

5.4. WANGETTI TRAIL HUB

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DEPARTMENT Environment and Planning

RECOMMENDATION

- A. That Council resolve to give “In Principle” support for the establishment of the Wangetti Trail Hub on the corner of Quaid Road and the Captain Cook Highway, Wangetti over land described as Lot 48 on CP910509, Lot 1 & Lot 2 on AP15771 and including part of the road reserve of Quaid Road.**

The Trail Hub could contain a range of land uses that reflect the aspirations of the Traditional Owners to the extent that such uses are complimentary and necessary to support the Trail Hub and the continued ongoing operation and maintenance of the trail. Such uses may include, but not limited to:-

- Visitor / interpretation facility / Tour desk;
- A shop (limited Gross Floor Area);
- Arts display / studio and associated sales of the goods;
- Café / Restaurant;
- Rangers station / depot;
- Camping / overnight stays in cabins;
- Other facilities to support users of the track i.e bike assembly area and other complimentary facilities.

- B. The above advice is offered on a “without prejudice” basis. The determination of any future Development Application will be subject to an assessment against the Planning Scheme in addition to any submissions received during the public notification period.**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wangetti Trail is a proposed iconic mountain bike and hiking trail in the coastal ranges between Palm Cove and Port Douglas. The proposed trail showcases the beauty of the Wet Tropics and the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage areas. The proposed trail is a priority recommendation within the FNQROC Tropical North Queensland Regional Mountain Bike Strategy and is recognised as the “hero” trail that will attract adventure tourists to the Tropical North Queensland and contribute to the economy of the region.

In partnership, Douglas Shire and Cairns Regional Council developed a Concept Plan and Economic and Social Impact Assessment of the proposed Wangetti Trail.

Detailed ground truthing and design of the trail was completed in 2018 along with a full business case. This work was facilitated through the Special Projects Unit (SPU) of the State Government’s Department of Innovation, Tourism Industry Development (DITID) and the Commonwealth Games.

The project is intended to be undertaken in two stages with the works on the Mowbray North portion to commence in the 2019 calendar year with the balance of the trail to be completed separately once further funding is secured.

A key component of to the success of the balance of the trail is the establishment of a “Trail Hub” on the western side of the Captain Cook Highway at Wangetti. It is envisaged that the Trail Hub would be an arrival and drop off location to the trail while also accommodating a range of land uses that support the ongoing operation and users of the trail.

The Trail Hub is also intended to provide economic and social opportunities that meet the aspirations of the traditional owners. Discussions with the traditional owners to identify what those aspirations are expected to take place in the very near future.

The SPU have advised that the establishment of the Trail Hub is identified as a critical path in the project planning phase and therefore seek a commitment from Council for the establishment of the Trail Hub.

The SPU have also advised that such support will also greatly assist discussions with the Traditional Owners with respect to bedding down their aspirations in relation to the land.

The purpose of this report is to provide the SPU with a Council Resolution that provides “In Principle” support for the establishment of a Trail Hub on the western side of the Captain Cook Highway.

The proposed recommendation also identifies a range of land uses that would be considered appropriate to support the establishment of the Trail Hub in this location.

THE SITE

The area of land identified to contain the Trail Hub is located predominately on the western side of the Captain Cook Highway and to the north of Quaid's Road. An area of land has also been identified on the south side of Quaid's Road.

The land and respective owners is identified as follows:-

- Lot 1 on AP15771 – Crown Land (DRNM&E)
- Lot 1 on AP15771 – Crown Land (DNRM&E)
- Lot 48 on CP910509 – Wangetti Aboriginal Land Trust
- Part of road reserve on the norther side of Quaid's Road – Crown Land (DNRM&E)

A plan identifying the land parcels is provided below.

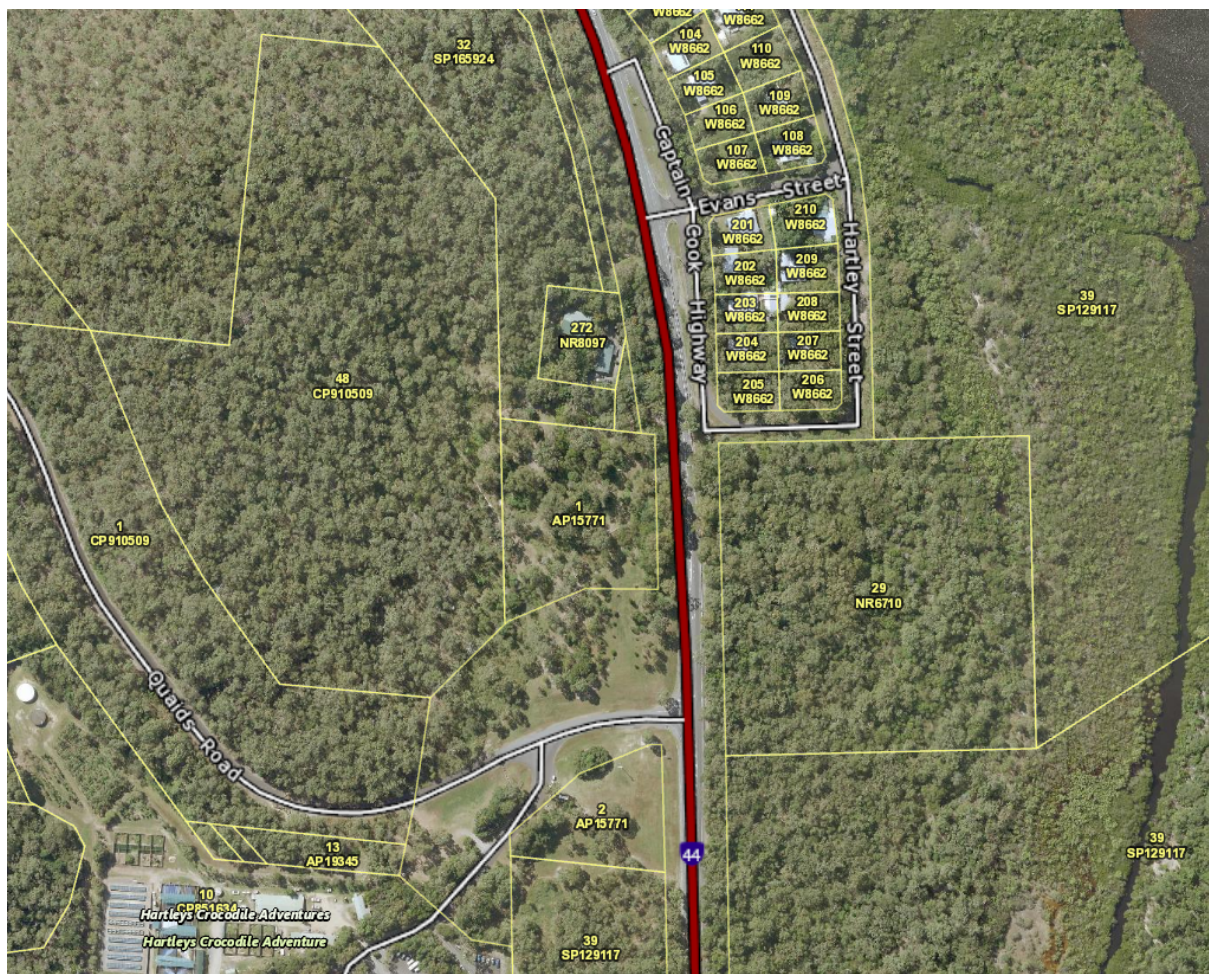


Figure 1. Locality Plan (Source Qld Globe)

The majority of the Trail Hub will locate on Lot 1 on AP15771. It is understood DRNM&E are currently in the process of realigning the southern boundary of Lot 1 to include a portion of the road reserve of Quaid's Road before transferring the land to Traditional Owners.

Options to be investigated will also extend over Lot 2 on the south side of Quaid's Road. This land is relatively flat and unconstrained and has the ability to accommodate uses that support the operation of the trail i.e Rangers Station / Depot.

Lot 48 is the land owned by the Wangetti Aboriginal Land Trust. This land is quite constrained with respect to hillslopes and vegetation. A significant portion of the site is identified as containing Remnant Vegetation with the exception of a slither of land adjacent the eastern boundary.



Figure 2. Areas of blue denoting Remnant Vegetation under the Vegetation Management Act 1999 - (Source Qld Globe)

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

In preliminary discussions with the SPU, the unit has suggested that Council undertake a Master Planning exercise with the view of amending the Planning Scheme to reflect the planning intent to establish the Wangetti Trail Hub. As mentioned above, the SPU have identified this as a critical path in the project planning for the development and also require this to take place to assist discussions with the Traditional Owners with respect to social and economic aspirations they hold with respect to the land.

As an alternative option to undertaking a Master Planning exercise and Planning Scheme amendments, it was suggested to the SPU that the Trail Hub be applied for as part of the Development Application when seeking to construct the trail. The exact nature of the land uses being applied for and the structure of the development application will be subject to further discussion. However this option is considered to be the most flexible and practical to achieve the desired outcome.

To this extent, the development application could be constructed in a way which seeks a Preliminary Approval for a range of uses which reflects the aspirations of the Traditional Owners and creates the trail hub which compliments the visitor experience.

Similar parallels can be drawn from the Mossman Gorge visitor centre in terms of the mix of activities contained on that site and the services offered. It is acknowledged that the scale may not be the same as the Mossman Gorge however similar activities could be established.

For example, the following uses would be seen as being complimentary and necessary to support the Trail Hub:-

- Visitor / interpretation facility / Tour desk;
- A shop. This could be limited to a certain size with goods being sold to support users of the trail / visitor hub. The location and layout of the shop component to attract passing trade from the Captain Cook Highway should be avoided;
- Arts display / studio and associated sales of the goods;
- Café / Restaurant;
- Rangers station / depot;
- Camping / overnight stays in cabins;
- Other facilities to support users of the track i.e bike assembly area and other complimentary facilities.

The SPU have been receptive to the alternative option and are supportive to pursue the creation of the Trail Hub through the development approval process and agree that this would be the most practical course of action. There is always the opportunity to amend the Planning Scheme in the future to reflect either the approval once issued or the facility once constructed.

There are obvious constraints with respect to the land in terms of no reticulated water supply or sewer services which will limit the scale and intensification of the development. Onsite water storage and effluent disposal will be a significant constraining factor along with other factors such as hillslopes and vegetation.

It is anticipated that any future Development Application will be impact assessable and require public notification as the land is contained within the Conservation zone. It is also anticipated that the development application will require trigger referral to various state agencies.

The proposed recommendation seeks to provide SPU with the necessary Council support they are seeking and will greatly assist discussions with the Traditional Owners as to what opportunities are available to them over the land.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Council has previously committed to 'in kind' assistance with the project with respect to waiving development application fees. Council will also play an active part in discussions and offering planning advice leading into the preparation of the Development Application.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

The overall project has a well developed risk management plan with environmental approvals, business case and Native Title negotiations being the focus.

Council is not providing the capital funding for the trail nor will Council be providing capital funding into the Trail Hub. Council's risk exposure is considered to be very low.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic:

The Wangetti Trail project as a whole will be the State's first purpose-built multi-day walking and mountain bike trail with public and eco-accommodation facilities. A detailed business case has been prepared for the Wangetti Trail project which has identified the project as a viable development with substantial returns.

The proposed Trail Hub is a fundamental component of the walking trail and will be key to its success. The Trail Hub will also provide economic opportunities to the Traditional Owners of the land that otherwise would not be forthcoming.

Environmental:

Planning approvals will need to be obtained. It will be through this process that environmental considerations will be taken into account to ensure the development is sympathetically designed and takes account of the environmental constraints of the site.

Any future development application will require referral to state agencies.

Social:

Ecotourism and adventure tourism are growing industries attracting high value customers, supporting local economies by generating economic and social benefits and creating resilience through sustainable employment opportunities.

Eco and adventure tourists have a marked impact on the communities they visit, wishing to connect with the local community in a meaningful way. Rapid growth in participation in walking and mountain biking tourism has led to increasing demand for quality trail networks that can meet different user needs. It is expected that the Project will meet these needs, with demand by walkers and mountain bikers anticipated to be significant.

The Wangetti Trail Hub will form a key component of the overall walking trail and will form an activity node that also supports the ongoing operation and maintenance of the trail. In addition, employment opportunities will be created for the Traditional Owners as well as an opportunity to undertake cultural activities that reflect their aspirations for the land and positively contribute to their social and individual wellbeing.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

1.1.4 - Support and encourage a healthy, active and capable region through sporting, cultural and recreational opportunities, and community wellbeing initiatives.

Theme 2 - Building a Sustainable Economic Base

2.2.5 - Expand tourism and agricultural business opportunities and benefits through collaborative planning and promotion.

Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner

4.2.2 - Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.

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.

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:

Part-Funder Sharing the cost of a program or activity with other organisations.

CONSULTATION

Internal: The Wangetti Trail project has frequently been workshopped with Councilors and championed by Douglas Shire Council.

The concept of the Trail Hub was workshopped with Council on 22 January 2019 and the alternative of pursuing the Trail Hub through the Development Application process canvassed.

External: DITID

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

No formal engagement. The Trail progress has been the subject of numerous media articles, Council Facebook and Website information.

ATTACHMENTS

Nil