

27/2/2015

Ms Natasha Exel
Committee Secretary
Legislative Council Parliament House
HOBART TAS 7000

Dear Natasha Exel,

RE: The management, preservation, tourist marketing and promotion of built heritage assets in Tasmania

Please find attached a submission to the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B' from Sealasash Window Renewal System Pty. Ltd ("Sealasash").

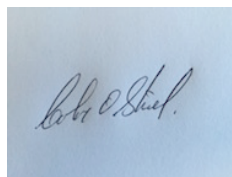
We wish to acknowledge the Legislative Parliamentary Council for undertaking this review.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this in further detail if required.

Yours faithfully



John Brennan
Director



Colm O'Shiel
Director

Introduction

Sealassh is a small Tasmanian start up business that reinstates heritage and other wooden windows back to full working order and draught seals them to improve energy efficiency and building comfort. The business has grown rapidly over the last three years and we have expanded from Tasmania to Victoria (Melbourne and Ballarat). Recently our expertise was required in Ireland (Bantry House) – more information at www.sealassh.com.au. The growth of our business exemplifies one of many reasons why our built heritage in Tasmania is a valuable asset to our economy and the community.

We acknowledge that it is important to find new uses for older buildings rather than promoting a stock of unaffordable “museum pieces”. It is important that when upgrading a heritage building it should be protected as much as possible and a balance has to be found to meet modern uses and standards. As a minimum, we believe that for redevelopments, the original facades should be kept intact so that we protect the character of our towns and cities. As evidenced overseas in Scotland, Ireland and England, heritage buildings can be redeveloped and retrofitted without significant compromise to their architectural features (e.g. original windows can be maintained and upgraded for energy efficiency measures instead of being sealed up, replaced with plastic or aluminum or non functioning wooden fakes).

Tasmania can learn from overseas experiences and protect and promote the built heritage. Given Tasmania’s wealth of intact built heritage, it is not too late to protect this asset and put in place a framework, which will enable the state to reap economic and social rewards.

We also believe that while important to tourism, our built heritage also offers an opportunity to provide and train skilled employment and promote education opportunities by creating a national hub of expertise for heritage trade skills.

The current and future potential contribution that built heritage makes to tourism in Tasmania

To move forward we believe that Tasmania needs to identify and develop a new economy based on its strengths (e.g. tourism, fine foods and boutique beverages, agriculture, aquaculture, Antarctic and southern ocean science research, logistics and education opportunities are all key assets). Built heritage is part of the success formula from which we can further develop our new economy. The built heritage we have in the state is an asset and as such should be adequately protected, resourced and positioned to provide benefits back to the economy and community.

We believe that the built heritage in Tasmania has been undervalued and has not received the attention it deserves. It could be accurate to say that Tasmania has not tapped into the full potential of our built heritage and what it really means for tourism and branding of the state. The built heritage and its associated cultural linkages make Tasmania an iconic and unique place to live in and visit.

If Tasmania did not have the built heritage as evidenced at Port Arthur, Woolmers and Brickendon Estates, Salamanca and the quaint villages of Richmond, Longford, Bothwell,

Oatlands, Stanley and Ross to name a few, what type of tourist destination would we be? Can you imagine the state without the built heritage of these places? Would we be as attractive to tourists if these places had been redeveloped over the years? The obvious answer is no.

The message to all tourists should highlight that our built heritage compliments the obvious advantages of our natural environment, fine foods, boutique beverages, adventure outdoor activities, art, music and cultural events and festivals.

The businesses, natural and built assets we have in Tasmania place us in a special situation to offer the tourist a very unique and unrivalled “experience”. We probably need to get smarter and draw together the attributes that we have and leverage off modern technology and clever marketing techniques. For example, imagine a mobile application that allows tourists to integrate their wine tasting and food experience in parallel with visits to heritage sites in the same area? Switch on an app and it guides you to the food/wine/built heritage pathway for a region of the state.

We believe that it is incumbent on the government to ensure that there is a way forward to protect and promote our built heritage to stimulate economic gains from tourism in alignment with community sentiment and in a manner that compliments other commercial opportunities.

A vision is required to include our built heritage in our other tourist attractions and Tasmanian experiences. In essence it is about joining the dots.

The role of Government

It is proposed that the government should investigate the following:

1. Provide beefed up policies and a regulatory framework to protect our built heritage. It is clear that some aspects of the built heritage are not protected at all (or if they are protected in legislation it is not being regulated and enforced on the ground). The resources needed for improvement are readily accessible from overseas entities and the cost would be minimal to implement these (e.g. look at the documents that exist on web sites for English Heritage, Historic Scotland, Irish Georgian Society, the Victorian Society, etc.).

We suggest that the regulator does not need to re-invent the wheel (as is so often the case). Be efficient and access and adapt information from other countries and jurisdictions where necessary.

2. Provide more education, guidance and support to developers and homeowners alike so that they can adhere to regulatory framework and protect the built heritage. A level of self-regulation can exist when the resources are available. The documentation available in the state is very limited and therefore leaves the door open to interpretation and possible loss of heritage values.
3. Undertake, with business and the community, a comprehensive study to define the economic and social benefit(s) of the built heritage. Some councils have undertaken studies that show there is economic stimulus linked to built heritage (e.g. Southern Midlands - Oatlands). This should include an in depth look at what happens in the UK, Ireland and Europe to learn how they embrace, protect and gain economically

and socially from their built heritage. A study could identify some projected revenue and expenditure.

We believe that a study should not be protracted and over prescribed with public consultation, as we need to get on with it.

UTas faculty of Architecture, heritage architects/consultants, tourism operators and trades may be willing to assist with providing support.

4. Develop, in collaboration with the tourism sector and market, a built heritage brand and tools to market the built heritage “experience”. Nature, built heritage, fine food, beverages, the arts, and science/research/education are our future. We therefore need to market collectively and this is not happening now.

One simple example could be a built heritage trail using mobile apps for locals/tourists. There could be opportunities for specific built heritage tours. So now we currently have the overland track, the south coast track, the three three capes track. We could have the Country House of Tasmania Trail, The Colonial Houses of Central Highlands Trail, Battery Point Merchant Buildings Trail etc. etc.

5. Support local government because they are on the ground, driving regional economic plans, and are often custodians of built heritage and have grass roots connections to the community.
6. Promote and support the development of traditional high value niche heritage trades (stone masonry, carpentry, fenestration, plastering and other specialised trades etc.), which could stimulate local jobs and the ability for the state to export this talent to other states that have built heritage.

Tasmania should have a vision to become a hub of excellence for built heritage trades. There is nothing to stop the state embracing the idea that we actually become the depository of knowledge for heritage trades. This has been attempted on a regional basis by Centre for Heritage Oatlands (all credit to them and their vision) but not enough support has been provided to underpin the value of their proposition or to expand it. Effective enforcement of heritage regulations would also assist the development of heritage trades.

Tasmania could in fact draw trainees/apprentices and other participants (national and international) to undertake training/courses about the built heritage. We are not making enough of this opportunity.

7. To stimulate heritage trades (and the economy) regulations should be enforced to ensure to encourage developers/owners keep the fabric of the built environment.
8. The new planning scheme should not weaken the ability to protect our built heritage or justify its demise based on an opinion that we have a large volume of any one type of architectural design (e.g. because we may have a large concentration of Georgian architecture this does not mean we can afford to lose it to new developments). By having a concentration of built heritage this is in fact an asset and draw card to be valued. Erosion of the current stock of built heritage through planning decisions will consequently dilute our asset and the value proposition.

9. Investigate, in collaboration with the local government, community and business, a sustainable way to fund grants to protect and promote our built heritage. For example a number of alternative funding possibilities include but are not limited to:

- Appropriate a levy on all gambling in the state to fund the built heritage (e.g. the UK funding has been used from the national lottery to fund the protection of heritage sites).
- Explore if local government can provide a proportion of rates back from heritage building owners to a state built heritage trust fund that cannot be accessed by consolidated revenue.
- Explore if local government could provide a portion of the remaining rate base back to a trust.
- Apportion some of the state land tax back to a trust fund.
- Levy government owned tourist operations (e.g. Port Arthur) to provide a revenue stream into a trust fund.
- Levy every airlight and TT Line passage into/out of the state at a minimal rate (e.g. \$1.00/flight) to go towards a trust fund.
- Assess the rental opportunities that exist for hiring out heritage sites for events etc. (e.g. similar to the recent plan by Hobart City Council to explore opportunities for the Town Hall).
- Government support through State Growth of a new fee paying organisation for owners/operators/custodians of built and cultural heritage to represent the interests of the sector. This organisation could be a peak industry advisor to work closely with government and other sectors.
- Implement a way that a proportion of industry training funds to be channelled into built heritage initiatives – this would suit heritage trades etc.
- Explore opportunities to find philanthropic inputs to support Tasmania's built heritage into the trust fund or in kind. Maybe some corporates (e.g. one of the major airlines) would like to be major sponsor of Tasmania's built heritage.

While levies are construed as taxes and are viewed as politically unpalatable, the fact is there needs to be funding if we are to leverage off the potential opportunities that our built heritage has to offer. In business we call it capital. Owners of heritage buildings are already investing by way of mortgages, rates, upkeep etc. and the government (state and local) need to step up to the mark and implement an enabling environment for success. It is likely that future success will require funds additional to those already provided by the owners of built heritage.

The role of tourism organisations

The tourism industry should embrace a holistic view of Tasmania's built heritage. Notable sites such as Port Arthur and Richmond tend in some ways to overshadow the rich depth of other built heritage we have in the state in small towns and villages.

The built heritage experience could be broadened out for visitors to experience more of Tasmania and not just concentrate on certain areas/businesses. Adoption of mobile apps (as previously mentioned) could serve to assist in melding together the local businesses thus providing a more holistic and enriched Tasmanian experience.

The tourism industry could be a conduit for some funding in the form of heritage levies to be collected through various pathways (see suggestions above re airports and TT Line).

The role of heritage organisations

We believe that some of the things heritage organisations (government or private) could explore but are not limited to:

1. Promote and assist (through education and regulation) developers and homeowners to meet minimum standards to upgrade and protect the built heritage.
2. Maintain good relationships and open forum with government, peak bodies, developers and builders to ensure that consultation happens early on for any developments that may involve built heritage.
3. Lobby state and local government where necessary.
4. Assist local regions/councils to enhance economic inputs from the built heritage.
5. Be responsible with funding to ensure that it is effective at the coal face and not absorbed in administration.

Any relevant considerations in other jurisdictions

As previously mentioned, built heritage is not something unique to Tasmania. Many parts of the world have no doubt assessed the economic and social worth of their built heritage. So we can learn from other parts of the world that have gone before us in this respect.

Government need not reinvent the wheel. On the contrary, we need to undertake a solid but speedy study of what is available to learn and borrow from other jurisdictions, modify if/where necessary, and adopt measures that would assist in making the most of our built heritage and ensure that it compliments all our other attributes.

Any other matters incidental thereto.

We believe that cultural heritage (including indigenous) should also be considered in the context of enhancing the opportunities that can be gained from Tasmania's built heritage.

The feel and character of Tasmania is important socially. Our built heritage creates a certain mood and feeling. We should be conscious of this aspect when considering permanent changes to our built heritage.