

Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc.

Questions with Answers to Bass Coast Shire Council Candidates.

(Order in which responses have been received)

Do you agree with the BCSC Draft Climate Change Action Plan 2020-2023?



Ash Belsar – Island Ward

It would be necessary, if elected, to spend time to familiarise myself with this issue and receive advice from relevant stakeholders such as your organisation.



Rochelle Halstead - Western Port Ward

Yes, I support action on climate change.



Bruce Kent – Western Port Ward

Yes, I voted for same.



Geoff Ellis – Western Port Ward

I get asked this one a lot. - Yes. I voted for the emergency, attended the Climate Emergency forum in Melbourne as a rep of BCSC, sat with the committee that crafted the response action plan and have been leading by example. We live off grid. No coal was burnt in the creation of this email.



Michael Whelan – Island Ward

I drafted and moved the resolution to declare a climate emergency. I sat on the Project Control Group that managed the preparation of the report with the consultants and participated in the Community Reference Group that provided community input. I believe the draft plan provides an excellent platform to guide council and community action to achieve zero emissions by 2030



Leticia Laing – Bunurong Ward

Yes. However, I think there are many opportunities to work with community groups to fill in the gaps particularly in relation to reduction of carbon emissions through food consumption and local food production.



David Rooks – Island Ward

Yes. Completed the survey as part of the development of the action plan. Look forward to implementing it if elected



Jeni Jobe – Island Ward

Yes - I would like to see it go further as far as asset recovery from waste streams is concerned. There is so much room for improvement in practice. With real infrastructure enhancement possibilities, for example using recovered plastic and glass waste for footpaths and roads, the Council's and community's goals become far more achievable. See link. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plastic_road



Mikhaela Barlow – Island Ward

Yes, I do. However, I believe that the current plan needs to be amended. There are carbon-savings that have not been identified and alternatives not mentioned. For example, fleets of e-bikes and e-cargo bikes could replace or at least supplement the existing fleet of Council vehicles, and an alternative need to be found for concrete shared pathways, as the carbon cost is far too high.



Clare Le Serve – Western Port Ward

Yes, I am pleased to be a supporter and proud that Bass Coast is a leader in Local Government with its Climate Emergency Policy and Action Plan. I agree with Council declaring a Climate Change Emergency, and together with the community we need to work to ensure that we are a key part of the solution to climate change and that broader communities show support. The farming community is the food and fibre of our nation and our farming communities need help and financial support programs that allow them to actively participate in reducing their carbon footprint. Working with partnership groups like Landcare and all levels of Government through better understanding and education together we can drive change. Climate change action is needed from all levels of Government, from businesses and the community as a collective movement.

Do you support BCSC creating high quality, accessible, stimulating off-leash dog exercise parks with all necessary amenities, as at Cape Paterson on land including Council land so dog owners and handlers have excellent alternatives to exercise their dogs all year?

Ash Belsar

In principle, yes.

Rochelle Halstead

Yes, I am supportive of these areas. Dogs play an important role in the mental health and well-being of our community. They are especially significant in the lives of those living alone. They are part of our families.

Bruce Kent

Yes. I am a dog owner but do not use such parks. I do support the creation of these parks although they are not for every dog owner.

Geoff Ellis

I support fenced dog off leaf areas across the Shire. Have been pushing for these since 2016 when we got the one in Wonny fenced. I used to have a deaf dog and the need for these facilities was obvious.

Michael Whelan

Yes, I support the strong push to have an off-leash dog area included in the new Aquatics and Recreation Precinct on the Carnival site and Hilton Chadwick Reserve

Leticia Laing

There are opportunities to creating an off-leash, fenced-in inland dog park on Phillip Island and it is something that needs to be considered along with numerous priorities across the shire. There are significant benefits to these kinds of dog parks and in principle I support them.

The off-leash dog park in Cape Paterson is part of The Cape private estate that is accessible to the public and was not as far as I understand it was not created with Bass Coast Shire ratepayer funds. It is an exemplary off-leash dog park and my dog regularly enjoys it. However, it does not have dog poo bag bins or dispensers as this is seen at The Cape as the responsibility of dog owners to bring and clean up.

David Rooks

Yes. It provides a safe environment for dogs to run around and take the pressure off our beaches as the only option for off lead dog areas.

Jeni Jobe

Yes - and not just one. Dogs are here to stay and provide huge mental health benefits. Give people an option other than the off-leash beach areas. Not all dogs are suitable to being off leash in an unconfined area.

Mikhaela Barlow

Yes. I am a dog-owner, and while I take my dog to the off-lead dog beaches quite often, it's always been a disappointment to me that I can't take him to a fenced-off dog-park on the Island. I would be very interested in pursuing such a development on the Island.

Clare Le Serve

Yes, in off lead areas. I believe responsible dog ownership is key to making these areas as social as possible for dogs and their owners. Walking your dog supports good mental health and wellbeing. There are designated off-leash beach areas and there are appropriate locations for off-lead beach runs. Offering residents enclosed dog parks are also a good idea. It is important that wildlife areas are protected and I support dogs being in signposted off lead designated areas.

PICS and the Bass Coast branch of the National Trust, (together with a range of experts volunteering their time and skills to this) are currently preparing a Significant Trees and Vegetation Register for Phillip Island, potentially as a model for a Bass Coast-wide register. Do you agree that such a register would be a good idea to help identify and protect Significant Trees and Vegetation for Phillip Island, and potentially Bass Coast generally?

Ash Belsar

In principle, yes.

Rochelle Halstead

Absolutely!! I had this on my list to bring to Council in a Notice of Motion. I am 100% supportive of this and would encourage community members to nominate trees of significance.

Bruce Kent

Yes, great idea that has been supported by current councillors. Looking forward to the shire wide report Yes, I voted for same.

Geoff Ellis

Yes. I was at the meetings when this was first proposed and developed. I look forward to the result of the survey being enacted.

Michael Whelan

This project arose out of a discussion between the President of PICS and myself, as a way to recover from the loss of a significant tree that was cut down for the Transit Centre. The discussion also led to a commitment to retain the mature trees on the Cowes Civic and Cultural Centre site, the adopted design does this. To date there has been interaction with Council, but formal adoption is still required, I commend the way PICS have pursued this and support the project.

Leticia Laing

Yes absolutely. This kind of information is critical to be able to successfully audit the council's trees which are effectively community assets.

David Rooks

Yes. Have been aware of this register for a while now and supportive of it.

Jeni Jobe

Yes - anything that will help change the views of the planning office. I also think that significant trees should be shown on site plans and presented to be as valuable as water mains and other infrastructure. We can't afford to have a repeat of the Transit Hub. 150-year-old trees are irreplaceable.

Mikhaela Barlow

This sounds like a fantastic idea, and I would definitely support this model being used. On my website: www.blueskyfuturesresearch.com you will find my entire Policy Suite, including my idea for conducting a Citizen-Scientist led Bio-Diversity Study, kind of like a Flora and Fauna Census. It's great to see that we have a jump-off point, and I commend PICS for starting this important work.

Clare Le Serve

Yes, the more trees and vegetation we retain the better. We need to record and register what we have as a generational footprint and demonstrate how we can turn the degradation around.

In order to prevent ad hoc RRV road upgrades on Phillip Island do you support advocating for an Integrated Transport Island Road Corridor Study with an Environmental Effect Statement as recommended by PICS?

Ash Belsar

It would be necessary, if elected, to spend time to familiarise myself with this issue and receive advice from relevant stakeholders such as your organisation.

Rochelle Halstead

Yes. within budget constraints.

Bruce Kent

Yes, as I feel that RRV is just not listening to the community, commercial retailers or opinion of council. An additional weighted expert enquiry would be beneficial to address and support a line of argument.

Geoff Ellis

After four years of stonewalling I believe RRV is a law unto themselves. I attended the consultations in 2016 in Newhaven and little has changed from that first proposal, no matter how much the public have argued against it. Happy to keep up the fight. There is strength in community.

Michael Whelan

I agree that the works on the road corridor should require an environmental effects statement. It is important to note that BCSC already has a document the *Phillip Island Integrated Transport Study A Community Vision for Transport* known as PIITS and this is a consideration in the current road upgrades. It served well early in solving some of the serious safety issues such as at the Cape Woolamai intersection and includes alternative transport options, but it also includes the option of the road duplication through Surf Beach.

The Visitor Economy Strategy also deals in some aspects of roads management and provides a better overall environmental and economic perspective than the PIITS. What is required is an Island wide plan that integrates environmental, economic and transport considerations into a single high-level strategy that also considers how the Phillip Island Nature Parks planning fits the overall context.

Leticia Laing

This is something I need to learn more about because currently I only have relevant information from PICS. I commend PICS for compiling such a cohesive document, it

is critical for me to understand all elements to this issue before arriving at a position. I appreciate the time given here and I will endeavour to look into it further.

David Rooks

Yes.

Jeni Jobe

Yes - RRV just don't seem to be listening. Their solution only looks at getting visiting traffic down here. There is no attention paid to cultural suitability and town presentation. What they want to do to San Remo and Newhaven is heavy handed, ill-planned and most likely will not address the issue at all.

Mikhaela Barlow

Yes. However, when it comes to RRV road upgrades—RRV needs to apply for a permit, which Council has to approve. It seems to me that the Council has taken a back-seat approach, and rather than standing up for the community, has blindly been approving plans simply because they don't believe they have the power to say 'no'. I would argue that until RRV submits plans that the community likes, the Council should not approve it.

I agree that an Integrated Transport Island Road Corridor Study with an EES would make the grounds for not approving plans much easier.

Clare Le Serve

Yes, I don't believe at this stage that we have a shared vision. Through this ongoing process Regional Roads Victoria has conducted community consultation. The community raised their many concerns with Regional Roads Victoria and they feel that they have not been heard. I support the community on this and we need to prioritise safety first over this duplication and have a shared vision. The RRV concept design is about getting to the destination as quickly as possible but I believe it's about enjoying the journey.

How concerned/committed are you about preserving Phillip Island's natural environment both flora and fauna?

Ash Belsar

100% committed! That's why we live and work here. We have such a beautiful natural environment, and the crucial responsibility to steward it for future generations. My working life has been spent in the outdoors from ranger to tour guide, and currently running an outdoor adventure activities business. I've been involved with the Great Victorian Fish Count on our Bunarong Marine NP since its inception, something I'd like to see expanded to Phillip Island. I'd love to work together with your organisation to see us leave our region not just as good, but better, for our kids. If you'd like to chat further pre-election I'd love to sit down and have a coffee/chat?

Rochelle Halstead

I strongly support the retention and protection of the Islands natural environment.

Bruce Kent

Very concerned. I fully support any measures that are acted upon to preserve our paradise of Bass Coast. We are so lucky to live in this environment but with this comes the responsibility to preserve, protect and increase our areas of life. This is just a part of addressing the current crisis that exists within our community and the world. We must all do our small part.

Geoff Ellis

There is a video of me talking about the loss of the Transit Centre trees at the community memorial. Ref attached pic - this is the bark from one of those trees. I have been heavily involved in actions to save the bushland around Western Port and I have voted against several developments that would have meant loss of habitat and vegetation. I have often spoken on behalf of the 'scrappy trees and critters' that are an important part of our ecology. I have an environmental page in my community newspaper and have published articles by Lauren Burns and other environmental warriors as well as doing a few pieces of my own. In short, very concerned, totally committed.

Michael Whelan

Very committed. During the last term of Council, I worked to get Phillip Island declared under the Distinctive Areas and Landscapes Act, this occurred for the whole of Bass Coast. This allows the protection of significant areas and defines town boundaries in legislation thereby stopping the urban sprawl. The Bio links and The Significant Roadside Vegetation plan are valuable but the balance the Planning Scheme still leans to supporting clearing. There is a need for a comprehensive plan to extend bio links in partnership with landowners and to increase vegetation cover by extending public land. A program to fund these initiatives is required.

Leticia Laing

I am concerned and committed to preserving the natural environment across the Bass Coast Shire. We have a genuine opportunity to lead the way with sustainable planning and revegetation to continue to foster living in a community with quality natural spaces and protect our coastline which attracts so many visitors during the summer months and creates a lifestyle for locals who chose to live here for our flora and fauna. As I am the candidate in the Bunurong Ward I have been supporting the Cape Paterson Residents and Ratepayers Association in addressing the impacts of the Northern Development and working to limit its expansion.

People move here and visit this area because of the natural spaces and it is critical that the council continues to take a proactive stance and work with community groups like PICS to work to protect the Island and the broader Shire's natural environments for flora and fauna.

David Rooks

I've demonstrated my commitment to the environment and conservation on Phillip Island through my time here, particularly as President of Landcare for the last 4 years. If elected I'm looking forward to working with PICS on projects as they arise and utilising the skill and knowledge your group brings to the table.

Jeni Jobe

Yes - Very Committed. I have been actively donating my illustration and design skills to campaigns since Jeff Nottle said he would appreciate some illustrations done back in 2013 - they were in his email inbox within days. I am also a core member of Totally Renewable Phillip Island.

Mikhaela Barlow

Extremely. The number of animals that are killed on our roads is appalling.

We need to reduce the speed limit to 80km/h across the Island, and we need to install more noisemakers along roads that are greatest impacted, and investigate the possibility of animal crossings and bridges.

Animal crossings are a crucial part of looking after our wildlife. In a School Zone, the speed limit is reduced to 40km/h, yet there is always a safe crossing in front of the school. It doesn't seem like a big jump then to try and introduce a similar system for our wildlife.

Clare Le Serve

Yes, very. There is such a small amount of remnant vegetation remaining on Phillip Island and in Bass Coast and this should be recorded and protected.