

# Natural Resources Management Plan 2015–2025

## Have Your Say

### *Discussion paper No 10: Suitable Level of Development*



This discussion paper is part of a series covering all of the 'Big Issues' raised by the community during meetings and workshops about the new Kangaroo Island NRM Plan. It provides a summary of the current state of knowledge about the issue, suggests courses of action and identifies who might work together with us in addressing it.

*We now invite your comments, suggestions, criticisms and ideas.*

### Introduction

The magical appeal of Kangaroo Island has earned it the iconic status of 'jewel in the crown' of South Australia, put it on the list of *National Landscapes* and earned its position as Australia's top-rated wildlife viewing destination. This appeal is derived from its unspoilt, island character; abundant wildlife and access to nature; ruggedness and wilderness appeal; pristine clean, clear ocean waters, beautiful natural coastline and uncrowded beaches; excellent recreational fishing; peace, quiet and tranquillity removed from the business of life elsewhere and sense of pioneering community spirit.

It continues to deliver hundreds of thousands of tourists each year, as well as attracting a significant number of 'sea-change' and 'tree-change' immigrants. The island is valued as a national asset by many Australians, regardless of whether or not they have actually visited KI! Its clean and green image provides the basis for KI's brand value, also adding to the worth of the primary production sector.

This appeal is a quality that landholders and residents hold dear and wish to preserve. It is the reason they came here and/or what keeps them here. The state government is also committed to maintaining this image. However, these qualities are also associated with a number of challenges to the community and local businesses including access and freight costs, seasonality of tourism and trade, lower than state average income levels and low population density.



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**Natural Resources**  
Kangaroo Island



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These factors combine to impact social networks, education, sports, volunteer capacity and business viability amongst other things. Challenges for the KI Council include a significantly small ratio of rateable property for the large (5,000 km<sup>2</sup>) council area and the decline in financial assistance from the federal government and rising pressures/costs, impacting directly on the council's financial sustainability and ability to provide services such as the maintenance and upgrading of the road network.

These factors create pressure to grow the population on KI, as is evidenced by KI Council's Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Board's [Paradise Girt by Sea](#)<sup>1</sup> which seek to:

1. increase the resident population of Kangaroo Island to drive economic growth
2. promote living on Kangaroo Island to increase rate revenue, and to double tourism on KI (interpreted by KI Futures Authority as doubling revenue, although not necessarily numbers, and also seeking to increase farm gate revenue through [local value add](#)<sup>2</sup>).

Whilst growing the island's population and increasing tourism numbers would bring a number of benefits, it would also present a number of challenges, which may influence the natural and social values that define KI, make it unique and give it a marketing edge. These would need to be considered and addressed through careful discussion, planning and management. All assumptions should be identified up front and suitably tested, e.g. growing the island's population will increase the ratepayer base but it will also increase the demand for and burden on services.

Building on efforts to date, key issues for consideration include:

- » maintaining the magic of KI with its unique appeal
  - avoiding inappropriate or indiscriminate development or unsustainable population increase
  - ensuring development is in keeping with or enhancing the KI brand and image and not destroying qualities that make Kangaroo Island unique.
- » increasing Kangaroo Island population
  - community spirit, crime rates, safety and solitude could all be negatively impacted by an increase in population size but conversely, it could enhance activities such as sports, increase the volunteer base and bring other positive social and economic impacts including increased critical population mass to support year round business
  - growing the population in a constructive way will require attracting people to the island that are empathetic to the KI ethos, encouraging new arrivals to embrace the local culture, maintaining the same sense of community spirit that is so highly valued by current residents, while proactively addressing social challenges such as unemployment.
- » subdivision of many properties over the last decade into lifestyle and hobby farming blocks
  - whilst a number of these remain unsold and undeveloped, where properties have been developed, notable impacts include the obligatory removal of native vegetation in order to comply with council by-laws in respect of fire safety and the protection of assets
  - further impacts include the proliferation of [weeds](#)<sup>3</sup> and pests where newcomers or absentee landowners do not actively manage the land and do not take steps to control or eradicate them.



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<sup>1</sup> Belchamber, G, Spencer, R and Worrall, L. 2011. *Paradise Girt by Sea: Sustainable economic and social development for Kangaroo Island*. Economic Development Board.

<sup>2</sup> Craig Wickham, personal communication.

<sup>3</sup> Natural Resources Kangaroo Island. 2015. *Big Issues Discussion paper No 2: Biosecurity, Weeds, Pest Animals and Disease*.

- » incremental coastal development
  - some sweeping, natural, coastal vistas have been degraded by developments sited to give the best view of the sea
  - there are potential negative impacts on species that rely on cliffs and beaches for breeding, such as coastal raptors and hooded plovers
  - houses have been non-complying in coast conservation zones since 2010, however, tourist accommodation proposals are assessed 'on merit', i.e. deemed to be acceptable due to higher level land management associated with commercial operation compared to low level land management associated with typical domestic / residential developments, and whilst this is in accordance with the Kangaroo Island Development Plan policy, it can impact upon the unspoilt KI aesthetic.
- » major projects and developments
  - have the potential to act as anchor projects, realising investment into services such as infrastructure that can benefit the community and businesses
  - should be suitably located to optimise benefits that might be derived and reduce the negative impacts, to be guided by the KI Development Plan and Structure Plan
  - should have contractual conditions negotiated to ensure benefits are locally captured
  - should recognise and allay community concerns that local knowledge and opinion is often disregarded in respect of these projects
  - should carefully consider the balance of impacts and benefits in the decision making processes to ensure justified and sustainable outcomes are achieved.
- » the potential impact of development activities on key biodiversity assets
  - a proactive planning approach is needed that minimises the risk to threatened species, critical breeding refuges and sensitive habitats and that ensures the delivery of timely advice to interested parties.
- » the road network and road vegetation corridors
  - the drive to seal and make KI roads safer and more user-friendly also means that greater widths of road reserves are being cleared for safety clearances, visibility and physical road construction, with impacts on native vegetation (some of which contains threatened plants or is listed as a threatened plant community) and aesthetics
  - increasing traffic may increase road-kill, noise pollution and road accidents
  - certain areas of the island are more vulnerable to hazardous spills given the proximity of roads to sensitive ecosystems, e.g. around Pelican Lagoon
  - reducing speed limits on a number of roads has been considered in order to address all of the above, notwithstanding in many cases speed limits are controlled by State legislative requirements and not readily subject to alteration
  - safety of major road intersections should be considered, with option for re-design and construction where statistically relevant under State roads legislation.



- » delivery of services and amenities
  - an increase in population and tourism numbers means an increase in solid waste requiring recycling and disposal or transport 'off-island', (as is currently undertaken by Council and the Fleurieu Regional Waste Authority), increased sewage requiring effective treatment, increased water demand, increased litter and increased risk of introduction and spread of new and existing pest species and increased demand for firewood that is likely not to be locally sustainable
  - building awareness around the need to conserve water will become increasingly important due to climate change and tourists in particular will need to be educated and sensitised in this regard
  - whilst there has been considerable improvement over the last ten years, critical tourism infrastructure needs include toilets at key locations (e.g. Pennington Bay), coastal paths and proper access routes to support areas of high to medium level visitation, and sufficient, informative and effective signage.
- » management of key tourism locations
  - where measures are not already in place, visitor carrying-capacity should be established in order to maintain the quality of the visitor experience and limit environmental impacts to acceptable and manageable levels
  - existing facilities could be rationalised to better manage asset budgets and maintenance costs and allow for planning of more sustainable facilities in appropriate areas
  - there is evidence of erosion and coastal degradation in areas that are not adequately serviced and managed and where further deterioration needs to be prevented.
- » [climate change](#)<sup>4</sup>
  - as the mainland warms and dries to a greater extent than KI, the island may become a more attractive place to live, potentially increasing the island's population and level of development
  - the impacts of climate change are projected to include decreased rainfall, increased risk of flooding as rainfall becomes more variable and intense, and increased bushfire risk
  - water resources will need to be carefully managed and conserved
  - given the remote nature of many dwellings and developments, the pressure on emergency services is likely to increase in the future and warrants careful consideration
  - sea level rise and increased storm surges will impact on coastal infrastructure, including residences, and may present public and environmental risk.

There may not be simple solutions to the development issues listed above that balance all of the desired economic, social and environmental outcomes. We need careful consideration of pros and cons and conscious decision-making involving comprehensive discussions about what is required to achieve the best outcomes, building on efforts to date in this regard. We also require collaboration between different agencies on the island, decision-makers, the private sector and the island community. KI Council's Development Plan and planning process as well as other legal instruments will need to be suitably comprehensive, informative and proactive in their approach.



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<sup>4</sup> Natural Resources Kangaroo Island. 2015. *Big Issues Discussion paper No 6: Climate Change*.

## Strategies and priorities

*It is important to note that the NRM plan is intended to guide and coordinate the efforts of all stakeholders in the region and responsibility for its implementation is a joint one.*

- » Ensure that the cumulative impacts of development are considered and addressed in all decision making.
- » Develop a bioregional zoning plan and/or promote/expand the application of the coastal lands assessment tool to ensure that the development planning process is suitably informed and proactively avoids or addresses potential impacts on threatened species, breeding refuges and sensitive or threatened habitats.
- » Ensure that visitors to the island are aware of the important role they have to play in preserving the character of the island and limiting negative impacts that may result from their visit.
- » In areas of high bushfire risk, ensure that appropriate vegetation management strategies are sensitively implemented and that there is effective engagement with landholders and contractors in order to minimise impacts on native vegetation and on the sense of place.
- » Seek to ensure that the potential costs as well as the benefits of all proposed major developments are considered in order to inform sound decision-making and a clear articulation of the trade-offs involved, with the aim of ensuring that local benefits outweigh local costs.
- » Ensure that visitor infrastructure provision and management is adequate for visitation level and activity, in order to minimise and mitigate disturbance impacts.
- » Ensure the protection of Aboriginal and European culture and heritage, archaeological and geological sites and monuments.
- » Collaboration across agencies, the private sector and the community to preserve the island's character and appeal, optimise the benefits, minimise the costs and negative impacts of development activities, and ensure that best practice is implemented at all times.

## Partners

- » Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources
- » Department of the Premier and Cabinet
- » Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
- » Kangaroo Island Council



- » Kangaroo Island Futures Authority
- » Industry
- » Community

## *What are your thoughts?*

1. Have all the key issues relating to this **big issue** been adequately captured and understood?
2. Are there any gaps or misinterpretations?
3. What is the overall trend in relation to this issue — are matters improving or deteriorating, how fast and why?
4. In order to address this challenge, will the 'business as usual' approach work, or is adaptation (substantial change) or transformation (complete rethink of how we do business and how we tackle this issue) needed?
5. Do you agree with the strategies and priorities listed and/or do any need adding?
6. Who are the partners that need to collaborate to address this challenge?



*The Daily Telegraph*

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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