

Cockatoo and Snapper Islands Consultative Committee

Adopted Minutes for the 2nd Meeting, 6:00 pm Tues. 20th Feb 2001

a. Attendance

Present

Steven Adams, Jack & Mary Clark, Don Dinnie, Mal Hiley, John Jeremy, Steve Matthews, Alan Mitchell, Michael Rolfe, Garry Stewart, Bill Wallace

Geoff Bailey, Nick Hollo, Colin Menzies

Apologies

Ralph Brading, John Smith, Alan Stannard, Joe Glascott.

b. Minutes of the last meeting

The draft minutes of the first meeting had been circulated.

Resolved: The revised minutes are adopted as a true and correct record.

c. Activity since last meeting

Site visit

Most of the Consultative Committee enjoyed the tour of the site in January.

Resolved: that a letter of thanks be forwarded to the Sydney Heritage Fleet, for arranging transport and personnel on our recent visit to Cockatoo Island.

Aboriginal Tent Embassy

Geoff Bailey reported that it was expected that the Court would hand down a decision on the occupants on Cockatoo Island in the near future.

Jack Clark reported that the Friends of Cockatoo Island had written to the Aboriginal tent Embassy asking that they refrain from further damaging the wood drying loft. Members of the committee had observed it to have lost wooden slats, during their recent visit. The committee expressed continued concern at the risk of damage to Cockatoo Island from the occupation.

Legislation

Geoff Bailey reported that an amended Bill has passed the Senate and will be presented to the House. Some further amendments were possible in the House and it was expected that the Bill would be enacted soon.

Geoff Bailey thanked all those who had been involved in the effort to achieve good legislation. He believed that the legislation had been improved through the combined efforts of community and council groups and political parties.

Geoff was asked about the transfer of Snapper Island to the Trust, as it was not listed in the Schedules to the Bill. Geoff replied that the island was not in the ownership of the Department of Defence, rather Department of Finance and Administration. The transfer process was different and the DFA was currently conducting studies prior to transfer.

He was asked about the applicability of State laws and replied that the Bill only exempted the Trust from some State laws such as the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act.

d. Planning Progress

Planning Report

Nick Hollo reported on the current state of the management planning process:

- ◆ The island has a lot of languishing infrastructure so it is a big job to work out maintenance priorities.
- ◆ Maritime industry revival was most likely on the southern handstands, probably for small-scale boat building / repairs.
- ◆ The Trust needed to explore the financial issues associated with possible uses.
- ◆ It was important to have public access to the Island and to link Cockatoo Island into surrounding heritage maritime precinct.
- ◆ The entrance to the island was important. Possibly the current gatehouse could be used as an interpretive centre.
- ◆ The core area for visitors was the high point of the island because it allowed an over view of the whole Island. Some buildings may have to be temporarily mothballed for safety.
- ◆ A diversity of mutually supporting activities was desirable (eg commercial studios, training facilities, meeting/function/reception places, Dry-stack storage of boats, visitor accommodation), though this should not constrain the possibility of major Maritime Industrial projects.
- ◆ The island was unsuitable for large-crowd events due to the movement patterns resulting from water travel. It was more suitable for exhibitions etc which attracted a continual smaller flow of people.
- ◆ The northern side could become a park, balancing the parklands at Woolwich. Storm water and sewerage management may be incorporated into the parklands.

Comments from the Consultative Committee included:

- ◆ The Friends of Cockatoo Island wanted the park named Shipbuilders Park.
- ◆ Using contaminated northern land for a park was a good way of dealing with the contamination.
- ◆ The Trust should collect old films of the island and could show these in the entrance building. The Cockatoo archives stored at Villawood and Film Australia had films and many photos. John Jeremy offered to bring videos to the next meeting and this was warmly accepted.

Nick Hollo continued:

- ◆ The planners were exploring other access to Cockatoo Island.
- ◆ It may be desirable to remove some less significant buildings to give better interpretation of the site – such as the Convict built Workshops on the apron, lesser significant workshops on the knoll. However, the priority is on finding uses that revive the island in a sympathetic way and re-using old buildings rather than erecting new ones.
- ◆ The cleared, paved “plaza” area on the eastern side would be left largely untouched for the time being and could be used in the interim for ceremonies/functions, dry stack storage of boats, film sets.

Nick reported that he had visited Snapper Island. It was a special place but there was an enormous amount of work to do. The nature of activities there was in keeping with the ideas for Cockatoo Island.

Further comments by the Consultative Committee were made:

- ◆ What was to be the mainland base for Cockatoo Island? Geoff Bailey said that Woolwich was not the best option because the base really required good road and rail access, and Woolwich was at the end of a long residential peninsula. White Bay or Rozelle appeared preferable.
- ◆ The western slipways on Cockatoo Island were an obvious haul-out place for boats. Nick It was commented that there were other slipways and that lifting boats onto hardstand may be an option. The difficulty would be meeting current EPA standards.
- ◆ There was some discussion about slipways, with some feeling that these should be preserved even if not used. The inclined planes are an important feature of Cockatoo Island. A large ship-lift may be visually intrusive.
- ◆ An earlier Heritage Commission report had noted that Cockatoo Island had every stage of industrial heritage still in use. Developments need to be consistent with this heritage but a ship-lift need not be contrary to this heritage and should not be ruled out.
- ◆ At the end of the day, uses have to pay their own way.
- ◆ There was the prospect of making Slipways 1 and 2 useable, drawing ships up into sheds for work.
- ◆ Berthing vessels at Cockatoo Island was possible.
- ◆ Mike Rolfe tabled a diagram of a possible walking route around the base of the pinnacle to show its different faces. This could have spur routes out to various places on the flat. Such a route would be consistent with most uses. Nick responded that this was very similar to the approach of the planning team.
- ◆ Be aware of the possible high power needs from industry – ensure infrastructure is adequate.
- ◆ There was the possibility of a business to re-fit large yachts, which currently go overseas for refurbishment.

Generally, the committee felt that planning was heading in the right direction – “the concepts are great and you’re keeping the options open”.

Geoff Bailey said that, after the scope of possible uses had been decided, there would be more investigations into feasibility before calling for expressions of interest for feasible uses. It was not intended to have blanket expressions of interest calling for any use. This will involve talking with people in maritime industries.

Nick Hollo reported that the Trust was looking for short-term projects that could demonstrate the possibilities of the island without compromising long-term possibilities. The northern park was one such option.

e. *Future activities*

Public participation

Geoff Bailey advised that the Trust hoped to have draft management plans by the end of the year. Concept Plans for the sites would be available for public response during May /July with Customs House booked as an exhibition venue. The Cockatoo Island display would not go

much further than what had been presented to the ctte. A variety of participatory activities to involve people from across Sydney in the sites over these months were being planned to attract people. Ideas included a lecture series by community experts and film nights.

Suggestions from the committee were:

- Involve schools particularly technical high schools
- Have means for feedback from the community
- Check on insurance – Bill Wallace advised that Snapper Island was able to get coverage only for six “workers”.
- Investigate the Chatham Docks (Portsmouth, Liverpool and Bristol Docks had also undergone refurbishment). Mal Hiley offered to visit some on an upcoming trip to Britain.

Next meeting was set for Tuesday 20th March; 6-8 pm at Chowder Bay.