

WALK THE YORKE

CASE STUDY



The Walk the Yorke Trail was awarded Best Overall Project 2016 at the KESAB Sustainable Communities Awards.



PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Walk the Yorke Leisure Trail (the WTY Trail) is a continuous shared walking and cycling trail around the entire Yorke Peninsula (YP) coastline; a distance of approximately 500 kilometres of spectacularly rugged cliffs, amazing views, pristine beaches, secluded coves, rocky reefs and tidal pools, windswept sand dunes, samphire forests, historic lighthouses and a peek into some of Australia's most productive farming land, rich Aboriginal culture and endemic scrublands.

Stephen Goldsworthy (aka Goldy), is Yorke Peninsula Council's Operations Manager and Project Manager of WTY. Goldy had the vision in 2004 of creating a walking trail that would truly demonstrate how stunning the Yorke Peninsula region is. Over his many years at Council, Goldy, along with local Progress Associations, had managed the construction of walking and cycling trails within a majority of the townships. It was during the planning of these unconnected trails, (totalling approximately 60km) that the idea of the WTY Trail was born.

In 2013, Yorke Peninsula Council successfully applied for funding for the project, with construction occurring over 2.5 years. Walk the Yorke was officially opened on 13 December 2015. The Project was jointly funded by the Australian Government, South Australian Government and the Yorke Peninsula Council.





PROCESS

The WTY Trail Concept Plan formed the basis for planning as it included community consultation, risk and environmental management, and trail route.

The development of the WTY Concept Plan included consultation with the community, adjacent Councils and relevant SA Government Departments. This allowed for the ownership of the concept by the community, particularly groups such as local Progress Associations and government staff, who developed a strong belief in the aims and goals of the Project.

Being such a large Trail of a very long distance, the use of a Operational Guide allowed for the Trail to be divided into manageable sections for construction. Consultation and negotiation occurred with owners and managers of land the Trail entered onto, as well as with adjacent landholders when identified as necessary. This was 'rolled out' from section to section, beginning with the sections with higher requirements for construction.

For each section, construction was identified as required actions; trail surface preparation and construction, marker installation, seating installation, shelter and rainwater tank construction and installation, signage design, production and installation etc. Risk management requirements were also addressed this way so assessments could be conducted prior to works commencing. The installation of the interpretive podium signs and information signs were managed slightly differently, as they were installed towards the end of the construction activity timeline of the project and not in every section.

The Australian Government contributed \$1,343,000, the Government of South Australia (SA Government) contributed \$90,000 (mainly for the development of the Concept Plan) and Council contributed \$1,343,000.

MOTIVATION

It is expected that users of the WTY Trail will initially contribute at least \$1 million to the local economy with significant increases in future years, as the WTY Trail receives recognition and publicity. This local economic boost was a key reason for undertaking the project, as well as a key factor in receiving Australian Government funding. The WTY Trail can be a major tourism drawcard for Yorke Peninsula. In addition, WTY has the potential to make a significant contribution to the lifestyle, health and social wellbeing of South Australians, particularly those that live on YP.

The health benefits of the WTY Trail will be available to a wide range of people, including the elderly, families and people with disabilities, not just those people seeking challenging adventures and/or a sense of achievement, as there is a range of walking and cycling options to choose from. WTY also provides people with a low or no cost way to exercise. The increased participation in Trail activities will play a part in building and sustaining the health of the region's population. A key benefit of a healthier community is that the existing pressure on rural health facilities is reduced, with obvious economic benefits.

The underlying principles that guided the development of the Walk the Yorke concept were:

- Consultation with interested parties
- Ensuring public safety
- Providing a variety of opportunities for the mobility impaired
- Minimising establishment costs
- Minimising maintenance requirements
- Using recycled materials where practicable, and
- Weighted toward minimising impact on the environment.

Objectives of the Project included:

- Reduce human impact on sensitive coastal areas
- Create opportunity to communicate educational and sustainable management messages
- Enhance visitor and resident experience of the Yorke Peninsula, and
- Create training, employment and business opportunities for the region.



PARTNERSHIPS

The intended result of the Project was a walking and cycling trail that allows the user to circumnavigate the Yorke Peninsula, from Wakefield Regional Council in the north-east, through the Council region to the District Council of Copper Coast in the north-west.

To successfully achieve this, Council needed to work effectively with the numerous stakeholders involved. The Project team regularly met with, contacted and called upon all stakeholders for Project delivery. These partnerships are summarised below:

- Wakefield Regional Council and District Council of Copper Coast – the trail starts and ends within these Council districts with Council installing trail markers and signage within their borders
- Australian Government's Department of the Environment
- Department of Environment, Water, and Natural Resources (DEWNR) and Natural Resources Northern and Yorke – land use licence agreements for where the Trail enters Crown Land (including leased Crown Land) and National and Conservation Parks, construction including liaison with the Native Vegetation Council, and development of interpretive signage with a particular focus on Marine Parks and DEWNR priority areas
- Other land use licence agreements with private landholders, the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI) and the Australian Maritime Safety Authority
- Management of sites of Aboriginal significance with Narungga Nations Aboriginal Corporation (NNAC) via the Adjahdura Narungga Heritage Group (ANHG), with advice from the Department of State Development – Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation
- Development of the Trail on Point Pearce Aboriginal Lands, with the Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation and Aboriginal Lands Trust
- Development of a significant portion of interpretive signage with 20 local Progress Associations and community groups
- In-kind support from Conservation Volunteers Australia

To successfully deliver such a large Project, strong, collaborative and open working relationships were required along with a desire from all involved to achieve the common goal. This was built on a foundation of communication and community partnership, and positive cooperation with all stakeholders.

WORKING WITH THE NHARANGGA COMMUNITY



Council staff corresponded and met with representatives from the Department of Premier and Cabinet's (DPC) Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division (AARD) regarding registered Heritage Sites. Council developed discovery protocols and heritage conservation and risk management strategies with input from AARD.

Council engaged an archaeologist to conduct an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Survey of the proposed route through Point Pearce land (10 kms) that involved representatives from the Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation (PPAC) and Aboriginal Lands Trust.

Council was directed by the Chairperson of the NNAC to consult with the Adjahdura Narungga Heritage Group (ANHG) for permission for the release of registered sites information (held by AARD) and to further investigate and identify other high risk areas and associated protection measures.

The processes Council undertook with the ANHG included:

- A meeting to review the Trail route and briefly identify areas that require protection or further investigation, as well as discussing opportunities for including Aboriginal Cultural Heritage within the project i.e. interpretive signage and graphic;
- A drive of the proposed route to identify areas of significance (for cultural heritage signage etc), areas that require protection, and areas (of high risk) that require further investigation by an archaeologist ;
- Engagement of the ANHG to conduct an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Survey in conjunction with an archaeologist of the high risk areas, with the output being a written report that met the DPC-AARD's standards and minimum requirements as per DPC-AARD Aboriginal Heritage Guideline #13 Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys.

A result of these consultations included some route diversion and fencing to preserve heritage sites.

A key component of the project has been the development of 40 interpretive podium signage detailing Aboriginal Cultural information and creation stories, and a graphic to represent the Nharangga's connection to Country (graphic is watermarked on this page).

Please note, the NNAC have asked the spelling of their people be 'Nharangga', though formal entities and documents remain with the predecessor spelling of 'Narungga'.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

The following 20 Progress Associations prepared content for a total of 51 interpretive podium signs:

- Black Point Progress Association
- Bluff Beach Community Group
- Coobowie Progress Association
- Corny Point Progress Association
- Edithburgh Progress Association
- Friends of Devil Gully
- Friends of Port Moorowie
- Foul Bay Area Progress Association
- Hardwicke Bay and Districts Progress Association
- James Well and Rogues Point Progress Association
- Pine Point Progress Association
- Point Turton Progress Association
- Port Julia Progress Association
- Port Rickaby Progress Association
- Port Vincent Progress Association
- Price Progress Association
- Sheoak Flat Progress Association
- Stansbury Progress Association
- Tiddy Widdy Beach Progress Association
- Wool Bay Progress Association

Some of these signs required more research and hence time input over others, but on average, approximately 15 hours per sign was invested (this includes research, drafting, sourcing photos and images, gaining consensus at Association meetings, editing, and administrative aspects). For signage alone, an approximate total of 765 hours were contributed by the 20 Progress Associations.

In addition, 8 of these Progress Associations also undertook weed control and revegetation works around the Trail, helped to identify and mark out the Trail route, and were consulted with to overcome some issues that arose related to route. On average, each group contributed 9 hours for these types of services, totalling an approximate of 72 hours. The approximate combined total of hours contributed by Progress Associations was 837 hours.

Ardrossan Area School submitted content for signage, including for Clinton Conservation Park, and contributed to the development of the Parara whale stranding interpretive site, adjacent to the WTY Trail.

Six team members from Conservation Volunteers Australia worked on sections of the Trail late in February 2015. A total of 144 hours were contributed.

Natural Resources Northern and Yorke staff contributed 153 hours to the project.



RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Construction progress updates were sent to all Progress Associations for inclusion in their newsletters and websites. The general public were kept informed of construction progress via media releases and articles in the local paper, the Yorke Peninsula Country Times, with 10 articles published over the duration of construction.

The WTY brochure and Yorke Peninsula Visitor Guide were also an effective means of making the local community aware of WTY, especially the landowners who holiday but do not live at their properties.

The visitor market is technology-savvy and increasingly using the internet for end-to-end holiday planning and bookings. As such, the online presence of the WTY Trail is vital to its success. Both Yorke Peninsula Tourism and Council's Visitor Information Centre provide extensive information on the WTY Trail on their websites, including walking routes and maps, distances and timings, recommended rest stops and accommodation, as well as town descriptions and more.

Social media is also proving to be a low-cost, low-input marketing and information tool with #WalkTheYorke used extensively. Both Council's Visitor Information Centre Facebook page and YP Tourism's Facebook page regularly promote WTY.

In addition, the use of traditional media such as newspaper and magazine articles is a highly valued-tool, especially for the interstate target market. YP Tourism has provided invaluable assistance in ensuring the WTY Trail receives influential and continuous media exposure.

OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE TRAIL

For the opening, Council in partnership with YP Tourism and the South Australian Tourism Commission executed a marketing campaign via radio (102.3, 5AA and Cruise 1323) and Facebook to raise awareness of the new trail experience and the launch event.

Radio advertising on all stations began the week commencing 29th November and concluded on Sunday 13th December 2015. The website www.yorkepeninsula.com.au was the call to action to measure the impact, with the following outcomes:

- 4,024 total sessions on yorkepeninsula.com.au during the campaign period (increase of 211% compared to the previous month).
- 150 sessions took place on the 'trails' section of the website.
- 'Walk the Yorke' was the 8th most searched query leading to a session on the website during the campaign period.

Facebook advertising commenced 1st December until 13th December 2015. The Facebook post advertised the WTY experience with a click through to the regional website. Total paid reach for the two Facebook WTY posts equated to 233,338, plus an additional 56,451 organic reach. The posts received: 4,351 likes, 380 comments and 371 shares. This marketing activity was extremely successful with the Yorke Peninsula Facebook page receiving an increase of 29% in page likes from 4,053 to 5,226, making the Yorke Peninsula Facebook page the second most followed regional Facebook page in the state. Eleven posts promoting the launch on YPC's Facebook page reached a combined total of 13,783.

The official opening (launch) was broken into three key events:

- a breakfast at Port Vincent Wharf, attended by 80;
- a public walk of over 4 kilometres from the Wharf to the Port Vincent Golf Course, with 60 participants; and
- a grand opening and associated events, including a pop up market, at the Port Vincent Golf Course, attended by 400.

The opening was a great success and demonstrated the key partnerships Council has with Project stakeholders and the community, with over 30 stall holders at the market, including SA Government Departments, Adjahdura Narungga Heritage Group and community groups, to showcase the Yorke Peninsula region. Friends of WTY led the public walk and Port Vincent Progress Association cooked the breakfast. Council was extremely happy with the reach of the promotion associated with the launch.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

During construction Council used many local businesses and contractors (a total of 17 ranging from two-person enterprises to businesses that employ over 100 staff) and 2.5 full time equivalent (FTE) positions were created specifically for WTY Trail works. Nearly \$1.8 million was invested in the local economy during construction of WTY.

As a result of the trail two new businesses have been developed, supporting trail users. One business is operational, with 5 staff employed in various part-time roles. A total of 5 tourism operators have contacted Council expressing their intent to expand their businesses and/or provide services for Trail users.

A core intended outcome of receiving funding for the Project was to provide an economic and community boost to the region through increased tourism and therefore to be economically viable. Whilst Council's region will be the prime economic beneficiary of the project, the regions within the three adjacent Local Councils (Copper Coast, Wakefield and Barunga West) will also benefit economically from the increased number of tourists passing through or adding a visit to their areas.

WTY has the ability to increase visitation, length of stay and spend in the region, generating a significant economic impact. Existing businesses have the opportunity to expand and diversify their offerings whilst, as previously mentioned, WTY is also an opportunity for new businesses to develop in response to consumer demand.

The Friends of WTY group have also increased their membership significantly to over 50 members who can choose to participate in day walks offered once per month, walking a distance of between 15 and 20 kilometres along with cycling options. This increased participation in Trail activities will play a part in building and sustaining the health of the region's population.



ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

The construction of the WTY Trail required the most amount of environmental management, and the development provided an opportunity to manage the effects of people visiting the coast. Numerous informal tracks exist on the Peninsula and the WTY Trail has been sited to include the most environmentally appropriate of these tracks. Those not incorporated in the WTY Trail will be closed over time and access actively discouraged through various measures. Closures will halt ongoing negative environmental impacts such as weed introduction and erosion. Over the 500kms of Trail, approximately 110km is a constructed gravel surface, with a small portion sealed. The remainder is natural surface and has been sign-posted with markers and signage. The gravel used for the constructed sections of the WTY Trail was locally sourced and had minimal impact on the natural environments.

The focus of the walking sections along beaches, cliff tops and various terrains means these sections are not accessible to cyclists (who are diverted along local roads and reconnect with walkers further along). Whilst the Trail is clearly signed to inform users of access restrictions, it is recognised that there is the possibility that 'walk only' sections may be attempted to be accessed by some cyclists and even off-road vehicles. For the majority of cyclists, the terrain, surfacing and signage will act as sufficient deterrent. Access restriction stiles have been placed in areas of the highest priority to prevent off-road vehicle access to both walking sections and shared use (walking and cycling) sections.

The maintenance program includes regular inspections of Trail condition (e.g. every six months), including weed assessment and control (as frequently as required dependant on seasonal conditions), and repair or modification along sections that are beginning to experience environmental damage, if required.



OVERALL BENEFITS

The materials used for infrastructure saw the majority constructed of recycled and reclaimed materials, particularly the plastic products of podium and information signage, bollards, and bench seats.

Interpretation and storytelling are vital to assisting the visitor in gaining an understanding and appreciation of the region's natural environment, culture and heritage. The 210 interpretive podium signs developed in partnership with local community groups and agencies, serve to educate visitors on the local environment and its indigenous flora and fauna, and how visitors can contribute to their conservation. 43 of these signs share Nharangga information and stories that are culturally important. 3 of these signs were developed by the Point Pearce community whilst the remainder were produced as part of the Aboriginal Cultural Signage program.

Since construction completion, Council has supported Greening Australia, who secured funding under the Australian Government's '20 million trees program', for a revegetation program on the Yorke Peninsula to reinstate critical woodland bird habitat. Sections of land WTY enters that are either Crown Land or under Council's care and control have been included in the revegetation program to support the aims of formalising the WTY Trail and to rehabilitate some of the degraded land WTY passes.

In addition Council has received funding from Natural Resources Northern and Yorke to install access stairs at Blue Bay to help manage access for WTY and other users. Council has also supported community groups in their grant applications for infrastructure that will improve the facilities of the Trail whilst helping to manage some of the environmental impacts. Council will continue to support these groups as well as apply for grants to undertake such works.



With the completion of the Walk the Yorke Trail it is now possible to walk or cycle the entire Yorke Peninsula coastline, from Port Wakefield down to Innes National Park and back up the western side to Moonta Bay, experiencing the spectacular and diverse coastal scenery along the way whilst learning about the local history and environment, and how to conserve it.






COUNCIL INFORMATION

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TRAIL/TOURISM INFORMATION

Yorke Peninsula Visitor Centre
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or


yorkepeninsula.com.au
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