

North East Recreation Trail Inc

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL INQUIRY

SUBMISSION

Legislative Council Government Administration
Committee B
North-East Rail Corridor

October 2018

Prepared by:
Mike Scott, BSc CEng MIMechE
Vice President, North East Recreation Trail Inc

Authorised by:
Harry Rigney, LL.M.(Harvard '80) LL.B. (Hons) (UTAS) Dip.Ed. CTA TEP
President, North East Recreation Trail Inc

i) Preamble

a. North East Recreation Trail Inc (NERT)

NERT is a community based, non-profit group whose aim is to promote the proposal to establish a non-motorised, multi-use trail over the non-operational North East railway corridor between Launceston and Scottsdale (to be known as the North East Recreation Trail).

NERT has significant community support as evidenced by a FaceBook page followed by 1300 overwhelmingly local individuals and organisations. NERT supporters have willingly shown their support by signing an 860 signature petition in support of the Recreation trail proposal [13].

The NERT board is comprised of members who have a strong personal interest in the project. They also combine a broad set of skills and experience well suited to the guidance of a project of this significance. Short profiles of board members are found in Appendix A.

b. Terminology

The Recreation Trail project follows the globally recognised 'Rail Trail' format. In the past reference to it as a 'Rail Trail' has caused significant confusion due to the alternative proposal of a Heritage Rail service. In this document, and much of the referenced material, the Recreation Trail is called:

- Recreation Trail
- Rail Trail
- Trail

In contrast the Heritage Rail proposal is known variously as:

- Heritage Rail
- Railway
- Rail

1. Summary

The North East Recreation Trail Inc group (NERT) plans, in partnership with Dorset Council, to convert the non-operational North East Railway into a walking and cycling track. The end result is envisaged as a trail linking Launceston to Scottsdale and the existing North East Rail Trail from Scottsdale to Billycock Hill.

An alternative proposal for the rail corridor exists in the form of a Heritage Rail operation promoted by the Launceston and North East Railway group (L&NER). NERT remains convinced that the existing Recreation Trail proposal remains the superior option on the basis of viability and the broad economic and social benefits that would be realised. NERT also recognises that Heritage Rail operations can bring many benefits and can, potentially, be compatible with a Recreation Trail. NERT's understanding is, however, clear that the nature of this corridor precludes side-by-side use on any section by both Trail and Rail. Separate lengths are, therefore, essential.

NERT has made contact with Heritage Rail proponents to enable better mutual understanding of the proposals. Unfortunately, this interest has not been reciprocated. To help move debate along NERT has, therefore, been working with key stakeholders to develop workable options for use of the corridor by both Trail and Rail. This resulted in a discussion paper submitted to the State Government in March 2018 [1] outlining an appropriate compromise position. This paper evaluated the three independent reports on Trail and Rail viability [2], [3], [4] available to the State Treasury during its deliberations in conjunction with community input and research aimed at benchmarking the Rail proposal against existing Heritage Rail operations throughout Australia.

This discussion paper identified an optimum split of the corridor, based on community impact and viability criteria, of a Heritage Rail operation between Launceston and Turners Marsh and a Recreation Trail from Turners Marsh to Scottsdale.

Following the submission of this paper in March 2018 and the subsequent Treasury report [5], the Treasurer announced the State government's preferred solution [6] of Recreation Trail from Scottsdale to Lilydale and Rail starting from Lilydale to Turners Marsh and staged expansions, based on proven capability, back to Launceston.

NERT initially accepted the Government's position and invited all stakeholders to do so in a spirit of willing compromise [8] and in recognition of clear community pressure for the proponents of both projects to set aside differences and work together. Unfortunately, the Rail supporter groups have not reciprocated, leading NERT to reconsider the optimum approach based on the additional evidence made available by the Treasury report.

In consequence NERT strongly reaffirms the position outlined in the Discussion Paper [1] and recommends that the inquiry adopts this as the preferred objective.

NERT also notes the alarming degree of highly optimistic and unsubstantiated claims made by L&NER, as identified in the Treasury report, in the Business and Strategic Plan supporting the Rail project proposal. As the Rail proposal is shown to carry disproportionate risk for all stakeholders based on doubts over the ability to meet such optimistic targets, any compromise solution could be further enhanced by requiring the rail operation to prove fundamental capabilities. It would be essential that this be done in a staged manner that minimises risk to all stakeholders and provides future flexibility that will assist in the optimisation of the balance between Trail and Rail. Fundamental to this would be the requirement that the Rail operation should establish its initial operations at the Launceston end of the proposed service.

2. The NERT Perspective

NERT firmly believes that the Recreation Trail project has the potential to provide significant benefit, in many forms. Most of these are well covered in the referenced reports [2] and [5]. A summary of these would be:

- Amenity: Free and safe access to cycle or walk through countryside and settlements away from traffic and other annoyances.

- Accessibility: Gradients are gentle, allowing ease of use by people of all ages and almost all abilities.
- Visitor Incentive: Rail Trails cover significant distances thus allowing for multi-day traverses. This attracts visitors from out of the district looking for an easy-paced, active and varied outdoor holiday experience, one that enables deep immersion in the countryside and communities.
- Potential: Rail Trail use is growing rapidly world-wide with significant social, health and amenity benefit to local residents. It is also a growing attraction for visitors looking for 'slow' and 'low emissions' holiday breaks.
- Economic Benefit: Rail trail users stop at will and linger, effectively spreading the commercial benefit to any point along the trail where someone is prepared to provide a service/hospitality/retail.
- Established rail trails are financially independent and well managed. Although voluntary labour and donations are important sources of support, Rail trails need not be dependent on these resources.
- The considerable employment generated from the growth in small business along the trail is gainful employment. Volunteering may be good for community cohesion but only a growth in gainful employment can future proof rural communities that struggle to remain viable as traditional forms of rural employment continue to diminish.
- Rail trails enhance value in the community (both property and lifestyle).

The NERT position regarding the most effective and workable future use of the North East Rail Corridor is clearly articulated in the Discussion Paper: Options for the Development of both the North East Recreation Trail and Heritage Rail, March 2018, Reviewed October 2018.

Accordingly, NERT strongly endorses the position articulated in this as the optimum compromise.

Ref [1] P8. *"NERT strongly believes that the best fit scenario would be:*

1. *A Heritage Rail service operating between Launceston and the Austins Road and Pipers River Road junction at Turners Marsh.*
2. *A walking and cycling recreation trail from Turners Marsh through to Scottsdale connecting with the existing North East Rail Trail."*

Note: NERT has had an ongoing policy of focussing solely on promoting the Recreation Trail and, in so doing, refraining from commenting on the Heritage Rail proposal. However, ongoing selective and misleading critique of the Recreation Trail proposal and aggressive strategies articulated by the leadership of the Heritage Rail proponents means that NERT feels obliged to defend the Recreation Trail proposal. Central to this must be a truthful and balanced comparison of the two proposals. NERT feels that the Treasury report is a well-researched basis for comparison. Such comparison can be further informed by NERT understanding and expertise.

2.1 Evaluation of Evidence Arising Subsequent to the Release of the Discussion Paper [1].

2.1.1 Viability of the L&NER Proposal

NERT has also assessed both the Treasury Reports [5] and [6] and notes disturbing issues raised by these reports in assessing the feasibility data supplied by L&NER. Specifically, but not limited to:

- Unsubstantiated market studies including exceedingly optimistic figures for passenger numbers. These bear little resemblance to figures achieved by equivalent operations and appear concocted to provide seemingly viable financial projections.

Ref [5] P16. *"L&NER's Business and Strategic Plan, developed by OnTrack Consulting, sets a forecast of 22 500 passengers by year four of operation, with growth from that point of around 9 per cent per annum, reaching almost 60 000 passengers after 20 years.*

***L&NER has not undertaken market research to support this level of projected demand.** These estimates are significantly above the initial estimates in the report by Sarah Lebski & Associates of just under 5 500 in the first year rising to just under 11 000 by the third year. The demand estimate in the Business and Strategic Plan of almost 60 000 is therefore **almost six times greater** than any estimate in the Sarah Lebski & Associates report."*

- Insufficient rigour in determining the impact of key business costs such as public liability insurance.

Ref [5] P15. *"Insurance broker Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT) has assessed the proposed operation and has recommended a coverage level that **is ten times the level** to which the L&NER quotation applies. "*

- Unwillingness to engage with key stakeholders whose decisions will have a very significant impact on the project viability. One such is the National Rail Safety Regulator from whom L&NER will be required to gain accreditation to both work on the line and operate a railway service. This has led to L&NER adopting highly unrealistic expectations. NERT has contacted the National Rail Safety Regulator and understands that no meaningful contact or application has been received from L&NER. Ref [5] P14.

2.1.2 Viability of the NERT Proposal

NERT further notes that the Treasury report finds little to dispute with the Recreation Trail proposal and evidence as supplied by Dorset Council/NERT. The only significant concern raised involves usage of the Recreation Trail and the resultant economic benefits.

Ref [5] P9. *"There is therefore no firm basis for the estimates of demand and the direct and indirect economic benefits from the proposed rail trail in the above report. However, there are several encouraging trends that support the project. Firstly, the number of visitors to the State, and expenditure by visitors, has been increasing strongly in recent years. Secondly, there is strong evidence that the demand for cycling, in general, has been increasing. These two factors explain an upward trend in the number of interstate and international visitors to Tasmanian participating in cycling activities."*

NERT agrees with the trend indicators and the appropriateness of discussion relating to other 'Rail Trails' in Australia and overseas [5] P8. NERT would, however, point to the discussions in [2] Sects 2&3 as providing robust supporting data. As Tasmania does not yet have a long-distance cycle trail, understanding cycle trends and benchmarking against established 'Rail Trails' is a reasonable, evidence-based approach.

2.1.3 Objective Outlook

Whilst there seems little risk associated in the 'unknowns' articulated in the Treasury report regarding the Recreation Trail proposal, there are very substantial risks linked to the 'unknowns' highlighted in the Heritage Rail proposal.

Further, it is clear that some of these railway 'unknowns' are the result of insufficient diligence on the part of the proponent or a deliberate lack of substantiation in order to avoid poor viability metrics. All stakeholders should be concerned that, if other key metrics (restoration costs, running costs, maintenance costs, labour costs, volunteer availability etc.) have been treated with the same aversion to due diligence, then there can be little faith in other data and projections provided by L&NER.

For a project characterised by high financial risk, technical complexity and public safety, such a lack of critical preparation is indicative of proponents who are simply not prepared for any real or unforeseen challenges. The resultant risk to all stakeholders is extreme.

2.2 Revisions to previous NERT positions

2.2.1 Response to the State Government Compromise

After the announcement of the Government's preferred solution in July 2018, NERT carefully considered its position in concert with recreation trail supporters and the broader community.

Consequently, NERT adopted the position of accepting the Government's position as a workable and a well-researched compromise [8]. NERT believed that adopting this position would help all stakeholders set aside differences and was a way forward.

Unfortunately, despite significant support from the broader community, this has not eventuated and the leadership of the Rail project has decided to oppose the compromise. Even more unfortunately a public position has been adopted aimed at using any available means to deny (through expiry) promised Federal funding for the Recreation Trail. This aggressive and divisive policy seems calibrated to deny any prospect of cooperation between NERT and L&NER. NERT believes there is ample room to compromise and bring the benefits of both proposals to the community but is deeply disheartened by these developments.

2.2.2 Review Following L&NER Rejection of the State Government Compromise

NERT has, accordingly, reverted its position to the one outlined in the discussion paper [1] because it is the best fit for the two projects, the capability of the proponents to realise their projects and for generating positive outcomes for the broader community.

Further, the Treasury report highlights very substantial risks of failure for the Heritage Rail proposal due to many critical 'unknowns' pertaining to the project viability. NERT therefore believes that considerations of project implementation should concentrate on how to minimise such risks by allowing L&NER to develop its project in small, manageable stages that allow the proponents to meet challenges and test their ability to overcome them in a realistic manner and one that reduces the possibility of failure due to overreach during the early stages.

Such an approach would also need to test the bona fides of L&NER competence and pledges of assistance. This is of clear interest to NERT. For a shared use of the corridor, to which NERT is a key stakeholder, it is essential for planning and cooperation that trust is built up between all actors in a structured and verifiable manner.

As such NERT would see the following (table below) as a clear and appropriately staged path for L&NER to achieve a workable Heritage Rail service between Launceston and Turners Marsh.

A key part of a workable solution must be the requirement for L&NER to establish their initial service in a benign location. That is to say a location where there is:

- Ready access to appropriate workshops
- Ready access to a large pool of potential volunteers
- Ready access to support/service/sub-contract skills and facilities
- Ready access to a pool of customers to enable more accurate marketing/customer approval data and operations experience
- Access to track requiring renovation to establish skills and capability in a location where such improvements would not jeopardise other projects (i.e. on a length of track that is unlikely to be usefully included in a future project such as the extension of the North East Recreation Trail).

The above precautions point strongly to L&NER establishing their initial service at the Launceston end of the proposed Heritage Rail service.

An ideal location would be the track linking Inveresk and the TasRail hub at Newstead.

The program stages outlined below would provide the Rail proponents and all other stakeholders an appropriate level of clarity for planning and engagement. Most importantly it is a low risk strategy that would help L&NER to prove their capabilities and bona fides in a staged and responsible manner that would have reduced negative impacts upon other stakeholders should they fail to achieve their objectives.

Stage	Objective	Deliverables	Target Date
1	L&NER to establish competence to run a rail service.	To obtain accreditation from the National Rail Safety Regulator (for	EOFY 2019

		both track management and rail service operation)	
2	Establish a viable stand-alone local service (Inveresk to Newstead).	Prove capability to establish and operate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe track and rolling stock operation • Road crossing (1) • A viable marketing strategy Initial financial viability. Adequate and appropriate public liability insurance. Establish potential customer numbers.	EOCY 2019
3	Establish (in conjunction with TasRail) a weekly rail excursion to Georgetown district on the Launceston to Bell Bay working line.	Establish potential customer numbers. Establish clear data on service costs and revenue streams. Evaluate feasibility of meeting the costs of renovating the NE line between Coldwater Creek and Turners Marsh	EOCY 2019
4	Establish safe rail infrastructure and improvements between Coldwater Creek and Turners Marsh	National Rail Safety Regulator approval for the reconditioned line and facilities. Successful and viable operation.	EOFY 2020

3. Sections of the NE Rail Corridor that Feature in Proposals by Both NERT and L&NER

In any compromise there has to be a degree of give and take. NERT believes it would be instructive to the inquiry to highlight past areas of contention between the trail and rail proponents. This would help clarify the potential for movement in their respective positions that the State Government considered in defining a workable and broadly accepted compromised.

3.1 Turners Marsh to Lilydale

NERT believes that this stretch of the corridor is much better served by a Recreation trail than a rail service. The reasons for this are compelling:

- NERT has a high level of support amongst property owners, current businesses and prospective businesses along the Lalla Rd stretch.
- This section has a very high concentration of the type of small family business that benefits from the steady stream of customers that would pass their doors on a recreation trail but would be bypassed by a rail service. This includes hospitality businesses, art and craft, visitor attractions and primary producers selling direct to the public. NERT has contacted these small businesses to gauge their preferences

regarding rail or trail. Of the 9 businesses 6 support the recreation trail project, 2 declined to state a preference (although the proprietors of one were prepared to sign the NERT supporters petition). Only one business is known to support the Rail option (and that business is due to change hands very shortly).

- Railway reconditioning costs would be prohibitively high.
 - The track along this length is, in sections, overgrown and in very poor condition with the majority of wooden sleepers requiring replacement.
 - There are multiple road crossings (4) which will require expensive re-building and the provision of expensive operational/safety facilities.
 - The bridge at Karoola, as identified in the various reports [3], [4], [5] is the longest one on the line and in disrepair and suffering ongoing deterioration. Its restoration to working capacity would be a crippling burden to a Railway operation.
 - The authoritative Raylink report [3] costs the rehabilitation of this section at \$5.5M. L&NER disputes this, however, as mentioned earlier L&NER have not discussed this with the National Rail Safety Regulator. Prudent evaluation of this matter would suggest that a professional railway consultancy (Raylink) would have an accurate grasp of the regulator's requirements. As has also been demonstrated in the Treasury report [5], L&NER figures are fundamentally untrustworthy.

3.2 Lilydale to Wyena and Beyond

L&NER has dismissed the State Governments compromise on the basis that there are key attractions along this section without which their proposal would cease to be viable. These attractions are Denison Gorge and the tunnel between Lilydale and Lebrina.

NERT's perspective on this is:

- If L&NER claims that their project is dependent on access to couple of short sections of the corridor is credible, then this strongly suggests that there is a fundamental lack of robustness in the Heritage Rail proposal. Given the lack of market research undertaken by L&NER ([5] P16) statements such as this can have no credibility.
- NERT's research into other Heritage Rail operations [1] strongly suggests that visitors access the services primarily for the 'railway' experience with scenery being an important but secondary consideration. For example, the Don River railway has provided a popular service for many years along a line of only 4km length.
- Users of 'rail trails' pass slowly through and are immersed in the surrounding countryside. Scenery and features are a fundamental attraction providing key highlights. This can readily be seen in marketing materials for existing rail trails (see photos below). It is equally, if not more, important to have these features as part of the Recreation Trail as it would be for a Heritage Rail operation.
- Heritage Rail operations over 30km are extremely rare and where they have access to such lengths of track the full distance is rarely used. With the ideal of a Heritage Rail operation with a Launceston terminus both the Tunnel and Denison Gorge are simply too far for a service to operate and would encompass a length of corridor that any Heritage Rail operation would struggle to manage even with significant subsidy.

It is noted that there are voices within L&NER calling for the Rail option to extend as far as Scottsdale. Benchmarking against other Heritage Rail operations emphatically shows this to be considerable overreach and outside the scope of plausibility. It would also orphan the existing North East Rail Trail which, while popular with locals, is too short to attract a significant influx of visitors and valuable overnight stays.



Great Victorian Rail Trail. Aus



Otago Central Rail Trail. NZ

4. Other Pertinent Considerations

4.1 The Benefit of Retaining the Rails and Sleepers

NERT notes that supporters of the Rail proposal accuse NERT and Dorset Council of wanting to 'rip up' valuable rail infrastructure. A figure frequently touted is that the Recreation Trail will remove above ground railway assets worth \$40M.

The Treasury report [5] P17 is clear on this matter: "L&NER has not been able to justify its valuation of \$40 million...The current value of the railway (setting aside the land value) is likely to be zero as it is not in use, or even negative allowing for maintenance and other costs."

TasRail is equally adamant that there is no retained value in the above-ground assets [9] a vanishingly small chance that they would be of use for any future transport system using the corridor.

[9] *"and considers that there are no significant commercial rail freight opportunities likely on that line within the foreseeable future."*

The reverse of this argument is to ask what benefit would be lost to the North East economy if any length of the corridor were to be denied to the Recreation Trail in order to preserve the above ground assets. The report assessing the viability of the Recreation Trail [2] Sect 6 shows forecasts of increased economic activity from \$6M p.a. to \$8.5M p.a. after 5 years of operation rising to \$10M p.a. to \$14M p.a. after 15 years of operation. These figures are based on the proposal to have a Recreation Trail starting near Launceston and extending to join the North East Rail Trail beyond Scottsdale. Any reduction in this length for the

purposes of asset preservation would deny the local economy of a proportionate amount of this increased economic activity.

In short, the argument that the Recreation Trail will remove above ground railway assets worth \$40M is not only grossly misleading and unsubstantiated but it also ignores the very considerable opportunity cost of not establishing the recreation trail in its place.

4.2 Tasmania's Mix of Tourism Attractions: The Impact of the First Long-Distance Recreation Rail Trail or Another Heritage Rail Service

Mixed use, long-distance 'Rail Trails' are a valuable asset with strong growth in usage [2] Sect.3. Tasmania does not have such an asset to offer potential visitors. Given the complementary growth in other cycle-based tourism attractions and the aims of the Tasmanian Government's Tasmanian Cycle Tourism Strategy released in September 2017, this is a clear gap in the State's offerings.

The boon for business that comes with bike tourism is clear to the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania and is exemplified by their 'Bike Friendly Business' Accreditation Program [12]. The Recreation Trail will be an additional and complementary attraction for this growing and lucrative market.

In contrast Tasmania is already well endowed with Heritage Rail attractions (West Coast Wilderness Railway (ABT), Don River Railway, Redwater Creek Railway, Ida Bay Railway) with others (excluding the L&NER proposal) being considered.

Whilst the Recreation Trail will become a unique attraction that is complementary to the highly successful bike tourism attractions already established in the North East, the L&NER proposal will be just another Heritage Railway offering. With the West Coast Wilderness Railway unable to attract enough visitors to be profitable and the Ida Bay Railway recently approaching the State Government for funding it is clear that the Tasmanian market for Heritage Railway attractions is already over-supplied and another major service will further increase competition for an already insufficient pool of potential customers.

It should also be noted that Heritage Rail operations rely heavily on volunteer workforces to maintain services. The Linqage report [4] into the L&NER proposal estimated that to maintain a sufficient number of volunteers L&NER would have to access population pool of 500,000. As this is equivalent to almost the entire population of Tasmania it is clear that competition between Heritage Rail services will extend beyond customers and include the volunteers and experienced individuals required to run the services.

4.3 Access to the Countryside

One of the key benefits of the Rail trail format is that it allows safe, unhindered and peaceful access to the countryside. Unlike countries such as England with its common law heritage of footpaths and bridleways, Tasmanians and visitors have limited access to safe rural tracks and paths. Mostly these are found in parks and reserves requiring an excursion.

It is well known that ready access to safe outdoor exercise increases participation dramatically. A recreation trail would provide this for all communities and residents close to the corridor. The amenity benefits are clear with very substantial physical health benefits also accruing as detailed by the Heart foundation [12]. Access to the countryside is also known to have a therapeutic affect. so provision of a trail that allows peaceful access without disruption to farming practices can only benefit the health and well-being of all [11] P.2.

Another key aspect concerns growing tensions between settlements and surrounding farming concerns. With agriculture employing ever smaller fractions of the rural population and larger farms relying less on local services, rural settlements and their populations are becoming less and less enmeshed with the surrounding rural enterprises. Cultural development of the settlements and commercial objectives of surrounding farms can, as a result, become misaligned. This has led to several heated disagreements in the North East region. Experience elsewhere has shown that landowners can not assume that they exist and operate in isolation from the broader community. Indeed, the seeking of a 'social licence' is not only advisable but ultimately of enduring benefit to their enterprises. The ability of residents and visitors to access the countryside in which these enterprises operate is an effective method of breaking down such barriers. The Royal Agricultural society (mouthpiece of the British farming industry) bulletin is clear on this:

[11] P. 2-3: *"Farming is valuable because it satisfies, or could satisfy, values related to subsistence, security, relationships among people and with nature, tradition and identity. These latter reflect many of the social and cultural benefits of farming identified above. Satisfying them depends on public access to farms and farmland, strong connections between farming and wider society, and stewardship of the natural and cultural environment. Ethical perspectives urge us to move beyond thinking just in terms of 'delivery', costs and benefits, to understanding farming and society as a relationship of mutual consideration and responsibility, with emphasis on stewardship and service. Ethics can also inform how we value farming's public goods and how farming engages with the public."*

Rail trails are also characterised by the shallow gradients required for railway operations. At a maximum of 2 degrees and a well conditioned surface, these trails are accessible to all but the most infirm. Indeed, a lot of use on existing rail trails is by seniors and the very young because of the easy gradients and safe environment. [2], [5]

4.4 Entrepreneurial Activity

Small business entrepreneurial activity underpins the successful operation of established rail trails. It provides the funding (via sponsorship and advertising revenue) to cover the modest maintenance costs and encourages active support from local authorities.

Some doubt has been placed on the ability of the proposed Recreation Trail to encourage such activity after implementation. NERTs experience in talking to businesses and organising bodies of other rail trails is that this is a common concern prior to implementation but invariably proven to be unfounded.

There is clear proof in the North East of Tasmania that there are ready and willing investors around. The transformation of Derby following the construction of the Blue Derby mountain bike trails is clearly instructive. The trails were constructed, people came and the businesses followed soon after. The implications are clear, when opportunity presents in this part of Tasmania, economic activity rapidly and readily follows. The ABC article, “Wheels of Progress” [13] is a fitting social study of the causes and effects of the town’s transformation. Rising economic activity and property prices have given residents opportunities and choice over their future prospects that they could only have dreamed about a few years ago. As a resident is quoted in the article:

[13] *“There have about three real estate booms in the town since then. Candice estimates house prices have gone up by 95 per cent in some cases. A lot of older locals took the money and moved away.”*



Business opportunities exist anywhere along the trail. Riders and walkers stop wherever and whenever they wish. Accommodation, a cafe, a craft shop, a produce outlet, a gallery, etc
Murray to Mountains Rail Trail



The Murray to Mountains Rail Trail (VIC) approaches Bright along an avenue of businesses like these accommodation units directly serving the trail.

4.5 Landowners Neighbouring the NE Railway Corridor

Much has been made of resistance by neighbouring landowners to the establishment of the recreation Trail. Whilst this is far from universal (the author, his neighbour and his neighbour’s neighbour border the corridor for approximately 2km and all support the Recreation Trail project) there remains significant suspicion despite attempts to consult and inform by Dorset council and NERT.

Resistance by landowners is a common theme in the establishment of ‘Rail’ Trails worldwide, although in Australia, which lacks a precedent of common law footpaths and bridleways, there seems to be noticeably more entrenched opposition. As the Treasury report concludes:

[5] p. 9: *“It is reported that some landowners adjacent to the corridor do not support the rail trail proposal...The concerns of landowners appear to be riders and walkers entering their land*

and potential damage to crops or disturbance to livestock, threats to biosecurity, fire and the loss of privacy. There are also concerns that the trail would be used by motorised transport, particularly motorbikes.

*These concerns, principally from farmers, have been raised with other proposed rail trails... Treasury has been unable to find evidence that significant adverse outcomes have occurred on existing rail trails. Dorset Council officers have stated that, for some other rail trail proposals, local landowners who may have initially opposed a rail trail have benefitted by establishing stalls or other commercial ventures adjacent to the trails and become supporters. The New Zealand study reported above **did not identify any economic or social** costs to local landowners, including any losses to farmers, from the rail trails."*

This appraisal resonates strongly with the understanding of NERT and our supporters who have experienced Rail Trails elsewhere. When discussing the trails with organising groups, business owners or the general public, the invariable response to questions about the hurdles faced during the development stages concerned resistance from landowners and the more conservative residents of affected communities. Equally common was the subsequent statement that, once established, the opposition to the trails dissipated, often transforming into support as the benefits became apparent.

Although most initial objections are articulated in terms of nuisance, as indicated in the Treasury report, NERT's impression, from communities involved with other rail trails and our own in the North East of Tasmania, is that there are deeply-held and less superficial concerns underlying the objections. Many residents have talked about the history of their region and the deep connection between the development of their communities and influence of the 'old' railway. This sense of the relationship between the railway and those it served can be particularly strong with landowning families especially those whose tenancy has been multi-generational. Their family histories recount the coming of the railway and how it connected their communities to the world, presaging a golden era of development and progress. Other rail trail developers and NERT understand and respect this deep connection.

Engagement with and respect for the history of the railway and its communities is a fundamental consideration of rail trails. On many trails this is apparent from installations and information boards along the trail and background material accessible through their websites. Some examples are shown in the photos below:



The rails may be long gone but the history endures. Pictures and Information boards at Warburton Station (Lilydale to Warburton RT, VIC)



A dismantled bridge is replaced with a cheap, trail suited structure that mimics the original design. An information board tells the bridge's story. (Riesling Trail, SA)



The change from rail to trail is an unsurprisingly daunting prospect to those who see the deep connection between the former railways and the communities they served. NERT fully intends to follow best practice in honouring that history by incorporating information boards and installations along the trail that bring this history to life. By partnering with local history groups NERT intends to, in effect, curate the trail as an open-air museum telling the story of the railway and the communities it passes through. This is not just to secure the provenance of the line and the communities' ownership of its history, but also as an important part of the positive experience visitors can enjoy as they pass through the countryside.

Those trails that get it right are generally rewarded by growing appreciation and support from those sectors of the community that were initially hostile as is evidenced in the photo below.



Rail Trails become an integrated part of the rural landscape and economy. Note the lack of boundary fence between the trail and the vineyard. (R&R)

Art installations commissioned by community organisations enhance community amenity and the visitor experience. In the case above by local vintners and in the case on the right by the local graziers association. (R&R)



4.6 Social Capital

NERT believes that a key stakeholder in both the Trail and Rail proposals is the community of North East Tasmania. Both projects look to the communities for:

- Financial support
- Voluntary support to implement and maintain the Rail or Trail.
- Provision of skills, knowledge and materials for enhancing the visitor experience.

Of particular importance within the communities are the interest groups that are often at the forefront of community social and cultural life. Such groups would include Progress associations, voluntary groups such as the Lions and Rotary clubs, Landcare, CWA, Arts groups, history groups, school associations etc.

The NERT board, as members of the North East community, are loath to see unnecessary division and animosity develop between fellow residents. It is not only harmful at the social level but also diminishes the capability of the community to work harmoniously towards common goals. From an organisational perspective NERT also recognises that the community and the active groups within it represent a stock of social and human capital that both the Trail and Rail projects will be heavily dependent on in order to bring their projects to fruition.

NERT has been deeply concerned that the manner of debate concerning Rail v Trail within the community is undermining this social and human capital by engendering divisiveness and potentially lasting resentments. Splits within the community and particularly within interest groups may render them unwilling or incapable of supporting either of the proposals.

Members of the NERT board have experienced past community controversies and witnessed the damage and the extended time taken to repair trust and social progress within the community. NERT believes that neither project can afford to let old wounds and past divisions reassert themselves just when both projects will need wholehearted community support.

Accordingly, the NERT board made the conscious decision to refrain from active, aggressive and partisan promotion of the Trail project both publicly and on-line. This has meant:

- No mass meetings or rallies.
- An emphasis on promotion by personal contact and face-to-face discussion.
- A strict social media policy on NERT accounts of only discussing matters pertinent to the Trail project and not passing comment on the Rail option.
- Engaging constructively with the Government agencies responsible for decision making and implementation of the Recreation Trail (State Government, Treasury and Dorset Council).

This policy was implemented in reaction to emerging aspects of the debate that NERT found inimical to community harmony. Specifically:

- Argument based on emotional and prejudicial concepts.
- Use of highly selective and unbalanced information.
- Deliberate misinformation.

- Use of social media to bully, troll, harass, abuse and launch unwarranted personal attacks when disagreeing with postings.

While NERT cannot control reaction by supporters of the Recreation Trail (and there have been some unfortunate incidents) disrespectful use of social media by these supporters has been very limited and is not condoned by NERT.

NERT, however, believes that it should be clearly pointed out that monitoring of the Rail project supporter's social media pages has shown clearly co-ordinated campaigns of misinformation and harassment, directed by the project leadership, aimed at intimidating and suppressing contrary opinion. Deliberate use of derogatory terms for cyclists and newer members of the communities has been inciting splits and old cultural divisions.

NERT hoped that the passive position taken would neutralise much of the animosity. It was further hoped that the compromise outlined by the State Government would also present an opportunity for rapprochement. This was a key reason for NERT to accept the proposal.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case, a situation NERT finds deeply regrettable.

5. Summation

The Recreation Trail proposal championed by the North East Recreation Trail Inc is based on the globally recognised 'rail Trail' format. The attraction of rail trails comes from:

- Free and safe access to cycle or walk through countryside and settlements away from traffic and other annoyances.
- Gradients are gentle, allowing ease of use by people of all ages and almost all abilities.
- Rail Trails cover significant distances, allowing for multi-day traverses. This attracts visitors from out of the district looking for an easy-paced, active and varied outdoor holiday experience, one that enables deep immersion in the countryside and communities.
- Rail trail use is growing rapidly world-wide with significant social, health and amenity benefit to local residents. It is also a growing attraction for visitors looking for 'slow' and 'low emissions' holiday breaks.

In short, Rail trails are very much more than simply walking and cycling tracks.

Once established, the Rail Trail model, in Australia and elsewhere, demonstrates the capacity for successful and ongoing self-financing through the sponsorship of local businesses and support of volunteers. Local authorities are generally willing partners that see improved revenue bases arising from the growth in economic activity derived from the Rail Trail.

The projected increase in economic activity is considerable. The NTD report [2] shows conservative to optimistic bands of increased activity of from \$6M p.a. to \$8.5M p.a. after 5 years of operation rising to \$10M p.a. to \$14M p.a. after 15 years of operation.

NERT believes that the Rail Trail model is an excellent fit for the North East railway corridor given the above benefits and:

- The project also aligns closely with the Tasmanian Government's Tasmanian Cycle Tourism Strategy released in September 2017.
- It complements existing bike-based attractions in the North East.
- Tasmania does not have an equivalent attraction. The recreation trail will, therefore, attract a new cohort of visitors potentially benefitting all other aspects of the Tasmanian tourism industry.
- Rail Trail users have extended stays in communities generally bypassed by other visitors, effectively spreading economic benefit.

NERT also acknowledges the existence and merits of the L&NER Heritage Rail proposal. Whilst NERT remains convinced that the Recreation Trail proposal remains the better option for the North East railway corridor, NERT also recognises that there are options that allow for access to the corridor by both parties as long as such access involves separate lengths. NERT has, accordingly, indicated willingness to implement a compromise solution allowing for the development of both proposals.

The State Government has articulated a preferred compromise position that it is keen to implement. This involves a Rail service from (eventually) Launceston to Lilydale and the Recreation Trail extending from Lilydale to Scottsdale. NERT was initially willing to endorse this position, however, a review of the Treasury report [5] has resulted in a reconsideration based on:

- Considerable lack of faith that L&NER has the means, capability, knowledge and potential market to establish and manage a viable service over the Launceston to Lilydale distance.
- The high risk of failure to meet any of the many difficult challenges facing L&NER would result in sections of orphaned and unused corridor.

Accordingly, NERT has reaffirmed its belief that the option outlined in the Discussion Paper [1] remains the optimum solution. This shares the corridor such that a Rail service would run from Launceston to Turners Marsh and the Recreation Trail extend from Turners Marsh to Scottsdale and connect to the existing North East Rail Trail.

NERT, while willing to work with L&NER to bring the benefit of both projects to the North East, also recognises that there exists an acute lack of trust between the two proponents. From NERT's perspective:

- The L&NER proposal lacks technical and financial rigour with deficiency in providing adequate substantiation for claims made. In short, NERT believes that partnering with L&NER would pose excessive risk to both projects, the communities of the North East and public resources.
- The leadership of L&NER has pursued aggressive strategies aimed at undermining the financial and social capital that the Recreation Trails will rely on for implementation. Such tactics completely undermine the trust and respect necessary for effective cooperation.

NERT believes that the necessary trust can be reinstated. To do this, however, would require L&NER to prove their bona fides in a clear, staged and achievable manner. NERT, accordingly, recommends a staged development plan with clear objectives starting with a small 'prototype' operation close to Launceston as a test bed for developing skills, structures and operational procedures. Successful implementation of this would lead to further expansion stages that, based on capability, skills and revenue development, could see the service reach Turners Marsh.

References

- [1] NERT Discussion Paper: Options for the Development of both the North East Recreation Trail and Heritage Rail, March 2018, Reviewed October 2018.
- [2] North East Rail Trail, Preliminary Demand and Economic Benefit Assessment, TRC for Northern Tasmania Development, 2014
- [3] Tasmanian North East Rail Line, Assessment for Establishing a Heritage Rail Operation, Raylink Consulting, 2017
- [4] Proposed Passenger Rail Experience between Launceston and Scottsdale Assessment, Linqage International, 2017.
- [5] Tasmania's North East Rail Corridor. Assessment of the Launceston and North East Railway and the Rail Trail Proposals, Tasmanian Dept. of Treasury and Finance, July 2018
- [6] Key Treasury Findings. Tasmania's North East Rail Corridor Assessment, Tasmanian Dept. of Treasury and Finance, July 2018
- [7] Decision on North-East Rail Line: Tasmanian State Treasurer's Media release. July 2018. <https://www.tas.liberal.org.au/news/decision-north-east-rail-line>
- [8] North East Recreation Trail Inc. Media Release printed in full in the October 2018 Issue of the Lilydale Progressive
- [9] Release of Launceston to Scottsdale Rail Corridor. Letter from TasRail to Dorset Council, November 2014
- [10] NERT Petition: "Support the Proposed North East Rail Trail". Tabled at Dorset Council June 2017
- [11] Farming's Value to Society. Royal Agricultural Society of England, Members Agri-Bulletin Paper 1087, 2013
- [12] Heart Foundation Article. January 2018
- [13] Wheels of progress: What happens when a rural town becomes the mountain bike capital of Australia?, ABC News Dec 2017: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-26/mountain-bike-trails-driving-major-change-in-derby/9276384>
- [14] Join the Bike Friendly Movement. Newsflash. Tourism Industry Council Tasmania (TICT). October 2018. <https://mailchi.mp/888ee01e5325/we-like-to-think-were-a-friendly-bunch-bike-friendly-that-is?e=4073ad4895>

Further Information on Rail Trails

www.railtrails.org.au

www.railtrail.com

www.rideforrest.com.au

www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz

Appendix A: North East Recreation Trail Inc.

Board Members and Supporters.

Malcolm **Cowan**, B Ec, Grad Dip Bus Management, Grad Cert Pubic Sector Management Board Member.

After graduating from Monash University in 1971 and prior to moving to Tasmania in 1983, Malcolm worked in England and on return to Australia in commercial agricultural production with agribusiness company Elders IXL. As a senior manager in DPIWE, Malcolm was involved in high level policy development and implementation, working with farmers to improve their businesses and evaluating new opportunities for the agricultural sector. In 2001 Malcolm moved back to the private sector, operating his own business consultancy, still involved with the rural sector. His work included the development of HACCP risk assessment plans and quality assurance programs for food and fibre production, small business development and environmental assessment and extension projects.

In retirement, Malcolm is a founding member of the Tamar Bicycle Users Group and tours extensively overseas by bicycle each year with his wife Vicky.

Richard **Forrest**.

Treasurer.

Married to ANNE for 38 years with two sons Tom and Will.

Born and educated in Sydney with a degree in Commerce from Macquarie University. After a short stint in an Accounting Firm in Sydney moved to Launceston working in the same role.

Richard then purchased Launceston Market Supplies - a long established fruit and vegetable supplier. In this role he got involved in the National Representative body holding industry conferences throughout Australia and Tasmania.

During this period he also got involved in various other activities including a transport business, livestock and crop farming, tree farming and others.

Over a three year period he Chaired the privatisation of the Cressy Longford Irrigation Scheme.

Richard was a member of The Rotary Club of Launceston for 28 years holding all positions and involved with three overseas aid projects.

In their leisure time Richard and Anne now sail. They have been fortunate to sail to New Caledonia and to sail also the waters of Spain, Greece and Turkey

Richard has cycled for over 18 years, over almost every road in Tasmania and participated in lots of cycling events in Tasmania and Victoria

Michael **Lowe**

Secretary

Michael, age 56, lives in Launceston with his wife and three young children. He worked as an award-winning reporter and sub-editor at The Examiner for 12 years until he left as a self-

funded retiree in 2014. Prior to that, he worked on newspapers around Australia, including The Border Mail in Albury-Wodonga. He was involved in establishing the High Country Rail Trail starting at Wodonga. He also rode on the nearby Murray to Mountains Rail Trail and noted how these trails (and many more) became beloved community resources and valuable tourism assets. He has a Bachelor of Arts (majoring in journalism and government) from the University of Queensland and was a long-time member of the Media, Entertainment and Art Alliance.

Glenn Moore

Board Member

North Eastern local born in Scottsdale, with land adjacent to the rail trail and a strong supporter of the North Eastern Rail Trail.

Lives in Scottsdale with his wife Dinah, four adult children one of which is making his home in the North East and running the farm and packing facility.

66 years old self-funded retiree. In his working life he built up and managed an agri-business growing, packing and exporting vegetables to the domestic and export markets. Through this business he was one of the larger employers in the district employing 30 FTE.

Glenn has also given back to his community through his active involvement with Apex and then Rotary and maintains his involvement with Rotary until the present time as a Rotary member on the N.E.R.T. board.

Harry Rigney Dip.Ed., LL.B.(Hons.), LL.M. (Harvard '80)

President

Harry Rigney is a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Courts of Tasmania and Australian Capital Territory and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Queensland. His focus in legal practice is in building and expanding commercial ventures and not-for-profit organisations, with emphasis on regulatory context and investment structuring. He has carried out this work in team roles with Coopers & Lybrand and PricewaterhouseCoopers, as advocate and legal consultant, as director of private and public companies, and as an author and educator. He is a partner vigneron with Susan Denny 'in The Ridge North Lilydale' producing classic Tasmania sparkling and pinot noir wines.

Mike Scott BSc (Hons) CEng MIMechE

Vice President

Mike is a chartered professional engineer with 30 years' experience in manufacturing and the automotive industry. Latterly he has had senior management responsibility for the Technical, Quality and Environmental portfolios of a major Tasmanian manufacturer.

Since 2009 Mike has also lectured at the UTAS School of Engineering introducing management skills such as, feasibility studies, project management, problem solving, risk analysis, quality systems and communication to final year undergraduates.

Mike has had a long involvement with voluntary community organisations. He is a current member and past President of the Lilydale District Progress Association.

Mike is a firm believer in the Rail Trail concept having used such trails in Europe and Australia. He also has an affinity for Heritage Rail operations and has enjoyed varied excursions over 5 continents.

NERT Supporters

Among NERTS many keen supporters there are those who have volunteered their expertise in professional diverse fields including (but not limited to); Marketing, Surveying, Small Business, Trades. The supporter base also has experience in organising voluntary groups involved in environmental/landscape management (i.e. Landcare) and community-based events (i.e. community markets).

NERT can also call upon the knowledge and skills developed by the Rotary Club of Scottsdale gained during the conversion of the rail corridor between Scottsdale and Billycock Hill.

○

○

North East Recreation Trail Inc

DISCUSSION PAPER

OPTIONS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOTH THE NORTH EAST RECREATION TRAIL AND HERITAGE RAIL

March 2018
(Reviewed October 2018)

Prepared by:
Mike Scott, BSc CEng MIMechE
Vice President, North East Recreation Trail Inc

Specialist Advice Provided by:
Chris Pedersen, BGeom MSSSI
Committee Member, North East Recreation Trail Inc

Authorised by:
Harry Rigney, LL.M.(Harvard '80) LL.B. (Hons) (UTAS) Dip.Ed. CTA TEP
President, North East Recreation Trail Inc

1. Summary

The North East Recreation Trail Inc group (NERT) plans, in partnership with Dorset Council, to convert the abandoned North East Railway into a walking and cycling track. The end result is envisaged as a trail linking Launceston to Scottsdale and the existing North East Rail Trail from Scottsdale to Billycock Hill. NERT (formerly called North East Rail Trail Inc) is a community group formed in 2014 to build and maintain the recreation trail. NERT received a \$1.47 million Federal Government funding promise in 2015. The project is fully funded with the Federal Government grant, a smaller Tasmanian Community Fund grant and a business plan developed with Dorset Council.

An alternative proposal for the rail corridor exists in the form of a Heritage Rail operation. NERT remains convinced that the existing Recreation Trail proposal remains the superior proposal on the basis of viability and the broad economic and social benefits that would be realised. NERT also recognises that Heritage Rail operations can bring many benefits and can, potentially, be compatible with contiguous Recreation Trails.

NERT believes that the most effective means to support the development of both tourism-based ventures would be to enable Heritage Rail operators to develop a varied offering of excursions based on the existing, well managed and safe TasRail network and designate all abandoned sections of line for alternative uses.

NERT has considered the possibility of shared use of the North East railway corridor as an additional but less optimal alternative. Combining the commercial imperatives required for successful Heritage Rail operation and the maximisation of potential benefit, NERT has developed the most workable scenario. This would involve a Heritage Rail service operating between Launceston and the junction of Austins Road and Pipers River Rd at Turners Marsh. The Recreation Trail would continue from this point to Scottsdale.

2. Introduction and Scoping Statements

Tasmanian Government legislation has recently enabled alternative uses for abandoned commercial rail corridors.

The North East railway linking Launceston and Scottsdale has not seen a rail service for 15 years and lies derelict.

Two seemingly competing and mutually exclusive projects have been proposed for the corridor:

- a. A walking and cycling track (based on the internationally recognised 'Rail Trail' format) promoted by the North East Recreation Trail Inc group (NERT).
- b. A 'Heritage Rail' operation proposing to run a rail-car (and potentially a steam train) service promoted by the Launceston and North East Railway group (L&NER).

Both have substantial community support. This strongly reinforces the premise behind the government legislation that releasing the rail corridor to alternative uses would be favoured by affected communities and lead to a result with positive outcomes for those communities. Leaving the corridor 'as is' or allowing it to be absorbed by neighbouring landowners have, effectively, been rejected as options by the community.

Due to the nature of the corridor and the extensive use of cuttings and embankments there is extremely limited opportunity for safe side-by-side use. The two proposed options have, therefore, to be considered as mutually exclusive at all sections of the corridor. Usage of separate lengths of the corridor, however, is feasible.

3. Pertinent Considerations

A study of key reports [1, 2, 3] to government concerning the two proposals and a review of both 'Rail Trail' and 'Heritage Rail' operations in Australia, strongly suggests that:

- Rail Trails provide maximum benefit where they pass through settled rural landscapes as they:
 - Are readily accessible to residents for safe exercise and access to schools, shops and services.
 - Are popular with visitors looking to travel peacefully and safely through the region, either on foot or bicycle, with the ability to sample, at will, all the region has to offer.
 - Provide a ready market for small business offering visitor attractions, hospitality, sustenance, bike hire and servicing, arts and crafts and local produce.
- The viability of Rail Trails is moderately insensitive to the trail length. In general, for additional length maintenance costs are offset by additional sponsors. Longer trails benefit from extra visitor spend due to multiple overnight stays.

...on the other hand:

- Heritage Rail operations provide no economic or amenity benefit to any part of the line other than at a few stops. To close neighbours the passage of trains can be intrusive.
- Even at stops, economic benefit is limited as visitor numbers are high for short, sporadic and hard to manage intervals.
- Heritage rail passengers put a premium on the 'railway' experience. They prefer return journeys completed between 10am and 4pm in a single day.
- Due to cost and the restriction to a single route, Tourist (Heritage) Railways are predominantly a one-off experience. There would be limited ongoing utility for residents.
- The viability of Heritage Rail operations is highly dependent on the length of line under management, the inherited quality of the rail infrastructure and the topography through which the line passes. Managing and maintaining track to acceptable safety standards represents a substantial challenge and results in a significant diversion of limited resources away from the core activity of providing interesting outings in heritage trains.
- Heritage Rail operations benefit from having a terminus in a populous and well visited regional centre.

4. Objectives

This discussion paper assesses potential solutions that enable the establishment of both the Recreation 'Rail' Trail and the development of Heritage Rail operations. These solutions address the strengths and challenges of both proposals.

These solutions are also based on the premise that a Recreation Trail and a Heritage Rail operation would have to access different lengths of track. With this in mind, objectives can be summarised as:

1. To maximise the interaction between settled rural areas and a Recreation Trail.
2. To ensure that the Recreation Trail extends to include the existing Scottsdale to Billycock Hill section and has sufficient length to encourage multiple overnight stops whether walking or cycling.
3. To ensure Heritage Rail access to track that is sufficient for single day return including stops whilst minimising the burden of repair, maintenance and management. To also enable the potential for the Heritage Rail operation to access a variety of destinations.
4. To ensure that the division of the corridor between Recreation Trail and Heritage Rail (should it be deemed necessary) enables and encourages users of one to also use the other, thereby expanding the potential market for both.

5. NERT Perspectives in Relation to Shared Use

NERT is committed to implementing the Recreation Trail from Launceston to Scottsdale. Any alternative arrangements that encourages the growth of viable Heritage Rail attractions without impinging on this objective is very welcome and should be considered as a priority.

If shared use becomes an imperative, NERT strongly believes that an optimum compromise could be developed around the simple division of the rail corridor as follows:

- A Heritage Rail service operating between Launceston and the Austins Road and Pipers River Road junction at Turners Marsh. (Approximately 22km depending on the location of the Launceston terminus). This would require access to sections of working Bell Bay rail line managed by TasRail.
- A walking and cycling recreation trail from Turners Marsh through to Scottsdale connecting with the existing North East Rail Trail. (Approximately 51km and 79km when combined with the North East Rail Trail).

6. Reasoning

This proposal for a workable split of shared use is based on the following outcomes:

- a. The proposed length of the Recreation Trail would include all the settled rural areas providing maximised health and amenity benefits and minimising potential nuisance.

- b. At 79km the Recreation Trail would be close to the minimum length required for two overnight stops (one-way) at a leisurely cycling pace and three overnight stops for walkers. Both assume frequent stopping at communities, vineyards and other attractions.
- c. The Recreation Trail would incorporate all the bridges and level crossings [A] identified in the Raylink report. This would substantially reduce the initial and ongoing management cost for the Heritage Rail operators and therefore reduce risk of the venture failing or requiring additional input of public funds.
- d. The length of the Heritage Rail section at 22km is compatible with the length of sustainable tourist rail operations elsewhere (Appendix A) and close to an optimal length that allows for:
 - i. Return journeys could be readily completed within the customer preferred daytime operating window (10:00am to 4:30pm).
 - ii. Potentially more than one return trip in peak season and intermittent operation in off-peak times.
 - iii. Easier and more convenient operating hours for a casual volunteer workforce. This allows for more effective use of a vital resource with less risk of burn-out. [B]
- e. The Heritage Rail responsibility for the upgrading and maintenance of track would be restricted to the 8km between Coldwater Creek and the Austins Rd junction and potentially the link from Inveresk to the Bell Bay line at Newstead. As the Linqage report [C] and the article from the Weekly (Appendix B) make clear, it is the cost of conversion and management of track that is a principle burden on a rail operation. This has a further dimension in that volunteers prefer to work on the rolling stock and the provision of the railway experience rather than the maintenance of track and corridor. This often falls to work-for-the-dole gangs (Linqage) which is both hard to manage and an impost on public finances (opportunity cost).
- f. The choice of the Austins Road and Pipers River Road (B83) junction as a preferred terminus for both the Heritage Rail and Recreation Trail (Appendix C) is derived from:
 - i. Ease of road access (20min from Launceston CBD)
 - ii. Ample space for parking, platforms and any other facilities. The road and rail line are straight and run parallel for 350m with combined corridors of 75m width. On the East side of the B83 the rail corridor continues parallel with the B83 for some distance with the rail corridor extending to incorporate the land between the road and rails. The first 175m of which (up to the Karoola Fire Station, 700 Pipers River Rd) is over 50m wide and is currently unused.
 - iii. The Heritage Rail proposal includes the possibility of setting up a museum at Turners Marsh siding. This would be more appropriately located at the Austins Rd terminus due to the available space and road access (both of which are very limited at the Turners Marsh siding).

7. Implementation

The upgrading of track between Coldwater Creek and the Austins Rd junction and potentially the link from Inveresk to the Bell Bay line at Newstead would be analogous to works detailed in the L&NER proposal. Similarly, the conversion of the corridor from rail to trail from Pipers River Road to Scottsdale would fall within the scope of the North East Recreation Trail proposal and funding plan.

The most significant change in implementation planning comes in the earlier requirement for the L&NER operation to access TasRail managed track. In the existing plans this is listed as part of the fourth stage of implementation. Access to working track has frequently been described by Heritage Rail enthusiasts as both highly desirable but also unattainable due to intransigence on the part of the rail operator.

It is NERT's understanding, on good authority, that:

- The rail operator (TasRail) has no formal policy regarding Heritage Rail operator access to the network, however it is being considered.
- There are no technical/legal/insurance issues that rule this out in any way.
- There is a recognised process that a Heritage Rail operation can undergo to achieve the required 'Rail Safety Accreditation' from the National Rail Regulator and meet TasRail's own operational capability standard. This would remove any technical impediment.

With a workable process for Heritage Rail operations to gain access to safe, managed track there is every reason to believe that this proposal is viable. Further investigation would be required to establish how much assistance Heritage Rail operations would require in order to meet the required safety accreditation.

This approach comes with both direct and indirect benefits:

- It is expected that achieving and maintaining the required safety accreditation would come at substantially less cost and effort than refurbishing and maintaining the bulk of the North East Railway.
- Access to the TasRail network would open up a variety of destinations and enable the operation to provide multiple and novel experiences.
- Establishing a viable process for gaining access to the network would be very popular with many Heritage Rail operators. It is more likely to foster integrated Heritage Rail activities in Tasmania whereby the pooling of resources could result in more robust regional groups rather than the fragile, disparate (and potentially competing) stand-alone operations that exist currently.
- It would help to alleviate the heavy resource burden that managing track imposes on Heritage Rail operations. This resource would be better redirected to developing the kind of variety and premium experience offerings that are seen to be the key to success in the Heritage Rail market. [E]

With access to TasRail managed track there is a strong argument that there would be no need for any operation to undergo the expense and risk of returning disused and degraded

track to operational status in order to provide a railway experience. This is particularly the case where, in doing so, rural communities would be denied the benefit of alternative uses.

NERT strongly endorses this argument. An implicit understanding that the future of Heritage Rail is aligned with the use of high quality, safe and accessible commercial track and that abandoned and degraded corridors are better aligned with alternative uses (such as non-motorised trails) would help:

- Provide more certainty to communities and businesses.
- Provide for longer term strategic planning unhindered by repeated and divisive debate over the same issue at different flashpoints.
- Allow for more cooperative rather than competitive interaction between rail and trail operations. (See Appendix D, Rail and Trail, a future vision).

8. Summation

The North East Recreation Trail Inc group believes that the best future use of the disused North East rail corridor would be as a walking and cycling trail over its full length (including connection to the Launceston city bike trail network at Rocherlea). This to enable integration of:

- a regional centre and tourist hub (Launceston),
- a multi-day bike and cycle trail,
- service, hospitality, retail and produce businesses at all points along the line,
- existing bike trails and attractions around Launceston, Underwood, Scottsdale and Derby.

NERT believes that there is room for both Recreation Trail and Heritage Rail operations in Tasmania. It is also believed that these could be complementary tourism drawcards if allowed to develop within a clear strategy. The strategy favoured by NERT would be for support to be given to appropriate Heritage Rail operations to access the TasRail network and set aside abandoned rail corridors for alternative uses. It is envisaged that mutually beneficial outcomes could arise whereby the Heritage Rail services provide a link between regional centres and these alternative uses.

On the understanding that if this is not a favoured outcome, NERT is open to discussion regarding shared use of the corridor with a Heritage Rail operation on the clear understanding that:

- There is no opportunity for safe side-by-side operation.
- Modification of the scope of the Recreation Trail proposal to allow for shared use of the corridor must be restricted to ensure continued compliance with the conditions pertaining to the release of promised Federal funding.
- The Rail operation should be restricted to scenic but unpopulated sections of the corridor.
- The Rail operation should not be granted access to a length of corridor that is incompatible with the ability of a volunteer workforce to manage and/or the need to provide excursions within the 10am to 4pm window.
- Both the Rail and Trail should operate over uninterrupted lengths of the corridor.

- With shared use would come shared responsibility to provide mutual support and operate in a manner that maximises movement of users between the Rail and Trail.
- There should be clearly established timing and viability targets set such that failure to meet such targets by one of the operators would result in termination of any contracted access to the corridor. Poor implementation by one should not be allowed to negatively impact the operation of the other.

NERT strongly believes that the best fit scenario would be:

- A Heritage Rail service operating between Launceston and the Austins Road and Pipers River Road junction at Turners Marsh.
- A walking and cycling recreation trail from Turners Marsh through to Scottsdale connecting with the existing North East Rail Trail.

This meets the criteria above with the additional benefits of providing the Heritage Rail operation with:

- Access to a scenic length of track suitable for an appropriate return journey duration.
- Minimised track management burden.
- A broader scope of potential destinations.
- A transition terminus between Rail and Trail that is located where there is major road access and availability of sufficient public land for facilities and parking.

References

- [1] North East Rail Trail, Preliminary Demand and Economic Benefit Assessment, TRC for Northern Tasmania Development, 2014
- [2] Tasmanian North East Rail Line, Assessment for Establishing a Heritage Rail Operation, Raylink Consulting, 2017
- [3] Proposed Passenger Rail Experience between Launceston and Scottsdale Assessment, Linqage International, 2017.

Pertinent Excerpts

[A] "TasRail advises that between Turners Marsh and Scottsdale there were 10 level crossings that were protected by flashing lights, while L&NER itself suggest up to 15..." (Raylink)

[B] "A key consideration with the management of volunteers is "burn out". Volunteer workloads must be managed to avoid overwork, and the activities must remain satisfying and enjoyable." (Linqage, Sect 2.2.1, P9)

[C] "The tourist and heritage rail sector is a capital and labour-intensive industry sector characterised by:

- High establishment costs; and
- High fixed maintenance costs.

The characteristic especially applies to track.."; (Linqage, Sect. 2.1, P6)

[D] "Generally, most services do not commence until after 10 am in the morning, which enables patrons to have a leisurely breakfast prior to their experience. Most schedules allow patrons to complete their experience by 4 pm." (Linqage, Sect 2.3.3, P14)

[E] "Successful tourist and heritage operations in Australia and internationally all have a range of product offerings, based around an enjoyable and memorable "excursion experience" for families, and a "premium product" for those patrons seeking a more value-added product which generally includes beverages and food." (Linqage, Sect 2.3.2, P13)

Appendix A. Case Study: Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society Inc.

Whilst there are many Heritage Rail operations throughout Australia it is hard to benchmark the proposed L&NER operation with successful examples as there are many compounding factors that make direct comparison potentially misleading. One operation, however, does stand out as having significant similarities, the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society in South Australia. This operation comes with the following key similarities:



Pichi Richi. Barwell Bull Railcar.

- It is not within the hinterland of a major metropolis and the ready supply of volunteers and customers that provides.
 - It depends heavily on passing tourist trade and benefits from its location (close to the Flinders Ranges and Stuart Highway) for a ready and steady supply of clients.
- It, however, enjoys some advantages that the L&NER operation would struggle to realise.
- The ability to run a variety of services including diesel and steam (due to high quality track).
 - The marketing cachet of running on a very famous route (the Old Ghan).

With the above factors in mind there are key inferences and comparisons to be made. These reinforce assessments made elsewhere in this paper, that:

- a) Heritage rail operations benefit significantly from being able to offer a range of excursions.
- b) Short trips of less than 3 hours and/or 20km each way are the most popular with clients, are the most lucrative and are the best aligned with the levels of commitment of a volunteer workforce.
- c) Scenic trips through unpopulated regions are a positive draw.

Pichi Richi railway has access to significant length of iconic track, part of the Old Ghan line, stretching 39km between Port Augusta and Quorn. Despite this 70% of scheduled services are restricted to 16km (Quorn to Woolshed Flat) as this provides the most popular and affordable excursion (2.5hr round trip). All trips are return excursions and operate between 10:30 am and 4:30pm. The shorter excursions take place through scenic and unpopulated areas.

<https://www.pichirichirailway.org.au/train-services.html>

Despite being regarded as a benchmark for successful operation of a Heritage Rail service the Pichi Richi Railway Preservation Society Inc. remains dependent on public funding and assistance:

“Local and state government have also assisted significantly with easing the burden of public liability insurance premiums in recent years, with premiums returning to more affordable levels of late.

In addition, local and state government have provided funding to help develop professional marketing of the Pichi Richi Railway ... Most of this assistance has been provided by the South Australian Tourism Commission.

Local government funding has been provided by both the Flinders Ranges Council and the Port Augusta City Council. Additionally, certain project funding has been provided by the Northern Regional Development Board (now Regional Development Australia Far North)."

<https://www.pichirichirailway.org.au/about/funding.html>

Even though the rail operation is dependent on a local volunteer workforce and local suppliers, only a small fraction of ticket income is retained within the local economy (note that the 27% figure quoted includes 'fuel and lubricants' one of the major cost items for a rail operation. The local supplier of such items would likely only retain a small margin of this expenditure indicating that the 27% figure is likely to be a significant over-estimation:

"...calculations indicated that about 27% (or just over one dollar in every four) of the Society's annual spending involved businesses in Quorn and Port Augusta... Such local spending includes fuel and lubricants, advertising, timetable printing, hardware, refreshments/catering supplies, mechanical repairs, rail safety worker medical assessments, and pest control services".

<https://www.pichirichirailway.org.au/about/funding.html>

Appendix B. Weekly Times Article

Quotes from the operators of the former South Gippsland Tourist Railway make it clear that balancing the demands of managing track with income and the availability of volunteer staff, is a huge challenge for Heritage Rail operators.

End of line for South Gippsland tourist railway

CHRIS McLENNAN, The Weekly Times

January 21, 2016 12:00am

THE South Gippsland tourist railway has closed.

The cost of maintaining trains and 38km of railway line led to the decision on the weekend. Almost 100,000 passengers rode the rails between Nyora and Leongatha during two decades of operation.

South Gippsland rail line supervisor Step O'Rafferty said the rising cost of meeting transport safety standards and a declining number of volunteers hastened the end for the tourist attraction.

Mr O'Rafferty said some of the state's 17 tourist rail operations, like Belgrave's Puffing Billy, received government support but most did not.

"Some are doing quite well, mostly in well-populated areas, but we understand many other tourist rail operations like ours are in trouble," he said.

Volunteer Peter Hinksman said \$100,000 to replace South Gippsland's ageing Y-class locomotive wheels and \$100,000 to replace sleepers along the Korumburra to Leongatha section of the line helped bring about the end.

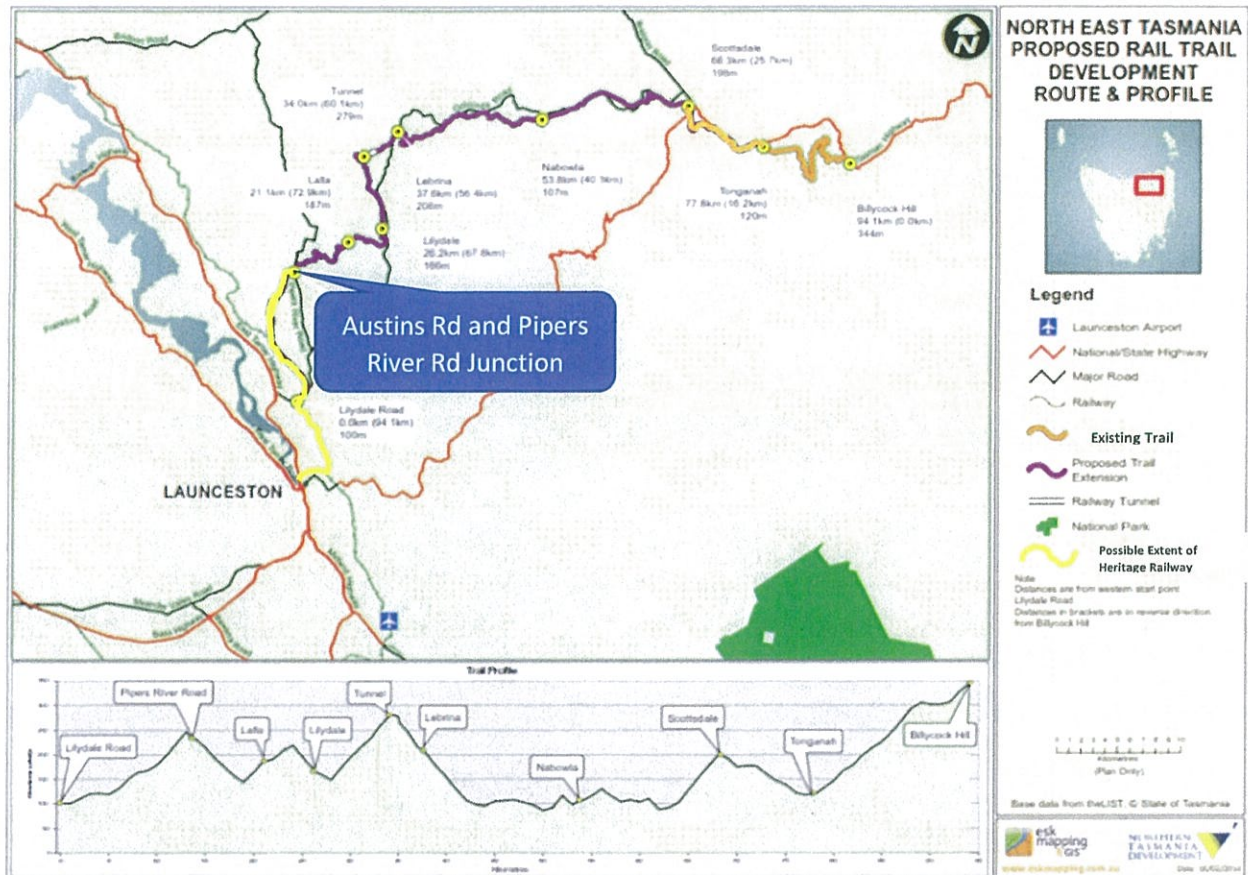
He said volunteers were also responsible for maintaining several old trestle bridges.

"Keeping our accreditation just became impossible, we didn't have the money or the people," he said.

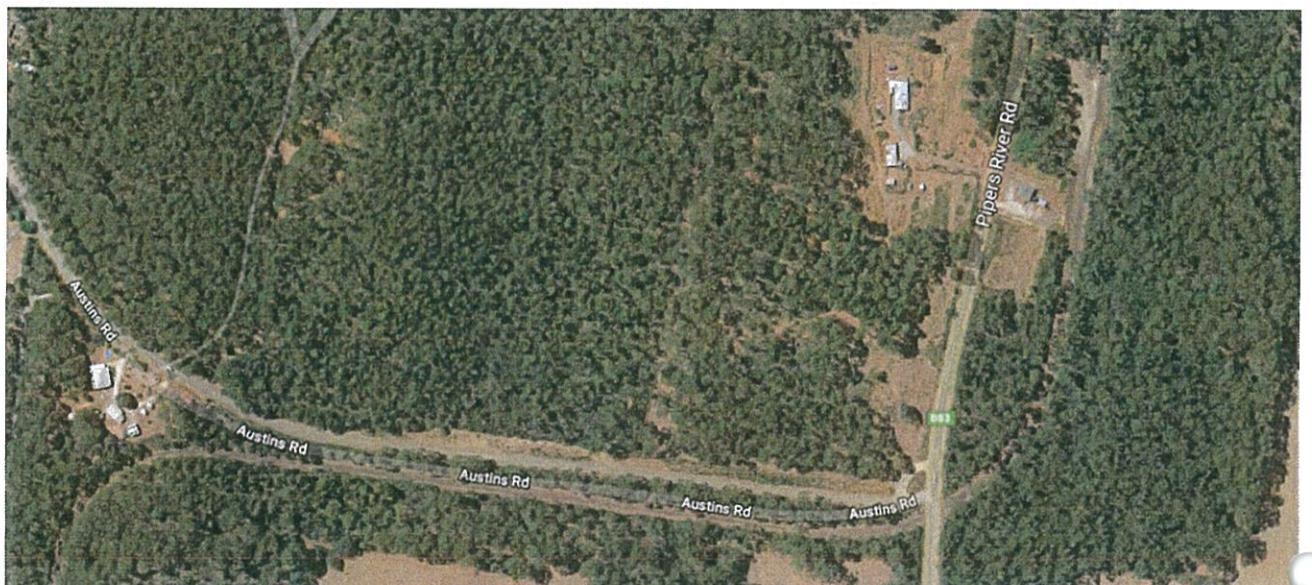
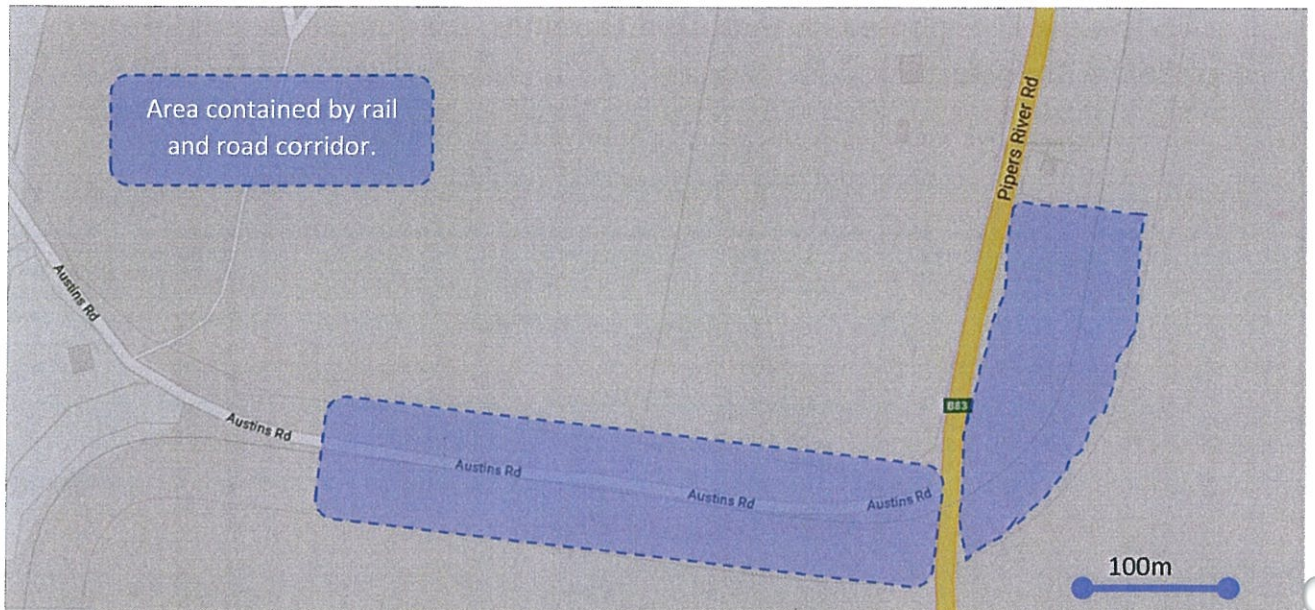
He said the rail museum at Korumburra would remain open by appointment and no decisions had been made about the future of the assets.

Appendix C. Proposed Rail and Trail Terminus. Junction of Austins Rd and Pipers River Rd

The map and overview below show the location of the proposed terminus and the significant areas of easement potentially available for facilities and parking.



Austins Rd and the parallel section of the North East Rail Line



Austins Rd and Piper Rd Junction.
Overviews showing possible areas
for facilities and parking.

Austins Rd and Pipers River Rd
Junction. (Looking West)

Appendix D. Rail and Trail. A Possible Future.

Heritage Rail and Recreation Trails need not be competing tourism attractions. Many amongst the Heritage Rail supporters have articulated the willingness to operate services aimed at linking cycle tourists with the termini of recreation trails. Transporting cyclists and their equipment would be a fundamental part of this.

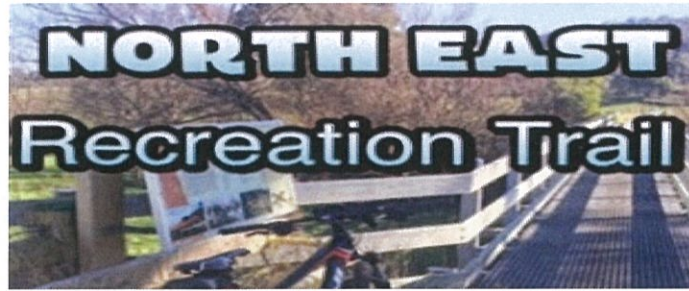
Access to TasRail managed track for Heritage Rail operations has the prospect of opening up many Rail & Trail excursions throughout the State. The map below (based on the TasRail activity map, courtesy of TasRail) shows some of the possibilities:



1. **North East Recreation Trail***, Launceston to Herrick.
2. **Derwent Valley Rail Trail***, Boyer to Maydena
3. **Western Line Rail Trail**, Burnie to Wiltshire
4. **NE Dundas Tramway Trail**, Melba Flats to Montezuma Falls
5. **Hobart Line Trail**, Bridgewater to North Hobart (potentially dual use)

*Current proposals





North East Recreation Trail (NERT) Inc

The future of the North East Rail corridor between Launceston and Scottsdale has been contested by proponents of a Heritage Rail service and supporters, including NERT, of the plan to convert it into a pedestrian and bicycle recreation trail. The latter will follow the globally recognised 'rail trail' format.

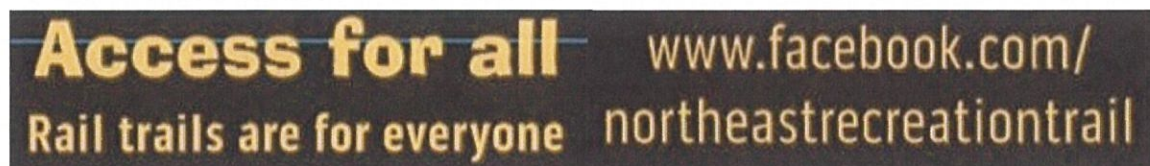
After exhaustive consultation and consideration, the Tasmanian Government has announced a compromise solution involving a rail service up to Lilydale and a recreation trail from there to Scottsdale.

NERT remains convinced that the North East communities would have been best served by a recreation trail over the full length of the line but also recognises the interest and support behind the rail proposal. Accordingly, NERT would like to congratulate the Tasmanian Government for taking a well informed and even-handed approach and arriving at a workable compromise that should be welcomed by all.

With the government's principled decision in place, NERT believes that the time for rivalry and community division over the two proposals should be at an end. The best outcomes for the communities of the North East can only be realised in a spirit of cooperation.

Accordingly, NERT looks forward to engaging constructively with all interested parties to ensure that the new lease of life given to the rail corridor brings benefits and opportunities to all the communities along the line.

Mike Scott
VP North East Recreation Trail Inc



○

○



11 Techno Park Drive
PO Box 335
Kings Meadows Tasmania 7249
T 1300 TASRAIL
F 03 6335 2636
www.tasrail.com.au

25 November 2014

Mr Tim Watson
General Manager
Dorset Council
3 Ellenor St
Scottsdale TAS 7260

Dear Tim

RELEASE OF LAUNCESTON TO SCOTTSDALE RAIL CORRIDOR

TasRail has undertaken a review of its non-operational lines, including the Launceston to Scottsdale Line (the North-East Line), and considers that there are no significant commercial rail freight opportunities likely on that line within the foreseeable future.

As a consequence, TasRail will be advising the Minister for Infrastructure of its intention to relinquish its lease on the North-East Line. Ultimately, it will be a decision for the Minister and the Department of State Growth to determine future uses for the corridor, but from a rail freight perspective TasRail has no further use. It should be noted that any future lessee will be responsible for vegetation management and public liability obligations.

Further, in relinquishing its leasehold over the North-East Line, TasRail will seek the right to re-invoke the corridor lease in the event that a substantial commercial rail freight opportunity emerged in the future (notwithstanding the significant investment that would be required by TasRail in order to re-establish rail freight operations).

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Damien White', is written over a circular stamp or seal.

Damien White
Chief Executive Officer



Agri-Bulletin is compiled by the Royal Agricultural Society of England for its Members.



ROYAL AGRICULTURAL
SOCIETY of ENGLAND

MEMBERS' AGRI-BULLETIN

Paper 1087

Farming's value to society

Summary

The report recommends that farming should deliver more food with provenance and build direct producer-consumer relationships; reinforce the public's understanding that farms produce food; further enhance farmland biodiversity and realise its social and economic benefits; create greater access for green exercise, therapeutic day visits and care farming and assess potential savings to the public purse; use explicit values and ethics frameworks to inform policy development; use participatory techniques for assessing the value of farming's public goods and for engagement with the public and that the farming industry uses the report to determine a clear course of action to which all interested parties can be committed.

This briefing is taken from this year's Oxford Farming Conference report "Farming's value to society - realising the opportunity" by S P Carruthers, Vision 37, D M Winter, University of Exeter and N J Evans, University of Worcester. The full report is at:
<http://www.ofc.org.uk/files/ofc/papers/ofcreportfullow.pdf>

In the past, farming's role in society was clearly understood and appreciated. It would never have occurred to ask: 'what is the value of farming?' By the 1970s and 1980s, however, as the full effects of post-war agricultural intensification emerged, public attitudes to farming became increasingly determined by its impacts on the environment, animal welfare, the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) budget and food surpluses. As a result, farmers felt increasingly marginalised. Opinion polls now suggest that the public, once again, is mostly in favour of farming. And some farmers and farm leaders are feeling more confident. However, confidence cannot rely just on public opinion, but requires an evidence-based understanding of farming's continuing value to society. This study aims to address that need.

Public attitudes

Public attitudes to farming and farmers are mostly positive, although significant minorities hold negative opinions. Public understanding of farming is, however, limited. Most people regard farming as important to the economy and believe that farming plays an important role in protecting the environment; they remain concerned about farm animal welfare and GMOs.

Policy challenges

UK farming has to rise to the challenges of global food security, climate change and energy security, yet must do so in the light of experience of the profound environmental impacts of

intensive agriculture. Policy must place society's present and future needs at the centre of the farming and food system - understanding farming's value to society is vital to do this.

Food

Food production remains farming's core value - both current production and the capacity to produce food into the future. UK farming substantially feeds a population of 63.5 million people, and supports industries that together contribute nearly 7% of national Gross Value Added (GVA).

Food security is valued - many people believe that Britain needs to be more self-sufficient in food. But there are no indications of a mandate to obtain this at the cost of compromising animal welfare or environmental protection. An important additional part of the value of food is delivered through its provenance. People value knowing where food comes from and how it is produced: animal welfare and British/regional/local origins are particularly significant. The 'ethical' food market (from UK sources) has more than doubled in the last 10 years and accounts for about 2.7% total food spending. For some, a direct relationship with producers matters - as evidenced by the growth in farm shops, farmers' markets and community-supported agriculture.

Land

As well as food production, farmland supports other industries, such as tourism, riding and shooting, which play important roles in rural economies and communities. Farming has both positive and negative impacts on the natural environment - its negative impact has decreased, but it still imposes a net cost on the environment and there are further improvements to be made.

Farmland's social and cultural value is expressed through landscape, nature and place.

- There are many indicators of the high value placed on farmland landscapes and biodiversity. Their continued value, however, depends on stewardship of the natural and cultural components of farmland.
- Farmland provides a valuable natural amenity, attracting regular recreational visits and increasing the value of nearby property. The therapeutic benefits of nature are increasingly recognised, and farmland plays a role in delivering these.
- As place, farmland makes an important contribution to national, regional and local identities - land has been eulogized over many years in much of the UK's best-loved literature and art, and is at the heart of our cultural identity.

People

Farming people add another important, though less recognised, dimension to farming's value. They have created distinctive landscapes, places and communities over the centuries, and, despite declining numbers, remain a significant influence on rural life in many areas. Farming has an important place in people's imagination, as evident in the popularity of farming-themed television and radio programmes. Interest in connecting with farming is also revealed by the growing numbers of people visiting open farms. Recent experience and growth in therapeutic day visits to farms, and, especially, in care farming, is evidence of the considerable therapeutic potential of the farm as a whole.

Values

Farming is valuable because it satisfies, or could satisfy, values related to subsistence, security, relationships among people and with nature, tradition and identity. These latter reflect many of the social and cultural benefits of farming identified above. Satisfying them depends on public access to farms and farmland, strong connections between farming and wider society, and stewardship of the natural and cultural environment. Ethical perspectives urge us to move beyond thinking just in terms of 'delivery', costs and benefits, to understanding farming and society as a

relationship of mutual consideration and responsibility, with emphasis on stewardship and service. Ethics can also inform how we value farming's public goods and how farming engages with the public.

Total value

Farming satisfies needs and values and provides a broad range of different benefits (as well as incurring costs). Farming touches people's lives in perhaps more ways than any other industry. The different types of value delivered by farming, and the indicators that reveal them, cannot, however, be meaningfully added up: appreciating total value means seeing things from different viewpoints at the same time. As well as taking up specific opportunities, delivering more value to society requires farming (both the industry and policy) to strengthen public engagement, determine the critical number of farms and farmers needed to secure farming's full value, and consider how to use the CAP and other policy measures to secure social goods. For the future, farming should draw inspiration and ideas from a wide range of sources, including from outside farming - farming needs not only technical solutions, but also social innovations.

Highlights of the study's statistics

Of the UK population:

- 100% eats food from UK farms. In statistical terms 78% derives all their indigenous food and 63% of all their food from UK farms
- Approx. £2,532 million spent on ethical food from UK sources (2.6% total food spending); 160% growth in last 10 years. Red Tractor scheme assures 78,000 farms.
- At least 850 farmers markets, 4,000 farm shops, 600 PYO and 80 CSAs in the UK.
- UK farmland biodiversity 'valued' at £938.1 million.
- Up to 19.5% of adults made an amenity visit to farmland in the last seven days
- At least 7% regularly watches or listens to a farming-themed TV/radio programme
- At least 7% of UK population are members of a landscape preservation charity.
- 5.5% ride horses over farmland
- 0.69% is employed in agriculture
- 0.24% has visited an 'Open Farm Sunday' farm
- Home owners are willing to pay £113 on house prices for 1% more local enclosed farmland and £166 for uplands, and £2000 per year to live in house with access to high-nature areas
- Scientific evidence of health benefits of exposure to nature; people 1.2-4.0% happier on farmland than in town.

Alan Spedding, 08 January 2013

Agri-Bulletin aims to express a wide range of facts, figures and viewpoints and does not necessarily reflect the views or policy of the Society. Whilst we have tried to ensure that the information contained in this email is accurate, we do not give any representation or warranty (express or implied) as to its accuracy or completeness, and cannot accept liability for errors or omissions. The Royal Agricultural Society of England or Alan Spedding will not accept any liability in the event that users base actions on information contained herein that is subsequently found to be inaccurate

Agri-Bulletin is circulated by email on a weekly basis to Society Members. Previous briefings can be accessed on the Royal Agricultural Society of England Members' website: www.rase.org.uk/members/our_work

Agri-Bulletin may not be reproduced in any publication or offered for sale.

○

○

24/01/18

A clear pathway to preventing ill health

DIRECTOR of the Menzies Institute for Medical Research and Heart Foundation board member Alison Venn summed it up recently, saying it doesn't matter how much you throw at the health system, it's fundamentally unsustainable while we have the prevalence of chronic disease at current levels.

Obesity, diabetes and heart disease are among the conditions she refers to. Tasmania's figures regarding these conditions are among the worst in the nation.

To put Professor Venn's observation another way, when it comes to improving our health, prevention is better than the cure. It's also a great deal cheaper.

We can no longer afford to wait until people get sick.

The Heart Foundation has been working in this space for decades, influencing government policy and resource allocation whenever we can.

We also work diligently to influence healthy choices through programs like Heart Foundation Walking, Jump Rope for Heart, LiveLighter, the Heart Foundation Helpline, the information and resources available on our website, and our campaigns encouraging people to learn the warning signs of a

heart attack.

With the state budget looming, we are calling on the Tasmanian government to commit to three budget priorities to beat heart disease, our leading single cause of death.

■ Adopt a 'health in all policies' approach. The health of a population is largely affected by factors outside the health sector, for instance the environments in which we work, live and play. We need to establish an intersectoral board to advise the Premier and Cabinet on priority areas for funding that address the determinants of health across portfolio boundaries.

■ Spend more on preventing ill health.

Current expenditure on preventative health in Tasmania is a paltry 1.9 per cent of the total health budget. That needs to increase to at least 5 per cent if we are to seriously tackle the issue. To put it into context, New Zealand currently spends 7 per cent of its health budget on prevention. Tobacco control, better resources for those who have a heart condition already (to prevent recurrence), and more attention to healthy living initiatives such as the recently-launched LiveLighter campaign are prime examples

of money well spent.

■ Build healthier environments. We should transfer 5 per cent of the infrastructure budget to improving public transport and pedestrian and cycling facilities to encourage people to leave the car at home. The Heart Foundation's Healthy Active by Design initiative outlines ways in which state and local governments can build healthier community environments. We also need to provide healthier food options, and call for support for a food and nutrition coalition to help drive improvements to the food system, particularly in those communities for whom accessing healthy food is tough.

Prior to being elected in 2014, the Tasmanian government set a goal of making Tasmania the healthiest population in Australia by 2025. They also acknowledged that "if we don't act now, our state faces an unprecedented health challenge over the next decade in treating preventable and lifestyle-related diseases".

We support that goal, and can certainly back up with evidence that we really do need to act now.

■ Graeme Lynch is the Heart Foundation Tasmania CEO



2

