

Sally Munk - FW: Shaolin Environmental Assessment 2012 - Who gains what?

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The prodigious plans for the Comberton Grange development by Shaolin have rested on a down-

payment of just \$250 thousand dollars and the indulgence of Shoalhaven City Council for over six (6) years.

The first site inspection by a Chinese delegation was in October, 2005.

In May , 2006, the Shaolin Temple Foundation (Aust) Ltd was registered in NSW with the registered office as Landerer & Co and the ultimate holding company as Shaolin Development Co Ltd.

In June 2006, a contract for the sale of the Comberton Grange land (plus pine forest and quarry) for the sum of \$5 million was signed in China.

In October 2006, the South Coast Urban Lands Review confirmed the Shaolin development application but reduced the number of dwellings proposed and imposed a 'single ownership' condition. Property developer Landerer & Co is reported to have ended his association with the project soon after.

In May 2008, the Shaolin Project Application, prepared by consultants Conybeare Morrison, was lodged with the NSW Minister for Planning.

In June, Shaolin asked for a three month deferral of the agreed settlement date. The first deferred deadline was not met. The next was also not met and the third, in March, 2009, passed without payment.

Shaolin then took advantage of a clause in the sale contract allowing a three year mortgage, financed by the City of Shoalhaven, with a lower than commercial rate of interest payable six (6) monthly in arrears.

Shaolin representative Patrick Pang is reported as saying that Shaolin did not want external investors.

In July, 2009, former Mayor Watson returned from a China visit advising that the Shaolin development may attract Chinese Government sponsorship "if and when all the planning approvals are granted".

In November, 2009, Councillor Watson announced the presentation of a cheque for \$8 million as a personal contribution to the Shaolin project by a wealthy Chinese businessman known as Mr Huen. Councillor Watson is reported as saying that the new funding was expected to see the project through to the construction phase.

In March, 2012 Shaolin's three (3) year mortgage term ended. Shaolin asked for the final payment to be extended for another twelve months. Council agreed to this extension.

In August, 2012, Shaolin lodged a revised application with the NSW Department of Planning and, in October, Council agreed to defer Shaolin's interest payments for 6 months or until the environmental assessment was approved.

In the early 1980s the Shaolin Temple in Henan Province, China, is reported to have had only 12 monks and one hectare of farmland. A 1982 film featuring the kung fu martial art is reported to have changed its fortunes.

By 2009 the Shaolin Temple is reported to have set up twenty eight (28) overseas centres to promote kung fu and Chinese culture while the Shaolin brand has been attached to a wide range of products.

The Chinese Government sought United Nations consideration for World Heritage Listing for the mainland temple buildings and for kung fu as a 'World Intangible Heritage'.

The current Shaolin Temple Abbot, Shi Yongxin, was officially inaugurated in 1999. A published list of the Abbot's appointments and achievements show him to have been an Elected Deputy of the 9th National People's Congress of the people of China from 1998 to 2003.

Shaolin's 2012 environmental assessment indicates a greater emphasis on the provision of services for Chinese nationals in the proposed development.

"the residential component of the development will comprise mainly Chinese nationals and retirees" (Chinese national retirees?)

The Kung Fu Academy appears to have become (or is in addition to) a school for which:
 "it is anticipated that there will be an ultimate accreditation with the NSW Department of Education similar to independent schools. It is anticipated that 80% of these students will come from China to learn English and gain an education for future settlement".

A figure of some 20 to 50 Chinese medicine practitioners are proposed for the short stay 'Wellness' Centre.

The development "aims to optimise on self sufficiency" and it is difficult to see any of the anticipated tourist dollars escaping from the site. Shaolin want a self contained system providing food, accommodation, recreation, entertainment, shopping and alternative medicine.

As a religious organisation, Shaolin can expect to gain significant exemptions from the payment of local government rates. Australian churches also benefit from tax exemptions. These concessions are not usually available to other tourist operators.

Shaolin propose a five (5) to twenty (20) year construction period. That is up to twenty years of clearing, construction and occupation on a site bounded by the watercourse (Currambene Creek) which forms some 72% of the Jervis Bay catchment.

"The high water quality of Jervis Bay is attributed to largely undeveloped catchments which, as a consequence, spared the waters of Jervis Bay from the sediments, nutrients and other pollutants normally exported from developed and developing catchments" (Jervis Bay Territory Land Use / Development Blueprint, 1996)

"most of the site drains towards the Creeks, Currambene and Georges Creek, (with) a small portion draining towards the upper reaches of Bid Bid Creek". (Shaolin Environmental Assessment - Volume 1, August 2012)

The question is, what are we in danger of losing and who will gain what?

