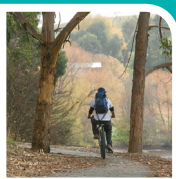


Devonport City Council



The City with Spirit



Don Reserve Environmental Management Plan

1 Overview

1.1 PURPOSE

The City of Devonport Strategic Plan 2009-2030 presents the community's vision, desired goals and outcomes for the City and the strategies Council will implement to achieve these.

One of the key goals for the City is '*Living lightly on the environment*' in which 'sustainability is promoted and integrated across all sectors'. Two strategies that are relevant to the development of the Don Reserve Environmental Management Plan (the Plan) are:

- 1.2.1 Support the conservation and maintenance of biodiversity corridors including coastal landscapes and preserve areas of remnant vegetation; and
- 1.2.2 Undertake projects that protect and enhance our rivers and beaches in partnership with the community and relevant agencies.

The Don Reserve Environmental Management Plan 2015 - 2020 sets out proposed actions, undertaken by the Devonport City Council in partnership with a range of organisations, agencies and community groups in the Don Reserve to protect and enhance the natural bushland ecosystem for the benefit of native flora and fauna and for the enjoyment of residents and visitors. The Plan reflects the work undertaken by the Don Reserve Working Group in reviewing the original plan released in 2002 and integrating community generated concerns and solutions. The Plan will be reviewed again in 2020.

Devonport Strategic Plan 2009-2030

Goal 1. Living Lightly on the Environment

Through the integration of sustainable practices, we will ensure Devonport's viability socially, economically and environmentally, preserving our natural geography and landscapes for future generations. Planned and sustainable management of energy, air, water and waste will assist in the delivery of a healthy environment.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

The following steps have been undertaken in developing this draft Plan.

- a. Review of the 2002 Don Reserve Environmental Management Plan.
- b. Community survey conducted October - November 2014.
- c. Analysis of community survey results by Don Reserve Working Group.
- d. Development of draft actions based on community feedback, existing Council policies and plans including the 5-year forward capital works program.

1.3 PLAN AREA

The Don Reserve is a narrow strip of remnant vegetation with a 689m maximum width from end Best St to the River and 2814 metres in length on the eastern bank of the Don River.

The statutory boundary defines the Reserve from Don River Railway in the South and the Tas Rail main line to the North (refer Map 1). For the purposes of managing the natural and community values of the Reserve this Plan covers an area larger than the statutory Reserve boundary (refer Map 2) to include:

- Riparian zone of a tributary of the Don River running along Jilola Way;

- Bushland area from Don River Railway to the Forth Road bridge including Dell Luck Reserve; and
- The cycling/walking track on the western side of the estuary (Waverley Road track) and Sawdust bridge (these are Council maintained, the remaining area is Crown land with Council having no jurisdiction to manage).

1.4 LAND TENURE

Current land tenures in and near the reserve comprise:

- land at the northern and southern parts of the reserve that are owned by Council;
- Crown land near the river;
- Don College (administered by the Education Department); and
- The railway corridor, which is leased until 2051 from Council for use as a railway heritage tourist attraction by the Don River Historic Railway.

The balance of the reserve, including the area occupied by the Aquatic Centre is public land administered by DCC.

1.5 RELATED PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

The following legislation and strategies may be relevant to this management plan.

Federal Government

- Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Threatened Species)
- Aboriginal Relics Act 1975

State Government

- Nature Conservation Act 2002
- Threatened Species Protection Act 1995
- Weed Management Act 1999
- Dog Control Act 2002
- State Coastal Policy 1996
- State Policy on Water Quality Management
- Crown Lands Act 1976

Devonport City Council

- City of Devonport Strategic Plan 2009-2030
- Open Space Strategy
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy
- Devonport Weed Strategy
- Pedestrian Network Strategy (2012)
- Devonport City Cycling Network Strategy
- Devonport Signage Strategy (2012)
- Five year forward capital works program
- Dog Management Policy (under review)
- Fire Management Plan Don Reserve (2005)

Map 1. Don Reserve Statutory Boundary



Map 2. Area Covered by this Plan



2 Reserve Values

2.1 NATURAL VALUES

Most of the natural values described in the 2002 Plan remain unchanged. The Reserve is considered to be of high conservation value due to significant remnant vegetation and faunal communities.

Vegetation communities include:

- *Eucalyptus ovata* (black gum) populating much of the Reserve south of the Don College. This is a significant feeding source for the threatened swift parrot. Black gum forest and woodland is listed as threatened under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.
- *Melaleuca ericifolia* (swamp paperbark) forest is located generally on the mud flats at the edges of the estuary, particularly at the southern end of the reserve. *Melaleuca ericifolia* swamp forest is listed as threatened under the Tasmanian *Nature Conservation Act 2002*.
- *Eucalyptus viminalis* (white gum) coastal shrubby forest adjacent to the Don College Oval.
- *Eucalyptus amygdalina* (black peppermint) occupies the higher ground along the estuary and the slopes near Steele Street and the Aquatic Centre.
- Damp sclerophyll forest dominated by a mixture of eucalypt species occupies a small area near the Don Recreation Ground.
- *Acacia sophorae* shrubland (coast wattle) occurs as small isolated patches at the northern extreme of the Reserve.
- Small patches of *Austrostipa stipoides* (saltmarsh) dominated by coastal spear grass exist on the more elevated mudflats.

A fauna survey conducted as part of the 2002 Plan recorded 9 mammal species the Reserve including echidna, Eastern Barred Bandicoot (vulnerable status under Federal *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*), southern brown bandicoot, brush-tailed possum, ring-tailed possum, long-nosed potoroo, Tasmanian pademelon, Bennett's wallaby and swamp rat. In 2014, platypus were recorded in the Don River near the southern end of Waverley Road. Other species considered likely to inhabit the Reserve include the water rat, sugar glider, eastern and little pygmy possums, white-footed dunnart, and eight bat species. *Engaeus granulatus* (central north burrowing crayfish) are present in the creek between Jilola Way and Georgiana Street (endangered status under Federal *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*).

Sixty five (65) bird species were further recorded in 2002 including two of note being the swift parrot (listed as endangered under the *Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* and the Federal *Environment Protection & Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) and the masked owl (listed as endangered under the *Tasmanian Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*). A further ten (10) bird species have been recorded in the reserve since 2009 making the current total seventy five (75). The Reserve also provides habitat for smaller invertebrates with fallen branches and leaf litter providing shelter and sources of food.

2.2 ABORIGINAL VALUES

Aboriginal heritage sites are of high cultural, scientific, educational and historic significance and provide Aboriginal people with a link to their culture and past. Consequently, it is highly important to conserve and protect these areas. Any major projects or development within the Reserve must comply with the *Aboriginal Relics Act 1975*. Should this occur a desktop assessment with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania followed by a request for a search on the Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Register will be undertaken to identify any heritage sites.

2.3 RECREATIONAL USES

The Don Reserve is currently used for a range of recreational activities from the more popular including walking (and walking the dog), jogging, cycling, family outings to geocaching, bird watching, photography and to just enjoying the bushland environment (refer to Consultation Outcomes Report for more detail).

2.4 COMMUNITY VALUES

Community values include factors such as reserve visibility and community involvement. Reserves that are highly valued by the community and have high community participation are likely to have higher management expectations by the community therefore maintenance costs are generally higher. Through collaborative partnerships with the local community, Devonport City Council will build on existing community strengths and resources to enhance and promote the values of the Don Reserve. Council further acknowledges the importance of enhancing opportunities for community engagement and participation in the long-term aims of bushland conservation and public open space management.

To understand community values for the Reserve a community wide survey was conducted between October and November 2014 (all responses included in the Plan's Consultation Outcomes Report). Over half of the 340 respondents (54%) use the Reserve at least once a week with 31.8% of respondents using more than 3 times a week.

The level of feedback received through the survey alone demonstrates the high social value of the reserve. This may be due to the Reserve's proximity to residential areas and recreational/tourism facilities, scenic value, and use as an educational resource.

However the level of community awareness and value toward the role of urban bushland and the effects of urban impacts is considerably variable in the community. This is evidenced by a number of actions that Council is aware of affecting the Reserve including:

- Dumping of domestic and garden refuse in the Reserve;
- Encroachment of private properties into the Reserve;
- Creation of new tracks and walking shortcuts;
- Lack of control of domestic pets;
- Unauthorised clearing of bushland understorey including creation of lawn and excessive mowing;
- Unauthorised poisoning and lopping of trees/native vegetation; and
- Planting of inappropriate species (such as environmental weeds) in, or on the boundaries of the Reserve.

3 Key Issues

Of the 290 survey respondents who indicated they had used the Reserve in the past 12 months 124 respondents (42.8%) rated the Reserve's condition and facilities as good while 56 respondents (19.3%) rated these as very good or excellent. Nevertheless, key themes of issues requiring attention emerged, including:

- Uncontrolled dogs and dog waste;
- Weeds and concerns regarding conservation of flora and fauna;
- Litter – rubbish and forest debris;
- Bushfire risk;
- Infrastructure issues: paths – uneven, hazardous (slippery), overgrown by vegetation; lack of bench seating particularly north of the Aquatic Centre; poor condition and/or lack of exercise equipment and playgrounds; lack of public amenities; and
- Lack of signage – distance markers, location of entry/access points, interpretation of natural and historic values.

These themes impact on the Reserve's values and are explored in further detail below.

3.1 INVASIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS

Feral cats, uncontrolled domestic cats and dogs, plus invasive weed species threaten the health of the Reserve's bushland ecosystem.

Uncontrolled dogs in particular disturb, injure or kill native fauna as well as threaten user's enjoyment and safety. Under the *Tasmanian Dog Control Act 2002* dog owners have an obligation to keep their dog under effective control. This means that dogs in public places must be held on a lead not more than two metres long by a person able to control the dog. When a dog is off-lead, the owner must still keep it under effective control. This means that the dog must be close to the owner and in sight at all times and respond to commands.

It is important to note that domestic pets in urban areas usually occur in higher numbers than native animals. Thus while each individual animal may only kill or injure a small number of native animals, it has a bigger effect on the already reduced population. Some small marsupials can also die of fright (stress) if chased.

Weeds threaten conservation values by changing natural ecosystems, altering river systems and displacing native plant and animal species by competing for space, nutrients and sunlight. Weeds spread naturally by the wind, water, birds etc and are also spread by human activity such as on clothing, sporting equipment, machinery etc. Given the Reserve is adjacent to residential areas, dumping of garden waste and the planting of environmental weeds in gardens are major sources of new weed incursions. The Reserve has 57 weed species recorded with 16 of these are new since the last survey in 2002. Efforts should be focused on containing and/or eradicating weeds and preventing the spread of weeds.

Responsible pet ownership, reducing the impact of weed invasion (such as dumping of garden waste), and undertaking appropriate weed control and revegetation is essential to maintain and enhance biodiversity and thus the Reserve's natural values.

3.2 LITTER

Many survey respondents raised littering as a key issue in the Reserve. Common types of litter include cigarette butts and fast food packaging. In addition to making the Reserve appear uncared for, litter is a form of pollution, which can injure or kill wildlife when washed or blown into the river and then the ocean. Cigarette butts are also a fire risk in the Reserve. The Friends of Don Reserve volunteer group often remove litter from the Reserve however it is an individual's responsibility to take unwanted items away for disposal.

Forest debris including fallen logs and branches and leaf litter was also raised by several survey respondents as being hazardous or unsightly. Removal of woody debris from forested areas has been recognised as a factor contributing to loss of biological diversity. Fallen dead wood and leaf litter provides important habitat for a range of invertebrate species dependent on decaying wood for their survival. These species play an important role in recycling nutrients in forest and woodland ecosystems. Restricting the removal of woody debris with due consideration of fire safety is of importance to maintain and enhance the Reserve's natural values.

3.3 FIRE MANAGEMENT

Devonport City Council has a general legal responsibility to take all reasonable steps to minimise the risk of fires that originate in the reserve causing personal injury, damage to adjoining property, or damage to items of natural or heritage value protected by government legislation. Protection of threatened species in particular is legislated under the *Tasmania Threatened Species Act 1995* as a requirement of reserve fire management plans. The Don Reserve Fire Management Plan outlines the role that fire can play in enhancing or reducing biodiversity for the Reserve's specific flora and fauna species. The Plan also assesses risks to infrastructure and assets adjacent to the Reserve, and outlines practices to reduce fire hazards and fuel loads including planned prescribed burns. Council reviews fire management arrangements for the Reserve annually and it is recommended that the Don Reserve Fire Management Plan also be reviewed along with a program to improve community understanding and engagement around appropriate fire management.

3.4 INFRASTRUCTURE MAINTENANCE AND RENEWAL

The Reserves' infrastructure allows the community and visitors to enjoy the Reserve's natural environment. Key concerns for the community relate to the condition of walking/cycling paths through the reserve, lack of bench seating, and the lack of public amenities.

The renewal and development of public open space is considered annually during Council's budget process. With a small rate base and a large amount of public assets Council prioritises infrastructure improvements around a number of issues (eg risk and safety, community expectation, cost) some of which at times are in conflict. To assist in informing potential capital works a rolling draft five-year program is developed. The current draft program includes many of the items raised during the public consultation period including:

- Staged path renewal of various sections of the Reserve and Waverly Rd walking track;
- Reconstruction of the sawdust bridge;
- Bench seating between Aquatic Centre and Coles Beach;
- Upgrade playground equipment outside Aquatic Centre;
- New public toilet facility – location to be determined; and

- Installation of fitness equipment.

The combined cost estimate for these works over the next five years is \$1,955,000. As previously mentioned the likelihood of these projects progressing is based on a variety of factors with definitive projects approved annually.

3.5 SIGNAGE

The Devonport Signage Strategy outlines a signage hierarchy and action plan to improve navigation across the City as well as the visitor experience. Directional signage is the key signage type allocated for walking / cycling paths. New directional signs have recently been installed in the Reserve. Community feedback requests installation of distance markers, walking map signs and interpretive signage in the Reserve. Consideration of these additional signs would be required through future Council budget processes and/or grant funding / sponsorship. In the interim walking/cycling maps and further points of interest in the Reserve are available on Council's website, however these require review.

4 Principles of Environmental Management

A review of the Reserve's values and key issues as identified through community consultation has guided the development of the following principles for the Plan's implementation.

- a. The Reserve shall be managed and used in a sustainable manner for the benefit of all people, in a way that is compatible with and does not impact on the natural properties of the ecosystem.
- b. Recreational uses must be compatible with ecological health and biodiversity.
- c. Integrated management, protection and appropriate use of the Reserve is a shared responsibility between all sectors of the community.
- d. Public consultation and engagement shall be undertaken where decisions and actions may have an impact on the Reserve and where the public may have an interest.

5 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Devonport City Council plays a number of roles in managing reserves.

- **Information provider** - Council shares outcomes of activities and assists with information exchange and promotion. Progress of the Plan will be integrated into corporate reporting of the Devonport City Council and communicated to residents via a range of print and on-line mediums.
- **Advocate** – Council advocates for issues of importance to rate payers and the wider community.
- **Regulator/Planner** – Council promotes a safe and healthy community including conservation of natural areas through a number of legislative frameworks (such as the Weed Management Act (for example, by ensuring that declared weeds are managed appropriately) and through planning policy (for example implementation of this Plan).

- **Owner** - as the owner and manager of public land Council has an important investment in and impact on balancing management of natural areas with community use.
- **Facilitator** - Council facilitates initiatives to improve bushland management by providing advice, co-ordinating and supporting efforts and bringing together stakeholders.

5.2 DON RESERVE WORKING GROUP

The Don Reserve Working Group will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Plan. Review of actions will occur on an annual basis and align with Council Annual Plan and Estimates process, ensuring the allocation of resources to achieve the objectives is considered on an ongoing basis alongside a range of competing priorities of the community. The Group was established in November 2014 to assist in developing the Plan. Members of the Group to date include:

- Devonport City Council;
- Don River Railway; and
- Don College.

Council welcomes other interested organisations to participate. Other stakeholders such as Tasmania Fire Service, sporting clubs and local schools will be involved as required.

5.3 FRIENDS OF DON RESERVE

The Friends of Don Reserve are a committed group of volunteers who meet weekly for most of the year to undertake bushland conservation projects throughout the Reserve and adjacent bushland and coastal areas. On average the volunteers contribute 588 hours per annum, which equates to \$20,580 (at \$35 per hour). Without their assistance Council would not be able to maintain the health of the Reserve. The group welcomes new members even for a few hours. Contact Council to register your interest.

5.4 DEVONPORT COMMUNITY

The community generally, and each individual in the City, has a responsibility to take reasonable care and to discourage any anti-social behaviour they see, or report it to authorities. Residents also have the role of generating a culture of respect for the natural environment and public assets.

6 Strategic Directions

The aim of managing the Don Reserve over the next five years is:

To maintain and enhance bushland ecosystem health for the benefit of native flora and fauna and the enjoyment of residents and visitors.

It is envisioned that this will be achieved by undertaking a variety of actions grouped under three key directions:

1. Preserve and protect existing bushland to enhance biodiversity

2. **Improve low impact recreational opportunities**
3. **Increase community understanding of and participation in bushland values and management**

An action plan has been developed around these three directions with the following components.

Component	Description
Desired Outcome	The change that must occur to reach the strategic direction and overall aim of the Strategy
Action	The activity or output to be undertaken
Responsibility	The unit in Devonport City Council that will lead the action – also lists key potential partners
Priority	<p>Actions assessed using two criteria:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Level of strategic impact (considering cost savings, efficiencies, risk of not doing) 2. Ease of implementation (considering time, resources, complexity) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High: Critical importance, high impact, easy to more challenging to implement • Medium: Complimentary to existing services, medium impact, easy – challenging to implement • Low: Limited impact, easy-difficult to implement
Resources Required	<p>The level of existing or additional human or financial resources required.</p> <p>A-OPEX: Annual operational expenditure by Council – staffing or operational resource allocated as part of the annual plan.</p> <p>F-OPEX: Future operational expenditure by Council – increased requirements for future consideration in annual allocation.</p> <p>A- CAPEX: allocated capital expenditure for 2015/16 financial year – identified infrastructure requirements of Council.</p> <p>F-CAPEX: Future capital expenditure – identified infrastructure requirements of Council.</p> <p>External funds: Non-Council funded, e.g., grants, sponsorship</p>

Action Plan

1. Strategic Direction: Preserve and protect existing bushland to enhance biodiversity

Desired Outcomes:

- Fire managed appropriately to protect property and enhance biodiversity.
- Improved natural ecosystem for the benefit of native flora and fauna.
- Reduced impact of existing weeds and prevention of the establishment of new weed incursions.

	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Resources
1.1.	Review and implement the Don Reserve Fire Management Plan including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing programs for ecological management burning to maintain the significant flora values of the reserve. • Community education and engagement 	DCC Development and Health Services DCC Infrastructure and Works Tasmania Fire Service	High	F-OPEX
1.2.	Develop and implement annual plan for the control of priority environmental and declared weeds	DCC Infrastructure and Works DCC Development and Health Services Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE Tasmania) Friends of Don Reserve	Ongoing	A-OPEX External funds
1.3.	Undertake revegetation where required with local provenance species	DCC Infrastructure and Works Friends of Don Reserve	Ongoing	A-OPEX External funds
1.4.	Address illegal dumping of garden waste and removal/degradation of native vegetation through incentives and/or compliance	DCC Infrastructure and Works DCC Development and Health Services	Ongoing	F-OPEX
1.5	Consider monitoring, assessing and reporting on the state of the Reserve's ecological health at least every 10 years	Contractor	Medium	F-OPEX

2. Strategic Direction: Improve low impact recreational opportunities

Desired Outcomes:

- Low impact recreational options allowing users to enjoy the natural bushland environment.
- Provision of recreational opportunities for all ages.

	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Resources
2.1	Construct public amenities at Dell Luck Reserve or near Aquatic Centre	DCC Infrastructure and Works	High	A-CAPEX
2.2	Install additional bench seating from Aquatic Centre to Coles Beach	DCC Infrastructure and Works	High	A-CAPEX
2.3	Upgrade play equipment near Aquatic Centre	DCC Infrastructure and Works	Medium	F-CAPEX
2.4	Install outdoor exercise equipment along Sawdust Track	DCC Infrastructure and Works	Medium	F-CAPEX
2.5	Maintain walking/cycling path	DCC Infrastructure and Works	Ongoing	A-CAPEX A-OPEX

3. Strategic Direction: Increase community understanding of and participation in bushland values and management

Desired Outcomes:

- Responsible pet ownership promoted.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of natural values and appropriate uses by general public, schools, community organisation and business.
- Improved way-finding for Reserve users.

	Action	Responsibility	Priority	Resources
3.1	Promote responsible dog control / pet ownership	DCC Development and Health Services	High	A-OPEX
3.2	Investigated establishment of bins and supply bags for owners to collect and dispose of dog waste	DCC Development and Health Services	High	F-OPEX
3.3	Consider reclassification of the Don Reserve as an dog on-leash area	DCC Development and Health Services	Low	F-OPEX
3.4	Review and potentially develop walking maps and brochures integrating historical and environmental interpretive elements available on line	DCC Development and Health Services DCC Media and Communications	Medium	F-OPEX
3.5	Consider development of map-based and other signs indicating walking tracks, distances and access points	DCC Infrastructure and Works	Low	F-CAPEX
3.6	Support hands-on awareness /education programs and activities with schools and general public	DCC Development and Health Services In partnership with Don College, primary schools, Friends of Don Reserve	Ongoing	A-OPEX
3.7	Continue to support the activities of the Friends of Don Reserve volunteers – increase promotion of efforts and recruitment	DCC	Ongoing	A-OPEX
3.8	Promote the natural values of the Reserve through digital platforms, interpretive community art etc	DCC Development and Health Services In partnership with Don College	Ongoing	F-OPEX F-CAPEX External Funds