

5.8. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN - DAINTREE RIVER FERRY CONTRACT RENEWAL

REPORT AUTHOR(S) Darryl Crees, Acting Chief Executive Officer

DEPARTMENT Corporate Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

- **endorses the community engagement plan for the Daintree Ferry contract; and**
- **delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer in accordance with section 257 of the *Local Government Act 2009* to finalise any and all matters associated with this plan.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As part of stage 1 of the Daintree River Ferry contract renewal, Council is seeking feedback from all relevant stakeholders for suggestions on enhancements to ferry service. Attached to this report is the community engagement plan that has been developed for this purpose and it is presented to Council for endorsement.

BACKGROUND

The current Daintree River Ferry Services contract commenced on 1 July 2006 and is due to expire on 30 June 2021. To ensure a seamless transition from the current contract to the new contract, sufficient time has to be allowed for potential service providers to submit their tender and to ensure the vessel is ready to commence operations 1 July 2021.

To facilitate this end result it is planned to be in a position to invite tenders no later than 30 June 2019 and to award the contract by no later than 31 December 2019. That would allow the successful tenderer to implement all necessary arrangements to effect a seamless transition to the new contract.

COMMENT

Prior to the preparation of the tender documents, feedback from all stakeholders is being sought to identify any enhancements to the ferry service they would like Council to consider. All suggestions where practical and feasible will be incorporated into the tender specifications. It is unlikely that all requests can be granted however at the end of the community engagement process, a further report will be presented to Council detailing feedback received and reasons why a request or suggestion has not been incorporated into the tender documentation.

Attached to this report is the community engagement plan which details the process to be undertaken. Normally the community engagement plan would not be presented to Council for endorsement but as this relates to the ferry operations which is a very emotive issue, it is intended that all aspects of the community engagement will be in the public realm.

PROPOSAL

That Council endorses the community engagement plan as presented and delegates authority to the Chief Executive Officer to finalise any and all matters associated with this plan.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Funds have been allocated in the 2018/19 to cover expenditure relating to the ferry contract renewal.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

There are no risk management implications associated with progressing this plan.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

4.1.2 - Undertake community engagement activities that are clearly identified and are appropriate in relation to the project.

Theme 5 – Governance

5.1.1 - Establish and develop long term financial, resource and infrastructure planning to ensure ongoing capacity to fund operations and capital works programs.

5.2.1 - Provide Councillors and community with accurate, unbiased and factual reporting to enable accountable and transparent decision-making.

Operational Plan 2018-2019 Actions:

4.1.2 - Undertake Stage 1 of Daintree River Ferry Contract renewal which will focus on community/stakeholder engagement and feasibility studies on potential ferry operations expansion.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Fully-Responsible Funding the full cost of a program or activity

Regulator Meeting the responsibilities associated with regulating activities through legislation or local law.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Senior staff, Executive Leadership Team and Councillors.

External: Community engagement plan to be implemented.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement plan to be implemented.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Daintree Ferry - Community Engagement Plan **[5.8.1]**

Community Engagement Plan – Daintree Ferry Contract

Background

The current ferry contract is due to expire 30 June 2021.

Douglas Shire Council is planning to invite tenders from the market for a new contract, no later than 30 June 2019.

The aim is to award a contract no later than 31 December 2019 which would allow 18 months for the successful tenderer to implement all necessary arrangements to ensure a seamless transition to the new contract.

Before preparing tender documents, Douglas Shire Council is seeking input from all stakeholders with regard to any enhancements to the ferry service they would like Council to consider.

This plan sets out the proposed community engagement activities for consideration by Councillors.

Approach to Consultation

The aim is to ensure widespread consultation to cover all users of the Daintree Ferry.

Douglas Shire Council will employ multiple communication channels and access business, industry and community networks to raise awareness of the opportunity for people to suggest how the ferry service can be enhanced.

All suggestions will be considered and where practical and feasible, they will be incorporated into the tender specifications. It is unlikely all requests can be granted and where this is the case, reasons why will be provided at the conclusion of the consultation process.

Council will also gather information via a survey of regular users. The option of doing a visitor survey has been included for consideration.

Stakeholders

Users of the Daintree Ferry and other stakeholders may be grouped as follows:

- Businesses operating north of the Daintree River
- Businesses serving customers north of the Daintree River
- Cook Shire residents
- Daintree Joint Management Group
- Daintree Marketing Cooperative (DMC)
- Department of Environment and Science
- Douglas Shire ratepayers and residents, particularly those living north of the Daintree River
- Douglas Shire Sustainability Group (DSSG)
- Ferry operators - current
- Jabalbina
- Queensland Health
- Tour companies operating tours north of the Daintree River
- Tourism Port Douglas and Daintree (TPDD)
- Wet Tropics Management Authority
- Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire residents

Fact Sheets

Two fact sheets will be prepared.

One will explain that Council will be going out to tender for a new ferry contract and is seeking community input as to how the ferry service can be enhanced. It will provide instructions on how people can submit comments and the deadline. A draft is shown in Attachment A.

A second fact sheet will list details about the current ferry service to assist stakeholders understand the context of their input. It will include carrying capacity, priority lane, provisions contractors must put in place if there's a disruption to the service and operating arrangements. A draft is shown in Attachment B.

Consultation Activities

Douglas Shire Council will announce it is seeking feedback initially via the Daintree Joint Management Group and will then roll out communications which will include:

- Email to database of stakeholders
- Email to TPPD, DMC and DSSG to encourage email be distributed to their members
- Face to face meeting with ferry operators
- Facebook post
- Survey of residents
- Hand outs at the ferry
- Poster on the Daintree Ferry notice board
- Media release
- Alert on Council's Have Your Say Page

Consultation Matrix

The following table lists each group and specifies the communication method and how comments can be submitted.

Stakeholder Group	Communication Method	How Feedback Supplied
Business operating north of the Daintree River	Email to DMC Handout at the ferry to all concession card holders Poster on Daintree Ferry Noticeboard	Send in suggestions
Cook Shire residents	Email to CSC	Send in suggestions
Daintree Marketing Cooperative	Email to secretary@destinationdaintree.com and request distribution to members	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting
Douglas Shire ratepayers and residents, particularly those living north of the Daintree River	Online survey Survey available at the ferry booth Handout at the ferry to all concession card holders Poster on Daintree Ferry Noticeboard Facebook post	Complete Survey Send in suggestions
Douglas Shire Sustainability Group	Email to DSSG and request distribution to members	Send in suggestions
Jabalbina	Email to ceo@jabalbina.com.au and Via DJMG	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting
Tour companies operating tours north of the Daintree River	Daintree Email List Handout at the ferry to tour companies Email to Tara at Tourism Port Douglas Daintree	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting
Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire residents	Email to ceo@wujalwujalcouncil.qld.gov.au	Send in suggestions
Businesses serving customers north of the Daintree River	Handout at the ferry to trades people and service providers	Send in suggestions
Daintree Joint Management Group	Include an agenda item on Daintree Joint Management Group	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting
Department of Environment and Science DES ¹	Via DJMG	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting
Ferry operators - current	Face to face meeting	Send in suggestions Raise in face to face meeting
Wet Tropics Management Authority	Via DJMG Daintree Email list	Send in suggestions Raise suggestions at DJMG meeting

¹ DES is the new department which encompasses Queensland Parks and Wildlife Services

Website

The opportunity to provide comments will be published on DSC's website on the have your say page.

Community Engagement Status Report	
Project Name:	<i>Community Engagement – Daintree Ferry Contract</i>
Status:	<i>1 September 2018</i>
Consultation Closes:	<i>31 October 2018</i>
Description:	<p>The current Daintree River ferry contract is due to expire 30 June 2021.</p> <p>Douglas Shire Council is planning to issue tenders for a new contract no later than 30 June 2019 with the aim of awarding a contract no later than 31 December 2019. This will allow 18 months for the successful tenderer to implement all necessary arrangements to ensure a seamless transition to the new contract.</p> <p>Before preparing tender documents, Douglas Shire Council is seeking input from all stakeholders with regard to any enhancements to the ferry service they would like Council to consider.</p>
Please give us your comments:	<p>Comments may be lodged as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emailed to enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au with Daintree Ferry Contract in the Subject Line or; ▪ Mail written comments to PO Box 723, Mossman, QLD 4873 <p>Residents and ferry concession card holders are invited to complete a short [survey].</p>
Future Engagement:	<p>All suggestions received in writing will be considered and where practical and feasible, they will be incorporated into the tender specifications for the new ferry contract.</p> <p>A summary of all comments will be published at the conclusion of the consultation process.</p>
Supporting Information:	<p>Daintree Ferry Service Consultation fact sheets [link].</p> <p>Residents and ferry concession card holders survey [link].</p>

Resident and Ratepayer Research

An online survey will be conducted to collect feedback from the following groups:

- People who live north of the Daintree River in Forest Creek, Cape Kimberley, Cow Bay, Diwan, Thornton Beach, Cape Tribulation, Degarra, Bloomfield and China Camp
- Residents who have a current Ferry Concession Card

The purpose of the research will be to measure their current level of satisfaction with ferry services, and to seek input with regard to any enhancements to the ferry service they would like Council to consider.

Methodology

People will be made aware of the survey via:

- Letter to all Douglas Shire ratepayers who own land north of the Daintree River inviting them to go online and complete the survey;
- Handouts at the ferry to all those who present a concession card when crossing inviting people to go online and complete the survey;
- Poster on the Ferry Notice Board inviting residents to go online and complete the survey;
- Email link to North Douglas Group representative with link to the online survey.

Proposed questions are:

Q1. How often do you use the Daintree ferry?

- 5 or more return trips each week
- 2-4 return trips per week
- Return trip once a week
- Less than once a week

Q2a. How would you rate the ferry service in general?

- Very Unsatisfactory → go to 2b
- Unsatisfactory → go to 2b
- Good
- Excellent

Q2b. Please tell us why you believe the service is not satisfactory?

Q3. What enhancements to the ferry service would you like Council to consider under a new ferry contract commencing in July 2021?

Q4. We do request your name and suburb for quality assurance purposes. Please be assured any feedback you provide will be kept confidential. Comments will be presented in a collated format only, with no comments attributed to individuals.

Name

Suburb where you live

Submit

Thank you for taking the time to provide feedback. Should you have any questions about this survey, please email gaye.scott@douglas.qld.gov.au

Outcomes from Research

- % of residents who find the ferry service satisfactory
- % of residents who are not satisfied with the ferry service
- Of the people who are not satisfied, the reasons why—i.e. I can't take my kids to after school ballet lessons during the tourist season because the long queues mean we can't get there in time;
- Good ideas from residents of how the ferry service can be enhanced which can be incorporated into the ferry contract resulting in an improved service.

Risks

To minimise the risk of individuals filling in multiple surveys, the online survey will allow only one submission from each IP address and will require respondents to provide their full name and suburb to provide an ability to cross check against Council records.

Visitor Research

DSC will consider the option of doing a visitor survey to measure satisfaction with the ferry service. Tour operators have expressed concern that long wait times at the ferry detract from the visitor experience. While there's anecdotal evidence of visitors complaining about long wait times and missing pre-booked tours, we do not know what proportion of visitors are in this "dissatisfied" group.

One way to ascertain the proportion of people negatively impacted is to do a visitor survey at the ferry asking people about their experience.

Below is a proposed methodology.

Methodology

- A professional researcher would be stationed on the northern side of the river, and interview people in their cars waiting to return after their day's activities.
- The survey would be done from 3pm through to 6pm each day.
- Interviews would be done on all seven days of the week (to determine if there was a difference between week days and weekends)
- Interviewing would continue until a sample size of 200 was achieved.
- Only visitors would be surveyed.
- Only those who had travelled across on the ferry, either on that day, or in the previous few days would be interviewed.
- Questions would be kept to a minimum.

Questionnaire

- Q1. When you came across on the ferry, how did you find the experience?
- Good/okay/fine/no problem
 - Not good/awful/terrible
- Can you tell me why? [If wait time was the issue, skip to Q3.]
- Q2. Did you have to wait at all?
- No
 - Yes
- How long did you wait?
- Q3. Can you tell me what time arrived at the ferry to travel north?
- Q4. Postcode or Country of usual place of residence

Outcomes from Research

- % of visitors who had positive experience on the ferry
- % of visitors who had negative experience on the ferry
- Of the people who had a negative experience, the reasons why—i.e. had to wait too long, too expensive, other.

- Correlation between level of experience on the ferry and wait time. For example, for wait times longer than 45 minutes, x% of people were annoyed. For wait times less than 15 minutes, x% of people were annoyed, etc.
- Whether there was any significant difference in people's ferry experience when comparing week days with weekends
- Origin of visitors, i.e. local, intrastate, interstate, overseas.

Cost

The estimated cost to outsource the interviewing is \$3,000. If Council was to proceed, two quotes would be sought as per Procurement General Policy.

Risk

Prior to determining whether to proceed with the visitor survey, the workplace safety issues need to be worked through.

Proposed Timing

Endorsement of community engagement plan by Councillors by 31 July 2018

Implementation August/September 2018

Analysis October 2018

Draft Report on feedback November 2018

Report to Council December 2018

Attachment A – Fact Sheet



Comments invited on the Daintree Ferry Service.

Background

The current Daintree ferry contract is due to expire 30 June 2021.

Douglas Shire Council is planning to issue tenders for a new contract no later than 30 June 2019 with the aim of awarding a contract by 31 December 2019. This would allow 18 months for the successful tenderer to build a new vessel should this form part of their offer.

Before preparing tender documents, Douglas Shire Council is seeking input from all stakeholders with regard to any enhancements to the ferry service they would like Council to consider.

How to Submit Comments

Comments need to be in writing and may be lodged as follows:

- Emailed to enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au with Daintree Ferry Contract in the Subject Line or;
- Mail written comments to PO Box 723, Mossman, QLD 4873

Survey

Council is also conducting a short survey about the ferry service. All Shire residents who live north of the Daintree River and who have a ferry concession card are encouraged to participate.

The survey may be completed online [address] or a hard copy may be collected from the ferry booth or picked up from Council Chambers.

Deadline for Comments and Survey Responses

31 October 2018

Summary of Comments will be published

All suggestions received will be considered and where practical and feasible, they will be incorporated into the tender specifications for the new ferry contract.

It is unlikely all that requests can be granted. A summary of all comments will be published at the conclusion of the consultation process.

Enquiries

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact Gaye Scott via email gaye.scott@douglas.qld.gov.au or 4099 9414.

September 2018

Attachment B – Current Ferry Service



Daintree Ferry Service Current Arrangements.

Operating Days and Hours

The Daintree Ferry operates continually across the river from 6am through to midnight every day except Christmas Day when hours are restricted to 7.30am to 10.00am and 2.30pm to 5pm although this can vary slightly from year to year.

Capacity

The current capacity of the ferry is 27 standard vehicles. It is 43 metres long and can carry up to 450 tonnes.

Priority Lane

There is a priority lane for locals on the southern side of the river and this operates between 9am and 4.30pm from the first Sunday in June through to early November each year. DSC sets the start and finish dates of the priority lane.

Disruption to normal ferry services

The current contract allows for the ferry to be out of service for up to six days each year for repairs and maintenance. The contractor must provide reasonable notice to Council of any pending closure. During the closure, the operator must provide a passenger vessel service capable of taking at least 30 passengers.

Management

Douglas Shire Council pays the contractor to deliver the ferry service. All aspects of operating the ferry are the responsibility of the contractor. This includes the ferry driver, traffic controllers to load and unload vehicles, and staffing of the ticket booths.

The fees charged to cross the river are set by Douglas Shire Council and all revenue collected goes to Council.

EFTPOS is available at the ferry at all times with machines at the booth and on the ferry. Payment arrangements are managed by DSC.

Douglas Shire Council is responsible maintaining the channel across the Daintree River to accommodate the ferry.

July 2018