Point Nepean National Park Master Plan

Community update and discussion paper

January 2016
Purpose

The Victorian Government is reaffirming the direction for management of Point Nepean National Park and redefining the master plan to better protect and conserve the Point Nepean Quarantine Station.

The recent Expression of Interest process for development of the Quarantine Station highlights the planning challenges and the delicate balance between conservation, appropriate development and adaptive reuse of its heritage buildings.

On behalf of the Victorian Government, Parks Victoria is undertaking three tasks:

1. Re-engaging with the community and stakeholders to reaffirm their aspirations for Point Nepean
2. Expressing those aspirations in a renewed master plan for public comment
3. Finalising a master plan that the government will use as the clear and unequivocal parameters for future management and development.

Over a number of years, the community, stakeholders, local businesses and industry have contributed generous amounts of knowledge, time and energy which Parks Victoria has captured in the Point Nepean National Park Master Plan.

The master plan was developed in close collaboration with community and it is our understanding that it still describes a shared, long-term vision for the future of Point Nepean.

However, Parks Victoria is reviewing the master plan to ensure that it still reflects the intent and future aspirations of community, for this precious landscape and its heritage. The review seeks to validate the knowledge, information and broad strategic intent from the previous versions of master plan and to build on the wealth of existing knowledge gathered during consultation undertaken in 2010–2013.

Parks Victoria manages Point Nepean National Park including the Point Nepean Quarantine Station, on behalf of the government and the Victorian community. Protection of this significant piece of Australia’s heritage is of primary importance to Parks Victoria, to ensure that its beauty, heritage and stories are conserved for future generations to enjoy.

This paper outlines the master planning principles that Parks Victoria understands to be current and relevant. It summarises what we have heard during consultation so far and seeks your input.

This document is structured as follows:

- Purpose
- Background
- Draft master plan: key elements
- Engagement
- How to contribute.
Point Nepean National Park Master Plan

Acknowledgement of Country

This is Boonwurrung Country, clans of the Kulin Nation. We have left many material traces in cultural heritage sites throughout Point Nepean. Aboriginal landscapes also breathe with the spirits of ancestors and their presence is celebrated in story and song to conserve place, community, culture and identity. The connection remains unbroken.

Parks Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we now call Point Nepean and supports their opportunity to express connection to Country, and the significance and meaning of particular sites, places and events.

Background

Point Nepean National Park has a long and rich history spanning thousands of years of Aboriginal occupation, military, defence, quarantine and most recently as a national park. Parks Victoria took over management control of the Quarantine Station in 2009.

A draft master plan, which involved extensive community and stakeholder consultation, was prepared and exhibited in 2010. It was prepared within the planning and management context provided by the Point Nepean National Park and Point Nepean Quarantine Station Management Plan 2009.

The master plan was amended and released in April 2013 under the former Coalition Government alongside an Expression of Interest process to find a suitable investor to revitalise and operate accommodation and associated services within the Quarantine Station. This process stretched beyond the recommendations of the master plan and ultimately was not successful.

During this period, Parks Victoria undertook a major works program to upgrade essential services, reconfigure vehicular circulation, construct a new visitor carpark and park entry. A number of less significant buildings were demolished, while others were refurbished to provide for administration and interpretation. Conservation works have continued throughout to protect and conserve the park’s natural and heritage values.

Point Nepean National Park contains a number of ageing assets, many of which are of heritage significance. A key challenge for management is to define suitable future uses for those buildings that can support their sustainable maintenance and management into the future.
Draft master plan: key elements

In 2010 Parks Victoria in collaboration with landscape architects Taylor Cullity Lethlean, developed the Point Nepean National Park Draft Master Plan. The plan included a project vision and a series of guiding principles which were developed as part of consultation to reflect community aspirations for Point Nepean. The vision and principles form the foundation of the master plan.

These key elements are summarised here. For a more complete description, download the full draft master plan http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/point-nepean-national-park/plans-and-projects/point-nepean-master-plan-review

Vision

Facilitate sustainable growth encouraging recreation and tourism, protecting natural and cultural values and celebrating history through rich story telling.
Principles

Guiding principles are grouped under four ‘pillars’ which were identified in the planning framework established in the Point Nepean National Park and Point Nepean Quarantine Station Management Plan 2009:

Conservation
- Conserve natural and cultural values
- Create a balance between conserving park values, visitor experience and increasing visitation.

Inspiration
- Tell stories with meaning, through an enticing and engaging range of media
- Accommodate a range of visitor types and provide opportunities that increase length of stay
- A place for events
- Establish a strong and cohesive park identity
- Strengthen ‘anchor experiences’ at the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean and encourage visitors to move out and explore the park from these points.
- Support learning as a life-long journey for visitors.

Sustainability
- A sustainable service platform to support activities and minimise resource use.
- Uses and activities that are a good fit with park values and contribute to sustainable park management.

Accessibility
- Create a clear sense of entry and orientation
- Provide multiple connections between the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean
- Make the water connection: providing access from Port Phillip and better interpretation of the Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park
- Provide a choice of multiple destinations
- Provide a choice of movement modes: private vehicle, shared transport, cycling and walking
- Enable the community to invest in the park. Conservation of the park’s rich built and cultural fabric will be through active community use.
Concept approach

Experience the peninsula
Enhance the sense of ‘peninsula’; the proximity of water on both sides, the presence of an end point or tip from which expansive water vistas are possible.

Slow down
Slow people down and allow them to discover the stories latent in the landscape.

Reveal stories
Enhance the appreciation of the rich natural and cultural heritage of place by unfolding its many interwoven stories through a spatial network of sites and trails – dynamic coastal habitats, Aboriginal cultural use and elaborate European institutions of quarantine and defence.

Value remoteness
Value the sense of remoteness and isolation of the peninsula, and the immersive experience of being among tracts of Moonah woodland.

Build on a healing focus
Encourage activities and being active which evolve from the healing focus of the park’s history. Make the park identifiable with the Healthy Parks Healthy People philosophy.

Invite participation
Enable a diverse range of activities to evolve, to attract a wide cross-section of the community to appreciate the park’s rich cultural landscape. Where possible, participation may extend to research and focussed learning and action.
Master plan concept

The master plan was built on the guiding principles and the conceptual approach established for the park. The following key elements were framed within the overall objective of conserving the natural and cultural values of the park, while enabling new use and functions.

1. **Provide major interpretation experiences** at the Quarantine Station and Forts Nepean and Pearce, complemented with story telling of the rich cultural heritage of the Boonwurrung people and Country across the whole park.

2. **Key destinations** were defined at the Quarantine Station, Fort Nepean, Fort Pearce, Cheviot Hill, a new lookout on the coast near the end of the 300m range and a lookout another at the southern end of the Monash Break.

3. The existing road corridor provides a primary route **connecting the park entry to Fort Nepean**, linking to trails and features.

4. **Improved water access** provides a range of measures including the potential for a new jetty and moorings at the Quarantine Station.

5. **Three walking experiences** were promoted between the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean:
   - The Bay Beach Trail
   - The Ocean Lookout Trail
   - The Woodland Network

6. Private vehicle and bus **access** was proposed via Defence Road and Danson Drive to a main carpark (now constructed) at the Quarantine Station, exiting via Ochiltree Road. Access beyond the Quarantine Station to the Gunners carpark was proposed to be restricted.

7. A central **visitor information** and services precinct was proposed near the current Parks Victoria offices, utilising existing buildings.

8. The concept identified the need to provide for a range of **tourism, accommodation, education, arts, science and recreation** functions and activities, based from the Quarantine Station.

9. Adaptation and re-use of existing heritage buildings was proposed to re-establish a diverse **range of accommodation** and other appropriate services at the Quarantine Station. **Adaptive reuse** should be compatible with the scale and fragile nature of the **heritage** buildings, and be designed to respect and interpret their value and significance.

10. Replacement of non-significant buildings with new buildings of a commensurate and appropriate scale and form was recommended within the Quarantine Station. The design of any **new buildings should respect** the curtilage of existing buildings and precincts, use compatible contemporary materials and be sited so as not to interrupt major vistas through the site.

11. The opportunity of **sea kayaking** between the Quarantine Station and the waters around Fort Nepean was considered, recognising the inherent risks of tides close to the heads.

12. Improved interpretation of the adjacent **Port Phillip Heads Marine National Park**.

13. A large area of the former Range and adjacent Bass Strait coast to be reserved primarily for flora and fauna **conservation and research**.

14. The **park entry** was to be upgraded to convey the character and values of the Point Nepean National Park and provide a simple circulation route into and out of the park (largely complete).
Engagement

The process so far

Engagement with community and stakeholders regarding the future of Point Nepean has been extensive over a number of years, including:

- Early engagement conducted by the Point Nepean Community Trust
- Establishment of the Point Nepean Advisory Committee.
- Consultation regarding the development of the Point Nepean National Park and Point Nepean Quarantine Station Management Plan 2009.
- Initial engagement as part of the master plan in February–March 2010
- Formal consultation on the draft master plan during July–August 2010. This focused on providing ‘walk up’ consultation opportunities for people to speak with the design team and Parks Victoria staff at a range of events held at farmers markets, in the main street of Sorrento and at an information day held on site at Badcoe Hall including guided tours of the Quarantine Station.

In addition, a broad range of potential user groups including government departments, not-for-profit and private sector experts, and educational institutions were consulted regarding future use of the Quarantine Station buildings.

What we have already heard

Key issues raised during consultation and engagement, which have been captured and will inform the master plan review, are summarised below:

- Of greatest importance to most people, was the necessity to protect and conserve the natural and cultural values of Point Nepean, its biodiversity, its history and heritage, its stories, its sense of remoteness, natural scenery, landscape and views. Nothing should compromise these.

Most people saw it crucial to restrict any future development opportunities to within the existing disturbed/developed footprint of the park, ensuring protection of the natural/cultural values.

- Concepts regarding the key visitor destinations at the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean, their interpretation, access and transportation were well supported.

- High quality interpretation was seen as a particularly important priority. Many people sought a better explanation of Aboriginal culture and heritage in the park, alongside post European heritage.
• There was support to **explore a range of opportunities for adaptive re-use of the Quarantine Station buildings**. Most people understood the need to provide contemporary functions for these buildings in order to provide a stable, sustainable future for their conservation.

• Most people supported the provision of **affordable accommodation** across a range of price points, recognising that this continued the heritage and previous use of the buildings. However, **most people were cautious regarding the development of a hotel**. This related primarily to a **concern about the design and size** of any new building and its fit within the character of the Quarantine Station precinct.

• Most people also understood the need for the private sector to play a role in implementing this objective. However, by far the greatest concern was in relation to major private sector development within the Quarantine Station and skepticism regarding government’s ability to prevent development that was inconsistent with the master plan or of an inappropriate form or scale.

• There was a strong view that any development **should not exclude public access** to the key areas within the Quarantine Station, including the first class precinct.

• There was good support for government to pursue partnerships to develop future uses.

• There was strong support for smaller, short-term leases and opportunities for local businesses, community groups and volunteers to establish and activate the Quarantine Station as a ‘village’.

• Facilities and functions that support education and learning such as school group camps, artists in residence and potentially research facilities, were supported.

• There was a desire to achieve **environmentally and economically sustainable outcomes**, particularly in relation to building works and renewable energy.

• Respondents sought the correct **balance between preservation and attracting more people** to the park. There was concern about the park’s **carrying capacity and accessibility**.

• Responses regarding the idea of **improved access to the Quarantine Station via the water** were divided. Everyone agreed that this would need to be very carefully managed to minimise impacts on the marine ecosystems. While many supported a simple jetty and short-term swing moorings, there was strong opposition to more substantial marine infrastructure or permanent moorings.

• Concern was raised regarding the **safety** of a sea kayaking route between the Quarantine Station and Fort Nepean.

• Better **recognition of the army occupation** of the Quarantine Station was sought.

• The potential to host **outdoor events** such as music festivals was supported.
How to contribute

What are we asking for?

In order to progress the master plan review, we are seeking your comment on whether the above summary accurately captures your views. Please consider:

• Do the fundamental principles of the master plan still hold?
• Has anything changed?
• Was anything overlooked?

Process from here

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<th>Description</th>
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<td>Phase 1</td>
<td>Engagement&lt;br&gt;Parks Victoria seeks feedback on a discussion paper which summarises key elements of the 2010 draft, their rationale and the previous feedback received during consultation.</td>
<td>Jan – Mar 2016</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phase 2</td>
<td>Preparation&lt;br&gt;Parks Victoria prepares a revised final draft of the master plan.</td>
<td>Mar – May 2016</td>
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<td>Phase 3</td>
<td>Consultation&lt;br&gt;Formal exhibition of the final draft master plan, including consultation with community and stakeholders, local information sessions and targeted stakeholder meetings.</td>
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<td>Phase 4</td>
<td>Finalisation&lt;br&gt;Amendment of the master plan in response to community and stakeholder consultation.</td>
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<td>Phase 5</td>
<td>Approval and release&lt;br&gt;Final approval of the master plan by Parks Victoria and release by the Minister for Environment Climate Change and Water.</td>
<td>Late 2016</td>
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How to provide feedback

• Call us at the Parks Victoria Info Centre on 13 19 63
• Email us with your comments at pointnepeanmasterplan@parks.vic.gov.au
• Send us a letter addressed to: Point Nepean Master Plan Comments Level 10, 535 Bourke Street Melbourne VIC 3000
• Complete a brief questionnaire on www.surveymonkey.com/r/VTRS3FB

Further information

Further information on the project including links to download the 2010 Point Nepean National Park Draft Master Plan, is available on Parks Victoria’s website http://parkweb.vic.gov.au/explore/parks/point-nepean-national-park/plans-and-projects/point-nepean-master-plan-review