



Break O'Day
COUNCIL

2022 Federal Election Submission



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Cover image: Riders on the Georges Bay Multi-User Track

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PRIORITY 1.

Georges Bay Multi-User Foreshore Track- Parnella Linkage

Project Overview

The extension of the Georges Bay Multi-User Track will see the completion of a project the community has wanted Council to deliver for more than 30 years. Not only will the construction of this missing link provide connectivity for the townships of Akaroa and Steiglitz to the main town of St Helens, it will provide a scenic walk way for visitors and locals alike that showcases our area's unique scenery.

Break O'Day Council is seeking funding to construct the final extension to the Georges Bay Multi-User track which will connect with the existing path at O'Connors Beach through to Steiglitz including the designated landslip zone at Parnella. This project will have two major benefits:

1. The project will protect this known landslip area from current as well as future coastal erosion currently impacting the residential area.
2. Connect the township of St Helens to the rapidly growing Stieglitz area which will have health, social and economic benefits for the area.
3. Provide a safe, off-road track for pedestrian and cyclists from Steiglitz to the centre of St Helens.

Once this is completed the multi-user track will stretch approximately 7 km around Georges Bay.

Background

The township of St Helens is bordered by Georges Bay with locals and visitors alike utilising the bay for a range of recreational activities both on and off the water. The bay is a family friendly area that offers access to six jetties, five barbecue areas, five public toilets, three playgrounds, Skate Park and recreational space as well as numerous beaches.

The vision to create a cycle path/walkway linking the various residential areas around Georges Bay goes back 30 years or more and in November 2020, Break O'Day Council opened the latest stage of the extension to the Georges Bay Multi-User track. This work connected the existing track to the wharf area and therefore provides an off-road connection from the centre of St Helens to Lions Park, on the corner of St Helens Point Road as well as to the Flagstaff Mountain Bike (MTB) trailhead. This project would not have been possible without Federal Government funding.



Pictured above: The completed bridge section of the Georges Bay Multi-User track

For decades Break O'Day Council has been asked by the community to establish an off-road walkway in the Parnella area. This correspondence commonly references safety concerns around walkers and cyclists using the road to walk in to town. With an increase in cyclists, visitors and residents in the Steiglitz area, these concerns are being more frequently raised with both Councillors and the General Manager.

Safety and connectivity aside, the residential area of Parnella, which borders Georges Bay and St Helens Point Road, has been declared a landslip area since 1981. Council, Mineral Resources Tasmania and Parks and Wildlife Service have examined ways to mitigate and contain further deterioration of this already developed residential area which has included the completion in the last five years of comprehensive stormwater works that seek to channel run-off water away from the area. However, these works will not protect the area from coastal erosion as a result of wave action.

Despite the disconnection the track is heavily utilised by locals and visitors. Now that the extension through to the St Helens Wharf has been completed, the track is getting even more use by locals and visitors alike from children and workers commuting to and from work and school each morning and evening to visitors accessing the trailhead from the centre of town and vice versa.

Discussion

Council believes that the completion of this track will have significant benefits for our community including:

- Healthy lifestyle – by facilitating residents and visitors to walk/ride all the way from Stieglitz to the centre of the St Helens Township or the St Helens MTB Flagstaff Trailhead.
- Safety – Will allow riders and walkers to get off the main road which is narrow with poor visibility in some areas, particularly Aerodrome hill.
- Connectivity – connecting not just the locals with the township and MTB trails but tourists staying at one of the several caravan parks and accommodation providers in this area.

- Economic – allowing easy access to the centre of the St Helens township attracting visitors to spend more time enjoying the diversity of the bay
- Environmental Sustainability – by future proofing and mitigating further landslip from ongoing erosion, climate change and consequential tidal and coastal inundation

Demand for Infrastructure – Visitation and Population Growth

Since the introduction of the St Helens MTB Network in 2019 we have seen a rapid and significant increase in visitation to our area. This increase in visitation is increasingly putting pressure on our road network as we are not only seeing a general increase in visitation, but an increase in heavy vehicles like caravans and vehicles towing boats. We are also seeing an increased number of cyclists and walkers on our roads, particularly in the Stieglitz area, this has raised concerns for safety from locals and visitors alike.

The Tasmanian Visitor Data shows that in March 2020, visitation to the East Coast of Tasmania had increase by 6.5% as well as an increase in night stays which were up by 3.7%.

Throughout winter 2020, a usually slow time for our region and in the middle of a pandemic, over 50% of businesses who undertook our Business Survey reported an increase in business growth that resulted in 12.5 FTE being created.

Further to an increase in visitation, Profile id reports that our municipality has experienced a 0.9% increase in population in 2019. Stieglitz specifically is evidenced as having a growing population through our New Resident Survey which is sent out to all changes of property. This survey found that of the 174 people who have purchased property in our area over the last 18 months, approx. 9% have purchased in Stieglitz with the majority of these purchases intended for residential use.

Due to Council receiving funding both at a State and Federal level for the construction of the St Helens mountain bike network, we have seen an increase in investment in the Steiglitz area including the construction of a large holiday accommodation complex on St Helens Point Road valued at more than \$10M with plans to expand in the near future. The holiday park includes 26 family friendly cabins, 45 powered camp sites as well as a restaurant catering for up to 200 guests.

Having witnessed the success of the recently completed extension to the multi-user track as well as the community's desire to see a safe, off road path suitable for cyclists and walkers from Steiglitz to St Helens we believe this project to be a priority.

Landslip Mitigation

The Parnella area was declared a landslip area in 1981, unfortunately there had already been residential development in the area. Since then there have been numerous reports and examinations of the area to determine the main causes for landslip and how best to mitigate landslip.

In 2013, Mineral Resources Tasmania undertook a Geomorphological mapping and a review of past investigations. This report concluded that the slips in the area were largely related to 'weather and other climatic fluctuations'. The report examined the effect of the following factors on the land;

- Vegetation clearing – this has largely ceased since the 1980s once the area was officially declared a landslip area.
- Drainage Methods – Council has undertaken significant work in this space to ensure stormwater is diverted away from affected areas. This was at a cost of approx. \$4 Million.
- Weather – This related specifically to significant rain events, which has been largely mitigated by Council's storm water works.
- Shoreline erosion – This was attributed to tidal fluctuations and wave scouring. It was indicated by the report that land stability could be achieved with the implementation of a rock wall.

In 2016 Burbury Consulting undertook an engineering review of Coastal Erosion and Mitigation Measures for Parnella Landslip confirming that shoreline erosion was a contributing factor to the landslip.

Through their findings, Burbury presented seven options for mitigating coastal erosion with the construction of a rock wall the preferred option for several reasons:

- Provides good protection.
- Cost effective.
- Access to material – there is suitable rock material available in our area (This was used to construct the recently completed sections of the Georges Bay Multi-User Track).
- Multi-use – could also be used as a shared pathway.
- Can be accessed easily.
- Can be built upon if required.



Pictured: Walkers on the Georges Bay Multi-User Track.

Conclusion

Having considered these reports as well as our experience in building the extension to the Multi-User track, Council has determined that a rock wall would be the best solution to mitigating landslip as well as provide pedestrian and bike access to the Steiglitz area.

Construction

Construction methods to be utilised will be similar to those used to construct the Multi-User Track extension completed in 2020. This involved placement of crushed rock material, a geofabric barrier and rock armouring topped with a compacted gravel surface. The constructed pathway has an approximate width of 2.5 metres as well as a locally designed and constructed elevated walkway and bridge. Over summer this track was highly utilised by locals, visitors, walkers and cyclists alike.

Methodology

The project construction will involve five different construction methods to ensure the validity and success of the project. These methods take into consideration the goals of; 1. Mitigating landslip and, 2. creating a multi-user track that connects St Helens with the township of Stieglitz. Each one will be applied as appropriate to existing natural or previously-modified landforms. The methods are as follows;

Approx. Location	Method
Section 1. O'Connors Beach area	Removal of vegetation Rehabilitation of the existing structure
Section 2. Aerodrome Hill area	Partial reconstruction of the existing gravel pathway and wave protection
Section 3. Parnella beach area	Construction of a boardwalk at top of beach Localised erosion treatment – geofabric and rock armouring
Section 4. Parnella Landslip area	Construction of gravel walkway – similar to the new section Erosion treatment – geofabric, rock armouring
Section 5. Steiglitz jetty area	Rehabilitation of existing pathway Extension of existing pathway

Swimcart Beach to Binalong Bay – Multi-User track

Project Overview

The Bay of Fires is one of Tasmania's most popular tourism destination sites offering internationally acclaimed, beaches, free camping, a range of recreational activities, and the Bay of Fires Mountain Bike Trail.

Break O'Day Council would like to construct a shared use, dual direction trail from Swimcart Beach in the Bay of Fires to the township of Binalong Bay.

The proposed trail would be approximately 4.5km and would provide significant benefits to both the local community and the visitor economy.

The trail would connect Swimcart Beach and Binalong Bay passing through scenic landscapes with environmental and cultural values.

Background

The East Coast of Tasmania is known for its natural beauty and this remains one of the largest drawcards for visitation to our area. According to the Tasmanian Visitor Survey data, for the period March 2020 – March 2021 from 328,000 visitors, 182,000 participated in bushwalking ranging from less than 4hrs to overnight walks and 21,000 participated in either MTB or cycling activities. Of those visitors, 106,000 visited the East coast.

However, it is not just visitors who come to the area to experience our unique environment. In 2017 Council undertook comprehensive community consultation to form our ten-year strategic plan. Through this process, our community specifically named up the environment and the lifestyle offered by the natural area as their main motivations for living or moving here. They also stated that they wanted more ways to enjoy the environment and their desire to preserve the natural values of the area for future generations. (Reference: [Break O'Day Council Strategic Plan- Transparency Document.](#))

In 2015-16 Break O'Day Council commissioned a comprehensive report on 'Planning for Sustainable Tourism on Tasmania's East Coast. The document was prepared by Hansen Partnership P/L and explored tourism opportunities in the region and took into account cultural, environmental and economic impacts and values. The document recognised the region as having a unique and diverse environment and supported low impact tourism activity naming up specifically the idea of coastal walks.

The researchers developed a feasibility assessment for a multi-day coastal trail "*The String of Pearls*" with sections of this located in the Bay of Fires and on similar alignments to the trail we are now proposing.

A dual direction and multi-user walking/cycling track from Swimcart Beach to Binalong Bay has been something the local community have expressed a strong interest in seeing developed. Their reasoning for the trail development is that it would connect the 'bays' or beaches of the Bay of Fires, provide a unique perspective on the area as well as connecting the dispersed residential areas.

The addition of the 42km Bay of Fires mountain bike trail now ending at Swimcart Beach has further increased the need and desire for a walk/cycle connection to Binalong Bay from the Bay of Fires. Residents and riders alike have expressed their desire to see a trail that would allow them to ride from Swimcart Beach back to Binalong Bay. Not only would this trail provide this connection, as it would be off-road it would be a much safer way for people to move between the areas. Gardens Road is currently the only road access to the Bay of Fires and was not designed for cycle traffic due to its camber and sight line constraints.

Pictured: Riders at Swimcart Beach after completing the Bay of Fires Trail



Discussion

The construction of a dual direction multi-user track from Swimcart Beach to Binalong Bay will have positive outcomes in several areas including:

- Safety – Allowing cyclists and walkers access to and from the Bay of Fires and Binalong Bay off-road.
- Environmental sustainability – A designated track that would ensure riders and walkers would avoid any sensitive areas on the coastline including vulnerable shore birds. This would also provide us the opportunity to;
 - Educate users of the trails to the unique environment, its vulnerabilities and its challenges.
 - Showcasing our unique environment – the trail will pass through varying landscapes from coastal heath and dune habitats to coastal forests and woodlands
 - Showcase aboriginal cultural values in a sensitive manner and in collaboration with local aboriginal elders.
 - Connect the Bay of Fires and Binalong Bay communities
 - Increase both local and visitor access to outdoor walking/cycling tracks that in turn foster a healthy lifestyle.

Already we are finding that walkers and cyclists are trying to form their own tracks through this area. A formalised trail would ensure sustainability and natural values would be not only retained but showcased. We are also seeing an increase in the number of cyclists using Gardens Road to access Binalong Bay. Due to the visibility and sight distances on this road, concerns have been raised by the community as well as cyclists who would like to be able to ride from the end of the Bay of Fires trail at Swimcart Beach to Binalong Bay. The provision of this trail would ensure a safe route off road for walkers and cyclists alike.

The Bay of Fires is a very popular summer holiday destination for Tasmanians and mainlanders alike. This is in large part due to approximately 500 free camping sites located along the Bay of Fires bays right on the beach. These sites are managed by the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and are overflowing during summer.

Various beaches in the Bay of Fires including Swimcart and Jeanneret Beaches are also popular day use areas which can become congested with campers, caravaners and day parking. The establishment of a formalised trail from Swimcart to Binalong Bay would take some of the pressure off these areas as cyclists and other day users could utilise the proposed trail to access these areas.

Council officers have already begun the process of investigating the most suitable trail alignment through the area. To date this has involved working with land owners, Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) to identify the applicable Reserve Activity Assessment, a comprehensive Environmental assessment from EcoTas and desktop Aboriginal Heritage Assessment.

Due to the environmental sensitivity of the Bay of Fires area it is important to Council and our community that the track will have minimal impact on the natural landscape paying particular attention to nesting shorebirds including penguins. This led to the proposed alignment which has been designed with environmental and cultural significance in forefront of mind.

The proposed trail would be around 4.5km in length and would start at Grants Lagoon in Binalong Bay and end near the day use area at Swimcart beach. The trail alignment already mapped utilises existing tracks and road reserves with some new trail requiring to be constructed or rehabilitated.

Break O'Day Council is concurrently undertaking a Bay of Fires Master Plan and Recreational Trails Strategy with both documents referencing this project.

St Helens to Binalong Bay – Multi-User Trail

Project Overview

Break O'Day Council would like to construct a shared, dual direction trail from the township of St Helens to the township of Binalong Bay. This trail would foster walkability and connectivity between the two towns as well as provide a safe, off road connection for cyclists.

The proposed trail would be an extension of St Helens' Georges Bay Multi-User track which starts/ends on the St Helens foreshore. The proposed trail would connect to this trail and then follow the Binalong Bay Road reservation until connecting with the footpath in the township of Binalong Bay.

This project will provide a connection between the two residential townships, allow riders and walkers a safe space to travel between the townships as well as provide additional, visitor infrastructure for Binalong Bay, a popular intrastate, interstate and international holiday destination.

Background

During community consultation to formulate our 10 year strategic plan in 2017, the Break O'Day Community clearly expressed its desire to see more pedestrian and cycle access across the municipality. (Reference: [Break O'Day Strategic Plan – Transparency Document](#) and [Strategic Plan](#)). This form of infrastructure supports the lifestyle of our community as well as the demands of visitors to the area.

With the establishment of the St Helens MTB Network in 2019, the area has experienced an increase in MTB visitation as well as increased interest in cycling from within the community. This can be evidenced by the establishment of a local MTB club, the Pedal Heads. This has led to a demand for more cycle and walking tracks that allow exploration of our area in an active and safe way, for example, off-road.

Break O'Day covers an area of 6346 Ha and is a low socio-economic area with no public transport. Connectivity between townships continues to be a priority for Council and the Community with transport often named by the community as barrier to opportunities and connection.

Discussion

Binalong Bay Road, it is classified as a Class 4 Tourist Road in the State Network. Due to this classification and the fact that the road forms part of the established tourist route Great Eastern Drive, the Tasmanian Government has just officially taken over the future responsibility for this Road. (The official proclamation was made in the Tasmanian Government Gazette on 20 October.)

Currently the road is not fit for purpose based on the increasing amount of traffic using this road. Particularly in the busy summer season. This is compounded by a large number for heavy vehicles such as caravans and boat trailers as well as cyclists using this road. The increase of these users of the road raises safety concerns.

Over the 30 December 2019 to 5 January 2020 period Council's traffic counters recorded a total of 3694 vehicles. Approximately 430 of these were heavy vehicles.

The construction of a dual direction multi-use track that connects the townships of St Helens and Binalong

Bay will have positive outcomes in several areas including:

- Safety – Allowing cyclists and walkers access to and from the St Helens and Binalong Bay.
- Connectivity – Connecting the Binalong Bay and St Helens residential townships as well as the St Helens MTB Network.
- Lifestyle – increasing both local and visitor access to outdoor walking/cycling tracks that in turn foster a healthy lifestyle.

According to the 2016 Census, Binalong Bay has a population 290 residents but has 394 private dwellings. This indicates a large number of houses in the area are 'shacks' or holiday homes as well as short term accommodation providers like Air BnB properties. According to Department of Justice figures there are approximately 87 Air BnB properties listed in the Binalong Bay area.

The proportion of Air BnB and holiday home figures illustrate how rapidly and significantly the population in this area grows during the holiday seasons. Council anticipates that the population of Binalong Bay almost quadruples during summer – this also takes into consideration more than 500 free camping sites in the Binalong Bay and Bay of Fires areas as well as day users whom all contribute to the demand for infrastructure in the area.

The establishment of the St Helens MTB Network has also seen a notable increase in cycle traffic, not just on the trails but around and between townships. In order to facilitate this growth, Council is actively pursuing and undertaking projects that enhance off-road connectivity.

Last year, Local Government Association Tasmania partnered with the Tasmanian Government and the Menzies Institute to Understand and Promote Active living in Rural Tasmania (UPROAR). This pilot program utilised citizen science to “understand the environmental characteristics that influence walkability and physical activity in rural Tasmania.

The program focused on three rural areas of varying population and essentially audited the area's policies, programs, physical characteristics and amenity to understand what fostered, facilitated and encouraged walkability in these areas. The conclusion of the study was that connectivity was a high priority for rural townships in terms of walkability. Other findings were:

- *“Improving connectivity between existing town features and trails was identified as the highest priority for enhancing walkability...”*
- *“For some people this was also identified as an important mechanism for enhancing social inclusion.*

This project would not only deliver on the connectivity of the St Helens and Binalong Bay townships, it would also facilitate connections with the MTB trails, local businesses and services. It would also foster healthy living ideals and aligns strongly with what we already know about our community.

Break O'Day Council is concurrently undertaking a Bay of Fires Master Plan and Recreational Trails Strategy with both documents referencing this project.