



DERWENT VALLEY COUNCIL

Enquiries: Martyn Evans
Telephone: 0429 167 796

File:

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

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Dear Ms Excel

Legislative Council Inquiry Into Built Heritage Tourism In Tasmania

On behalf of the Derwent Valley Council I would like to thank the Legislative Council for the opportunity to make a submission on the above matter.

Derwent Valley Council has instigated a working group to provide the views of Council to the inquiry. Due to the broad terms of reference, the working group did not respond to each point as numbered, however we feel that our submission covers all aspects of the inquiry.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information or to arrange for a member of the working group to attend a hearing if appropriate.

Yours sincerely

Martyn Evans
Mayor



Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the management, preservation, tourist marketing and promotion of built heritage in Tasmania through this inquiry.

The terms of the inquiry do not clearly define what a built heritage asset is and this may cause discussion to focus on only those major visible assets such as Woolmers, Port Arthur, Richmond Bridge etc. However, Tasmania has a wealth of built heritage, from the obvious to the obscure; assets that are currently listed on the Heritage Register; and structures such as bridges, dams, roads and other built assets that are not currently necessarily recognised for their heritage values. The Derwent Valley Council believes that action should be taken to ensure that those more obscure assets are included in any further discussions around the management, preservation and promotion of built heritage assets in Tasmania.

The Derwent Valley has a rich built heritage history, from the Willow Court site (which is well known and has been highly publicised since its closure in the early 2000s), through to other notable historic properties, and many lesser known built heritage assets. A brief look at the Tasmanian Heritage Register shows that more than 100 properties are listed in the Derwent Valley on the Register. However, many more properties and other built assets are not currently on the register. During our discussions we looked broadly at the term 'built heritage' to include things such as the Gordon Dam, the original remnants of the Lyell Highway and tracks that connected to the West Coast as well as other buildings and structures such as the remnants of the Adamsfield settlement, pickers cottages, sheds and original surveys of the proposed train line between Maydena and Strahan.

With its strong colonial and convict history and compact size, Tasmania is a draw card for tourists (interstate, intrastate and international) wishing to engage with heritage. We are in a unique position to be able to offer an abundance of heritage options within a relatively short travelling distance. Tasmania's reputation for genealogical research continues to grow, and this along with a strong interest in family links to convicts, Norfolk Island descendants and first settlers gives the State another opportunity to capitalise on the family links to built heritage in the State.

Tourism Tasmania's current focus is on those wishing to undertake 'life long learning' and those seeking an experience and wishing to engage with the community and area that they are visiting. The incorporation of heritage experiences in this provides the State with an opportunity to broaden its image and capture more of the tourist dollar. Tasmania has long been known for its scenic beauty and is developing a reputation for food and beverage and arts and culture, the inclusion of a strong heritage stream in tourism promotions can only enhance the promotion of Tasmania to yet another potential tourist market.

When considering the marketing of heritage tourism in Tasmania it is essential that the focus is not only on those major sites that currently attract promotion. There is a diverse range of



opportunities available for those interested in exploring the heritage of our State, from major developed sites, through to sites undergoing development (such as Willow Court), private properties and gardens, industrial heritage including places such as Adamsfield, our Hydro dams and their infrastructure and relics from older industries such as mining on the West Coast and early forestry operations. Some of this built and industrial heritage is hidden from the public for example the Spray Tunnel at Zeehan and old machinery in various places in the World Heritage Area near Maydena, however there is a substantial amount that is of interest to people that is readily accessible and currently not promoted or interpreted in any way.

A strong definition explaining built heritage, and an audit of those assets would assist in devising ways of capitalising on and promoting the bounty of heritage that Tasmania has to offer. In doing this it is important to involve local communities in the process. Too often experts, or members of peak bodies are commissioned to undertake these type of activities, without local knowledge and input we consistently see things of importance 'missed off the map' because those undertaking the activity do not have sufficient knowledge of an area to have an understanding of where things of significance are or what is culturally significant to the area.

The three levels of tourism organisations in Tasmania each have an important role to play in the promotion of heritage tourism in Tasmania.

As the lead tourism organisation in the State, Tourism Tasmania is broadly tasked with the role of promoting the Tasmania to visitors (international, national and intrastate). Through its Historic Heritage Tourism Strategy 2012-2015, Tourism Tasmania has attempted to provide a strategy to promote heritage tourism in the State. Unfortunately, the Historic Heritage Tourism Strategy seems to place major emphasis on the existing 'big bang' historic attractions in Tasmania (Port Arthur, Oatlands, Woolmers, Brickendon and the Heritage Highway feature strongly) , and does not cast a wide net in terms of what other built assets we have to offer that are of historic significance.

Additionally, it would not appear that many of the goals and actions listed in the 'Plan of Action' at the back of the document have been achieved.

A review of this strategy, and broadening of the tourism assets mentioned in the document would benefit more regional areas. There is for example, only one mention of the Derwent Valley in the document. This refers to The Agrarian Kitchen, a well known and award winning cooking school housed in an historic building. There is no mention of any of the many other built assets in the Derwent Valley; our historic homes, hop fields, cemeteries, oast houses, Willow Court, Adamsfield or Gordon Dam (to name a few) all of which form an integral part of the built heritage of the area.



Although the role of Tourism Tasmania is limited through its scope of activity, there is an opportunity for the organisation to engage much more fully with stakeholders, and include those people that know the area in discussions around the heritage assets of the area. From experience our community knows that staff at Tourism Tasmania appear to have little knowledge of the Derwent Valley outside the Mt Field National Park.

Regional Tourism Organisations (in the case of the Derwent Valley, Destination Southern Tasmania) are tasked with increasing regional dispersal, yield and visitation to their specific area. Again, there is a focus on the those areas that are well known, Port Arthur etc. rather than looking further afield and working with stakeholders (members and member Councils) to find ways to promote the built heritage of the area. Again from experience, the Derwent Valley community knows that staff at Destination Southern Tasmania evidently have little knowledge of the Derwent Valley area.

The local tourism association, the Derwent Valley Tourism Association, is in the process of rebuilding and one of its focuses is to attract people to the region. Members and others associated with the Derwent Valley Tourism Association are often local people, with an intimate knowledge of the area, the heritage assets it contains and those things of particular interest to visitors. However, lack of resources and support from tourism organisations further up the chain often prevent the local tourism association from progressing any ideas. Those ideas which do go further to the RTO or Tourism Tasmania are often ignored in favour of a focus on existing major attractions.

From a Local Government perspective, it is frustrating to say the least that those people who are at a grass roots level in the community have little or no opportunity to have input into strategies that would promote heritage tourism in the area. Council through elected members and staff not only has access to a networks of people with information and knowledge on this matter, but also has direct experience and knowledge of the area, yet seems to be excluded from having any input into the development of strategies or providing information to Tourism Tasmania and the Regional Tourism Organisation in particular. Consulting with Council on these matters would ensure that all stakeholders are engaged in any strategy and would in the long term assist in the success of the strategy.

The built heritage of Tasmania and the Derwent Valley is diverse in nature, therefore appealing to a number of different interest groups, it therefore makes sense that a broad approach is taken when looking at the subject of built heritage, and that those with the most local knowledge are consulted to have input into any strategies and policy being developed.

In a broader government context, although Local Government has the willingness and local knowledge to be able to identify important built heritage assets; in many cases it does not



have the technical expertise or resources to be able to promote, interpret or develop a viable tourism experience. In the Derwent Valley, Willow Court is a prime example of this. Once the site was vacated by the government, Council understood the intrinsic value of the site. Despite the best intentions of Council, the site proved to be more challenging than expected, requiring large amounts of capital investment and expertise that Council did not have to rejuvenate the area. Over the years, Council has sold parts of the site to fund works on those parts that have high heritage values, however, this has caused consternation in the community and within Council due to the site being 'broken up'. Without grant funding from the State and Federal governments it is unlikely that those works that have been undertaken to restore parts of the site and allow for adaptive reuse would have taken place.

This is just one example of the technical knowledge and resources required to ensure that built heritage is conserved and promoted appropriately and the challenges that some smaller Councils may face. In terms of State and Federal Government involvement innovative assistance would be welcomed, as would additional funding. The *Your Community Heritage* funding that was available from the previous Federal government is no longer available, replaced in part by the Green Army programme, however this new programme has an environmental focus and does provide funding for the type of long term, resource and skill intensive projects that are often required in the preservation of built heritage.

Council recognises that funding from both the State and Federal government is limited due to budget constraints, but would appreciate the opportunity to be involved in discussions around funding models that may assist with the preservation and promotion of built heritage. These could include options such as the introduction of a lottery system to fund heritage preservation, secondment of government employees with skills and expertise in relevant areas, using publicly owned heritage buildings for training for students undertaking related qualifications etc. It is the view of Council that there must be innovative approaches that could be discussed and implemented that would benefit both the owners of buildings and the community.

Council has also discussed the matter of funding privately owned built heritage, such as homes and estates. It is generally the view of Council that unless such places are open to the public on a regular basis, and do not provide an income to the owners that government should not be responsible for funding these structures. There may of course be exceptions which could be dealt with on a case by case basis.

There has been discussion within Council regarding responsibility for funding of publicly owned buildings, including those owned by Local Government. As previously noted, the Derwent Valley Council has encountered a number of challenges around resourcing the restoration of Willow Court, it would be safe to assume that this may also be the case for



other smaller organisations who bear responsibility for the upkeep of heritage listed buildings and other built assets. Consideration could be given to investigating how this type of responsibility is dealt with in other jurisdictions, nationally and internationally. It may be that an information package, templates or contact service of some description could be set up to provide assistance and information to organisations who find themselves in this position. Ideally, a pool of funds would be available to assist organisations to undertake necessary works and to provide technical advice; this may be administered by an independent body with strict guidelines around usage. Possibly a needs-based competitive grant round would allow the funding to go to those organisations with most need. This idea certainly needs further investigation, however may encourage more discussion around innovative ideas for funding or merit further discussion in its own right.

Heritage Tasmania has an important role to play in all facets of this discussion. The current structure of the organisation, with the Tasmanian Heritage Council, although a statutory body separate to the Department, is in some ways seen as a hindrance, a 'toothless tiger' and prone to political influence. The Heritage Council has the potential to be a body of great strength, available to assist owners/managers of built heritage assets to understand their rights and responsibilities. The current make up of the Heritage Council shows a great breadth of talent, however, this talent seems to be rarely used to its full potential to advise on heritage matters, and seems to be focused on the Heritage List and preservation of built assets at all cost. It may be that it is time to review the role of and representatives on the Heritage Council with a view to broadening its sphere of influence and including every day community members with an interest in heritage matters.

Heritage Tasmania, part of the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment, is charged primarily with the execution of the Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995. Although its role in compliance is vital, consideration could be given to broadening this role to include a user friendly advisory wing. Council frequently has reports of Heritage Tasmania being what is perceived to be obstructive and unwilling to assist in helping people find solutions to issues. This has not necessarily been borne out in council's own experience.

As an independent organisation the National Trust may well fall outside the terms of this inquiry, however it is worth noting that other than the annual heritage celebrations, the National Trust does not seem to play an active role in heritage in the Derwent Valley.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that built heritage assets play an important part in our State, whether it be to preserve and highlight your heritage for its intrinsic value, or to attract tourists and promote the State. A review of how all levels of government can work together with external organisations to promote the assets we have is long over due. Such a review should "look outside the box" and encourage input including tourism operators, owners and managers of heritage assets (both public and private) and most importantly



members of the general public, who although often interested in our heritage have no mechanism to become involved in or share their ideas around the importance of built heritage to our community.

It is equally important that when considering heritage the net is cast widely to include built assets such as dams, bridges, pickers sheds and institutions, and that not only the 'pretty' and unusual are included, but also the everyday and less aesthetic, as these things are also an important reminder of our past.

Any review should also include a review of available funding and the consideration of innovative ways of raising funds to ensure that there is a pool of money available in the future. Options such as heritage lotto and other ideas should not be discounted.

If heritage assets are to be taken seriously as a potential tourist attractor, we must ensure that tourism organisations have a thorough understanding of what is important within the context of a community and its history and not only look at the obvious as is currently the case. This could be assisted through a closer working relationship between those organisations and local government and the community in which heritage assets reside.

Overall, better consultation, communication and funding strategies would assist in the promotion, preservation, management and marketing of built heritage assets in Tasmania.

Derwent Valley Council thanks the committee for the opportunity to comment on this matter and is happy to attend any hearings to answer questions on this submission.