

Community Information Sessions

Coal & Allied's Lower Hunter Lands proposed residential development and conservation land transfers.

October and November 2010

Background

Coal & Allied has approximately 4,078 hectares of land in the Lower Hunter Region of NSW. This land is located within the four local government areas of Newcastle, Cessnock, Lake Macquarie and Wyong. The sites are not required for future mining or other operational purposes.

In 2004, Coal & Allied commissioned a preliminary review of its Lower Hunter land holdings. This review made a number of recommendations with regard to the potential future land development opportunities that may exist for Coal & Allied's land holdings in the Lower Hunter. In late 2004, Coal & Allied established a Lower Hunter Project team.

In mid 2007 the communities surrounding this land were consulted about possible residential developments at the southern estates of Catherine Hill Bay, Gwandalan, and Nords Wharf and the northern estates of Minmi/Link Road and Black Hill. This process included one-on-one meetings, community workshops, charettes, community reference groups and public exhibitions.

Concept plans and supporting studies were submitted to the NSW Department of Planning in late 2007. A high number of community submissions and an Independent Hearing and Assessment Panel (IHAP) suggested a number of changes including a reduction in the number of lots proposed, further environmental considerations and heritage mitigation.

These initial plans were withdrawn by Coal & Allied in mid 2010.

In June 2010 new applications were submitted and in August 2010, the NSW Department of Planning provided the Director General's Environmental Assessment Requirements for the proposed developments at Nords Wharf, Middle Camp (Catherine Hill Bay), Gwandalan, Minmi/Link Road and Black Hill.

Coal & Allied is preparing to submit revised concept plans and supporting studies in late October 2010 for the southern estates and late November for the northern estates.

Coal & Allied's objectives

The overall focus of this project is on sustainable regional conservation, sustainable urban outcomes and supporting valued communities with a sense of place.

The project proposes to develop more than 800 hectares of land located at Black Hill, Minmi, Link Road, Gwandalan, Nords Wharf and Middle Camp. The aim is to achieve sustainable residential development and employment generating development in these areas.

The project will also assist the NSW Government realise the long sought after 14,600 hectares Watagans to Stockton Bight and Wallarah Peninsula conservation corridors by contributing over 3,200 hectares of land.

This contribution will provide a great boost to the environment and to the health and enjoyment of the community through the recreational opportunities that will be available as described in the Lower Hunter Regional Conservation Plan.

Community information sessions

To help the community learn more about Coal & Allied's revised plans for the proposed residential land development and conservation land transfer in the Lower Hunter a number of community information sessions were conducted in October and November 2010.

The following table details the information session schedule.

Date	Time	Location
Thursday 14 October 2010	3.30 to 6.30pm	Gwandalan Community Hall
Friday 15 October 2010	4.00 to 7.00pm	Nords Wharf Community Hall
Saturday 16 October 2010	9.00 to 12noon	Catherine Hill Bay Surf Club
Friday 4 November 2010	4.00 to 7.00pm	Minmi Progress Association Hall
Saturday 5 November 2010	9.00 to 12noon	Minmi Progress Association Hall

The purpose of these sessions is to:

1. raise awareness of the plans being resubmitted
2. provide an overview of the process to lodge the Environmental Assessment and State Significant Site studies
3. highlight revisions to previously submitted concept plans
4. provide an avenue for personal interactions with impacted communities
5. provide details of submission process (submissions not accepted at information sessions)

The sessions were hosted by Coal & Allied representatives General Manager Property Development, Keith Dedden, Project Specialist Property Development, Geoffrey Rock,

Principal Community Investment, Stephen Sneddon and community relations consultant Justine Voigt.

Information session outcomes and feedback

Gwandalan – Thursday 14 October 2010

A sign-in register available at the entrance of the Gwandalan Hall lists 37 names and addresses, however not everyone attending the session signed the sheet. It is estimated that approximately 50 locals attended the session. Visitors included a representative from Wyong Council, the member for Swansea, the Gwandalan Progress Association and a local property developer.

The Council representative did not identify any major concern with the proposal. It was suggested that Council may prefer more passive and active recreational areas and walking linkages, particularly near Kanangra Drive.

The Progress Association indicated that the association would again be objecting to the proposal with a focus on the environmental impacts and in particular the drainage system around Stranger's Gully.

A local real estate agent attended the session and while generally in favour of the proposal indicated that the property market in Gwandalan was currently subdued. He suggested the key issues were the lack of job opportunities in the area, the high level of unemployment, the need for new infrastructure and limited awareness of Gwandalan by prospective purchasers.

While the session attracted some expected negative responses including vocal opposition to the proposal, there were also several positive comments from local residents.

One of the main messages repeated during the session is the need to improve Kanangra Drive. It was suggested that the road is dangerous and could not accommodate an increase in daily traffic.

Other comments included the lack of medical facilities and employment opportunities and the need to enlarge the local school or provide an additional one.

Positive comments included recognition of the need for development in the area to encourage the provision of additional services such as public transport, shops and schools. The conservation outcomes were also acknowledged as positive and this proposal is considered a better option than allowing a power station or mining on the site.

There was a repeated reference to negative comments around the community about the proposal which were seen as a NIMBY attitude by residents who are in favour of the proposal.

Nords Wharf – Friday 15 October 2010

A sign-in register available at the entrance of the Nords Wharf Hall lists 39 names and addresses, however not everyone attending the session signed the sheet. It is estimated that approximately 50 locals attended the session.

The session was advertised in the local paper and supported by a “letter box drop” by one of the locals who participated in the 2007 consultation and charette process.

The attitude among those who visited the session was mixed and it is estimated that around 50 per cent of the attendees were positive about the proposal and the benefits it could bring the area. The other 50 per cent were opposed to the proposal and some suggested that the land should be “returned to the people”.

Some of the comments made during the session at Nords Wharf included the need for facilities for children with bikes. This comment supported the suggested path around the foreshore between Nords Wharf and Gwandlan.

Boat parking was also an issue raised during the session. There were repeated comments that the boat ramp facilities in the area need upgrading, however this must be carefully managed to minimise the impact on adjacent residents.

Traffic was a common issue, particularly reference to Awabakal Drive which is not considered appropriate for increased traffic by the locals. The impact on existing residents in Government Road and Branter Road were also key issues with residents in those areas concerned that their access will be compromised by increased traffic.

Inquiries regarding the future of the Scout Camp were also noted and it was explained that Coal & Allied has on-going communication with the Scouts regarding the camp.

Some of the positive comments included the need for new housing to attract young families to the area, the ideal location of the proposal and the opportunity to upgrade the access to the Pacific Highway.

Catherine Hill Bay – 16 October 2010

A sign-in register available at the entrance of the Catherine Hill Bay Surf Club lists 36 names and addresses. Most people attending this session signed the register and this is considered an accurate record of the number of attendees. Among those who attended, was the president of the Catherine Hill Bay Progress Association.

There was a notable shift in attitude by the locals of Catherine Hill Bay towards this development compared with previous consultation. While there is still some opposition, many of the locals indicated that the revised concept plan (which has fewer lots and is contained to the Colliery Road area) was a “good outcome”.

Traffic continues to be the biggest issue raised with repeated suggestions of traffic calming devices along Flowers Drive (Middle Camp) and in Northwood Road. Repeated reference was made to the dangerous intersection at the Flowers Drive and the Pacific Highway. There several comments that the proposal would be more acceptable if access to the new estate was provided by constructing Pitt Road (through the National Park) rather than along Flowers Drive.

Questions were asked about the occupied land being retained by Coal & Allied and the future use of this land. A suggestion was made to include a community garden in this area. It was also noted that a suggested walkway along the old railway line between Catherine Hill Bay and Middle Camp was not shown on the map.

Environmental concerns, including the maintenance and protection of the wetlands were also raised during the session.