetation be preserved. Please refer to Greg Moore OAM’s extensive writing on the cost of destroying trees and incorporate these costs in you cost/benefit analysis.

PICS are currently working on a Significant Tree Register for Phillip Island together with the National Trust. Bass Coast Shire Council has also been working on identifying and preserving significant roadside vegetation on Council controlled roads on Phillip Island. We believe RRV should do the same on main arterial roads and particularly on the Phillip Island corridor.

Road Safety issues

Dangerous proposed mergers

The duplicated lanes at Newhaven will encourage drivers to try to overtake to get ahead in traffic. This is likely to cause road safety issues when lanes merge again (particularly considering boats, caravans and long vehicles).

Merger of lanes will cause congestion that will make it difficult for residents, to enter from local roads.

Other Road Users

The current design is very car centric. More provisions are needed for integrated transport and to ensure the safety of all road users. The safety and needs of pedestrians and cyclists must be taken into account. It is well documented in traffic engineering and road safety research that roundabouts assist traffic flow for cars but do not cater for pedestrians trying to cross nor cyclists trying to negotiate through.

Pedestrians accessing bus stops will be problematic, particularly for children catching the school bus. One pedestrian crossing for the whole stretch is inadequate.

Wildlife Roadkill

The impact on wildlife must be considered. Roadkill is already a significant issue of concern on this stretch of road from Newhaven to Cape Woolamai that runs through a narrow stretch of land with wildlife on both sides that crosses for food and water. It is envisaged that inevitably roadkill will be exacerbated by the proposal because it will be impossible for wildlife to cross 4 busy lanes of traffic without being hit. This road carnage causes much anguish for locals, visitors, and overseas tourists, and does immense, permanent damage to the Island’s reputation of providing a caring and safe environment for wildlife. It also causes a road safety hazard. Avoidance of wildlife collisions results in unpredictable driving behaviour such sudden braking or swerving which lead to collisions or loss of control, either off the road or into adjacent lanes.

Speed Reduction

It is considered that traffic could be better managed in other ways, particularly the reduction of the speed limit. It is well documented that speed reduction is a very cost effective strategy and as well as improving safety, reduced speed helps to maintain a constant flow of traffic rather than the stop/start that will result from the proposed duplications and mergers. A Speed Review of is being undertaken by Bass Coast Shire Council on roads under Council control. This should also be considered on the main roads of Phillip Island by RRV.

Beach Cres Newhaven

It is concerning that the closing of the side road Beach Cres Newhaven will change the traffic flow at Newhaven and will funnel traffic through Forrest Ave, including heavy vehicles and boats trying to access the public boat ramp and Newhaven Yacht Squadron boat ramp. As well as affecting residents it poses safety issues for people crossing Forrest Ave eg from the car parking to the Newhaven shops.

Churchill Island

It is considered that he Churchill Island intersection also needs to be addressed as part of corridor planning.

SUMMARY

In conclusion, PICS does not consider the proposed road duplication at Newhaven to be justified. While it serves little apparent benefit, it will have considerable costs, not only financial but indirect costs and issues associated with compromised road safety, amenity, and the environment, including significant roadside flora like the cypress trees and impact on resident native fauna (roadkill).

PICS urges RRV to develop a Intergrated Transport Island Road Corridor Planning Study from the bridge to Cowes that considers integrated transport and the safety and needs of all road users such as pedestrians, cyclists and bus users. The *Planning Study* should include an independent and comprehensive Environmental Effects Statement to properly consider all transport needs and environmental, social and economic impacts of road duplication or widening proposals.

Yours Sincerely



Jeff Nottle

President

Media coverage re: Phillip Island transport planning

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Newhaven road plans “not justified”

Oct 14 2020. Updated October 14, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/newhaven-road-plans-not-justified#2>

Regional Roads Victoria’s proposed road upgrades for Newhaven are a costly “over-kill”, with no tangible benefits, according to a peak conservation group.

The Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS) in a submission says RRV’s four-lane plans for Newhaven and San Remo would “have a very significant impact on the Newhaven character and the gateway to Phillip Island”.

“The duplication of the road at Newhaven is inconsistent with the environmental and conservation significance of Phillip Island,” the submission states.

PICS is the latest group to be highly critical of RRV’s plans, with the new designs – yet to be funded – released last month including four lanes, two new roundabouts, compulsory land acquisition, even reclaiming a section of Western Port bay at San Remo.

Newhaven businesses, council candidates in the upcoming elections and the National Trust have been among those critical of the plans.

PICS president Jeff Nottle made a five-page submission to RRV saying instead of an “ad hoc piecemeal” road plan, the authority should instead look at the big picture.

“The current plans are a road design over-kill,” Mr Nottle wrote, adding the Phillip Island Road capacity is limited by the two-lane bridge and two lanes along the whole of the corridor. The justification for duplicating a section of the road at Newhaven is not evident. There are no tangible benefits provided by RRV to justify the current proposal.”

Yet, he said, the plans impose “considerable amenity, environmental and road safety concerns”.

RRV Regional Director (Eastern) Sara Rhodes-Ward said all feedback would be considered as a whole, rather than responding to individual comments in isolation.

She said the results of this recent round of engagement would be collated into a summary document and shared with the community in the coming months.

“We’re grateful for the feedback we’ve received from the community about our updated plans for Newhaven and San Remo,” said Ms Rhodes-Ward.

“All feedback received is valuable and we’ll consider it moving forward.”

Big picture

Mr Nottle instead suggested an overall Integrated Transport Island Road Corridor Planning Study be developed from the bridge to Cowes before any further corridor works were planned.

He said the planning study should be subject to an independent Environmental Effects Statement (EES), which would examine evidence around road and bridge expansion plans, environmental impacts, other transport including pedestrians, cyclists, buses and park and ride, as well as managing peak holiday traffic limits through highway signage and user-pays options.

“There are predetermined limits to the amount of vehicle traffic that is sustainable without destroying environmental value,” Mr Nottle wrote.

“Urban “off the rack” traffic solutions do not fit with this environment without full and proper consideration of unintended impacts. The EES inquiry would seek to provide recommendations on integrated transport solutions including the Island’s unique visitations patterns whilst preserving the Island’s unique and prized environment on which the economy depends.”

He said a cost-benefit analysis should be provided by RRV.

Rat-run

The PICS submission details several reasons why RRV’s Newhaven plans are flawed.

Mr Nottle states duplicated lanes would encourage a rat run mentality, with drivers trying to overtake to get ahead in traffic.

“This is likely to cause road safety issues when lanes merge again (particularly considering boats, caravans and long vehicles).”

He said roadkill impacts should be considered.

“Roadkill is already a significant issue of concern on this stretch of road from Newhaven to Cape Woolamai. Inevitably roadkill will be exacerbated by the proposal because it will be impossible for wildlife to cross four busy lanes of traffic without being hit.

“This road carnage causes much anguish for locals, visitors, and overseas tourists, and does immense, permanent damage to the Island’s reputation ... It also causes a road safety hazard.”

The PICS submission supports National Trust concerns about the chopping down of the classified significant cypress trees at Newhaven.

“The destruction of mature canopy trees, including the iconic cypress, is of major concern,” Mr Nottle wrote, adding planting offsets took decades to grow to the same size. Together with the loss of the edge of the Newhaven park this will significantly change the environmental character of the Island entry.”

He said the large parking areas on the southern service road was “totally inappropriate”.

The submission states while improvements to through traffic flow were justified, it doesn’t require four lanes.

“It is considered traffic could be better managed in other ways, particularly the reduction of the speed limit.”

Mr Nottle was also critical of RRV’s “flawed” community engagement survey, forcing “respondents to rank the top three benefits with no provision for listing issues and adverse impacts”.

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Road plans should not be behind closed doors

Oct 07 2020. Updated October 12, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/road-plans-should-not-be-behind-closed-doors>

Regional Roads Victoria needs to be transparently consulting with the whole community, rather than seeking to “divide and conquer”, according to Phillip Island’s peak lobby group Island Voice.

RRV’s proposed upgrades for Newhaven and San Remo – including four lanes, new roundabouts, compulsory land acquisition, even reclaiming a section of Western Port bay – were released last month, with community feedback closing last Monday.

The revised plans build on previous plans dating back to 2015 for Newhaven, and public drop-in sessions in San Remo last year, and because of Covid-19 restrictions have used online feedback.

However, Island Voice spokeswoman Nyree Davis said given the significance of RRV’s plans for Phillip Island, the roads authority needed to be engaging with all the community and releasing all comments and feedback.

“We want to know and hear all the comments, not just from this round of consultation, but previous rounds too,” she said.

“Planning on this project has been going on for more than seven years and yet the only time we are hearing anything is when they release new or adjusted plans. I’d like to see a similar level of transparency as was shown in the State Government’s Distinctive Areas and Landscapes plan, where all community comments were on public display.”

Nyree said in addition there should be “no break in the link” between groups, including businesses, Bass Coast Shire and the community reference group that created the Phillip Island Integrated Transport study in 2012.

“RRV should create a more fluid conversation, open and constructive dialogue. Because it feels like divide and conquer, where everyone is consulted separately.

“We want to hear from everyone, their thoughts and grievances.”

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Newhaven businesses reject RRV road plans

Oct 07 2020. Updated October 12, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/newhaven-businesses-reject-rrv-road-plans>

Newhaven businesses have rejected Regional Roads Victoria's proposed road upgrade plans at the entrance to Phillip Island.

The group of businesses – who are set to lose a chunk of land under compulsory acquisition as part of RRV's plans – say they are unable to support the road upgrade as it is currently proposed, adding the plans have “major problems”.

The businesses, which include Rip Curl, The Island Accommodation, YHA Phillip Island, and Phillip Island School Camps have called for “significant” changes, saying the roads authority needed to work with local residents, rather than applying “city solutions” to “our magical island community.”

“Open and transparent feedback from the community must be included and incorporated,” the businesses state in an open letter to RRV.

“We have been discussing these issues with RRV over the past seven-plus years with no satisfactory outcome. We demand not a fix for today, but a longer-term vision for the needs and requirements for local business, local community and tourism alike.”

The Newhaven plans include four lanes on the Phillip Island Road between two new roundabouts at Forrest Avenue and Boys Home Road, as well as a net gain for all of Newhaven of 25 car parks, while the Big Wave will need to be moved to make room for a new path.

Harold Jackson – the land owner most impacted by the RRV proposal – owns the Big Wave complex, as well as three other blocks of land between Forrest Avenue and Boys Home Road. He said RRV wants to compulsorily acquire a width of about 90m and a depth between 7-9m from his property.

The letter, signed by Harold as well as Larson Henderson and Scott Jackson, states their main concerns were bottlenecks created by RRV's plans, adding the complex would also have a net loss of car parks.

They believe the plans need to be adjusted, including: left and right turning entry and exit to The Big Wave Complex; access for all commercial businesses past Rip Curl; maintain or improve current parking, including for buses; provide signage and alternative transport options.

The letter states in order to avoid bottlenecks, when two lanes become one after Boys Home Road and before San Remo, four lanes must start at Anderson roundabout and continue through to the new Back Beach Road roundabout, while the bridge too must be widened to four lanes.

“If all these bottlenecks are not removed traffic flow will not happen. If you are not going to build it properly why do it at all.”

The businesses have called on RRV for more transparent community consultation. They said RRV also needed to take into account transport recommendations made in previous studies, including the Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy and integrated transport plans, as well as the soon to be released landscape plan for the entrance to the island.

“On numerous occasions we have asked for the actual data and research to support the effects and outcomes of this project. RRV and the Bass Coast Shire needs to engage the community and together create a healthier, safer, and environmentally-friendly infrastructure in keeping with locals needs and requirements.”

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Don't love the island to death

Oct 02 2020. Updated October 2, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/dont-love-the-island-to-death>

The Victorian National Trust has joined the growing community call for smarter traffic congestion management on Phillip Island, rejecting the push for a four-lane highway.

The call comes in the wake of Regional Road Victoria's plans – out for public comment until October 5 – to expand the Phillip Island Road into four lanes at Newhaven and San Remo.

The roads authority is currently building dual-lane roundabouts at Back Beach Road and Woolamai Beach Road.

And in 2017 they mooted four lanes through Surf Beach, more recently approaching adjacent landholders to discuss acquiring land to accommodate the expanded road.

Bass Coast Shire councillor Michael Whelan earlier this month described road upgrades at Newhaven as “excessive”, warning Phillip Island's lifestyle should not be destroyed to cater to congestion.

His comments follow the Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy, which warns the island already exceeds its infrastructure capacity at peak visitor periods, suggesting a bridge toll or park-and-drive were possible options to make congestion more sustainable.

Now the president of the Bass Coast branch of the National Trust of Victoria, Greg Buchanan – in a submission to RRV – said the island's character should be preserved.

“Preserving the integrity of the destination, not detracting from it, should be the main aim of a coherent strategy for Phillip Island,” Mr Buchanan states.

“The road strategy for the island raises broader issues around the natural environment of the island, landscape and scenic values, heritage and township character, and consideration of other options available to best handle increasing visitor numbers and tourist traffic.”

Mr Buchanan warned RRV's current plans “may indirectly pre-empt a decision on a dual lane highway extending all the way into Cowes”.

He said the Newhaven and San Remo plans, combined with the new roundabouts at Woolamai Beach Road and Back Beach Road “have the appearance of a piecemeal approach, rather than being based on an overall strategy”.

“The National Trust therefore encourages Regional Roads Victoria to engage with council and the community to first settle the overall strategy for the island before committing to a set design for Newhaven.”

The National Trust suggests better options than a dual lane highway would include the use of park-and-drive buses at peak periods, as well as expanded public transport, and more cycling and walking paths.

Cr Whelan called for smarter traffic management across the island, saying congestion in summer was largely driven by day visitors, “who contribute little to the island economy”.

“The focus should be on a well-designed and contained road corridor that focuses on efficient flow of traffic, but that does not destroy the island’s amenity to cater for a destructive traffic volume,” he said.

Cr Whelan said Regional Roads Victoria’s plans for a “massive” roundabout at Forrest Avenue in Newhaven were “excessive”, as was the four-lanes, which will “split the township”.

To provide feedback, email easternengagement@roads.vic.gov.au or call 133 778 by October 5.

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser Editorial: Don't love this island to death

Oct 02 2020. Updated October 2, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/dont-love-this-island-to-death>

What draws people to Phillip Island, whether tourist or resident?

The most obvious answer is the environment: beaches, surfing, wildlife.

It's a question at the heart of Regional Roads Victoria's (RRV) road plans for the area.

Currently the roads authority is seeking community feedback until October 5, on its plans for San Remo and Newhaven, including four lanes, new roundabouts, compulsory land acquisition, even reclaiming a section of Western Port bay.

However RRV's plans are much larger.

They are currently putting the finishing touches on dual-lane roundabouts at Woolamai Beach Road and Back Beach Road and in 2017 they mooted four lanes through Surf Beach, more recently approaching adjacent landholders to discuss acquiring their land.

At the crux of their planning is Phillip Island's increasing popularity, seen at peak season congestion; but as long-time residents observe, island roads are now busy year-round.

So what is the solution?

RRV sees the answer as making a four-lane highway across the island.

But is there a better solution and do we – as several community groups and a councillor suggest – need to be smarter about traffic management?

Most importantly, have Phillip and San Remo reached a tipping point? Could we be a victim of our own success?

Of course four lanes will ease congestion. To a point.

As Melbourne's regular freeway expansions so perfectly highlight, more roads simply create more room for more cars. Given population growth, four lanes in the long-term won't solve congestion, but make more room for it, on an island that is a natural bottle neck.

In 2016, the then eastern region director for the roads authority Scott Lawrence told the Advertiser the Phillip Island community needed to be clear on future planning. Did we, he asked, want to be like the Gold Coast?

"One of the great features of the island is it has an island feel. It's not super-developed like the Gold Coast," Mr Lawrence said.

“But do residents want that? If we build multiple roads onto the island it will impact how the island functions and encourage more development.”

A three-year Deakin University study on the “sea-change” phenomenon found the unique charm of popular beach holiday destinations was being lost to over-development. The study’s author told the Advertiser increasing development meant towns were losing what made them so attractive to visitors in the first place.

“This is the dilemma surrounding development: how do you get the balance right, allowing them to age gracefully, and accommodating the pressures of development?,” she said.

“How far can a town be changed before it loses its identity completely? It is a pity to see them become the victim of their own success.”

Pre-covid, it’s an issue tourist destinations around the world have been grappling with, and post-covid will grapple with again.

In Italy popular regions, such as Venice, have limited visitors through entry fees, a ticketing system to cap numbers, and an entrance tax for day-trippers.

At Victoria’s Great Ocean Road locals fear the icon is “being loved to death”, particularly with low-spend day-trippers. “What we would like to see is fewer tourists but spending longer here,” a GOR tourism figure said.

Even the Penguin Parade turns would-be visitors away when they reach capacity.

The Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy, commissioned by the shire and the State Government in 2016, warns the island already exceeds its infrastructure capacity at peak visitor periods, suggesting a bridge toll or park-and-drive were possible options to make congestion more sustainable.

The strategy recommends against day visitors instead to multi-night visitors, who contribute more.

The Phillip Island Integrated Transport study called for a focus on “demand management”, directing people to other locations during peak periods.

As frustrating as congestion is, and as tempting as a quick-fix four lane highway seems, there needs to be a smarter set of solutions.

It is the opinion of this paper that RRV and the community should think carefully about what choices it makes for the future of Phillip Island.

We must ensure we don’t love this island to death.

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Newhaven's golden cypresses must be saved

Oct 02 2020. Updated October 2, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/newhavens-golden-cypresses-must-be-saved>

Regional Roads Victoria must revise its four-lane road plans for Newhaven to save the avenue of historic golden cypress trees, according to a submission by the National Trust of Victoria.

Most of the 10 cypresses – which were planted in 1912 and are classified by the National Trust – will be felled to make way for RRV's road expansion plans, out for public comment until October 5.

The Newhaven plans – which will require compulsory acquisition of private property – include dual-lane roundabouts at Forrest Avenue and Boys Home Road, with four lanes in between.

The as-yet-unfunded development will see up to eight cypresses bulldozed.

President of the Bass Coast branch of the National Trust of Victoria, Greg Buchanan said they had lodged a submission with RRV urging them to re-think the destruction.

"We believe there are further steps that can be taken, under the road proposal, to maximise protection of the Newhaven avenue – through careful placement of bus stops, location of walking paths and the form and width of service roads," the submission states.

Mr Buchanan questioned whether the dual lane highway could be shortened.

"Does it actually need to commence at the bridge, given the present bridge only has capacity for one lane in each direction, and instead be commenced at the Boys Home Road roundabout? This alternative scenario could accommodate a new roundabout at Forrest Avenue while limiting the lane capacity, like the bridge, to one lane in each direction up to Boys Home Road.

"This option would obviously maximise protection of the avenue of golden cypress trees."

He said this option would also be calmer and safer for local residents, including children, especially around Graydens Reserve, and reduce the impact of a dual lane highway on the character of Newhaven and the island's entry.

Mr Buchanan said the National Trust had no statutory power to protect a landscape, or significant trees, but instead relied on Bass Coast Shire and RRV to "take into serious consideration the Trust's views and those of the community".

History

Mr Buchanan said Newhaven's cypresses were just as loved and valued by the community as the "complementary" avenue in Cowes' Thompson Avenue.

"The heritage of these trees is not only significant to Newhaven but to Phillip Island as a whole. Council has successfully maintained the mature trees in Cowes within a heavily paved and busy traffic street, over many years. A Friends Group has also been very successful in their advocacy and watching over these trees for a long time."

He added that additional plantings of golden cypresses had been carried out over the years in Cowes where older trees have suffered damage or declined.

RRV confirmed their new road designs "will impact some of the golden cypress trees in Newhaven".

"The Department of Transport has arranged for a specialist arborist to inspect these trees," a spokeswoman said.

They said the exact number of trees to be impacted would be determined by the final design and the Department of Transport was working with Bass Coast Shire to investigate possible future replacement planting at the site.

The spokeswoman confirmed the proposed road infrastructure plans would not impact Bass Coast Shire's current proposal for a regional skate park and play space at Graydens Reserve.

The full plans for [Newhaven are available on the RRV website](#).

To provide feedback, email easternengagement@roads.vic.gov.au or call 133 778 by October 5.

Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser: Full speed ahead on road review

Sep 03 2020 Updated September 3, 2020

<https://www.pisra.com.au/news/full-speed-ahead-on-road-review>

Community consultation on speed limits around Phillip Island and San Remo – initially planned for late August – has been delayed several weeks.

The consultation has been long-awaited by several community groups who have been lobbying for safer, slower roads.

Bass Coast Shire councillors at the August meeting accepted a petition signed by 120 people that requests the shire and Regional Roads Victoria act “as a matter of urgency to cut speed limits and improve signage” in residential areas of Ventnor, also calling for a neighbourhood traffic calming plan.

“We are particularly concerned about safety along Ventnor Beach Road and its interfaces with Lyall Street and Harris Road, specifically the numerous access points to walking trails and nature reserves, public playgrounds and toilets, the pony club precinct, car parks and dog beaches,” the petition stated.

Councillors said community consultation on RRV’s speed limit review of Phillip Island and San Remo was due to start in late August. However a shire spokesperson last week confirmed it had been delayed by several weeks.

“The joint Draft Communication and Engagement Plan is complete and currently in an approval process with RRV,” the shire spokesperson said.

“Once signed off, the engagement will commence with contact of key stakeholders in the first instance then followed by the broader community.”

The review will be a two-staged process, with the first stage reviewing 100km/h sealed arterial and council-managed roads and the second stage looking at implementing lower speeds on unsealed roads. RRV and the council are currently preparing stage one of the review.

Cr Bruce Kent said he supported local residents in their campaign.

“They are the ones who have to live there and it’s their local knowledge that should be taken into account by RRV in their investigation,” Cr Kent said.

Cr Les Larke said he often travelled to Ventnor and he found the roads “generally a poor standard – the quality of roads and surface apart from the speed,” Cr Larke said.

Danger

The petition follows a campaign in March by a coalition of Phillip Island community groups calling for a speed reduction on island roads to protect wildlife.

The Phillip Island Medical and Health Action Group, Island Voice, Rhyll Community Association and a Cowes citizen scientist – who has been researching roadkill for a year – called for a speed reduction to 80km/hr on the five island roads that currently have a 100km/hr limit: Back Beach Road, Ventnor Road, Rhyll-Newhaven Road, Berrys Beach Road and a section of Ventnor Beach Road.

In addition the coalition of groups was concerned sealed roads on the island – Gap Road and Smiths Beach Road, between the Phillip Island Road and Back Beach Road – have no speed limit signs and therefore by default – by law – became 100km/hr roads.

Furthermore, four dirt roads were also unsigned and therefore seen as 100km zones: Pyramid Rock, Harbison, McFees and Watts roads.

Eastern regional director of the Transport Department Sara Rhodes-Ward confirmed they were working with the shire on a speed limit review.

“The review is in its early stages and the community will be informed as the review progresses,” she said.

She said when assessing whether a speed limit change is appropriate, RRV considers a range of factors like pedestrian and vehicle numbers, road design, wildlife and the type of road, the local environment and crash history.

The RRV review will implement safer travel speeds for the local community and visitors, while also protecting precious native wildlife. Ventnor Beach Road is included in the scope for review in the first phase of the project.

Bass Coast Post: Beware: four lane highway ahead

21/2/2019

<https://www.basscoastpost.com/news/beware-four-lane-highway-ahead>

By Catherine Watson

The road to hell is paved with good intentions, according to the old adage. And what started off as an attempt to untangle Phillip Island's notorious holiday traffic congestion seems to be morphing into a monster highway.

At Wednesday's council meeting, Cr Michael Whelan said he feared VicRoads was ignoring council plans and community wishes and pressing ahead with plans for a four-lane highway bisecting the island.

He said in the past week surveyors for VicRoads had sought permission from a number of farmers to survey on private land along Phillip Island Tourist Road. They had also sought permission to survey in the council-owned land in Scenic Estate Conservation Reserve.

"What concerns me is that VicRoads have already put on the table a plan to make the road through Surf Beach four lanes. This makes me concerned that in fact they are simply proposing to add four lanes pretty well across the island. In my mind that would be a disaster.

"I'm highlighting that in this point in time because it's certainly not the approach that was identified in the Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study nor the Visitor Economy Strategy."

The community reference group set up to advise on implementation of the Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study, has expressed similar misgivings on "big engineering" solutions to the island's traffic woes.

The group is chaired by Cr Whelan's wife, Mary Whelan, who writes in this edition of the Post: "While VicRoads is proposing some very big engineering projects to improve traffic flow on the island, there is a concern that road and intersection upgrades will dominate the major funding for transport for the next several years.

"Meanwhile, low-tech solutions are being overlooked, the community's emphasis on safety seems to be forgotten, and there are no current plans to improve public transport services."

Ms Whelan said VicRoads' emphasis seemed to be on easing congestion at peak holiday periods but the community had other interests.

"How much do we build on the island to ease congestion?"

“The community broadly accepts VicRoads plans for roundabouts at the Woolamai and Back Beach Road intersections with the main road. However, there is much less support for a proposal to widen the roundabout and road at Newhaven, and duplicate the Phillip Island Rd in the adjacent farmland along the Surf Beach, extending to the new roundabout planned for Back Beach Rd.

“The council has adopted three different plans that express the community’s desire for alternatives to private car use on the island. These include improved public transport, works to encourage active transport (cycling and walking), a reduction in inappropriate speed limits to protect people and wildlife, and limits on visitor numbers at busy periods.”

Cr Whelan said the council had enjoyed good rapport with VicRoads in the past.

“I’m not attacking them but I’m putting it on notice that we must make sure they continue to listen to the strategies that we’ve got in place rather than putting in place something that suits them and doesn’t suit the issues around the visitor economy strategy and the management of the number of visitors that come to Phillip island.”

Bass Coast Post: Phillip Island at the crossroads

21/2/2019

<https://www.basscoastpost.com/mary-whelan/philip-island-at-the-crossroads>

By Mary Whelan

AS PHILLIP Island and San Remo grapple with rising populations of residents and visitors, our transport system is at a crossroads.

While VicRoads is proposing some very big engineering projects to improve traffic flow on the island, there is a concern that road and intersection upgrades will dominate the major funding for transport for the next several years.

Meanwhile, low-tech solutions are being overlooked, the community's emphasis on safety seems to be forgotten, and there are no current plans to improve public transport services.

These are the solutions recommended by our community and adopted by the council in the [Phillip Island Integrated Traffic Study](#) (PIITS) in 2014.

How much do we build on the island to ease congestion? The community broadly accepts VicRoads plans for roundabouts at the Woolamai and Back Beach Road intersections with the main road. However, there is much less support for a proposal to widen the roundabout and road at Newhaven, and duplicate the Phillip Island Rd in the adjacent farmland along the Surf Beach, extending to the new roundabout planned for Back Beach Rd.

The council has adopted three different plans that express the community's desire for alternatives to private car use on the island. These include improved public transport, works to encourage active transport (cycling and walking), a reduction in inappropriate speed limits to protect people and wildlife, and limits on visitor numbers at busy periods.

Background

PIITS encapsulated a community vision for integrating transport by:

- providing alternate modes of transport to private car use,
- prioritising safety,
- protecting the characteristics that make the area attractive,
- improving and better utilising existing facilities to address congestion, and
- creating and protecting commercial opportunities.

Since then, the council has adopted two plans that have changed the transport landscape.

The [Coves Activity Centre Plan](#) (adopted in March 2016) has four key priorities:

- Fixing the foreshore;

- Connecting the two ends of town;
- Recreating streets for people;
- Reinvigorating the character of Cowes.

The [Phillip Island Visitor Economy Strategy 2035](#) is committed to:

- Sustainable growth
- Limiting visitor numbers to 24,500 visitors a day
- Encouraging investment in land for conservation
- Increasing native revegetation from 7% to 30% of island coverage.

Progress

In 2014 a community reference group was set up to advise on priorities for action under PIITS and to inform the community of progress. Back then, our priority was safe access onto Phillip Island Road at the main intersections and through Surf Beach.

The State Government has now funded roundabouts for the Woolamai and Back Beach Road intersections and the authorities have accepted that Phillip Island Road needs upgrading at Surf Beach and San Remo to enable safe access. The ultimate design of these intersections is still the subject of community and council consultation with VicRoads.

The issue of congestion management has become highly charged. VicRoads data showing a traffic pinch point at the Newhaven roundabout led to a proposal to widen the roundabout and road to four lanes requiring an additional roundabout at Forest Avenue, with a service road in each direction to improve traffic flow. Many Newhaven residents and traders oppose the proposal.

VicRoads' Surf Beach & Sunderland Bay Traffic Management Plan, which followed on from PIITS, outlined six options for improving safety and access, and through traffic. The final proposal was a dual carriageway bypass from Surf Beach to the Back Beach Road roundabout.

For many people this is an excessive amount of infrastructure given the community priority is safety, and the three relevant strategies place a very high value on the environment of Phillip Island.

The community has been told that it's necessary to finalise the road design before starting other projects. But residents want to see progress on pathways, public transport and demand management.

The Pipeline Projects in the council's capital works master list tell us that 32 pathways across the shire area have been authorised and have some funding allocated in this budget. Seventeen are on Phillip Island and San Remo.

The current budget allocated \$827,500 across the shire for pathways. The total cost is estimated at \$14,190,910. There is no time frame allocated to any of the projects listed.

Bass Coast's Aspirational Network Pathways Plan, which was finalised in 2016, identified 53 aspirational paths that have not been built and were not on any work plans at that time.

Priorities

The priorities for 2019-20 should be to encourage active transport, as recommended in the Cowes Activity Centre Plan:

Cycle paths

The current bike path in Cowes is situated behind the existing angle parking bays, meaning vehicles back into cycle traffic. Moving the cycle path between the kerb and new parallel parking bays will improve cyclist safety.

Parallel parking bays make room for improved landscaping and greater pedestrian activity. Cyclists will be directed to turn right on Thompson at Chapel to link up with the new bikeway and footpath on Steele Street to head to the Esplanade.

Better bike paths and connections on Settlement Road will improve safety for school children.

Prioritising pedestrians

Replacing roundabouts with signalled intersections at the two major intersections on Thompson Road will improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, especially school children. It also gets people out of cars and spending more money, which boosts the local economy.

Expanding public transport

We need more services from Cowes to Melbourne on weekends and more services across the Island. We also need better timetable information to include connections with local bus operators.

PIITS recommended:

- Improving coverage of the existing network, so residents in townships are never further than 400 metres from a bus stop.
- Providing services at least half hourly.
- Running services from 6am-9pm on weekdays, 8am-9pm on Saturdays and 9am-9pm on Sundays.
- Developing facilities and routes that enable the highest number of people to use public transport services.
- Promoting development of Cowes- Anderson link and Phillip Island loop services.

As the first step in improving services, the community reference group asked the council to approach Transport for Victoria (TfV) to review our public transport. TfV declined. So there are currently no tangible actions in progress to make public transport a viable alternative to car travel.

Reducing speed limits

The Cowes Activity Centre Plan recommended reducing the speed limit to 40km/h in inner Cowes.

PIITS recommended:

- an 80 km/h limit on arterial and rural roads, which means reducing the 100 km/h limit on Rhyll-Newhaven Road, Back Beach Road after the race track, Ventnor Road to Grossard Point Road and Berrys Beach Road,
- 60 km/h on major and collector roads in urban areas;
- 40 km/h on residential and high pedestrian areas, including Surf Beach and Sunset Strip. It is pleasing to see action has been taken this year on the San Remo Access Strategy recommendation to reduce the speed in Marine parade to 40 km/h, improving safety for pedestrians.

VicRoads has acknowledged that the speed limit also needs to be reduced to 80 km/h on Phillip Island Road on the Melbourne side of the Silverwater Estate and Potters Hill Road, where there is poor visibility. No time frame has been set yet for this to occur.

Protecting wildlife

Our local wildlife carers have highlighted how many animals are injured and killed every week on Phillip Island's roads. Two passionate, committed women who run a wildlife rescue service on Phillip Island keep statistics of wildlife kill hot spots where wildlife need extra protection. Phillip Island Nature Parks is also gathering data in order to recommend actions.

Road authorities need to change the 'business as usual' mindset of ensuring drivers get to their destination as fast as possible. They must lower official speed limits and install dynamic signage to further reduce speed limits in 'hot spots' at dawn and dusk.

In the current planning process for the Phillip Island Road Corridor, the PIITS community reference group, Landcare and PINP have all highlighted the need to consider wildlife and the major corridors of natural vegetation across the Island.

Reducing speed limits, overpasses and underpasses, escape routes, reducing roadside grass and water and public education to encourage fauna-friendly driving practices all need to be evaluated. Solutions should be based on local evidence and what is effective in other places of high environmental value.

Demand management

VicRoads rejected extended use of the Blue Line due to the work needed to widen and strengthen the road shoulders of Phillip Island Road.

Real time information

Early identification of likely high (non-event) demand is essential, with appropriate traffic management responses in place, including dynamic signage at Bass.

A local resident has developed a Facebook page which enables people to change their travel plans when traffic is at a standstill.

Mary Whelan is spokesperson for the community reference group advising on the implementation of the Phillip Island Integrated Traffic Study. This is an edited version of the group's update to the community report for 2018.