

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

THE PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC WORKS MET AT THE COLES BAY COMMUNITY HALL, HAROLD ST, COLES BAY ON 4 JULY 2001.

RFA EAST COAST INTERPRETATION CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Ms SUE HAIMES, PROJECT MANAGER-VISITOR CENTRES, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT; Mr ANDREW ROBERTS, MANAGER-VISITOR SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT; Mr PAUL GILBY, JOINT PROJECT ARCHITECT, GILBY VOLLUS CRAWFORD SHURMAN ARCHITECTS IN ASSOCIATION; Mr ANDREW SHURMAN, JOINT PROJECT ARCHITECT, GILBY VOLLUS CRAWFORD SHURMAN ARCHITECTS IN ASSOCIATION; Ms SUE SMALL, PROJECT SITE WORKS CONSULTANT, SUSAN SMALL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS; AND Mr ROY CORDINER, CONSULTANT PROJECT ADVISOR, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

CHAIRMAN (Mr Wing) - I think we all realise how fortunate we are to be here on such a beautiful day in such idyllic surroundings. This meeting was postponed at this time last week because we did not have any papers. Without going into the history of that, I would just like to take the opportunity of saying it really is important for this committee to receive the papers about ten days before, but no less than a week before, so that members have a fair opportunity to consider the submissions and make whatever inquiries they wish. Through the sterling efforts of Mr Green in particular, we were able to reverse the decision to postpone this hearing. It is fortunate that that happened because it is just a beautiful day, so far.

Before we take evidence from those supporting and who have been involved in the preparation of the submissions, I would like to give Mr Colin Rattray the opportunity to speak to this because Mr Rattray represents this area in the Legislative Council, as Mr Hidding represents it in the House of Assembly - Mr Hidding is a member of our committee.

Mr RATTRAY - Mr Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity to come along today. During the last fortnight I have discussed the proposal with the chairman at different times. He said you were meeting up here today and it was convenient for me, as a member, to come up today.

I just want to say that I think you have an excellent project in mind for Coles Bay. From what I can see, just looking in the other room there when I came in - I couldn't really follow it too much, but going on and having the on-site inspection, I can see we are looking forward to a very exciting new proposal. I want to congratulate those who have done the work in regard to that. I am sure that the community of Coles Bay in general

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

would be delighted to see something like this being put in place to keep people here and to bring more people here.

Some of the concepts of it, as you explained in the tour this morning, I think are fascinating. I am fascinated by the way that you expect to get the wildlife to come up under the proposed building. I will look forward with great interest when it is up and running and been going for a while to have a look at that because I think that is really a new concept in nature. I think that is what this has set out to do, Mr Chairman. I am sure that after you have had your deliberations here today, that a proposal such as this will get the green light. I have been very pleased with the way you have accepted me here this morning, to be able to come along and have a look, and better understand now what you are doing. One is just starting up at Scottsdale but it is certainly not going to be anything like this one because that is a different concept. But I think, in that environment there along the bank and looking out onto the Hazards on the other side, that this is something that people will travel miles and miles to come and see.

I think it is an excellent project and I just want to commend you all for the way that you have put it forward. I certainly look forward to perhaps being here when you have an official opening to just see the end project. Just looking there today, I can envisage what it will look like, with all the new access roads and provisions you make, I think it is something I look very much forward to. Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to express my opinion and I am sure, on behalf of the local community here in Coles Bay, they will be delighted with it too.

CHAIRMAN - Thank you very much, Mr Rattray.

Mr RATTRAY - I think that is all I need to say, without someone wanting to ask me a question - and I don't think they would.

Mr GREEN - Except to say, Col, have you found the community are generally accepting of the position of the proposed lodge? Have you had any feedback about the siting?

Mr RATTRAY - No, it has been all positive. Everybody is looking forward to it getting up and running. Your time frame, I think, is somewhere at the end of February. I think they will look forward to it because of the fact that it is an icon. It is not another small undertaking; it is a major one and I think that is what we are looking for, particularly in the tourist development of the State. I think it fits in with the other things, like the Air Walk that has been opened down the Huon. I think these are the sort of things that are going to make sure that people stay a little longer in Tasmania than they would have done had they been driving around. I think it is very positive.

CHAIRMAN - Ms HAIMES, as project manager, would you like to lead the evidence or would you like Mr Roberts to?

Ms HAIMES - Mr Roberts can do that.

Mr ROBERTS - I thought I would just take one step back and put this project in context. A lot of research went into this area and the services that are needed in the Freycinet area. It goes right back to an attraction study that was undertaken in cahoots with Tourism Tasmania and others to work out what it is that makes attractions work and what is

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

required. One the key findings out of that was that visitors want that information where they stop and one of our challenges is to provide that information and to cross-promote to the rest of the community from an icon point where people stop and then can spread out and enhance the viability of the clusters that gather around there. Further to that, we commissioned a location study to be done when the RFA funding that was allocated to this project wasn't that clear on the exact location - I think it was in the Freycinet area.

We had a study done that looked at location at the entrance to the turnoff to the main highway - one on the edge of town and one in the park itself - and looked at all the different facets that needed to make a centre viable. That was a key in one of the funding allocations: that the centre had to promote tourism in the area; interpret the forest values; but also had to be viable in the long term in its operational costs. So that is where it became critical to identify an underwriting tenet and that income stream to help fund the operational and ongoing maintenance cost of the centre. That is the principle reason why the centre ended up at the edge of the park, because the park itself needed an orientation point. The visitors were looking for information at that point because they were all streaming into town and going to the park and then saying, 'What now?'

The site on the edge of town was ruled out basically because we were trying to find the practicalities of a ... parking and its impact on creating a third commercial zone in the township itself and changing all those dynamics. The site out on the intersection was written off basically because people don't stop at intersections. The history across Australia of interpretation centres on highway intersections is very poor and many of them have closed down five years after starting. So we ended up with a centre where we have the key ...interpretation centre ...(tape malfunction) ... tourism attractions first and, if there is room, accommodation after that. The idea is you can come to this centre and see what is on offer and you can book an experience or a product from that site as well. In relation to tours - we don't want it to become a total accommodation booking area. The idea is it is a self-help line; it is a copy of the one that is operating at the Strahan visitor centre and working very successfully. I think that puts it in context. Probably each of the elements we have worked through this morning - the parks office will be working, the north-east district will be working out of this office and to that end the Government has put some more money into this project to cover some extra costs that have added into that as a result of the park officers being involved. That again will put more focus on this park to deliver the visitor experience.

The camping situation - we dealt with that in the community consultation sense last summer with Minister Llewellyn. We came up here and had a very informative meeting with the local community about what the issues were with camping. The key was that there was a lot of concern that the visitor centre was displacing the camp site, which was not actually the case. What we have done is when we put the visitor centre we are making it a better camping site by not having a very busy through road right next to it. We are making a commitment to maintain the number of camp sites there. They are going to be upgraded with separate funding for another part of the project.

As I mentioned this morning too, the walk down to the waterfront from the centre is part of a taster experience, providing an edge of the national park; you don't necessarily have to go right into the heart of it to have that national park experience.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Ms HAIMES - I might just talk about the process. The location, as Andrew has suggested, is being determined with a lot of consultation with, I guess, the people who have a vested interest in it. It has gone through this site planning process where we looked at the location of the visitor centre and also the camping issues within the park itself. That site plan was approved by Minister David Llewellyn, so the location is in accordance with that site plan and in accordance with the statutory management plan for the park. That has been approved.

We have set up the project team in a similar fashion to what we have done for Hastings and Mount Field. For those of you who have visited those sites, I think you might agree that it has had a good result with that approach. Basically we have involved the site works consultant, the interpretation consultant and the architectural consultants together as a team that has worked closely with the Parks and Wildlife Service in developing a very integrated development that fits in with the landscape in which it is located.

Above the project also sits the nature-based tourism steering committee which is looking at a range of other visitor centre projects and tourism-related projects within the State. That has representatives from Forestry Tasmania, Tourism Tasmania, Parks and Wildlife, Department of Premier and Cabinet and the Federal environment and tourism representatives. They have, I guess, had approvals through the different stages of this project, so it has their endorsement as well. So that is basically the approach we have taken.

CHAIRMAN - Any other comments of a general nature before we start dealing with the specifics?

Mr CORDINER - Would you like the architect to explain the design response yet or would you like -

CHAIRMAN - Not yet. Just the general overview first and then we'll come to that.

I am just interested to know, in view of the fact that more than half of the funding for this project comes from regional forest agreement sources, why the forestry section are not handling the project, why it's Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment?

Mr ROBERTS - One of the outcomes of the regional forest agreement was identifying the different areas of value around the place and one of the areas that was sought was the flow-on to tourism benefit of forests. The grant was given to the people who were the biggest operator in those areas - in this case, Parks and Wildlife was leading this one; in the Meander Valley, Parks and Wildlife is leading it but it is also including a whole range of people through the whole process.

Ms HAIMES - The general intent was to interpret the values of the reserves that were considered under the RFA process, not necessarily to interpret forestry. I guess Forestry have been consulted in terms of the interpretation. Pru Cotton and myself met with Forestry to talk about the interpretation that goes into the centre, interpreting the RFA values. We also have Forestry on that steering committee that sits above the project as well, so they are being kept informed and consulted throughout the process of the project.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr HIDDING - There is still a public perception, though, that it is some sort of forestry interpretation thing- on the east coast at least. Somebody at Bicheno last night said to me, 'Why have a forestry thing at Coles Bay?' It seems to me that, I suppose, time will educate people that it is not really a forestry thing but there is a context of the forestry thing in it all, isn't there?

Mr ROBERTS - It is very much about forests per se.

Ms HAIMES - Within the east coast there are a number of different forest types and with the interpretation we will be interpreting those forest types across the east coast. Parks will also be doing some ancillary interpretation of those forest types as they relate to the Freycinet National Park.

Mr CORDINER - I just come back to the RFA program objectives. Under 2.2, those objectives were extracted from the agreement that provided the funding, so it was a bit more broad based. The first one to mention is sustainability tourism infrastructure development based on existing and new reserves - and that means existing new forestry reserves to enhance tourism. I think the perception was, because of the scattered nature of the reserves on the east coast and the tourism potential of this particular area and the centre of gravity of that, this was seen as the best place to be central to all those reserves, particularly those further down the coast towards Orford and on the ranges, if you like.

Mr HIDDING - I would just remind the committee that there was a deal of dilution, I suppose, of the money available through pressure for a centre at Scottsdale. Of course there also had to be one to be built at the Western Tiers which was eventually fragmented into all sorts of little projects. That is my next question: the funding has been augmented, the \$1.5 million, by an NHT grant; what the basis of that grant? What are the words associated with that?

Ms HAIMES - We had a \$1.15 million NHT grant that was to provide facilities for camping and day use within the Freycinet National Park.

Mr HIDDING - 1.15?

Ms HAIMES - Yes.

Mr ROBERTS - It was a component of the strategic package that was taken out of NHT that was to promote regional employment growth focussing on tourism. It is part of what has been used at some of the other sites, including Mount Field.

Mr HIDDING - Then there was another amount of money -

Ms HAIMES - It was about \$400 000 - \$200 00 from the State capital investment program and \$200 000 from Parks funding.

Mr HIDDING - What was that -

Ms HAIMES - There was also an additional \$100 000 earned from the RFA interest which unlike most of our grants which don't accrue interest, the funding was seeded to the State

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

on the basis that any interest earned would be put back into the project. So \$100 000 is an approximate estimate of the interest earned so far on the \$1.5 million.

Mr HIDDING - The capital investment program, which budget was that out of - Parks?

Ms HAIMES - No, that is State Government - global State government; it's a capital investment program for capital works.

Mr CORDINER - It comes out in works and services, out of that budget.

Mr HIDDING - It is under Parks budget, though, isn't it?

Ms HAIMES - Yes.

Mr HIDDING - Why was it felt necessary to have \$400 000 taken from State funds for this building?

Mr ROBERTS - Part of having the Parks and Wildlife district base there, the district there at the moment, the Parks and Wildlife also concentrated a lot of its district management into this park and, instead of decreasing the size of the centre available to the public and increasing the size of the offices, the Government has recognised that and put more money into the building so that the offices can be expanded to cope with that district function.

Ms HAIMES - When you look at the floor area of the business centre, the floor area that Parks will occupy as office space is approximately 50 per cent of the total floor area and the \$400 000, if you like, equates to roughly 50 per cent of the costs of the building and the \$350 000 from the NHT equates to roughly 50 per cent of the site works costs. It is to cover the camping and some of the day-use facilities.

Mr HIDDING - But that is my point: how does the NHT money for camping and what have you apply to offices for Parks staff?

Ms HAIMES - We have transferred that amount from the NHT on the basis that it was money for the site works associated around the visitor centre, including the redevelopments at the powered camping site and the parking and also the walks down to the beach.

Mr SHURMAN - The NHT money doesn't go into the building; it goes into the camp grounds infrastructure.

Ms HAIMES - And the day-use facilities surrounding the visitor centre.

Mr SHURMAN - The building cost is \$750 000.

Mr ROBERTS - If the centre wasn't being built that money would have to be expended on visitor facilities in that area anyway.

Mr HIDDING - My point is we have \$1.5 million in total for the building, including site works. Once you flatten the buildings that are there, the \$1.5 million buys you the shell,

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

of which 50 per cent is for Parks offices. It seems to me that you have plugged in \$400 000 of \$1.5 million - that's hardly a 50 per cent share.

Ms HAIMES - If you add the \$350 000 which Parks could have used in other areas of the park from the NHT funding, that then takes it up to about \$750 000.

Mr HIDDING - You've lost me with that. \$350 000 from NHT funding -

Ms HAIMES - That's right.

Mr HIDDING - that is for camping.

Ms HAIMES - As camping and day-use. What we are saying is that the facilities that are being done as part of this project include camping in the powered camp sites area and day-use facilities in the sense of parking and the access walks, the relocation of the outdoor theatre, relate to the day-use activities within the park. There will still be a substantial amount for other development of day-use and camping facilities elsewhere in the park as well.

Mr SHURMAN - In explanation, if you go to page 13, Mr Chairman, the interpretive centre works is the \$790 000, which is the building works; the interpretive works is the \$221 000 -

Mr HIDDING - That is fit-out later, though, isn't it?

Mr SHURMAN - Yes. So if add those two together you are getting close - that is almost a million. Then you gather in a proportion of the fit-out works, that goes into that budget, so you get \$1.13 million and then you add a proportion of consultants fees, a proportion of project management et cetera and that comes up close to your RFA fund, which is only for that element. You can break down the proportion of the CIP funding and PWS funding as deducted off the proportion of the building which is for office only functions. So ultimately you come out with the balance - there's still \$1.5 million of your RFA is going into legitimate RFA -

Mr HIDDING - It's not a bad way to stack up the figures if you were coming from that point of view. I suppose if everything was being provided as part of this project that everybody hoped would be provided, you say, 'The good outcome of that is that we've got good offices for the Parks people'. However, I suspect that if I was to ask you a question, without having had this discussion, as to how you could spend another \$500 000 on this project - because these projects are always pruned down in some ways - what would do you with another \$500 000 in this project? What fell by the wayside in your value management studies?

Ms HAIMES - I don't think anything has fallen by the wayside.

Mr ROBERTS - This particular project isn't being pruned as fiercely as some of the others have when it came to the crunch. The ways that it has been pruned perhaps is in the higher level of rehabilitation work and more track work down to the waterfront, better platforming through there - that is the main area. Some areas of interpretation were

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

trimmed a bit, but this project is more unique in that the consultants were given a budget and they actually came in pretty close. We didn't have to do a lot of hard pruning.

Ms HAIMES - As part of the gain there are additional funds from Parks-related sources. The value of the interpretation was increased by about \$20 000.

Mr CORDINER - I think it is also fair to say that in the major program objective to be cost neutral with regard operation and maintenance after construction. I think without that additional synergy of having the parks operation with it, it stood on its own as a \$1.5 million centre. As we have had experienced before from interpretation centres where people have to essentially pay to visit, it is very hard to get it to stack up even with a budget of \$1.5 million.

Mr HIDDING - Oh yes, but you're not telling me that fifteen workplaces in there are going to service the interpretation centre. One or two people do, you don't need managers and all that all servicing the interpretation centre.

Mr CORDINER - No, sure enough. I think the efficiency and the improved visitor services are bringing people up from the information kiosk - the current gate kiosk - to the information desk and finding a more grounded role for them has added a lot to -

Ms HAIMES - It creates that critical mass of support that virtually underwrites the operation of the centre. I guess there is significant community benefit because the tourists will be able to visit the facility without any cost.

Mr GREEN - But aren't you also employing another person to specifically focus on tourism?

Ms HAIMES - Yes.

Mr ROBERTS - The concept of that person would be, as much as possible, funded from retail sales. What we like to do with some of the other centres is to cover as many costs as we can from the activity, whether it be for park fee administration or for retail sales. Cradle Mountain is a classic example where two of the staff up there in visitor information are employed from the takings of the retail sales. It is a service level that wouldn't be provided otherwise.

Mr GILBEY - Also, with tourism you often get times in the summer when overload happens with buses coming in one after the other. Your peaks go right up and if you really want service you have to have that. The bigger the backup the better, really.

Mr SHURMAN - I think you are quite right. This is very much a site-specific thing, too. I think the analysis of the site in the first instance as to where best to locate has identified it from an infrastructure point of view. As you are probably all aware, the Coles Bay and general area of the east coast is very poorly served for infrastructure for sewerage and water. Fundamentally this site allowed us to connect to an existing sewerage scheme that could take it. We had water supply that we could also plug into, so I think the two things coalesced. We also had a disturbed site - which is another issue when you are developing in this area. It might not have happened in another site, you might have had it off a separate - it was a convenient and appropriate site in terms of infrastructure, so the two came together. The funding breakdown has been trying to balance up the RFA

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

elements with the State responsibility. Again, I think as Roy has pointed out, if you get up to a project cost for a building of \$1.5 million alone, as you would know if you are in private enterprise to recover that money in terms of just normal interest rate on your borrowings you are going to have to earn income at a fairly significant sum. So we have kept it within the bounds of that affordability in a commercial sense as well.

Ms HAIMES - The experience of a number of other visitor centres within the State has been where visitors are asked to pay in order to finance the staffing and the ongoing operation of the centres. It has been a very difficult job, even in places like Hobart where you have high numbers potentially coming through. People are very resistant to pay to go through a visitor centre and certainly in a more remote location that becomes even more critical. Having the Parks staff located there provides that critical element. You might have two employers but if one's away or at lunchtime you have the Parks staff to back that up, to provide that critical support to enable the centre to be open 365 days a year, which was part of the funding requirements.

Mr GREEN - Can you explain to the committee again the situation with regard people who intend to visit the park and how they go about paying, given that there will be some changes to the existing arrangement?

Mr ROBERTS - The plan is that people come to the centre, there will be a vending machine up on the road, as well as one in the car park itself. The idea is principally though that people can buy their park pass, if they don't have one already, from the staff in the centre and then they will go on from there. If people have a pass already, they are able to go straight on past the car park. Part of this process of not having a boom-gate-type-booth that we have at the moment is that you get to use the staff from the centre more but also it means you have to increase your enforcement time in the park. That will mean a bit more ranger time, going out checking on passes to make sure that each car that is within the park has a valid park space.

We had a pretty good situation the last couple of years here. They became much more consistent on checking passes in the park and the problem virtually dried up overnight. Once the community realised that if you're going to go in the park you're going to have to pay, have your parks pass, the angst dropped right out of it. So it is a case of consistent management. This works a lot better in with the lodge. Previously we had a deal that people would come, they would say they are going to the lodge and we'd say, 'Okay. You can go to the lodge grounds but if you park outside the lodge grounds you'll need a parks pass' and trying to explain all that was quite difficult.

Mr GREEN - So the situation is now that they will be able to go to the lodge.

Mr ROBERTS - They can go to the lodge and the lodge, because we are not playing the boom-gate role, hopefully - and they have agreed to it twice in the past but haven't yet followed through with it - they will actually offer to sell passes from their own centre to go on to the park.

Mr GREEN - I was just about to ask that question.

Mr ROBERTS - They have the capacity to do it and the agency has been set up but in practice they don't do it.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr CORDINER - Could you expand the role of the vending machines?

Mr ROBERTS - We have one going at Mount Field as a trial for the style. It is a note-accepting machine so we are not sure how that will survive. If it can survive at Mount Field it will survive here.

Mr HIDDING - It'll want to be well bolted down.

Mr ROBERTS - Other States like New South Wales have just brought 200 or so vending machines across their parks, so it is becoming quite a common thing. The difference with the Tasmanian park fees is that it is close to a \$10 fee and not many people have \$9 worth of change, so we've had to go to a note-accepting machine. We had been holding off for years waiting for this 'value card' - like a phone card - to do it that way but that never seems to have taken off. We really are pushing our off-site sales as well. We get a large proportion of people now who come in with their holiday passes already purchased, especially the people doing the loop. They tend to go to Cradle Mountain and places like that before they get to Freycinet. Freycinet is not that often a first port of call.

CHAIRMAN - So the machines would be cleared regularly, I am assuming?

Mr ROBERTS - They'd have to be otherwise we'd be leaving ourselves wide open to -

CHAIRMAN - How regularly would you clear those?

Mr ROBERTS - I would imagine daily but it depends how much it runs to. It would have to be visibly done daily, at least initially, to show people, 'Hey, we know there's not much money in these things. It's not worth it'.

Mr GREEN - We heard about the numbers of buses that can come from time to time during the peak period and there are only four bus spaces. Has somebody done a traffic management survey and understand that at peak there is likely to be only four? It seems to me that that mode of travel is not going to diminish.

Ms HAIMES - There is provision for overflow parking down near the powered camp sites. The general approach, I guess, to most of our visitor centres is that we design for pretty average anticipated loads and then you manage the peak loads, rather than have a very costly and large car park to cater for absolute peaks. I guess the experience to date within the park, and allowing for some future growth, that is the figure that we have come to at that top car park, but there is room down in the overflow car park.

Ms SMALL - There's room for three more down that lower road, so that's up to seven.

Mr ROBERTS - One of the keys to keep in mind is this is an orientation point. It is different to, say, Mount Field, where you go and stop and have your experience. This is probably a 20-minute to an hour experience here and then go on to the other parts of the park, so there would be a fair turnover in the car park.

Mr SHURMAN - I think there is an added thing to that, too. One of the things you're trying to do, particularly on this site as you've experienced out there today, is to try to retain

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

some of the core values of what you're seeing out there. There is something quite disturbing if you've ever gone to any other visitor centres either around the State or indeed in other States, to see ten buses parked out the front of what is purporting to be an experience. How you deal with that - and we are lucky in this instance in that we have, as Andrew says, another destination in the park further on that does cater for buses and we have an overflow. So we have tried to make that work on a circuit rather than have them all sitting at the front of the centre.

Mr GREEN - I guess the fact that people aren't going to be spending a lot of time here makes a bit of difference.

Mr ROBERTS - There's a popular bus picnic spot just down over Ranger Creek, past the centre, with a shelter there and there is a big turning area. That is quite often where the buses stop and pull out all the deck chairs and have a quick meal and then get back on the bus. The idea is, when we do further works around the areas of the site, that we keep all those things in mind - the likely use of those sites - to try to keep it working. The park does experience high loads and they can often be peak loads and that is our challenge: trying to handle the loads without making a tarmac out of it.

Mr GREEN - When you talked about your taste orientation, you would expect that will take about an hour?

Mr ROBERTS - I would say about 20 minutes to an hour visit, depending on what people's needs are and whether they want to do it. Cradle Mountain is very similar in concept to this and that's about what they do there. Cradle Mountain, they capture about 50 per cent of the people who come to the park actually go into the centre, so a lot of people who have been before will go through. We're not sure whether that would be higher or lower here but not everybody who comes to the park is going to go there, particularly if they've been there before and they know the park. The unique thing about this park is, as I was saying to you earlier, it's very high amount of visits - a lot of in and out. We get, I think, close to 200 000 vehicle movements - people movements - in and out of the park but we estimate that it's about 130 000 people so that makes it harder to work out what the loadings are.

CHAIRMAN - On page 2 of the submission, it says in the second paragraph: 'New visitor facilities must be provided that will serve to enhance the commercial viability of the national park's operations in a thoroughly economic and sensible manner'. As no fees are being charged for the centre, how will that be commercially viable?

Mr ROBERTS - What's happening at the moment, you've got an entry booth box on the side of the road and park entry fees is handling all the camping fees and everything and any inquiries that go through with that and that's basically the sources of income. The idea of the centre it's a full retail area for things like branded clothing - again, Cradle Mountain is the example here. That shop up there now is turning over \$400 000 a year in branded clothing and making a significant trading surplus which covers off a lot of their costs. So the idea is that you get your camping inquiries properly managed from there, you get the park entry fee sales from there and you get retail sales. The information staff can deliver, in many cases, at no extra cost in staffing time, particularly in the low season. The staff are there anyway and they can make a sale and it often helps in the high season because it helps the truncated visitor inquiry when someone wants to tell them how much

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

they're enjoying their life and chewing them up for hours, they can say, 'Oh' I've got another sale to make' and people don't seem to get offended by that in a visitor inquiry centre if there's no-one else around. It can be hard to truncate people. The idea is to maximise those opportunities that are there but also we've got to work in with the local business community as well and that's where this sharing - this self-help line with the other attractions goes.

I'm really keen to see it become a focus of the area and not just parks and wildlife. It has to be, 'Come to Freycinet, the east coast, and this is what else is on offer and this is how you go about getting it'. What they call it is a seamless visit in tourism jargon.

CHAIRMAN - Last year a colleague and I visited a number of travel agents in Sydney just to see what their clients' felt of Tasmania as a destination and we were interested to discover that the two most popular parts of Tasmania for their clients were Cradle Mountain and Freycinet. They were way above Port Arthur and any other places and travel agents fairly consistently talked about them as being very special places.

Mr ROBERTS - Freycinet has grown at an average of about 6 per cent for the last five years in visitor numbers. The other parks have grown but not as consistently as Freycinet. It seems to have always kept on going. A lot of that is the promotion it gets with the different developments that go in but also it's the realisation, I think, from visitors to Tasmania that it's not just dark green, there's actually coastal - there's some magnificent scenery here as well.

CHAIRMAN - On page 4, under Visitor Potential, the second paragraph reads: 'In 1999-2000 the Freycinet Peninsula had an estimated 118 400 interstate and overseas visitors or 23 per cent of the total. Is anybody able to tell me what the total was?

Mr CORDNER - I think it is 450 000 or 470 000.

Mr HIDDING - Is it a stab?

Mr CORDNER - Yes.

Mr HIDDING - Well, it's 5 000 under half a million.

CHAIRMAN - No, this is the Freycinet Peninsula had an estimated - oh, I see, this is the 23 per cent of the total visitors to the State, not to Freycinet.

Mr HIDDING - 495 000.

CHAIRMAN - I see. I read that as the total to Freycinet - and visitors to the park itself, including Tasmanian residents, was estimated to be 170 000 and increasing. Is anybody able to say how many Tasmanians were included in that?

Mr ROBERTS - We have a visitor survey that did an analysis - I haven't got those in front of me - but it was in the ballpark of about 60 per cent interstate and 40 per cent Tasmanian people, but the number of visits in and out of the park would be a lot higher because of the shack base here that the Tasmanians are using basically as a backdoor to their shack. The interstate visitors tend to be in and out once and then off and away.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

CHAIRMAN - So 40 000 Tasmanian people, so 130 000 from interstate.

Mr ROBERTS - Yes. I haven't got those figures in front of me -

Ms HAIMES - We would be happy to provide you with them.

CHAIRMAN - It's just a matter of interest really. Thank you. Any more question of a general nature?

Mr HARRISS - The last three items on the cost estimate - the locality amount, contingency and project reserve - do I take the locality allowance to be some sort of allowance for workers because -

Ms HAIMES - Yes, because of the location for construction workers.

Mr HARRISS - Is there an expectation that you will need that \$120 000, because those three items come to 10 per cent of the whole budget?

Ms HAIMES - It's quite significant, I guess the cost of actually working here is actually much higher because it's more than two and a half hours from a major centre like Hobart or Launceston so there are significant building costs associated with accommodating construction workers to work on the site over what will be a reasonably extensive period. I guess that 10 per cent figure is probably an average figure that has been estimated -

Mr SHURMAN - I might add there that it's a weighted average across the materials and labour. Mr Cordiner could speak to that with more detail at some point.

Mr CORDINER - There's always a hope that with a competitive building industry at the moment - and I think it is fairly competitive. You get some money back but they look to ways to save money by having accommodation arrangements within the park or outside that save money for the workers -

Ms HAIMES - And also the cost of material transport is quite high to this region too.

Mr GREEN - Have you applied for your \$14 000 first interpretative centre grant?

Laughter.

Mr HARRISS - So, Mr Chairman, even if the project needs the \$120 000 because of the locality allowance, contingency and project reserve still comes to \$115 000 and if you don't need that amount, where else can that money be spent on the project or would it go back into consolidated revenue somewhere? Do you lose it?

Ms HAIMES - I don't think we would lose it. We haven't considered that. It might actually be higher than what -

Mr ROBERTS - The concept is that it is a surplus, it is put back into bits of the project that are priority that may have been pruned earlier but if it's unclear where they should go, we'd do another value management exercise on where best to spend it on the projects.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

The two projects we have done to date have proved that it's been eaten up by unforeseen things like a car park that's subsiding and they had to change the design or something, these sort of things where the contingencies comes in. If it's available and we'd love to have it available I'm sure we could spend it and enhance the project some more.

Ms HAIMES - Certainly the contingencies are usually eaten up by contingencies -

Mr GILBEY - That's the experience across the board. Contingencies are acquired and they are used in most cases on a big project.

Ms HAIMES - And the locality allowance is based, I guess, on previous experience, that it may come in under or it may come in over that amount.

CHAIRMAN - I think we'll move to the architectural design now. Mr Shurman, are you going to lead that?

Mr SHURMAN - Yes. Thank you, Mr Chairman. If there are any questions on items 5.1 through to the end, including the cost estimates, which we've already discussed in a preliminary sense. If you could take those as read in the first instance -

CHAIRMAN - In 5.4, the design response - second last paragraph - the details of materials used such as timber, stone and red ochre coloured render. I was surprised that there is no red granite included in the building at all, that you have to have an artificial red ochre colour when there is an abundance of red granite in the area.

Mr SHURMAN - We are certainly testing that, Mr Chairman. We have discussed this with Parks but our understanding is that there are certain interpretive aspects of what is happening both within the park and the previous quarry. We may be able to use some materials but because of the understanding of the requirements of the park in using those quarries, we haven't been able to source that material in any significant way. There are reasons perhaps Mr Roberts could -

Mr ROBERTS - There are no active quarries in the local area; they are on reserve land. Trying to source granite from commercial sources and we haven't been able to find it, that's basically what it comes down to. We are looking - Sue might be able to add to that. The landscaping is going to pick up elements of it.

Ms SMALL - We are going to use whatever granite comes up when the excavations for the car park happens. There will be plenty of site rocks, so that will be used. There is some agreement that we can take some rocks from the quarry, which basically is closed, for interpretation purposes.

Mr HIDDING - That will flash up a storm if you start quarrying again.

Ms HAIMES - We don't intend to quarry.

Mr HIDDING - I can't imagine why not.

Laughter.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

CHAIRMAN - It is a pity that it can't be used in this because it's such a feature of the local area.

Ms HAIMES - We will be using it.

Mr ROBERTS - Wherever we can find a rock we'll be using it.

CHAIRMAN - It's on the front of buildings in St John Street, Launceston, and yet it can't be in the interpretation centre. It's incredible.

Mr GREEN - I noticed there was quite a few slabs of granite laying in one particular place - the work station there.

Mr SHURMAN - In further explanation, it is true to say that we have marked several slabs of that rock and several boulders which we are considering for the landscape elements, which are sizeable elements rather than small stones. We hope that will integrate with the colour that will come to the building. But to significantly mine and clad the building would maybe increase our costs.

CHAIRMAN - Is there any chance at all of having that instead of red ochre-coloured render?

Mr SHURMAN - We're exploring that, if in fact we could mix it in with the rendering material so you get the same sparkle. But, again, it's a quartzite material, so in slab form it could work. We're not sure how it would work mixed in with the rendering capability but we would get an entirely different effect. As you've pointed out though, part of that design response was to try to bring the colouring from the mountain down to the ground and visually link the two elements.

Ms HAIMES - I might add, on the toilet block side, which is where the red is proposed, we will also be adding some interpretive element on that surface as well. There will be an artistic rendering of some of the features of the earth science of the area on that external wall.

CHAIRMAN - It'd be good if you can have some of the real, natural product there as well.

The other question I have, on page 7 at the end of 5.4 - there is reference to natural ventilation and energy management being adhered to. Would you like to just give some details about that?

Mr SHURMAN - Just expanding on the microclimate, I guess, that is available here, albeit that it does get quite cool at times - as we experienced today. Our thought was to use a natural system of ventilation first up in the interpretive centre which employs opening windows and a controlled western rotor - are you familiar with the rotor system, with a dampener control? That enables us to move air through without having to air condition. Our heating is going to be a foil which is placed in the ceiling of the interpretive gallery and that radiates heat down and heats the body rather than heats the air space. Where we have doors opening in a continuing fashion, people moving through the interpretive centre will feel warm but we're not actually heating the air.

Mr HIDDING - It won't be warm.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr SHURMAN - It will be warm. The lodge has a similar heating system. There are the natural fires but the real heat's coming from the foil heating system.

CHAIRMAN - Would you like to make reference to any other features in your submission?

Mr SHURMAN - Yes. I think it was mentioned earlier that the team consisting of Paul Gilbey and myself as architects and Susan Small, landscape architect, and Clint Johnson and Pru Cotton and of course our quantity surveyor, Steve Arnett from Rollinsons, have been involved in the project right from the outset. To us it has been a unique experience because we've come up here and felt the conditions. The planning we started with is really a fully-integrated planning of the building and interpretative and external spaces, so we feel very comfortable with the way the building and the landscape has developed and the site works.

So, with that in mind, the real intent with this building is to interpret the east coast values and hence we've used materials and an open plan that we think will give an aspect to this building that we hope will be unique. The functional aspects are split between the interpretative gallery and the offices. The real area split, if you analyse the functional areas, the summary of those areas is something like 345 square metres given over to the interpretive space and public utility - public toilets - 230 square metres is given over to office space on the upper level and a further 86 square metres downstairs. The upper level really focuses around the interpretive gallery. Paul, do you want to speak on that at this stage?

Mr GILBEY - The interpretation of course starts from outside the building and carries right through. The idea is that the reception is right in the middle of the space and retail and interpretation will be intermixed for the experience of the visitor. When you approach the building the toilet block form of course becomes the rock upon which the sails of the building fly away and as you walk through the building, the views are directed by the glazing and the orientation. So you have views out through to the water and the deck allows you to go out and see all that. If you walk through the interpretation area taking in the information, you also experience the Hazards from the glass observation area at the south-east end.

The staff of course from the office area will be looking after that all the time and they will be able to augment the staff as the need arises for people wanting information and/or retail or experiencing the interpretation.

Mr SHURMAN - The upper level is fundamentally the function of the whole of the district as it will be. In terms of the office space for Parks, the lower level is an operations centre for summer programs and emergency management - probably for the east coast. Am I right here, Mr Roberts?

Mr ROBERTS - Yes, it is used for critical incident management.

Ms HAIMES - Whether they be fires or whale rescuing -

Mr ROBERTS - Or people rescuing and things like that.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr CORDINER - Could you explain the summer program in there?

Mr ROBERTS - The summer ranger program is part of what is funded from park entry fees. A portion of that is put in each year to putting a summer ranger at the key sites around the State and they run interpretive programs with visitors to the park during the day and during the evenings. Many times it's hands-on activities; other times it's talks in the auditorium or walks along the beach explaining the flora and fauna. A lot of it has been a catalyst to train other people into the tourism - the ecotourism guides in the local community as well. That is all supporting that process.

Mr SHURMAN - Externally - as we walked around today, you will have noticed the redirection of roadworks and services in the entry to the site. Susan, in terms of landscape, input from the civil -

Ms SMALL - In terms of landscape, the work basically will be replanting the endemic species in the area. There will be two ways of doing that: actual plants being planted or in rehabilitation in just spreading seed and things. In terms of the way the car parks are being developed, again we are trying to manage run-off from the car parks. Rather than centralise the water run-off we're trying to keep it reasonably regular over the whole site so we have it distributing through four different channels. Some of it we are directing into the rehabilitation areas, so it won't all suddenly end up in Mosquitos Creek and be dumped into the swamp on this side. Other services - basically, the sewerage is all being directed down into the existing sewerage pumps, as we talked about on site, which is then pumped up the hill and over into the existing sewerage ponds.

Where possible, as we've talked about, we will using the existing stone and local timber in handrails. The path network - we are going to use bitumen but the aggregate that we are using in the bitumen is going to be a local quartz to try to get it blending in to the bushland surround, but also be a long-term material.

Mr GILBEY - Another aspect which you might have overlooked, we have mentioned it, is the integration of the interpretation with the building and in particular the ability to watch animal life from within the building - and that is an important aspect. But that integration with the building is happening; Sue has already mentioned it is happening on the outside of the toilet block wall but it is also happening on the doors and it's happening on a whole lot of aspects within the building. This is where the teamwork has been really close with interpretation and landscape and architecture.

Mr ROBERTS - Another bit that adds into that further is that instead of having an interpretation/information desk with quite separate functions, the information desk-retail is in the middle of the space which integrates with the interpretation, so there will be a flow between the two. You will have things for sale in the middle of the interpretation that makes sense next to things that are being interpreted, so it all flows together and maximises that real link to the park.

Mr SHURMAN - Our building cost on a square metre rate is about \$1 200 a square metre -

Ms HAIMES - \$1 285.

Mr SHURMAN - \$1 285 - which is comparable with similar locations.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr HIDDING - \$1 285 - including site works?

Mr SHURMAN - No, just building and associated costs.

Mr GILBEY - Per square metre rate, which is pretty much what you'd expect.

Mr SHURMAN - That would include our immediate site works around the building, but not including the greater site works.

Mr GREEN - I might just ask in the first place, the wildlife viewing. You talked about it earlier, nesting boxes - to attract what sort of birds?

Ms HAIMES - There will be nesting boxes underneath the building to attract some of the mammal species, particularly the devils, the wombats, perhaps quolls. It won't be a zoo-type situation, it will be if those animals happen to nest in there, which we believe they will because this is quite a key location for Tasmanian devils particularly.

Mr GREEN - I just made the assumption when you were talking about nesting, it was birds.

Ms HAIMES - No. We're intending to put in some video cams, if you like, or security cameras that look at locations around the centre where birds might happen to be nesting and then there will be that link back to viewing those nesting sites within the centre, but they can be changed wherever the birds are nesting. Within the wall system too, or one part of the building, recognising that possums often get into walls, we're also having a clear view in one of the portions of the building to see if there is a possum nest or similar.

Ms SMALL - There will be a structure out on the deck which has water in it where possibly birds might come.

Ms HAIMES - At the moment, where the visitor centre is, there's an old tank, for instance, and particularly at this time of the day you'll get lots of birds playing in the bit of water that's there, so we're trying to replicate that.

Mr GREEN - Just on the design of the toilet facility, you've got the round area with obviously an external door but, unless I'm wrong, I can't see where there's an internal access.

Mr SHURMAN - No, I guess we have two issues here. Generally, in these sorts of locations, there is a requirement for after-hours use of the toilet but we do have a specified - in the corner opposite there's a common use disability toilet which is also for internal use -

Mr GREEN - I see.

Mr SHURMAN - The idea is that we try to limit the flow of people opening doors to go to toilets within earshot, if you like, of the interpretative gallery and also to enable that to be after hours usage. We have thought about that issue and how that works.

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

Mr GREEN - In terms of the pathway of the offices, I assume - we walked down there today and we were looking in that general area where that open space is at the moment - that there would be some kind of forked arrangement?

Ms SMALL - There is. Just to the right of the building there's access to the doors to the toilet and then there's this additional path down to that lower office area and that is another track down to the beach, or you can go around this way. Is that what your question was?

Mr GREEN - Yes, basically -

Mr ROBERTS - When we did the functional links, there wasn't a crying need to have the toilet open to inside because people were getting their experience and then going on and, likewise, if people were coming to the toilet they didn't necessarily have to trip through the centre to go to the toilet, they could do their bit and get on going again.

Ms HAIMES - And making allowance for that external access.

Mr SHURMAN - I think this is fundamentally different to some of the other centres in that they have a refreshment area which would add the other 150 square metres that you were talking about to the centre and because of the proximity to the commercial area here. Once you lose that, one of the things that could destroy the feeling within the centre was to have those doors doing their normal banging and shutting and flushing and hand dryers going all the time. So it was thought that we could deal with that by one uni-sex disability toilet. People coming in buses, typically, will try to pile out of the bus and head for either a refreshment or a loo - we kept that activity largely to the outer edges of the building -

Mr HIDDING - Four stalls in the ladies toilet, is that enough for buses arriving at the same time?

Mr GILBEY - This isn't the only toilet block. This is a toilet block at the centre but there is also an existing toilet block down on the lower car park area. So there are actually other facilities. This augments facilities specifically for this function.

Mr ROBERTS - And one past the ... car park as well.

Mr HIDDING - That first stop when they arrive after a long drive from wherever they've come from, they will pull into the visitor centre, they will all bail out of the bus looking for the loos.

Ms HAIMES - The number of toilets is comparable to what we have in our other major visitor centres and we find that they work with very similar numbers - places like Cradle Mountain, Mount Field and Lake St Clair.

Mr HARRISS - Regarding the under-floor space, Mr Chairman, looking at the elevations and the indicative floor levels that you have there, that lower floor plan gives a little bit of space for an operation centre, et cetera. It would seem with such a huge under-floor area there it would be a simple process to pour a slab now at minimal cost for future

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

development of the under-floor space. There seems to be plenty there given the elevations.

Mr SHURMAN - There would certainly be the capacity to come back at least two bays to do that.

Mr HARRISS - Would that be a consideration now rather than trying to - is there a need? You are looking at an operation centre and a bit of a store, essentially that is all, is there a need for greater storage space or greater operational area?

Ms HAIMES - At one stage we actually had it less than what that area is there so we've already, if you like, done a lot of that as well. So I guess that amount of area that's provided for in these plans does make allowance for future expansion as required.

Mr ROBERTS - It came to a point that we actually had to stop. If you dig back a little bit more and expand it a bit more but we came to a point where we couldn't actually justify any more works for more office space.

Mr GILBEY - Mr Chairman, there is a trade-off. The dotted line with the '9' on it - the dotted line that goes through the edge of the staircase, actually that dotted line represents where we hit rock. If we tried going beyond that dotted line we're into rock which means our costs go right up, so the trade-off is that if you really want that space you have a limited amount that you could actually use. It would only be on this other side of that line, so there isn't as much as you might think under there. We've used most of it, in fact we've put that staircase in that corner because if we strike rock specific to that area we will have the landing above it.

Mr SHURMAN - I think there's probably another issue too. When we disturbed the soil in this area it's a very fine gravelly material that erodes very quickly. If you've noticed the roads around and the edges, as soon as you actually create the path, and water happens to get into it, it really does cavitate after a while. The principle of the construction has been devised by our structural engineers. We are building on steel piers so we minimise the amount of disturbance where possible, other than that bit underneath. But you are quite right, at the end of the day, if it were required or if in future it is required there is still a capacity, provided the footings of those last three columns are down at the right level in the first instance, it could happen now or it could happen in the future. So there is nothing to preclude us from doing that. We are always maintaining our requirement to meet the budget and at this stage we are on our budget but if we were to do that we would marginally increase that budget.

Mr HARRISS - Mr Chairman, part of the RFA process with the funding indicates that you need to use best practice and innovative techniques. Can you convince me of what you have done here, apart from what you've said, to satisfy that criteria.

Mr SHURMAN - One of those things is try to build within the capability of the local area as much as possible and I think that is something we have taken on board. We have taken on board the nature of the site and the materials that we are trying to join to the site. Beyond that innovation there's no high-tech innovation, if you like, that relates to this project but we don't think that is a principle that we necessarily wanted to follow in this

UNEDITED TRANSCRIPT

instance. It's really to make the building fit to its site. If innovation is about that then this is what this is about.

Mr HARRISS - Again, throughout the documentation there's reference to both heritage and natural values. The natural values are pretty obvious to anybody, I would have thought, around the east coast generally, but what are the main heritage values which you've needed to take account of?

Ms HAIMES - In terms of the interpretation?

Mr HARRISS - Yes, the whole development.

Ms HAIMES - I guess the cultural values which are historic, European, cultural values and Aboriginal values. The interpretation within the centre will have interpretation on both those aspects and in terms of the site we have done site surveys as part of the site planning exercise for this and the rest of the day area within the park on the Aboriginal values of the area and we've had liaison with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council in that regard.

Mr CORDINER - There was an Aboriginal cultural heritage survey.

Ms HAIMES - Yes, there was an Aboriginal cultural heritage survey and I guess the design of the building has taken that into account.

Mr GILBEY - From an ecological point of view the location, so that we're minimising disturbance of the park on the whole, we're locating the new centre over the top of the old buildings using the cleared area as the car park, so we're maximising the area that's already disturbed and minimising the area that we have to disturb in order to finish the centre.

Ms SMALL - Just as a feature of displaying some of that heritage, the rocks that we're talking about getting out of the quarry are ones that have showed the blasting and so it's showing that this granite was used in quarries and so it won't look very natural, some of it - it's cut and it's got the drill holes in it - so depicting that side of things. We're showing all the different sorts of rocks that have been mined in the area and the soil and sand and they'll be interpreted outside. We'll have pockets of those on display.

Ms HAIMES - Within the centre one of the key features is what's called a history book. You'll see it located on the plan - the last plan in the report which has the interpretative elements - and it's No. 12, the story book, which will have local stories. We also hope to have a number of photographs taken of the east coast by an Aboriginal photographer - a quite prominent one. That has to be developed yet but there will be significant elements of the history contained within the interpretative displays as well.

CHAIRMAN - I think that concludes the questions. Thank you all very much for your help. We appreciate that and for the interesting site inspection too. Thank you very much.

THE WITNESSES WITHDREW.

**PUBLIC WORKS, COLES BAY 4/7/01 (HAIMES/ROBERTS/GILBY/
SHURMAN/SMALL/CORDINER)**