

North West Coastal Pathway Plan Executive Summary

The North West Coastal Pathway plan provides guidance for local councils, State government agencies and the Cradle Coast community in regard to the development and maintenance of a shared pathway between Wynyard and Latrobe. The plan includes useful development tools for local councils who wish to implement sections of the pathway.

The plan has been made possible through a grant from the State Government of Tasmania and financial contributions from five local councils: Waratah-Wynyard, Burnie City, Central Coast, Devonport City and Latrobe. The plan draws extensively on earlier reports including the *Wynyard to Port Sorell Cycleway (1997)*, *Trails Tasmania Strategy (2007)* and the *Tasmania Physical Activity Plan 2005-2010*.

Development of the plan was assisted by local council technical staff, Sport and Recreation Tasmania and Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management. The project was directed by a steering committee comprised of members from Safer Roads for Cyclists Tasmania, Sport and Recreation Tasmania, Department of Infrastructure Energy and Resources Tasmania, Department of Health and Human Services, Local Councils and the Cradle Coast Authority.

The North West Coastal Pathway plan outlines alternatives for constructing approximately 110 km of shared walking / cycling pathway to connect the communities of the North West coast of Tasmania. The North West Coastal Pathway has the potential to deliver benefits in:

- Health and wellbeing
- Environmental outcomes, particularly as an alternative transport mode, and
- Tourism and the regional economy.

Tasmanians have the second lowest participation rates for exercise and physical activity nationally¹ – 71% of North West Coast Tasmanians are not undertaking 30 minutes of exercise per day which is contributing to poor health outcomes. The North West Coastal Pathway has the potential to provide fundamental infrastructure to allow safe and convenient exercise for people of all ages and abilities in a variety of natural settings.

Recently completed sections of the pathway have been received with great enthusiasm by the community and are already in high use.

The North West Coastal Pathway plan has applied a design model assuming three use-cases for the path: providing community access to local places; providing recreation and exercise; and providing community connectors linking towns and cities.

Proposed pathway typologies include concrete, asphalt and gravel with both off-road and on-road path placement. The path width varies depending on location from 1500

¹ Tasmanian Government (2005), *Tasmanian Physical Activity Plan, 2005 – 2010*, p.11

mm to 3000 mm. Barriers are proposed for the pathway where it is off-set from the road or rail tracks.

The route has been designed to maximise separation between users and motor vehicles and utilise existing pathways and connections. The proposed route also seeks to minimise level road crossings and consider the natural landscape to avoid steep and sudden changes in grade while incorporating scenic views. The North West Coastal Pathway plan provides maps of existing and proposed routes, plus any unresolved sections, in the coastal zone between Wynyard and Latrobe.

The North West Coastal Pathway has been designed as a shared pathway and is classified as such in as many instances as possible. The placement of the route has been designed, where possible, using the following criteria:

- Location within either the current road reserve or rail corridor
- Avoidance of location on private land
- Maximum distance away from vehicular traffic
- Maximum distance away from an active rail line
- If located close to an active rail line, set back far enough so as to avoid installation of fencing
- Location to maximise natural locations and coastal views and avoid places of environmental significance
- Location to maximise existing pathways and connections
- Location to maximise existing and proposed secondary paths that are not directly part of the North West Coastal Pathway
- Alignment and placement to encourage commuting activity, particularly family and children use
- Maximum user safety considering (for example) good visibility of path users, avoidance of sharp curves, best alignment and good visibility and lighting at bridges and enclosed pathways.

Specific places of Aboriginal cultural significance have not been considered as part of this project, but it is noted that they exist along the coastal zone. Potential areas of Aboriginal cultural significance and the impact of pathway placement should be addressed on a case by case basis.

The consultation phase of the North West Coastal Pathway project highlighted two issues in relation to land use planning – sequence and timing of development approval processes. Essentially, if development approval processes are delayed whilst funding is sought, the consideration needs to be given to the manner in which the proposed route corridor can be preserved to ensure that the route remains intact until such a time as it can be developed.

It is important that land owners and land managers are informed of the opportunities to provide public and private infrastructure that will support the future use of the North West Coastal Pathway system. In particular, new residential subdivisions should make allowance for shared paths and connections to existing and proposed sections of the

pathway. A cooperative approach needs to be taken with land managers such as Parks and Wildlife and Crown Land Services to progress nodal developments recommended in the plan.

Each council will stage the pathway sections according to their own project and capital funding priorities. The following recommendations for staging are provided in terms of overall North West Coastal Pathway function:

Community access pathway sections – Somerset to Wivenhoe, Penguin to Heybridge, Devonport to Latrobe and Goat Island to Leith/Forth.

Once the community access paths are in place, efforts could be concentrated on creating the community connecting paths – Leith to Devonport, Wynyard to Somerset, Heybridge to Burnie and Goat Island to Penguin.

Estimated cost per linear metre of different path types and construction materials have been identified in the plan. Estimates are preliminary only and vary from \$100 per metre for adapting an existing roadway to \$7,500 per metre for a 2500mm suspended and/or partially supported concrete bridge path with maximum span of 20m. As with all quality project plans, each pathway section development should be considered within its own unique setting.

Total asset lifecycle costs for the pathway have been calculated at \$60.4 M over a projected asset life of 40 years. This includes a capital investment of \$26.4 M to construct the pathway and annual costs of \$832,000 to maintain, operate and renew the asset.

Specific standards apply to the use and requirements for barriers and fences, as outlined in the *Austrroads Guide to road Design Part 6A: Pedestrian and Cyclist Paths 2009*. All sections of the North West Coastal Pathway should comply with this standard. It is noted that Tasmanian Railways requires an additional standard of fencing beyond that of the Austrroads standard.

Universal pathway markers and signage have been suggested including warning signs, directional signs, track head signs and interpretive signs. The plan also proposes locations for support facilities such as public toilets, bike racks and lockers, drinking fountains, viewing points and public showers.

Pathway landscaping should be designed to improve the aesthetics of pathway infrastructure, enhance existing coastal ecosystems and rehabilitate compromised coastal areas. In most instances the use of local native plants are recommended set well back from paths.

Appropriate maintenance and asset management practices are vital to the successful use and safety of shared pathways. Maintenance issues to be assessed in section planning include path structure and surface, earthworks, sightlines, rubbish and debris, and furniture and barrier/fencing condition. The various path types identified in the plan have advantages and disadvantages in terms of capital cost, maintenance and carbon footprint. Consideration of all these factors will be important for councils in planning development of pathway sections.