

21.07 MT STIRLING RESORT STRATEGIC STATEMENT

31/05/2012
C21

21.07-1 RESORT PROFILE

31/05/2012
C21

Mt Stirling is the only Victorian Alpine Resort with a largely undeveloped and unspoilt alpine summit, offering a readily accessible 'semi-wilderness' experience for visitors. The Resort's wealth and diversity of environmental characteristics and its proximity to Melbourne (230 kilometres) make Mt Stirling unique in the Australian Alps.

The summit at Mt Stirling is located at 1,749 metres and offers a 360 degree panoramic view of surrounding mountain ranges. The high country landscape features sub-alpine Alpine Ash forests, Snow Gum woodlands and wide expanses of alpine meadows.

Mt Stirling is a 30 minute drive from Mt Buller and is managed by the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board.

Mt Stirling is used year-round. During winter, Mt Stirling is a destination for cross country and back country skiing, snow boarding, snow camping and snowshoeing. There are 65 kilometres of maintained trails with 35 kilometres of these groomed for cross country skiing. During the non-winter season, Mt Stirling offers passive and active recreation activities such as camping, bush walking, four wheel driving, horse riding, mounting biking, fishing and outdoor education.

Public facilities at Mt Stirling are located at Telephone Box Junction and include a bistro, ski hire and first aid during winter. The year-round facilities include car parking, public shelter and toilets at Telephone Box Junction and other locations across the mountain including Cricket Pitch, King Saddle, Razorback Hut, Bluff Spur Hut and the Geelong Grammar School Hut near the summit.

21.07-2 VISION – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

31/05/2012
C21

Mt Stirling Alpine Resort is an all season nature based tourist, recreational and educational resource. Mt Stirling is not an option for downhill skiing. Mt Stirling offers a unique nature based experience with limited options for commercial activities in accordance with the Assessment and Panel Report on the *Environment Effects Statement, February 1997*.

The following strategic directions will guide the use and development of the Resort:

- Protect and enhance the natural environment while adaptively planning to improve winter experiences to mitigate the potential impacts of climate change.
- Promote and facilitate increased year-round use through improved amenities and access, increasing the range of activities on offer and development of an events schedule.
- Develop new and improved public infrastructure to expand visitor experiences year-round.
- Facilitate a sustainable increase in visitor numbers across a suitable range of activities offering quality products, a variety of experiences and value for money.
- Increase awareness of the natural environment by rehabilitation projects, rationalisation of tracks and development of interpretive projects and programs.
- Improve management by strengthening relations with neighbouring public land managers including addressing potential capacity issues into the future.

21.07-3 OBJECTIVES – STRATEGIES – IMPLEMENTATION

31/05/2012
C21

ENVIRONMENTAL AND LANDSCAPE VALUES

Overview

The Resort is in a sensitive alpine environment that has significant conservation, scenic, tourism and recreational values. The sub-alpine environment as a whole is a valuable

resource forming an important part of the Australian landscape. Protection of the environment aids the maintenance of biodiversity and provides important habitat for flora and fauna within the Resort.

Key issues

- Ensuring sustainable use and development within the Resort to capitalise on the natural assets which are a primary focus for visitors.
- The potential for adverse environmental impacts through ongoing recreational use and by disturbance of natural ecosystems during construction.

Objective 1

- To maintain, preserve and improve the natural environmental features of the Resort.

Strategies

- Ensure that the present diversity and viability of species and ecological communities is maintained or improved within the Resort.

Objective 2

- To maintain, preserve and enhance the habitat of threatened species and communities within the Resort.

Strategies

- Identify areas of the Resort that contain habitat for threatened species and communities.
- Ensure that development and use of the Resort does not detrimentally impact upon threatened species, habitat or communities.

SETTLEMENT

Overview

The Resort does not provide for on-mountain accommodation other than camping, however the Resort provides facilities for day visitors. It is the intention that no accommodation be provided at Mt Stirling in accordance with the Assessment and Panel Report on the *Environment Effects Statement, February 1997*.

Key issues

- The need to provide for camper and day visitor needs.

Objective 1

- To reinforce Mt Stirling's role as a nature based tourist, recreational and education resource.

Strategies

- Improve the interface between the Resort and the adjoining Mansfield State Forest and Mt Russell Education Area.
- Provide services to cater for day visitors.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Commercial and Service Activities

Overview

The Resort has a range of commercial, retail and service facilities and infrastructure that caters for the needs of campers and day visitors.

Key issues

- Maintain the provision of commercial and service facilities to meet the needs of campers and day visitors.

Objective 1

- To provide an appropriate level of commercial development within the Resort.

Strategies

- Ensure that development including commercial activities and other facilities (apart from a small day centre at Cricket Pitch and the King Saddle interpretation centre) be restricted to the Telephone Box Junction location.
- Ensure that commercial development is linked to camping, snow play, cross country skiing and nature based education activities.

Tourism and Recreation**Overview**

The Resort's key attraction is as a cross country and back country ski and snow play destination in winter months. However, year-round use is a consistent theme across all Resorts in Victoria. The Resort is used for bush walking, horse riding, four wheel driving, hiking, camping and mountain biking during summer.

Key issues

- Maintain Mt Stirling Alpine Resort as a nature based tourist, recreational and education resource.
- Acknowledge that Mt Stirling Alpine Resort is not an option for downhill skiing.
- Facilitate year-round use of the Resort.

Objective 1

- To provide for year-round recreation, having regard to environmental, social, ecological, economic, aesthetic and safety considerations.

Strategies

- Facilitate passive recreational activities in balance with the conservation and protection of the natural environment of the Resort.
- Ensure that cross country trails can be used year-round for cross country skiing, hiking, mountain bike riding and bush walking.
- Ensure that the design and development of cross country trail systems is carried out in such a manner that environmental impacts are minimised.
- Ensure that monitoring of environmental impacts associated with skifield terrain development occurs.
- Encourage research into management techniques to safeguard environmental quality.
- Develop further cross country skifield terrain in a manner that minimises land disturbance and vegetation clearance.

- Advance the quality of experience for day and snow play visitors and campers by improving access to and the quality of public facilities.

Objective 2

- To recognise the significant value of the Resort area for cross country skiing and snowplay activities.

Strategies

- Develop the cross country trail system in such a manner to complement the cross country trail system in the adjoining Mansfield State Forest and Mt Russell Education Area.
- Design cross country trails in a manner that recognise the inherent land form identified through terrain analysis.
- Further develop the complementary aspects of the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling cross country opportunities.

TRANSPORT

Overview

Access to and within the Resort is a critical issue during the winter season. The Mt Stirling Access Road is subject to peak loads at weekends, holidays and following good snow falls. During summer, access is also a critical issue during times of bushfire.

Key issues

- Effective management of traffic along the Mt Stirling Access Road during peak periods.

Objective 1

- To ensure a high level of accessibility to the Resort.

Strategies

- Improve the connection between Mt Buller and Mt Stirling.
- Improve the access to the snowline in low snow conditions for Resort visitors.

Objective 2

To ensure that the provision of car parking within the Resort meets visitor needs throughout the year.

Strategies

- Provide adequate car parking that is available to disabled persons.
- Encourage the convenient location of car parking.

Objective 3

To ensure the safe and efficient movement of vehicles, pedestrians and skiers within and throughout the Resort.

Strategies

- Improve mobility and linkages for cross country skiers and snow players within all areas of the Resort.

- Provide pedestrian and skier links to recreational experiences within the adjoining Mansfield State Forest and Mt Russell Education Area.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Overview

The effective and timely provision of physical infrastructure and services is crucial to the efficient operation of the Resort. Reticulated services are not present within the Resort with power being supplied by generators, gas via tanks and sewerage treatment via septic system.

Key issues

- The design and construction of new infrastructure should be sympathetic to the environmental values of the Resort.
- The design and construction of new infrastructure should minimise impacts on the surrounding natural environment.
- Improve infrastructure to allow year-round use of the Resort.

Objective 1

To ensure that physical infrastructure and services are provided to meet the current and future needs of the Resort.

Strategies

- Encourage the provision of underground reticulated services.
- Provide for the provision of emergency services which cater for the Resort.

Objective 2

To ensure that service and infrastructure development enhances the natural, built, cultural, visual and environmental values of the Resort.

Strategies

- Design and locate physical infrastructure and services to minimise their environmental and visual impact.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

Overview

The Resort lies in the traditional territory of the Taungarung language group whose traditional country spreads across much of central region of Victoria. The land around Mt Stirling appears to have been occupied by the Yowung-ilam balung clan. European settlers used the Resort area for grazing and grazier's huts remain, including the Howqua Gap Hut and Craig's Hut.

Key issues

- Preserving culturally historic places within the Resort.

Objective 1

To protect and improve identified and potential places, sites and objects of Aboriginal and European cultural, historical and architectural significance.

Strategies

- Ensure that future use and development considers the historical links to the Resort area including major cultural and scientific significance related to Aboriginal, pioneer, mining and ski history.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Overview

The Resort is located within a Special Water Supply Catchment and the Upper Goulburn Catchment Area.

Key issues

- The provision of service infrastructure should not adversely affect the water quality of the catchment.
- The appropriate management of 'Green Season' to protect the quality of the water catchment.

Objective 1

- To protect the environmental quality of the water catchment areas.

Strategies

- Manage roads, tracks and trails to minimise drainage, erosion and sedimentation.
- Minimise the adverse environmental effects associated with the disposal of effluent and wastes generated from the use and development of land within the Resort.
- Protect the water quality of receiving waterways by removing and managing pollution close to its source.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS

Overview

Geotechnical stability of the Resort is an important environmental and safety issue. The location and siting of buildings need to have regard to drainage lines and subterranean water levels and movement to minimise the risk associated with ground stability within the Resort.

In light of the risks of climate change, non-renewable energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions are of increasing concern.

Use and development within the Resort needs to recognise the influence of these climatic conditions and be designed to provide for use outside the designated snow season. There is potential for climatic change to influence snow depth levels in Victoria within the next 50 years.

Bushfire is another naturally occurring environmental event and the Alpine areas are particularly prone to bushfires with extensive areas of vegetation cover and steep slopes. The design and siting of buildings and the choice of building materials need to have regard to the bushfire risk.

Key issues

- Recognising the geotechnical issues associated with development within the Resort.
- Acknowledging the impacts of climate change.
- Managing the risk of bushfire.

Objective 1

- To take proper account of geotechnical stability considerations.

Strategies

- Ensure that the design, construction and maintenance of development takes account of geotechnical stability considerations.
- Identify and monitor sites in the Resort that may be susceptible to landslide/subsidence and minimise the risk of land slides/subsidence.
- Ensure that development applications demonstrate an acceptable level of risk of landslip or instability prior to granting approval for development.
- Encourage applicants to consult with the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board regarding existing geotechnical information prior to lodging an application for planning permit or a site development plan.

Objective 2

- To respond positively to climate change.

Strategies

- Facilitate a reduction in non renewable energy consumption.
- Encourage the design, construction and operation of buildings to incorporate energy efficiency principles.

Objective 3

- To ensure the safety of the Resort from bushfire.

Strategies

- Manage safety from bushfire through appropriate fire management strategies.
- Ensure that development demonstrates an acceptable level of risk to fire prior to granting approval for development or use.
- Encourage applicants to consult with the relevant fire authority and the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board regarding bushfire management information prior to lodging an application for planning permit or a site development plan.
- Implement the Bushfire Management Plan prepared by the Mt Buller and Mt Stirling Alpine Resort Management Board.
- Ensure that development in areas of high bushfire hazard does not increase the potential fire hazard to built assets and human life.
- Effectively balance vegetation conservation and protection from bushfire.
- Ensure that the safety of the Resort is managed through appropriate fire management strategies.

IMPLEMENTATION

- These strategies will be implemented by:

Application of zones and overlays

- Applying the Public Park and Recreation Zone to areas considered appropriate for public recreation and open space.

- Applying an Erosion Management Overlay to areas susceptible to landslip or instability hazards.
- Applying a Bushfire Management Overlay to areas susceptible to bushfire.

Application of local policies

- Applying Clause 22.01-1 Development guidelines when assessing development applications.
- Applying Clause 22.01-2 Management of Geotechnical Hazard Local Policy when determining an application for a planning permit or a site development plan made under the Erosion Management Overlay.
- Applying Clause 22.01-3 Urban Design in Alpine Resorts in the consideration of development applications.

Further strategic work

- Preparing and implementing a Bushfire Management Plan.
- Monitoring Mt Stirling Alpine Resort to determine possible geotechnical hazards.

Other actions

- Advancing the quality of experience for day and snow play visitors by improving access to and quality of public facilities.
- Increasing the provision of interpretative and education experiences in a complementary way to that offered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and Parks Victoria.
- Investigating whether the existing trails meet the needs of the Resort or whether extensions to the existing network are required.
- Investigating and implementing a cooperative weed and predator control program with Parks Victoria.
- Improving the understanding and increasing the interpretation of logging and reforestation activities in and around Mt Stirling.
- Supporting further research into species ecology and monitoring of flora and fauna communities, including exotic species.
- Encouraging the resurfacing of the road from Telephone Box Junction to King Saddle and King Saddle to the Machinery Shed.
- Continuing to ensure that water is treated to the standard required to minimise impact on natural hydrology.