

<b>Title</b>	<b>HUONVILLE TO FRANKLIN SHARED PATHWAY FEASIBILITY STUDY</b>
<b>Agenda Number</b>	19.020/20*
<b>Strategic Plan Reference</b>	2C, 2E, 9C
<b>File Reference</b>	22/67
<b>Author</b>	Manager Recreation Services
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Manager Recreation Services
<b>Reporting Brief</b>	The Director Community Services presenting a report from the Manager Recreation Services reporting on the Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway Feasibility Study
<b>Attachments</b>	A. Huonville to Franklin Foreshore Shared Pathway Feasibility Study B. Huon River Foreshore Shared Pathway Cost Benefit Analysis and Economic Impact Assessment of the Huon River Foreshore Shared Pathway

## Background

1. The Huonville to Franklin Foreshore Shared Pathway project was identified as a priority at the Huon Valley 2020 Future Search Conference conducted in December 2007. It was envisaged that once completed the multi-use pathway would accommodate walkers, cyclists and kayakers, with provisions for disability access on key sections of the route. It was proposed that the route for the pathway would be entirely contained within the Crown Land Foreshore Reserve along the banks of the Huon River. The pathway would start at the Coolstore Road in Huonville, covering a distance of approximately 7.5km along the riverbank through to Franklin finishing at the Wooden Boat School. It was thought that this proposed route would capitalise on the beauty of the Huon River and provide important public access points.
2. The project was estimated to cost \$2.6 million at the time with ongoing maintenance and depreciation calculated to be \$80,000 per annum. Additional costs for project management (\$50,000) flora and fauna surveys (\$20,000) and jetty construction (\$30,000) were also identified.
3. At the meeting held 10 December 2008 Council considered the project and resolved that:  
*Inter alia*
  - b) *The Huon River Foreshore Trail project be endorsed as Council's priority bid for the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program – Strategic Projects.*
4. \$50million was available under the program at the time, with projects assessed on a competitive basis. Council's application was unsuccessful.

5. Through the 2017 State Election, Council was successful in securing funding of \$80,000 to conduct an extensive study exploring construction feasibility and potential community benefits of the proposed Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway.
6. The Feasibility Studies have now been completed.
7. The purpose of this report is to present the completed studies to Council and seek guidance on further actions.

### **Council Policy**

8. Council's strategic stance is to encourage local arts, cultural and recreational pursuits, by facilitating or providing appropriate infrastructure and support for these local activities and events.
9. Council's strategic stance is to actively, and through regulation, protect and manage the natural environment for sustainable passive and active beneficial use by the community and visitors.
10. A community characterised by these strategic objectives provides a sustainable basis on which to attract people to live, invest and visit the Huon Valley.

### **Legislative Requirements**

11. The proposed Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway would require a number of permits and approvals including Crown Land consent and Development approvals, which were considered by the consultants appointed in undertaking the feasibility study.

### **Risk Implications**

12. Council has two clear options, accepting and endorsing or rejecting the findings of the two Feasibility Studies.
  - a) Accepting and endorsing the feasibility studies
    - i Given that the findings of both studies indicate that the concept of a Shared Pathway has opportunities for recreational, social, economic and tourism benefits, there is a strong case for Council providing in principle support and endorsing the studies.
    - ii Council is not being asked to provide funding for the project at this point in time. Given the scale of the project significant capital investment would be required to see the project through to fruition. The Feasibility Studies provide an excellent basis for a grant application and Council could play an important role in lobbying for State and Federal to invest in the project.
    - iii There is a risk that by endorsing the Feasibility Studies Council could create an unrealistic expectation in the community that development of the Shared

Pathway will naturally follow, with pressure on Council to contribute funding towards the project.

- iv Council could mitigate this risk with clear communication provided on release of the documents.

b) Rejecting the feasibility studies

- i The Feasibility Study was undertaken utilising State Government funds obtained through the 2017 Election. The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not the concept of developing a Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway is feasible and beneficial to the community.
- ii There is a risk that by refusing to endorse the Feasibility Study the Council could jeopardise the potential of this project proceeding in the future, should external funding ever become available.
- iii The high level of participation in the community engagement process reaffirmed that there is very strong support in the community for the project and there is a risk that by refusing to endorse the Feasibility Study, the Council would be acting against the wishes of the community.
- iv The study has met the objectives of the project and there is no valid reason for the Council to reject the findings of the study.

## **Engagement**

- 13 Community Engagement was undertaken collaboratively by SGS Consultants and Council in the form of a broad community survey and three community workshops, one of which was undertaken with landowners.
- 14 The Feasibility Studies have been presented to Council at workshops held on a number of occasions over the course of the project.

## **Human Resource and Financial Implications**

- 15 At this point in time no financial commitment to the project is being sought or expected from the Council therefore this report does not raise any Human Resource or Financial Implications.
- 16 Should Council decide to pursue the development of a Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway, it should be noted that the overall cost of the project far exceeds the means of this Council and investment would need to be sought from external sources including State and Federal Government grants.
- 17 Should Council resolve to commence negotiations with Crown Land Services to secure a Lease over the proposed (entire length of) pathway, an annual license fee would need to be negotiated.

## Discussion

18 The Feasibility Study project was undertaken in two parts:

- a) Technical and engineering requirements
- b) Potential economic and community benefits for the area

### Technical and engineering Feasibility Study

19 Expressions of Interest were advertised on Tenderlink, Mercury Newspaper and Council's website to attract a suitable consultant to undertake the Technical and Engineering Study. Six applications were received in total and following a detailed evaluation process Pitt & Sherry was awarded the contract.

20 The Consultant was required to determine the technical, engineering, planning, permit and approval requirements of the pathway and provide estimate construction and ongoing maintenance costs.

21 The Consultant was instructed that the pathway should be designed with the following parameters:

- Be multi-use, accommodating walkers, cyclists and kayakers
- Include provision for disability access on key sections of the route
- Be entirely contained within the Crown Land Foreshore Reserve along the banks of the Huon River
- Start at Coolstore Road in Huonville, proceed along the riverbank through to Franklin, finishing at the Wooden Boat School
- Be constructed of low maintenance materials

22 The Study broke the route down into fourteen distinct sections (not including the existing path north of Franklin), with a combined length of 6.75km. Generally, the path follows Crown Reserve with the exception of those areas where it is necessary to locate the path within the river due to the close proximity of the highway (sections 9, 12 and 14).

23 Construction methods have been recommended for the various sections, with boardwalk for wet areas and concrete path rather than gravel as the preferred option due to low maintenance and enhanced accessibility.

24 A matrix of cost estimates was developed exploring a range of different factors including path width (2m or 2.5m), pathway material (gravel, stabilised gravel, bitumen and concrete) and decking material for boardwalks and bridges (treated pine and FRP (fiberglass reinforced plastic)). The estimated construction cost of the pathway ranges between \$14.2 million up to \$23.4 million, with annual maintenance costs, estimated to between 2% and 5% of the construction costs.

25 Options for staging the project are provided, allowing for the works to be spread over a period of time as funding permits. Opportunities for adding additional features such as viewing decks and kayak platforms have been included in the study. Approximate maintenance costs, user access, car parking and public toilets have also been considered.

- 26 The Study concluded that the existing Crown Land Reserve extending along the length of the Huon River between Huonville and Franklin could be used to provide a shared pathway suitable for cycling and pedestrians, including those with prams and varying levels of ability.

### Community Benefits Feasibility Study

- 27 The viability of the project was then explored to demonstrate whether or not any future investment could potentially generate net benefits to the community and contribute to the local economy, as well as having broad social, health and wellbeing benefits.
- 28 Council invited quotes from two consultants to undertake a cost benefit analysis as part of the Feasibility Study and SGS Economics was awarded the project. The purpose of the study was to determine the following:
- support in the community for the project and the likely usage rates
  - community health and wellbeing benefits that would be achieved from the project
  - potential for the project to attract visitors to the area
  - potential economic benefits to the community including potential business activities that may develop as a direct result of the project
- 29 The report by SGS is structured as follows:
- Section 1 provides the introduction and background
  - Section 2 provides the strategic alignment of the pathway with key Council and State Government documents, as well as commentary on the project need from a socio-economic perspective
  - Section 3 outlines the community's support for the project as identified through the community engagement activities undertaken
  - Section 4 provides the pathways cost benefit analysis
  - Section 5 presents the analyst's finding and conclusions
- 30 It was established that the pathway strongly aligns with the goals and strategies of both the Huon Valley Council and the Tasmanian Government, providing numerous potential benefits including improved community livability, public health and wellness and appeal as a tourism destination.
- 31 The Huon Valley socio-economic profile reveals steady population growth of 1.5% with a change in median age, driven by the popularity of the region as a location for retirement-age residents. The aging population will require accessible recreational facilities, such as the pathway, where residents can walk and enjoy nature and in the company of friends, on a relatively flat and safe surface.
- 32 The Huon Valley has experienced high rates of unemployment in recent years. This shortage of jobs presents a major challenge, with a need to create economic activity (and employment) to support and enhance the quality of life of our residents.
- 33 Council was keen to understand the community support, concerns and perceptions of the pathway and jointly partnered with SGS to hold a number of community engagement exercises consisting of a "have your say survey" followed by three

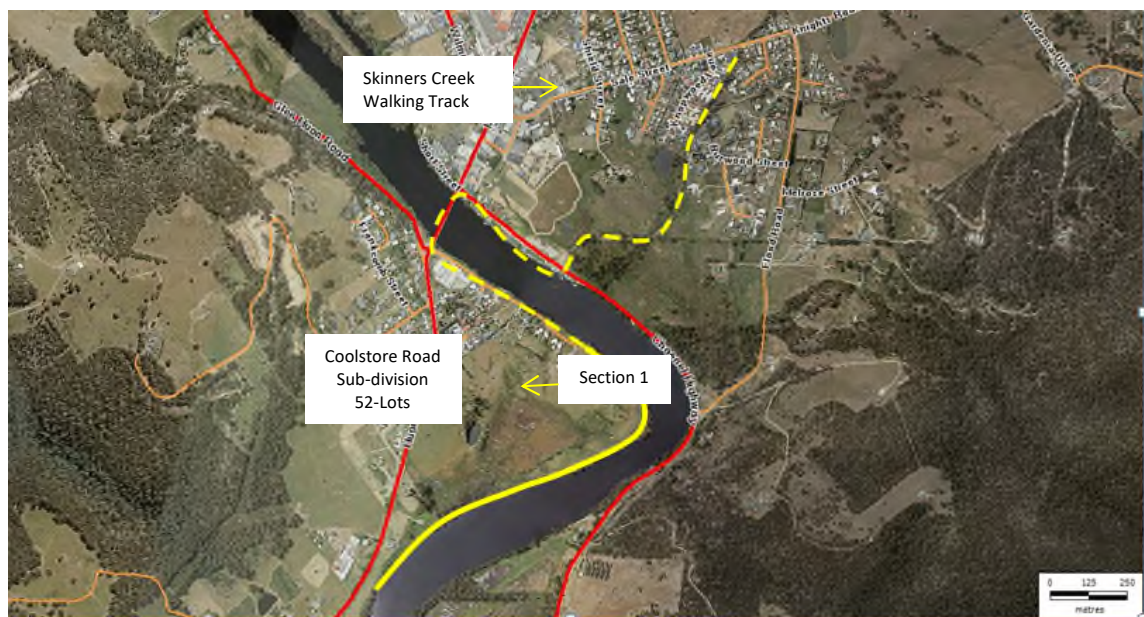
community workshops over a two day period; one with landholders and two others with the wider community. The rate of engagement was very high with 596 people responding to the survey and 116 people attending the community workshops. The people who participated in the engagement activities overwhelmingly supported the pathway. However, the landowner's workshop raised concerns around safety, privacy and perceived impact on wildlife.

- 34 The cost benefit analysis assessed the economic merit of investing in the project, contrasting the project's economic, social and environmental benefits with its cost to establish and maintain. For the purposes of analysis the highest cost of construction was used. In addition to the Pathway itself, SGS added costs for two floating viewing decks, three kayak landings, a six-car car park, a toilet block and signage, elevating the total construction cost total to \$24.6million.
- 35 The cost benefit analysis showed a benefit to cost ratio of 2.25 when the overall community costs are compared to the community benefits. The most significant benefits are generated from the community recreation and enjoyment allowed by having a high-quality recreational asset developed along the banks of the Huon River. Investment in the proposal will result in increased economic activity, including additional employment opportunities and demand for locally produced goods and services. There is a range of other benefits including leisure benefits for people with disabilities and elderly residents. marketing benefits, improved business confidence and private investment potential remain unquantified.
- 36 The Study concluded that the pathway would contribute to the social wellbeing of the growing Huon Valley population providing increased opportunity and access for all ages and abilities. Provision of the pathway will produce increased business opportunities and new jobs during the initial construction phase and beyond.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

- 37 The technical and engineering study undertaken by Pitt & Sherry established that a shared pathway could indeed be constructed from Huonville to Franklin, on Crown Land Reserve along most of the route, with the exception of some sections where the pathway would need to be constructed in the water. The study provides a matrix of costs which alter the overall cost of the project according to the materials used and provides options for the facility to be constructed in sections/stages as funding permits.
- 38 The cost benefit analysis undertaken by SGS found that the Pathway would enhance access to the Huon River, enabling physical activity and enjoyment as well as driving tourism in the Huon Valley and create jobs. The Pathway aligns with local, State and Federal strategies. The Huon Valley population is growing and so is the need for improved recreational infrastructure, with a particular demand to accommodate walking, cycling and kayaking.
- 39 The purpose of this report is to present the completed Feasibility Studies for endorsement and not to present options in relation to the construction of the Pathway.
- 40 However consideration could be given to the following options:

- Significant investment would be required to construct the entire Huonville to Franklin Shared pathway, far beyond the financial resources of the Huon Valley Council. However, this should not preclude Council from endorsing the Feasibility Study or from identifying the project as a potential investment opportunity for State and/or Federal Government, given the established merits.
- The current climate is likely to result in economic uncertainty for several years and the Government response is likely to generate substantial economic stimulus packages, in order to generate jobs and spending. The Feasibility Studies provide a sound case for stimulus investment in the Huon Valley community.
- The Pitt & Sherry Report identifies Section 1 of the pathway commencing in Huonville at the end of Coolstore Road, with a 1.3km length and a cost of \$320k (plus annual maintenance costs, estimated to be 5% of the construction costs). This section will run behind the Coolstore Road sub-division containing 52-lots. The sub-division will attract families who will want access to recreational walking paths. The 1.3km section of pathway links onto Coolstore Road, across the bridge onto the Esplanade and from there onto the Skinners Creek Walking Track. These linkages would more than double the length of Section 1.



## ***Huonville to Franklin***

### ***Shared Pathway Section 1***

- In creating this first section of the pathway, Council would be improving access to the river and achieve a considerable start on the overall project. If this section of the pathway proves to be popular and manageable then Council could consider further stages, if and when funding permits.

- Commencing the process with Crown Land Services to secure a corridor of Crown Land Reserve over the entire length of the proposed pathway will enable the Council to be proactive in strategically planning for the future.

41 It is recommended that Council endorses the studies which support the concept for developing the shared pathway. It also recommends that Council considers Section 1 of the pathway as a State/Federal Government funding application and undertake any actions required to progress the project as a priority project.

Cr Newell left the meeting at 9.42pm

Cr Newell returned to the meeting at 9.45pm

**19.020/20\***

**RESOLVED**

**C NEWELL**

**CR LOVELL**

**That:**

- a) The report on the Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway Feasibility Studies be received and noted.**
- b) The Council acknowledges the findings of the Feasibility Studies and endorses the project for future investment opportunities.**
- c) Based on the evidence provided by the Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway Feasibility Studies, indicating both community and economic benefits to be gained, Council considers listing the Pathway or Sections of the Pathway as a future Election Strategy Project and/or Stimulus Package Funding.**
- d) The General Manager be authorised to progress actions as identified to enable the possible future development of a Huonville to Franklin Shared Pathway.**

*Councillors Enders, Doyle, Newell, Gibson, Campbell, Wilson, Prince, Lovell and O'May voted for the motion and no Councillors voted against the motion.*