

# **PROPOSAL FOR SOUTH GANNET BEACH VIEWING PLATFORM**

Summary of Consultation Oct 9<sup>th</sup> 2020

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Executive of the Bawley Point Kioloa Community Association Inc. have been working on an 'idea' presented to them by community members in 2017, to develop a proposal to place a viewing platform at South Gannet Beach headland.

The 'idea' has been discussed for three years, and the current executive committee team has now grown the idea from a concept/idea into a proposal for the community to think about, discuss and provide feedback.

Assisting the Executive team, local residents, with professional skills in design and construction expertise, have all worked together, to develop and present this 'Proposal'.

The community has had the opportunity, through consultation and information supplied through social media and noticeboards, to provide views and opinions on the proposal. The following report summarises these opinions and suggestions.

Council has agreed to 'support in principle' the proposal, and will lend their support to further develop the best design and model for the site, complete assessments of environmental and site impacts, to consult again and then present that new proposal for consideration.

The next step is to present the proposal to a public meeting at 3.30pm November 8<sup>th</sup> 2020 at the Community Hall for consideration.

### **Public Consultation relating to the Proposed Viewing Platform South Gannet Beach**

The public consultation process has been undertaken with two notices on Facebook on 15 July 2020 and 12 September 2020, notices on the public noticeboards at Bawley Point and Merry beach shops, a notice in the August 2020 edition of the local newsletter 'The Messenger' and a letterbox drop to all houses (with a letterbox) in Bawley Point and Kioloa.

### **Facebook Responses**

The Bawley Point Kioloa Community Association (BPKCA) had 2 information notices on Facebook one on 15 July 2020 and another on 12 September 2020.

The first notice indicated that the BPKCA Executive unanimously supported the erection of a viewing platform at the southern end of Gannet beach.

There were 47 responses to this notice which supported the concept, while one respondent 'hoped it didn't distract from the natural environment'.

The second Facebook notice presented a summary of the concept plan for the viewing platform. This notice resulted in 46 respondents supporting the proposal, of these 10 submitted written

comments. Seven respondents did not support the proposal, while 13 respondents raised issues, or made cynical comments which suggested some of them were not supportive of the concept. A number of the Facebook respondents followed up with a written submission raising issues of concern. These have been summarised below.

Overall if one were to summarise the social media (Facebook) submissions it would indicate that there is strong support for the proposed Observation/Viewing Platform at the Southern headland of Gannet beach.

### **Overview of the Written Responses to the Observation Viewing Platform Proposal**

There were a total of 30 written responses to the platform proposal. In many cases, while issues of concern were raised, respondents were in favour of the proposal. It was difficult to categorise whether some responses were in favour, or not in favour, of the proposal. For example, one respondent stated that he ‘strongly objected’ to the proposal but concluded his submission by stating ‘I have no objection to a viewing platform if it blends in with the local environment ....’. Rather than attempt to categorise individual submissions as for or against the project, there is merit in summarising the main concerns raised and considering how these may be addressed. These include:

#### **Environmental Issues**

- Impact on natural beauty
- Adds to degradation of natural environment
- Imposes on natural landscape
- Negative impact on creatures and vegetation

#### **Structural Issues**

- Size/scale of platform
- Handrail to block view
- Boardwalk too long
- Sticks out too far

#### **Related Issues**

- Alternative Locations
- Impact on local residents
- Car parking, Pedestrian Safety and Litter bins
- Street lighting
- Maintenance issues

#### **Comments**

With regard to **environmental issues**, as a result of the impact of the recent drought, the local landscape at, and around the chosen site, is in a seriously neglected state with significant numbers of dead trees, weeds, uncontrolled grass growth, and considerable fuel load, the latter just south of the site towards Murramarang beach.

As the chosen site is on a rocky base, with little or no topsoil, there would be no perceptible impact on 'creatures and vegetation'. The predominant grass cover is kikuyu grass, which SCC has, in recent years, poisoned each spring, only to have it return the following year.

As part of the approval process, Shoalhaven City Council (SCC) will conduct a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) which includes an Aboriginal heritage assessment, a review of impact upon native fauna and vegetation in accordance with their obligations under the Shoalhaven Local Environment Plan (LEP) for the selected site. This assessment takes into account many of the respondent issues raised in relation to environmental impact.

With respect to **issues relating to the structure and construction**, these will be further considered in discussion with SCC managers and engineers, and will include size, scale, impact, positioning and materials on the proposed site so as to fit into the local environment in such a way as to blend with the natural and marine setting in an unobtrusive way.

It was suggested by some respondents that the handrail would obscure the view. This is not the case, The proposed handrail height is 750mm, which is the height of a normal dining room table. This height is permissible if the platform deck is less than 1 metre from the ground, which is the case in this design. The platform deck handrail has a flat 140mm wide timber top to serve as a resting place for small items such as drink bottles, cups etc.

The length of the boardwalk was felt to be too long by some respondents. The length resulted from a maximum slope requirement of 1:14 for wheelchair accessibility. As the full proposal indicates, the difference in height between the roadway and the platform deck is 1.9metres, so the deck, even with a handrail height of 750mm, will be well below the road level.

Referring to the comment that it 'sticks out too far', the deck has been designed, both in shape and positioning, to capture the maximum views, as well as leave a clear vacant space between the front of the deck and the start of the rocks. This will allow for people not to be impeded when walking around the headland.

## **Related Issues**

### **Alternative Locations**

A number of alternative locations were proposed, including the updating of the small platform at the southern end of Murramarang beach and the Bawley beach boat ramp.

With respect to the first proposal, this is a limited site from the point of view of access and practicality. Access is difficult for those with mobility problems and is a long way from the roadway. Furthermore the site has very restricted views of Murramarang beach as a result of screenings of significant stands of trees/mature shrubs. Even views to Brush Island are restricted by plantings which require regular pruning to expose these views.

A number of respondents suggested the Bawley Point boat ramp for a viewing platform. This area is continuing to be developed. As well as the boat ramp (with related boat/trailer movements, particularly though summer, and other holiday periods), there is a children's playground, barbeque

and picnic setting, the Gantry and an Historical Walk of 150m with viewing platform which has been approved by SCC in this area. In addition, a sub-committee of the BPKCA, after much investigation and consultation, has recommended their preferred site for the construction of a skate park is at this location. As a result, this location was deemed to be inappropriate for another viewing platform.

### **Impact on Local residents**

There was significant discussion with one local resident when the Flo Coffee van was first located at its current site near the proposed viewing platform site. Following these discussions, the Flo van was moved some metres off the road to alleviate congestion and noise. Since then the coffee van has turned into a local 'icon' and has proved extremely popular with the vast majority of locals and visitors. The introduction of the platform, and related bench seating will complement the coffee van and draw pedestrians away from the road shoulder and the corner. As the Landscape Plan for the site indicates, an area has been identified for the moving of the coffee van further away from the road. This will have the benefit of reducing the impact of the van on local residents and further reduce safety issues.

### **Car parking, Pedestrian Safety and Litter Bins**

These are issues which will be considered by the relevant SCC staff in the site development process.

There has always been significant parallel parking available on both sides of Malibu drive along the entire length of the southern end of Gannet beach and around the corner to the south up to its intersection with Sunseeker Drive. When the surf is up or there are major events such as the Bawley Point Ironman on Gannet beach and the annual surfing competition at the end of Murramarang beach, there is significant demand for car parking in this area. This has never been a problem. The introduction of a viewing platform with limited seating would not be expected to have any significant increase in demand for car parks when one considers what is already available.

With respect to pedestrian safety, since the introduction of the Flo Coffee Van, the SCC has erected a sign at the northern intersection of Sunseeker Drive and Malibu Drive which indicates pedestrian traffic.

One practical suggestion made in one response was for the SCC to impose a speed limit of 20 kph (or some other reduced speed which the SCC may deem to be more appropriate) from the junction of the northern end of Sunseeker Drive and Malibu Drive, around the corner to where Malibu Drive meets the southern end of Sunseeker Drive. This shared pedestrian road traffic section of Malibu Drive would then avoid any perceived safety problems.

It is, of course, up to SCC to determine whether additional litter bin(s) are required/necessary. There is currently a litter bin on Malibu Drive where the public walks onto Murramarang beach.

### **Maintenance Issues**

This is not seen to be a major issue. Initial enquiries have shown that a number of local residents have indicated that they would be prepared to participate in a Park Care Group to work with SCC staff to maintain the area where the platform is to be located. (This is the same situation where a

Park care Group has already been formed to assist SCC staff in the long term maintenance of the Historical Walk site at Bawley Point beach near the Gantry.)

## **Conclusion**

As the above overview indicates, there is strong public support for the platform proposal. The issues raised in written responses have been categorised and listed into three groups, with suggested ways forward in each case.

Council, at their September Ordinary Meeting 2020, recommended ‘supporting in principle’ the concept proposal. The next phase of the project will see Council staff completing structural and site reviews and compliance, and then developing a final draft costed proposal for consultation with the community after which a final project report will be put before Council.

7 October 2020

The Executive Committee- BPKCA Inc