



PORT STEPHENS

C O U N C I L

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ORDINARY COUNCIL MEETING
25 JULY 2023

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SUBJECT

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- Nb. **Bold** Items listed above have not been previously received or viewed by Councillors.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

ITEM NO. 3

FILE NO: 23/189006
EDRMS NO: PSC2020-00033

DRAFT HINTERLAND PLACE PLAN

REPORT OF: JANELLE GARDNER - COMMUNICATIONS AND CUSTOMER
EXPERIENCE SECTION MANAGER
GROUP: DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION IS THAT COUNCIL:

- 1) Note the Hinterland Place Plan Engagement Report (**ATTACHMENT 1**).
- 2) Endorse the draft Hinterland Place Plan (**ATTACHMENT 2**) to be placed on public exhibition for 28 days.

BACKGROUND

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an updated version of the draft Hinterland Place Plan.

Please refer to the business paper for (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

ISSUES

The most updated version of the draft Hinterland Place Plan was not attached to the original business paper agenda for Council.

ATTACHMENTS

- 2) Draft Hinterland Place Plan. [↓](#)

Hinterland Place Plan



Hinterland Place Plan – July 2023

Guudji Yiigu

(Goo-jee ik-koo)

We welcome you to
Port Stephens – part of
the Worimi Aboriginal
Nation who speak the
Gathang language.



We acknowledge the Worimi
as the original Custodians and
inhabitants of Port Stephens.

May we walk the road to
tomorrow with mutual respect
and admiration as we care
for the beautiful land and
waterways together.

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What is a Place Plan?

Place plans are a way of planning for the growth of unique towns and villages across Port Stephens. Place plans provide a local filter on the Port Stephens Community Strategic Plan and other important planning documents to create actions which improve the liveability and wellbeing of our communities.

Actions

The actions in our local place plans create alignment in the way we plan for future land use, invest in infrastructure, attract investment and bring life to our streets. Place plans recognise the importance of our public spaces in creating great places to live, work and play.

Community

Most importantly, the development of place plans starts with talking to our community. They respond to the community's values and priorities for their place aspirations; they enable collaborative partnerships between residents, business and Council to deliver great place outcomes.



Our place planning approach



Local values

Through the Port Stephens Liveability Index, we know the values and priorities of our individual communities. This information provides the foundations of our place plans and helps guide planning and decision making across our community.



Start with yes

A culture that supports innovation and ideas is critical to the success of our place plans. By starting with yes, we can encourage new thinking, new ideas and attract more people to share in creating great places.



Test and trial

Great places don't appear by accident – they take time, effort and a shared understanding that not every project will work every time. By testing and trialling low cost, short term ideas, we learn by doing and create the stepping stones to bigger and better things.



Civic pride

The Port Stephens community is abundant with energy and expertise and people who want to be involved in planning and creating for their place. Place plans provide opportunities for collaboration, foster pride and create meaningful community connection.



Measure and benchmark

When we trial a new idea, launch a new program or invest in our public spaces, we need to understand what works and what doesn't. Measuring the success of our projects and comparing them to the best possible examples we can find will help build amazing places where people will want to live, work and play.



About the Hinterland

This Hinterland is known for its rural landscape and fertile agricultural lands. Connected by three rivers: the Williams River, the Paterson River and the Hunter River, the Hinterland encompasses a collection of small villages and rural communities stretching from Raymond Terrace through to Duns Creek and Woodville to Balickera and Eagleton.

The Worimi People are the Traditional Custodians of this region. European settlers colonised the area in the 1820s. The fertile soils of the Hinterland supported agricultural pursuits including vegetable farming, barley, oats, corn and winemaking. As time passed, small settlements emerged introducing new industries and residents and among these, dairy farming emerged as the predominant sector. Today, approximately 6,000 people call the Hinterland their home.

The Hinterland strengths include its distinctive visual character, comfortable living environment and natural beauty, all of which contribute to the liveability and wellbeing of the residents. As the region continues to grow,

there are opportunities to further enhance liveability by connecting communities through the development of walking paths and cycling trails, new visitor experiences and further investment and support for local business.

This Place Plan is not imposed from the top down. It's been created together with residents and prioritises opportunities for community led initiatives and ideas that align with the Hinterland's competitive advantages. This plan will provide the roadmap to link the community's goals with the people and places that have the power to transform these visions into reality. By doing so, together we'll improve the liveability and wellbeing of those that live, work and visit the region.

Character principles

- The highly valued natural environment is celebrated and protected.
- Future development respects the local history and unique character of each village.
- Communities with a shared history and sense of place are better connected.
- Local stories are shared, with a strong focus on supporting new and innovative businesses.
- Sharing the Hinterland with visitors is supported and developed. This includes collaboration to deliver new events, touring itineraries and community activities.

Protecting our place

Rural communities around Australia are changing and the Hinterland is no exception. The increasing impacts of major weather events, land fragmentation and global economic issues are continuing to challenge rural land owners and fundamentally changing our Hinterland communities.

As this change continues, so do the needs and expectations of those that live and work in these communities. Landowners are looking to diversify the use of their properties to build resilience to this change and new residents are seeking opportunities to showcase their history, lifestyle and local produce.

In 2022, The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) implemented changes to simplify the planning process and approval pathways for small business activities and low-impact agricultural development on NSW farms. The changes were designed to respond to natural disasters such as droughts and bushfires, as well as the impacts of COVID-19, by supporting the recovery of regional communities by encouraging industries that are supplementary to, or based on, agriculture, such as agritourism.

At the same time, Council reviewed its planning controls in the RU1 and RU2 zoned land to maximise the economic potential of rural land, without restricting agricultural uses. The Port Stephens Local Environmental Plan 2013 (LEP) was amended to include an increased number of bedrooms for farm stay accommodation and new land uses including artisan food and drink industries, restaurants and cafes, function centres, secondary dwellings (granny flats), and recreation facilities.

This Place Plan will support the delivery of these LEP changes. Its actions support a diversified economy, encourages new points of sale for local produce, and supports agritourism while respecting the history and lifestyle of Hinterland communities.

This plan doesn't consider housing in our rural communities. Housing and its future in the Hinterland will be determined in consultation with the community through the 2024 review of the Port Stephens Housing Strategy.

The residents of the Hinterland are unique. Knowing who they are helps us understand their values and priorities.



Population
5,883

4.81%

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander population



5,178
Families

616 Active
Businesses trading in
the Hinterland



Most common age cohort
55 to 59 years

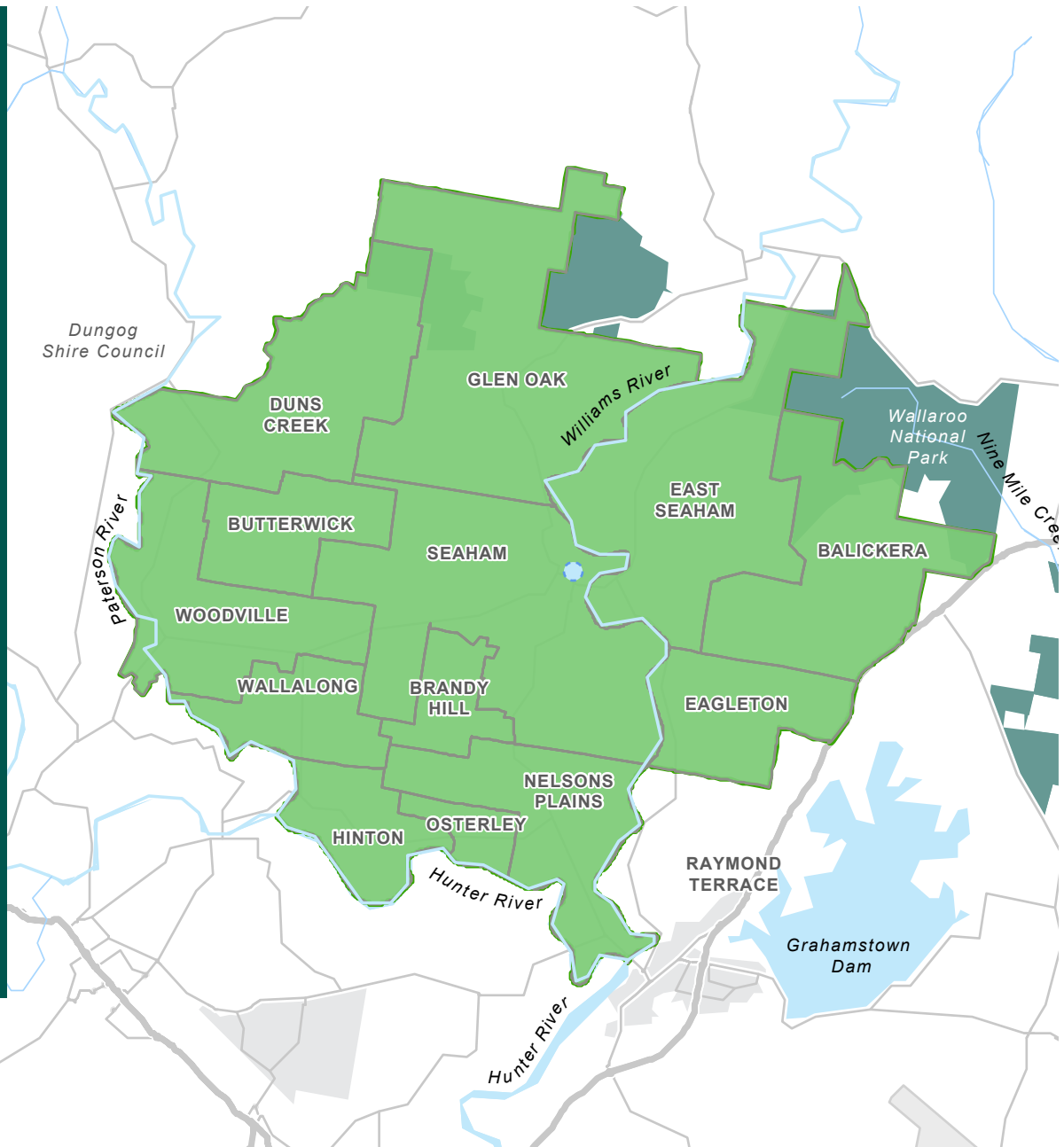
Sources REMPLAN Community 2021 and Economy 2023

Reference map

The Hinterland area of Port Stephens that is the focus of this draft Place Plan is outlined in the map below.

It includes the areas of:

- Balickera
- Brandy Hill
- Butterwick
- Duns Creek
- Eagleton
- East Seaham
- Glen Oak
- Hinton
- Nelsons Plains
- Osterley
- Seaham
- Wallalong
- Woodville



We've been listening

The community explored the future of the Hinterland through an extensive community engagement process. Here's a snapshot of the **Hinterland Place Plan Engagement Report**.



Community Engagement

What makes the Hinterland a great place to live? That's the question we asked our community in September 2020. More than 3,700 people across Port Stephens told us what they value about their neighbourhood and shared their thoughts on how its performing as a place to live, work, and play.

This data was tested and refined during our Hinterland community engagement sessions in November 2021 and again in April/May 2023. Once collected, feedback from our Hinterland communities has been used to develop a vision for the Hinterland, as well as the short, medium and long-term actions that will help deliver it.

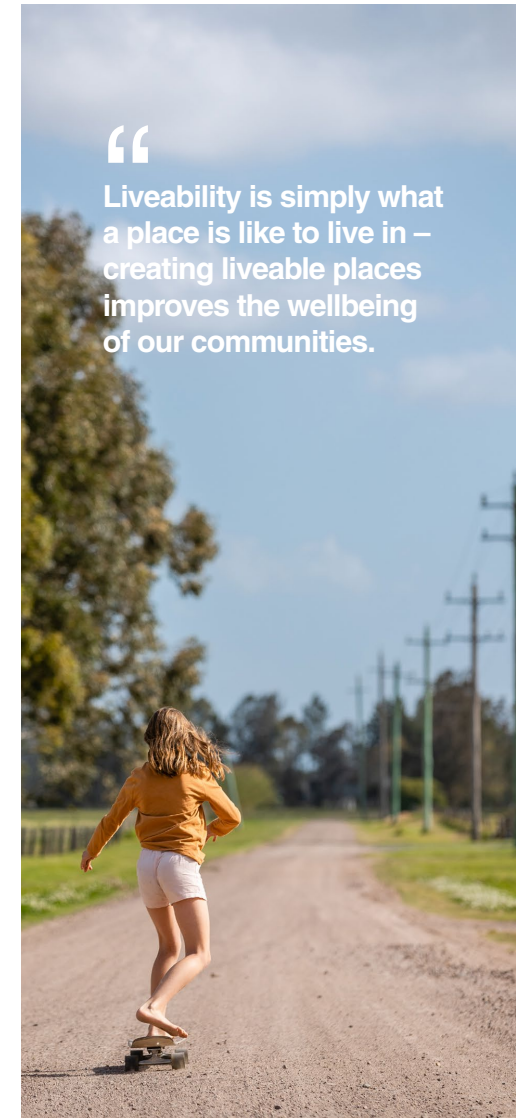
Key themes

The Liveability survey results indicate that the 6 most important themes of liveability for the people of the Hinterland are:

- Economy
- Movement
- Open Space
- Environment
- Management and Safety
- Character

“

Liveability is simply what a place is like to live in – creating liveable places improves the wellbeing of our communities.



How you value your place

In the Hinterland, you most value

These are the things most important to you in your ideal neighbourhood.

-  Elements of natural environment
-  Overall visual character of the neighbourhood
-  Physical comfort
-  Sense of neighbourhood safety
-  Locally owned and operated businesses

Hinterland's top strengths are

These are the things you care about most and which you say are performing well. We'll continue to celebrate and protect these.

-  Sense of personal safety
-  Overall visual character of the neighbourhood
-  Physical comfort
-  Elements of natural environment
-  Sense of neighbourhood safety

Hinterland's top priorities are

These are the things most important to you, but you believe they're underperforming. We'll work together to improve these.

-  Walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to communal amenity
-  Spaces suitable for specific activities or special interests
-  General condition of public open space
-  Protection of the natural environmental
-  Landscaping and natural elements

Liveability Index – how does the Hinterland compare?



Emerging themes for the Hinterland

Economy: New experiences and distinct business opportunities

Port Stephens attracts over 1.6M visitors per year, who stay and experience the wonders of our beautiful nature based playground. Over the past few years, as the visitor economy has grown, new products have emerged and investment has been made in infrastructure, improving both the visitor experience and increasing visitor dispersal across Port Stephens.

In May 2021, the Federal Government announced \$66 million in funding to allow Newcastle Airport to enable longer range domestic and international flights and increased freight capabilities for the region.

This investment will be a game changer for the region, generating new jobs and attracting new visitors.

With increased visitation to Port Stephens, it'll become even more important to expand our experiences.

Visitors will expect immersive, authentic and unique experiences that showcase the region. The Hinterland is ideally positioned to leverage this growing visitor economy.

Across the Hinterland, there's strong support in the community to improve access to outdoor recreation areas such as rivers and nature corridors, providing areas for activities such as riverside camping, picnicking, mountain biking and canoeing.

Additionally, farm gate experiences, farm stays and low impact events can showcase the Hinterland's history, lifestyle and local produce while increasing vibrancy, community connection and economic outcomes.

Recent planning reforms at both a state and a local level have created the ideal environment for these new economic activities to flourish.

Balancing this growth while maintaining the character of the place will be key to the long term success and sustainability of the visitor economy across the Hinterland.



Movement: Connection and access for all to enjoy

In rural areas like the Hinterland, we need to explore innovative ways to create connection. Connected communities are important for social inclusion and environmental sustainability. By prioritising pedestrians and cyclists over cars, the liveability and appeal of the area can be enhanced. This can be achieved by slowing down vehicle traffic, improving the connectivity of shared pathways, and providing amenities such as bike racks. This approach applies to areas such as Hinton, Woodville, Wallalong, and Seaham.

To connect these towns, existing networks like the Hunter Water easement or electricity easements can be explored for the development of walking, horse riding, or mountain biking trails. The community sees these links as a potential way to experience the local environment and provide access paths between the villages in the Hinterland area.

Establishing a unique rural access trail could attract visitors to local farm stays or bed and breakfasts and lay the foundation for future walking and cycling events.

Open Space: Creating quality open space

Open space is an important feature of healthy communities. Accessible and well designed open spaces are integral to a town's character and promote healthier lifestyles, attract tourism, support diversity and improve wellbeing.

Improvements to open spaces within village centres may include beautification through street planting, shade, seating, use of lighting, celebration of local history and creating a sense of arrival through signage.

In the Hinterland, improvements to open space also relates to linking smaller villages, quality public spaces such as nature playgrounds and improved access to rivers.

Quality open space needs to be multifunctional, enable group or community activities, provide gathering places, create areas suitable for play and adventure, and encourage wildlife through the provision and maintenance of natural habitats.

Improving the general condition of public spaces is a top priority for the Hinterland and a key aspect of this is to improve access to the rivers. The Seaham Boat Ramp

and Canoe Launch provides access for smaller vessels and paddlecraft from public land, however much of the river frontage is privately owned, which limits options for public access. Exploring potential access points with landowners and state based agencies would be a necessary first step to unlocking this opportunity.

Environment: Protection and conservation of our environment

Hinterland communities place a high value on their local natural environment, in fact it's the thing they care most about. The natural surroundings, including the rivers, wetlands, native bushland and agricultural farmlands are why people love living in this part of Port Stephens.

Many areas throughout the Hinterland provide important habitat for native wildlife and the area is home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Key sites such as Seaham Swamp Nature Reserve and Bird Hide are truly special, offering bird watchers and nature based visitors a unique experience. The thoughtful management of these assets will help preserve and educate on the importance

of the environment as well as provide opportunity to leverage off these natural assets for greater outdoor recreational and commercial opportunities.

The Hinterland provides key habitat corridors for a number of native species, including Koala, Brush-tailed Phascogale, Squirrel Glider and Powerful Owl. The Hinterland contains important vegetation, including Endangered Ecological Communities, like Hunter Lowland Redgum Forest and Freshwater Wetlands on Coastal Floodplains. To ensure the long term protection of these plants and animals, these corridors need to be maintained, strengthened, and where possible, rehabilitated.

Overdevelopment and clearing is a concern for residents, specifically the disposal of waste from housing fill, destruction of koala habitat, air quality and flooding. When planning for future land use, existing legislation and policy aims to ensure the protection of these valuable habitats.

There are opportunities for the community and Council to work together to ensure that these areas are not only protected but also celebrated. Leveraging these natural assets for greater recreational opportunities, education, visitor experiences and all abilities access would serve to safeguard unique environmental sites into the future.

Success in achieving these actions requires strong partnerships between landholders, community groups, schools, Council, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Hunter Water Corporation and other state agencies.



Management and Safety: Safe and resilient communities

The community's resilience is an important asset in the Hinterland. We know that both locals and visitors appreciate the stunning vistas and farmlands, but it's the genuine nature and hospitality of the people that really sets it apart.

Smaller, more intimate villages across the Hinterland offer a strong sense of familiarity and safety, while the countryside offers a laid back and peaceful lifestyle. Even though areas of the Hinterland have had their challenges with floods and fire, the community has consistently demonstrated that they can rally to help support each other in times of need.

Regular community events, produce swaps as well as utilisation of community halls as shared spaces offer opportunities to meet, build resilience and facilitate community connection.

The community has expressed concern around road safety and lack of public transport for moving children to and from school. There are ongoing opportunities to advocate for the review of speed limits, construction of natural pathways and the implementation of other safety measures to assist in the safety and wellbeing of our kids.

When we visit a place we like to feel comfortable, safe and welcome. Creating a sense of security is a shared responsibility. It needs ownership from the community, business and Council to create long term improvement.

Council can impact design and development through planning controls and the maintenance of public spaces.

Residents and business can align and work together to grow pride and ownership through volunteering, improved shopfronts, preservation of historical sites and stories, as well as hosting events and activations to enhance this sense of safety.

Character: The Hinterland and our unique identity

Character is what makes an area distinctive and shapes the identity of a place. It encompasses the land, people, the built environment, history, culture and tradition.

These elements create a specific look and feel, and a sense of belonging that a person feels for that place.

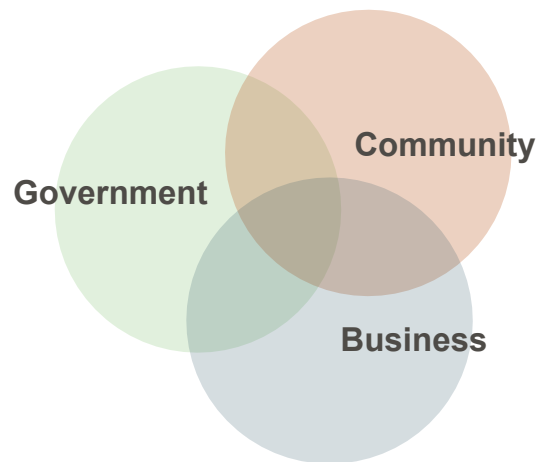
The Hinterland's character is defined by its working farms and its beautiful natural

landscape that features rolling hills, deep rivers, views of mountain ranges and a feeling of open space. The community values the unique identity of the villages that make the Hinterland. The community want to protect this for future generations through careful management of land, appropriate planning controls and the protection of habitat corridors.

The area's character is defined by a number of significant heritage buildings and places, each with their own stories to tell. Locals are eager to enhance and preserve the historical character of the area with new signage and the protection of heritage sites. There's a drive to reinvigorate and nurture heritage buildings and places, such as Foundation Houses, Broom Factory and historical sites at Seaham and Hinton for new uses like cafes, galleries or by developing an interactive historical trail, further expanding the appeal of the Hinterland.



A shared responsibility for our place



Individual responsibilities but opportunities for partnerships



Residents

Residents make an important contribution to their place through individual or collective efforts. The impact on the look and feel of a place is through the diversity of people; their rich heritage, lived experience and their sense of ownership of public and private space. Place making activities are developed in partnership with the residents and reflect strong cultural values, in particular with the Traditional Owners of the Land, the Worimi people.



Local workers

Local workers contribute to a place in many ways, and have a connection to a place even if they don't live there. Their presence activates a place and makes it vibrant and they support local business. Some workers even volunteer their time to activities that improve the place.



Visitors

Visitors and tourists, including day trippers, overnight visitors, or those just passing through, play an important role in a place. They provide a customer base that may result in new local business like cafés and restaurants, or key attractions that also benefit residents by offering a larger variety of things to see and do.



Business

Businesses have many opportunities to contribute to placemaking. These could include funding and supporting community projects, collaborating with other businesses, sharing resources or training local workers. Businesses make a vital contribution to the character of the place. Maintaining an attractive shopfront that presents positively to the streetscape contributes to an appealing and welcoming town and village centres.



Port Stephens Council

Council has 4 different roles in implementing place plans – as a coordinator by providing guidance and assistance for a project; as a supporter by providing permission, inspiration or project funding; as a partner that works with community groups and business to undertake projects; or as the primary organisation that funds and delivers the project.



Town Teams

Town Teams are a group of positive and proactive people that work collaboratively to improve a place or area. The Town Team model is inclusive and open to everyone – businesses, residents, community groups and anyone keen to have a go.

Contact Town Teams about how you can create a Hinterland Town Team and connect with other ambitious community members to start delivering outcomes for your town or village.



Community groups and volunteers

Community groups and volunteers with a can-do and proactive attitude are vital for placemaking projects. They include sporting clubs, schools, charities, churches, clubs, social groups and environmental custodians. Community groups and volunteers contribute significantly to their community.



State Government

State Government has 3 roles in placemaking – as an authority, a strategic visionary and a funding body. Importantly, they have a significant role in the management of roads and other infrastructure, parks and heritage, which are all essential contributors to the identity of a place.

Working together

Creating great places requires a collaborative approach and ownership from all those that live, work and play in the place. By working together we can harness people-power to achieve more, and best of all, create lasting connections that improve liveability and increase the wellbeing of the Hinterland communities.

Look and feel for the Hinterland

Creating an attractive streetscape brings people into town and compels people to stay and linger. The use of a consistent colour palette and materials can help to create a beautiful town with its own, unique 'look and feel'.

Small projects such as shop front renovations, fence replacements and street furniture may all present opportunities to create a more cohesive town centre and a sense of belonging to the community.

The colour palette of natural and earthy tones represent the many attributes of the Hinterland and celebrate the diversity of the broader Port Stephens West Ward region.



Green for the diverse vegetation of wide spanning pastures and grassy river banks.

C: 41% **M:** 0% **Y:** 58% **K:** 0%

R: 91 **G:** 208 **B:** 230

Hex: 5BD0E6



Deep Green for Hinterland's native bushland and pockets of wetland.

C: 91% **M:** 44% **Y:** 66% **K:** 35%

R: 0 **G:** 86 **B:** 78

Hex: 00554D



Deep Blue for the Williams, Hunter, and Paterson Rivers that define the Hinterland.

C: 50% **M:** 20% **Y:** 10% **K:** 0%

R: 127 **G:** 174 **B:** 204

Hex: 7FAECC



Clear-finished timber for the rural outlook and natural environment of the Hinterland and West Ward region.



Grey for the beautiful shrouds of mist that blanket the hills and pastures.

C: 35% **M:** 28% **Y:** 32% **K:** 0%

R: 171 **G:** 170 **B:** 165

Hex: ABAAA5



Deep brown for the rich and fertile soil that supports the crops and agricultural land.

C: 40% **M:** 60% **Y:** 70% **K:** 40%

R: 109 **G:** 77 **B:** 60

Hex: 6D4D3B



Brown for the timber and other natural materials found within the Hinterland and surrounds.

C: 29% **M:** 41% **Y:** 56% **K:** 3%

R: 181 **G:** 146 **B:** 117

Hex: B59275



Creating better places and spaces in the Hinterland

Council has completed a range of projects over the last couple of years and have a range of projects planned to improve liveability in the Hinterland. These include improvements or replacement of existing roads, additional pedestrian and cycle infrastructure, and a range of community and recreational facilities.

Balickera

- Rehabilitation Italia Road Seg 120 (2023/24: \$750,000)

Brandy Hill

- Brandy Hill pathway (Date TBC: estimated \$2,500,000)
- Provision of Brandy Hill bus stops (Date TBC: \$120,000)

Duns Creek

- Completed: Rehabilitation Duns Creek Road (North of Wallaby Close) including blackspot and sealing works (2022/23: \$1,149,000)

- Completed: Rehabilitation Seaham Road, including intersection upgrade at Hinton Road (2022/23: \$1,500,000)
- First seal Duns Creek Road from Forest Road to 291 Duns Creek Road (2024/2025 – \$805,000)

Eagleton

- Completed: Six Mile Road sealing (2022/2023: \$1,068,000)

East Seaham

- Completed: Newline Road, East Seaham (2022/2023: \$1,415,000)
- Completed: East Seaham Rd gravel Roads resheeting (2022/2023: \$47,000)
- Completed: East Seaham Rd rockwall and guardrail (2022/2023: \$95,000)
- Black spot funding for East Seaham Road (2023/2024: \$998,000)

- East Seaham Road stage 5. Install new seal, guardrail, signage and linemarking from No.474 to 829 East Seaham Road (2023/2024: \$1,000,000)

Glen Oak

- Replacement of Notts Creek Bridge on Oakendale Road (2022/23/24: \$469,000)
- Completed: Rehabilitation of Clarence Town Road from Wattle Creek Bridge to Langlands Road (2022/23: \$1,203,000)

Hinton

- Completed: Upgrades to Stuart Park, including a new sports amenities building, kiosk (2019/20: \$1,300,000)
- Rehabilitation Hinton Road Segment 10 (2033/2034: \$275,000)
- Renovating Hinton School of Arts (2030/31: \$45,000)

Nelsons Plains

- Completed: Rehabilitation Seaham Road intersection upgrade at Hinton Road (2022/23: \$960,000)

Seaham

- Completed: Rehabilitating Warren Street (2020/21: \$965,043)
- Completed: Rehabilitating Clarence Town Road at Croft Road (2021/22: \$580,944)
- Completed: Widening Clarence Town Road and correcting alignment from Mooghin Road to Dixon Street (2022/23: \$1,864,000)
- Completed: Upgraded Brandon Park, Seaham to include a multi-sport court upgrade, floodlight upgrade, tiered seating and accessible toilet (2023/24: \$830,000)
- Upgrading Seaham School of Arts, including driveway, disabled access and renovation (2023/24: \$60,000)

- Replacing playground equipment Seaham Park (2026/27: \$180,000)

Wallalong

- Completed: New spectator seating at Bowthorne Park (2019/20: \$100,000)
- Improving drainage under High Street (2026/27: \$400,000)
- Replacing playground equipment at Bowthorne Park (2030/31: \$80,000)

Woodville

- Rehabilitation Paterson Road Seg 70 (2025/26: \$600,000)
- Rehabilitation Paterson Road Seg 50 (2027/28: \$375,000)

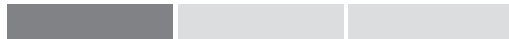


Actions

Timeframe

This Place Plan has a planning horizon of 5 years. Timeframes denote when delivery of an action is expected to start.

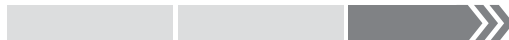
Short term – 0 to 2 years



Medium term – 2 to 4 years



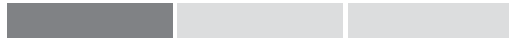
Long term – 4 to 5+ years



Cost

Cost indicates whether an action is a relatively cheap or a costly undertaking.

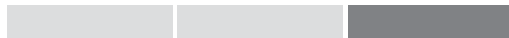
Low



Medium



High



Lead

Each action will be led by Council or a specific group associated with the action.

Council role

The Hinterland's Liveability Index results have inspired a series of action items. Port Stephens Council has 4 roles in delivering these actions:

- **Coordinate** – As a coordinator, we'll provide guidance on how to start your project, help by identifying approvals required, advise you about funding opportunities, get you in touch with other organisations, or advocate for your project.
- **Support** – As a supporter, we may provide support, permission, inspiration or funding.
- **Deliver** – In delivering, we'll fund and deliver the project.
- **Partner** – As a partner, we'll work with the community, business, developers, and state agencies to undertake projects or programs.

Emerging themes

- **Economy**
- **Movement**
- **Open Space**
- **Environment**
- **Management and Safety**
- **Character**

IMPORTANT NOTE

Cost estimates and delivery timeframes are indicative only and subject to further investigation.

The order for commencement of actions is flexible and will be based on timing and availability of funding and resources, and community initiative.

1. Create pop-up experiences

Do you have a great idea that can bring people together in the Hinterland? Community halls, parks, and village centres provide unique places where you can organise short-term events that showcase what makes the Hinterland special.

These events, known as pop-ups, may be art displays, interactive story projects, or new business experiences. They can transform a location, create an interesting experience, and catch people's attention. They also help assess the demand for new services, try out different experiences and small businesses.

For example, you could try running a coffee cart or selling local produce on a main street. Alternatively, you could use the kitchen facilities in a local School of Arts hall to create a special dinner featuring local ingredients.

Timeframe

--	--	--

Cost

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Lead: Community and Business

Council role: Support

2. We're here to help

Changes to planning laws have made it easier for locals to diversify their rural businesses and increase income. If you're interested in exploring these types of options, it's a good idea to check in with Council.

Council will provide guidance on what activities are allowed on your land and discuss the possibility of converting unused sheds, cottages, or other structures into accommodation.

Council recognise that starting a new project and understanding the required approvals can be challenging, so fact sheets and a campaign will be developed to provide assistance and information.

Timeframe

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Cost

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Lead: Council

Council role: Deliver



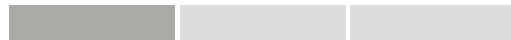
3. Support local – small business, big impact

In today's world, where people have more options for shopping online or at major shopping centres in Newcastle and Maitland, it's important to ensure that both residents and visitors support local shops whenever possible.

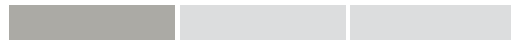
The community can take steps to raise awareness about small, specialised businesses by organising community market days, produce swaps, or even creating dedicated Facebook pages to spread the word.

Campaigns promoting the idea of 'Support Local' will be promoted within the Hinterland, along with additional business mentoring assistance.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council
Council role: Coordinate

4. Our bright future

Although this plan isn't focused on housing outcomes, there's still a significant demand for housing opportunities in Port Stephens.

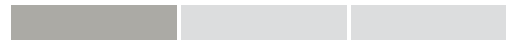
Council has already taken steps to provide increased housing options in the Hinterland by allowing secondary dwellings. This means that older farmers can now semi-retire on their working farms while still being able to mentor and live with the next generation of family farmers. It also opens up additional income opportunities for hosting people looking for unique accommodation options.

The supply of housing will be considered during the review of the Port Stephens Housing Strategy in 2024.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council
Council role: Coordinate

5. Agritourism mentoring program

Recent planning reforms have made it easier for rural land owners to diversify their incomes and provide new things to do and places to visit in the Hinterland. Council, together with Destination Port Stephens and Destination Sydney Surrounds North will establish a Hinterland mentoring program.

This will assist rural land owners to gain further insight and a better understanding of the visitor economy and how to leverage the opportunity to diversify their agribusiness.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council and Destination Port Stephens
Council role: Deliver

6. Deliver an annual event

Once the region establishes its identity and increases its available accommodation, local residents could organise an annual festival that showcases the area's local produce, heritage, waterways, and lifestyle.

A focus should be on prioritising events that connect residents with their heritage and make better use of local facilities including School of Arts halls, parks and businesses.

To generate ideas, it's recommended locals research what similar communities are doing. Initiating discussions with local businesses, neighbours, Town Teams, or Council can help identify funding opportunities to turn these ideas into reality.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community and Business

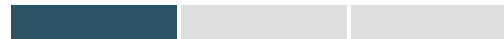
Council role: Partner

7. Improve access to interesting places

The Hinterland has many fascinating locations worth exploring. For instance, Seaham was home to some of the earliest vineyards in the Hunter Valley.

To celebrate the history and character of the region, a Town Team or a local working group can collaborate with landowners to identify sites of significance. These sites can be enhanced by things like walking tours, education sessions, open days, art and signage.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community

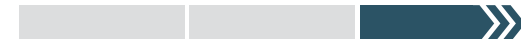
Council role: Support

8. Improve safety for pedestrians

The Hinterland has an extensive network of rural roads with varying speeds. Ensuring the safety of our children on these roads is a top priority for the Hinterland community.

Council can collaborate with the community to advocate for changes in speed limits in high-risk areas. This can involve reviewing and adjusting speed limits, installing solar panel speed message boards at important entry points, exploring alternatives to reduce heavy vehicle traffic, and conducting road safety campaigns through community groups and schools.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council and NSW Government

Council role: Coordinate

9. Increase walking, riding and cycle pathways

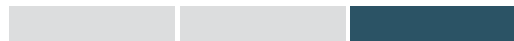
If you enjoy walking, biking, or horse riding, Council will review the Pathways Plan to find ways to connect villages and population centres using existing corridors. To help accomplish this, a local action group or a future Town Team could start conversations with landowners or businesses about creating safe pathways for pedestrians, cyclists, and horse riders.

Further investigation would be needed to determine the specific locations, design elements, and funding sources for these pathways.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council
Council role: Coordinate

10. Options for connection

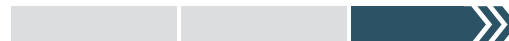
There's a strong interest in improving the connections between village centres, particularly Seaham, Brandy Hill and Hinton. Linking these villages via the Hunter Water pipeline and existing easements would be a complex, long-term and transformational project that would add huge value for the community.

In partnership with Hunter Water Corporation, Council will explore the potential opportunities to create pathways within these easements to connect the Hinterland villages.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council and Hunter Water
Council role: Partner

11. Keeping our people and rivers safe

The Hinterland has a tri-river system that offers many recreational opportunities for boaters and anglers to explore. It's crucial to prioritise the health of the rivers and the safety of people using them.

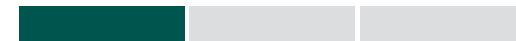
Agencies like Maritime NSW play a vital role in patrolling and promoting safe boating practices on our rivers.

Council will collaborate with Transport for NSW to promote the creation and execution of safety campaigns and events that emphasise responsible behavior and pollution prevention.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council
Council role: Partner

12. Better access to waterways

To improve connectivity and enhance riverbank areas, consultation and community engagement as part of the Hunter Estuary Coastal Management Program will be undertaken.

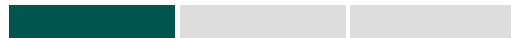
This program will identify options for private landowners to consider granting access to riverfront areas for activities like camping and picnicking. Additionally, Council will continue collaborating with state and local agencies to explore opportunities and advocate for better access to waterways, state forests, and national parks.

We encourage the community to do the same by advocating for access to waterways with private landowners and agencies like Local Land Services, as well as seeking easier entry to state forests and national parks for activities such as hiking and biking.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council

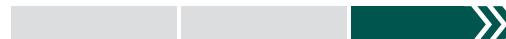
Council role: Support

13. Celebrate the riverfronts

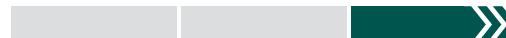
The Paterson, Williams and Hunter Rivers define the Hinterland. Existing public space that fronts these rivers could be enhanced to better connect communities with their waterways.

Council's Boating and Fishing Infrastructure Plan makes a number of recommendations for the improvement and maintenance of these local assets.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council

Council role: Coordinate

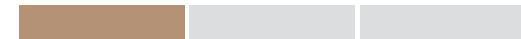
14. Preserving the Waterways of the Hinterland

The residents and visitors of the Hinterland highly value the tri-river system, which includes the Williams, Patterson, and Hunter Rivers.

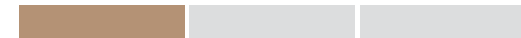
To ensure the long-term health and vitality of these waterways, the Hunter Estuary Coastal Management Program is being developed. This program aims to protect and enhance the area, considering the overall well-being of the rivers, and will outline specific management actions for the future.

Engagement sessions will be conducted, and community involvement is encouraged to contribute to the development of the plan.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council

Council role: Coordinate

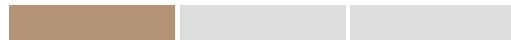
15. Encouraging sustainable gardening

More and more people are becoming interested in sustainable gardening, but they often lack the knowledge to get started. To address this, the Council plans to collaborate with experts to develop educational programs and a sustainable planting guide.

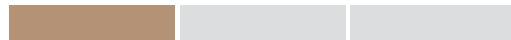
These resources will help residents learn about sustainable gardening practices, including the use of suitable plant varieties, bush tucker, edible species, and shade-loving plants.

Community members could also consider establishing a community garden or a native edible garden with like-minded individuals, providing a space to practice and share their gardening skills.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community and Council

Council role: Support

16. Sustainable conservation of landmarks

The Hinterland boasts several remarkable natural features and landscapes. Places like Seaham Conservation Area have the potential to attract more visitors to the region, opening up opportunities for new services and unique experiences.

In collaboration with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), Council and the community will champion the sustainable conservation of these important environmental sites. One way to enhance these sites is by improving access through the creation of an interpretive loop walk, complete with wayfinding signage that includes cultural stories.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community, National Parks Wildlife Service, Council

Council role: Partner

17. Protection and enhancement of wildlife corridors

The Hinterland provides key habitat corridors for a number of native species and important vegetation. To ensure the long term protection of these plants and animals, vegetation corridors need to be maintained, strengthened, and where possible, rehabilitated.

Community members are encouraged to work together with groups such as Landcare to plant native trees, shrubs and grasses to enhance the natural environment.

Council will also continue to work with agencies such as Local Land Services to combat regional priority weeds and Council will work with landowners to provide advice and support group funding applications for projects that align with the wildlife corridor protection and enhancement.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community, Council

Council role: Partner

18. Improve flood management

The Hinterland covers a diverse number of catchments, generally flowing to the Hunter Estuary. The area has a number of creeks, rivers, estuaries, stormwater channels and drains which are impacted by flooding, sometimes with little or no warning.

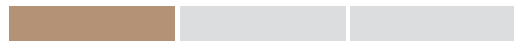
Council will continue to work with the community and key stakeholders to develop drainage solutions, improve the floodplain risk management policy and areas impacted by flooding.

Council will also continue to work with NSW Governments to implement findings from the NSW independent flood enquiry.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: NSW Government, Council

Council role: Partner

19. Establish a Hinterland 'Town Team'

To bring together the aspirations of residents and local businesses, it's suggested to create a local group that can achieve small victories and advance larger ideas. One possible approach is to establish a Hinterland Town Team.

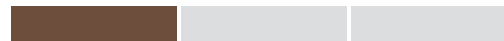
This group would serve as a platform for local change-makers to connect with each other and deliver projects that enhance the area.

A Town Team could lead efforts to beautify village centres by planting street trees, creating gardens, establishing heritage walks, or installing art displays.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community

Council role: Coordinate

20. Connect with neighbours

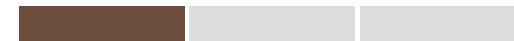
Community connection is important to the vitality of a place. In rural areas like the Hinterland it's important to provide opportunities for people to get together, share experiences and build networks.

Strengthening these connections through shared experience could include creating and hosting events and activations, hosting open houses, farm and garden days and other community-led initiatives.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community and Business

Council role: Support

21. Establish a Community Resilience Network

The Hinterland has experienced several instances of flooding and other disasters, causing significant disruptions in recent years.

To address these challenges, it's proposed to establish a Community Resilience Network.

This network, developed with Local Emergency Services, will enable residents and landowners to adopt a localised and focused approach to assist and support the wider community before, during, and after a disaster. The aim is to enhance community preparedness, response, and recovery efforts in the face of future emergencies.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council
Council role: Deliver

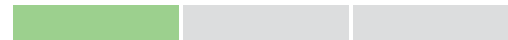
22. Documenting local character

Are you interested in photography? Why not begin capturing the unique essence of the Hinterland by taking pictures of interesting locations and people? You could even sell or share your images with local businesses, Destination Port Stephens, and other groups.

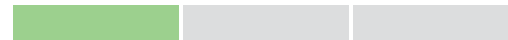
This will contribute to building an image library that can support a strong and consistent identity for the Hinterland as other initiatives unfold.

Additionally, you might consider organising a photography competition or exhibition to be held at one of the community halls in the Hinterland. It's a great way to showcase local talent and further celebrate the beauty of the region.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Community
Council role: Support

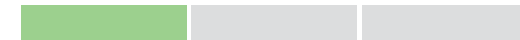
23. Recognition of the indigenous history and culture of the area

The Worimi people are the traditional landowners of the Hinterland. The most authentic and insightful cultural storytelling comes from the original custodians of the land.

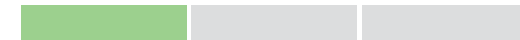
Cultural education sessions, held at Murrook, provide a great starting point to understand Worimi Aboriginal Culture. In collaboration with Destination Port Stephens and the Aboriginal community, Council will continue to identify and celebrate Aboriginal experiences at significant visitor sites.

There's funding opportunities available for community projects that aim to empower and raise the profile of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If you have ideas, reach out to Council's Vibrant Places team to discuss and explore your ideas.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council
Council role: Support

24. Create a brand and identity

Creating an identity improves the economic value and opportunities in the Hinterland.

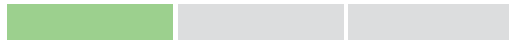
Locals and businesses could collaborate with Destination Port Stephens and Council to develop a unique brand and identity for the Hinterland.

The community and Council can the work together to improve or install signage and interpretive panels that enhance the sense of place and provide guidance for visitors.

Timeframe



Cost



Lead: Council, Destination Port Stephens, Community

Council role: Support



