

Middle Head Consultative Committee

Adopted Minutes for the 2nd Meeting, 6:00 pm 29th January 2001

a. Attendance

Present:

Jean Alexander, John Allen, Tim Allerton, Peter Caldwell, Phil Cannane, John Carmichael, Peter Deakin, Edward Elsom, Don Goodsir, Patricia Harvey, Virginia Howard, Audrey Lenning, Jillian Skinner MLA, Martin Skipper

Geoff Bailey, Nick Hollo, Bob Clark, Jane Silcock, Colin Menzies

Apologies:

Hon. Tony Abbott MP

b. Welcome

Introductions

Colin Menzies opened the meeting and welcomed the members of the Consultative Committee. Tim Allerton was particularly welcomed as a new member appointed by the Trustees because of his local sporting interests and contacts.

Questions were asked about Aboriginal representation on the consultative committee. Geoff Bailey replied that discussions were being sought with Alan Madden, a traditional owner and field officer with the Metropolitan Land Council, and advice was also being sought from the Sydney Harbour Manager who was developing the Sydney Harbour Dreaming and the Dual Naming projects. Patricia Harvey advised that the Sydney Harbour Catchment Management Board and the Coast Councils were both seeking Aboriginal representation and that the issue had to be handled slowly and sensitively.

Minutes of the 1st meeting

The minutes were accepted with the alteration of the third dot point of comments on the Reflections document to read:

To complete the Reflections, it is desirable to have more detailed work on flora and fauna and Aboriginal heritage

The members of the consultative committee introduced themselves. Colin asked if each could write a 50 word summary for use by the Trust in describing them (eg in newsletters).

c. Activity since last meeting

Site visit

Most of the Consultative Committee enjoyed the tour of the site in December. Phil Cannane offered to provide notes on the site.

Drill Hall

After receiving the advice of the Middle Head Consultative Committee and the Sports Union, the interim Trustees have decided that, with planning directions being developed during this

year, it was not prudent to spend over \$100,000 on refurbishing the Drill Hall at this stage. This was accepted by the committee. The Trust was investigating and talking with Defence about the feasibility of making the gym at the North Head Artillery School available for public use, and would be discussing this with the North Head Consultative Committee tomorrow. The Commando buildings at Georges Heights may not be vacated for four years.

Chowder Bay – Middle Head walking track.

Nick Hollo reported that contracts were being let for the refurbishment of the old path from Chowder Bay to the Officers Mess and then on to Middle Head Road. The further stage to Balmoral Beach will be settled after the Concept Plans have been displayed.

Middle Head access

The road to Middle Head has been opened to the public at the interim Trust's request, allowing an easier walk to the head. This was welcomed by the Committee.

Aboriginal heritage

Bob Clark displayed a map showing Aboriginal sites and sensitive areas identified in an earlier report by Mary Dallas. There was one recorded site and four archaeological sites (eg middens, shelters) on Trust lands, with the most sensitive areas being between HQ Training Command and Middle Head Road. Further studies of Aboriginal heritage are being planned, probably starting with a review of past work and identification of issues and gaps. The State Government is also commencing a major project to investigate Aboriginal art sites. Bob asked for any local knowledge, mentioning. The location of a recorded 30-foot whale carving was currently unknown.

It was agreed that the Committee should devote time at its meeting to being briefed on Aboriginal heritage. It was suggested that Gavin Souter and Anne Cook be invited to present. Contact with the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council was proposed.

Revegetation

Nick Hollo reported that initial bush regeneration would start focussing on works associated with drainage improvements and pathways. Contracts have been let with Tooli Jooa to collect and germinate native seeds from Middle Head in preparation for revegetation activities in the future. Total Earth Care have been contracted to clear weeds along Chowder Bay Road and the foreshore, and Gecko Environments have been contracted for weed clearing along the Chowder Bay – Middle Head Road path.

There was discussion about die-back. Bob Clark displayed a visual survey map of die-back areas and said there appeared to be a strong correlation between dieback areas and poor drainage and disturbance on higher grounds.

A list of species for revegetation had been prepared and will be circulated with the minutes.

The boat

Refurbishment of the former Captains launch is proceeding well in the boatshed at Chowder Bay.

d. Planning Progress

Planning Report

Nick Hollo reported on the current state of the management planning process. The overall approach is to do those things Priority projects also need to be defined for areas we are sure about and which will make a significant difference in terms of the Trust's objectives. Key principles emerging for the Middle Head sites were:

- ◆ Expansion of Bushland: The priorities were to ensure the viability of the bushland along the slopes by increasing the bushland along the plateau and improving the drainage, complete the continuity of the tree canopy along the ridgeline because of the importance of the wooded headland, expanding the bush down the hillsides. Use bush regeneration to define spaces more clearly. Possibly improve wetlands at the camouflaged tanks to help control run-off. However, some areas may not be easy to regenerate, such as where cutting and filling has occurred.
- ◆ The pathways network: Giving a variety of unfolding vistas and experiences and joining the currently separated Defence complexes. Improving Suakin Drive to the Training Command Officers' Mess. Reflect the Mosman pattern of ovals and parks surrounded by trees. Reshape the Georges Heights oval and revegetate the southern edges to reduce run-off.
- ◆ Reinforcing the sense of "village squares" and viewing terraces at each of the former Defence bases.
- ◆ The relationship between places is important. This reflects the military context with different places for different ranks and buildings sited to suit military purposes.
- ◆ Future uses should respond to the character of the buildings – eg some lend themselves to small scale office/studios (eg – for semi retirees), some are suited to provide educational/institutional training facilities. A mix of uses would provide diversity and help ensure public access.
- ◆ Some areas need more thought, such as the paved areas at 30 Terminal, where regeneration is difficult where a visitor centre in some form and an accessible picnic area was an option – being at the junction of the pathway network and at a change in the alignment and character of Middle Head Road. But additional buildings or depot facilities are not likely to be desirable due to its prominent location along the ridge.
- ◆ It was possible that terraced the land along Middle Head Road at Training Command could be used for sports courts on terraces(eg hockey).

Nick then raised the question of immediate projects that the Trust could undertake to illustrate the nature of evolution proposed. He suggested that Chowder Bay was a good location for a project because it occupied by the Trust is available – ie Defence have largely vacated this site, it is along the foreshore, is highly visible, and is part of a recently opened link between foreshore parklands. Possible simple actions included:

- ◆ Bringing the bush down the hillside to the foreshore
- ◆ Narrowing the carriage way so it winds through sheltered areas and allows revegetation;
- ◆ Tiering the grassed viewing area near the entrance so it is less visually intrusive from the harbour;
- ◆ Reinstate the parade ground (removing parking)at the cottage and enhance the submariners' memorial, now at the Sergeant Major's quarters
- ◆ Reinstate the picket fence and levels, revealing stone wall along the escarpment
- ◆ Planting around the newer buildings to make them less intrusive;

n response, the committee made a variety of comments:

- ◆ There were some questions about the retention of the newer Chowder Bay barrack buildings. Some committee members hoped this was not intended as long-term, as these buildings were considered intrusive in the landscape. Nick Hollo said the Trust hoped to use them in the interim as removal would present major difficulties – the benching of the land still had to be dealt with. There was a lot of scope to plant around the buildings and provide interim uses. Planting for screening can occur soon regardless of the final decision.
- ◆ The Chowder Bay Road used to be narrower and tree-covered.
- ◆ Nick was asked if keeping buildings were driven by financial return. He replied that the approach was more influenced by a broad interpretation of heritage value, and the desire to move cautiously, but was influenced by and the fact that buildings also could have an asset value to the community. There were some intrusive demountable buildings that might be more rapidly removed, but even humble buildings might be important in telling the story of past occupation. The relationship between buildings is important and tells a story, with different places for different ranks and buildings sited to suit military hierarchy and purpose.
- ◆ It was important to have interpretative materials early so that people entering the sites could better understand what was there. An interpretation/visitors' facility near the water arrival point at Chowder Bay was suggested.
- ◆ On revegetation, it was suggested that the community should be involved in bush regeneration efforts (eg schools). Geoff Bailey advised that Alfred Bernhart had been retained to advise on the paths and revegetation, and that the Trust hoped to draw from the extensive expertise in the Mosman community, the home of bush regeneration.
- ◆ Discussing the Middle Head Road – Balmoral Beach walk, the committee expressed strong support but advised that the immediate neighbours should be involved in the design regarding, for example path alignment and landscape for privacy screening. Personal security for those walking the path was stressed.
- ◆ It was important to get “runs on the board” by having some early projects that demonstrated the concepts behind the plans to the public. Nick responded that the criteria for early projects were that the space was within the control of the Trust (rather than being influenced by users) and small works that could make a big improvement.
- ◆ Some concern was expressed about possible over-commercialisation of Chowder Bay. Nick responded that some change was inevitable – the challenge was to manage that process by defining and nurturing the character of the place, allow activities that help to provide that character and interpret its heritage, but control it so that it does not grow to overwhelm the place.
- ◆ There was some discussion on transport implications – managing traffic and promoting water access. Attracting people who used water transport was preferred. Bob Clark responded that, because traffic and transport would be generated mainly by the users of the site, this indicated the need for overall continuing management to influence their transport choices. It was noted that newspaper articles on the Trust tended to mention only walking and driving access not public transport, and this should be addressed where possible.

e. *Future activities*

Public participation

Nick reported that the interim Trust hoped to have Concept Plans for the sites available for public consultation during May/June. Customs House has been booked as an exhibition

venue. The aim was to have a variety of participatory activities to involve people from across Sydney in the sites over the exhibition period.

Ideas suggested by the Consultative Committee included:

- ◆ Having shuttle buses to the sites
- ◆ Collecting / displaying military memories
- ◆ Shopping centre displays to promote the exhibition
- ◆ Using the Mosman Daily

Further discussion was planned for the next meeting.

Next meeting

The next meeting was set for **Monday 26th February 6-8 pm**. The venue would change to another part of the site.

The meeting closed at 8:15 pm.