

SOUTH GIPPSLAND SHIRE COUNCIL

# Coal Creek Community Park and Museum Strategic Plan Discussion Paper

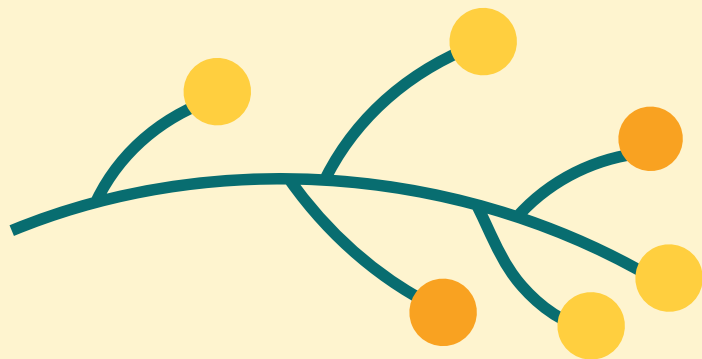


South Gippsland  
Shire Council

## Acknowledgment of Country

*We acknowledge the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Custodians of South Gippsland and pay respect to their Elders, past, present, and future, for they hold the memories, traditions, culture, and hopes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia.*

*Acacia pycnantha (wattle)*



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## Introduction

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Coal Creek Community Park and Museum, nestled in the heart of South Gippsland, is at a crossroads. Originally developed to preserve and showcase the region's rich history, it has evolved into a multifaceted park, attracting visitors and serving as a testament to the area's heritage. However, the passage of time and emerging challenges means that a decision needs to be made about its ongoing operation, continued relevance and sustainability.

To achieve this, South Gippsland Shire Council has embarked on the development of a new Strategic Plan for Coal Creek. In the wake of COVID-19, the landscape for community activities and tourism has fundamentally shifted, and it is clear that not doing anything is no longer an option.

This Discussion Paper is the starting point for a community engagement process to decide the future of Coal Creek. The aim is to provide a candid and comprehensive view of the Park today, the challenges, opportunities and options.

This Discussion Paper is an invitation to get involved. Read it carefully, consider the options presented, and share your thoughts and ideas. We are keen to get the input of as many people as possible from across the Shire to shape the future of Coal Creek.

Everyone in South Gippsland will have the opportunity to provide input and a Community Assembly, randomly selected to represent people who live, work and visit South Gippsland, will make recommendations to Council.

Council is committed to taking action on the outcomes of the engagement process, recognising that the best way forward is one that reflects the collective voice and vision of the South Gippsland community.

### The purpose of this Discussion Paper is threefold:

1. To provide a clear picture of Coal Creek today, including its current state, operational challenges, and financial constraints.
2. To present the community with a range of high-level options for the future of Coal Creek, each with its own set of considerations and costs.
3. To invite the community to actively participate in the strategic planning process to ensure that the Park's future reflects the needs and desires of the South Gippsland community.





## History

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Coal Creek opened in 1974 as the result of a collaborative effort involving the local community, volunteers, the Shire of Korumburra and the Victorian Government. Central to its success was the support and dedication of the local community, which donated skills, trades, collections, and funding. They aimed to make Coal Creek a place for the community to gather, learn about the area's history, and stimulate regional tourism.

Over the years, Coal Creek grew from a historical mining site to a broader heritage and cultural attraction, hosting cultural events and educational programs. In recent years, it has faced challenges maintaining its relevance and condition.

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted Coal Creek, leading to a decrease in visitors and a decline in the Park's condition. Since it reopened in early 2022, the need for significant maintenance and an injection of investment has become clearer. It is also clear that there are competing views about the future of the Park: some view Coal Creek as an important tourist attraction and a memorial to the past, while others see its significance diminishing.



## Coal Creek today

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Council is the Committee of Management of Coal Creek and the site is Crown land owned by the Victorian Government. Since the Park reopened in 2022 following closure due to COVID19 restrictions, Council has been making solid progress, putting in place a maintenance and improvement program and hosting both much-loved and new community and cultural events, leading to increased visibility. The Southern Lights Festival and Halloween attracted crowds in their thousands, with more than half travelling from outside South Gippsland. The success of these events, largely due to the strong working relationship with community groups and volunteers, shows the potential to attract more visitors to the region. It has also resulted in an increase in volunteers, reflecting Coal Creek's ability to bring the community together.

Beneath the surface of these successful events and community involvement lies a financial and structural reality that cannot be ignored. Budget constraints limit the Park's operations and development. The bulk of Council's budget allocated to operations goes to maintaining the status quo, which includes paying staff, maintaining buildings and the extensive grounds and delivering events and activities. The experienced Council staff take pride in evolving Coal Creek to showcase South Gippsland's history and attract new people to the region.

A major challenge for the ongoing operation of Coal Creek is the infrastructure investment required. Since the Park reopened, a significant maintenance program has commenced, but recent inspections reveal that many of the buildings and other infrastructure, including walkways and bridges, need repair.

Some even pose potential safety risks due to structural issues. The estimated investment required could be significant if all the buildings and structures were to be refurbished over the next five to ten years, signifying the scale of the task ahead.



# Timeline

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## **1969 - Proposal submission:**

The community submits a proposal to the Korumburra Shire Council to build a coal mining village on the outskirts of Korumburra.

## **Early - 1970s Funding and land acquisition:**

Local and state governments pledge funding for the project. The land is leased by the State Government to the Shire of Korumburra.

## **March 1974 - Opening day:**

Coal Creek officially opens as a testament to the collaborative efforts of locals and government.

## **Post-1974 - Ongoing community involvement:**

Continued involvement of local volunteers, contributing skills, trades, family collections, buildings, and money.

## **July 1983 - Advisory committee formed:**

The Coal Creek Historical Park Advisory Committee was formed to replace the Shire Committee of Management.

## **1985 - Change of name:**

Coal Creek Historical Park name changed to Coal Creek Heritage Village.

## **1991 - Board of Directors appointed:**

The Shire of Korumburra appointed a Board of Directors focusing on activities, finance and capital works. Park management reported to the Board.

## **1993 - Growth in volunteers:**

Volunteer numbers reach 391

## **1995 - New management committee:**

Formation of a Section 86 Committee appointed by the newly amalgamated South Gippsland Shire Council to run operations and day-to-day management.

## **1996 - New friends:**

Friends of Coal Creek first established

## **2001 - New management:**

Friends of Coal Creek Inc. took over day-to-day management with an annual funding allocation provided by Council.

## **June 2007 - Park closed:**

Coal Creek Heritage Park was closed by South Gippsland Shire Council in June 2007 for renovation works and a major reorganisation after an architect assessment report was completed. The Friends of Coal Creek objected to this.

## **December 2007 - Park reopened:**

VCAT orders Council to reopen Coal Creek Community Park and Museum.

## **2008 - Council resumes management:**

Management and operations of Coal Creek bought 'in-house' by Council.

## **2014 - Museum accreditation:**

Coal Creek Community Park and Museum attained museum accreditation through Museums Victoria.

## **2020-2021 - COVID-19:**

Coal Creek was impacted by the pandemic restrictions, leading to a decline in activities and visitations.

## **2022 - Current state and challenges:**

Reopening in early 2022, Council faces the need for significant investment for maintenance to prevent further decline.

## **2023 - Developing a Strategic Plan:**

Council commences a community engagement process to inform the next stage of Coal Creek.

## Snapshot of current operations

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### Current operations and engagement

#### Visitor engagement:

Successful events like the Southern Lights Festival and Halloween are attracting significant audiences, including many from outside South Gippsland. Visitor numbers are provided below:

- 2013/2014 - 68,779 (peak)
- 2022 - 20,929
- 2023 - 23,564 (Jan to Oct)

#### Volunteers:

The number of volunteers is also growing, from a low of three in 2021 to more than 30, making a valuable contributing to maintenance and activities.

#### Attractions:

Most people visit the Park for events, displays and the natural setting.

#### Key projects:

Initiatives such as the general store revamp, train upgrades, and rotunda rebuild are enhancing the visitor experience.

### Infrastructure and future maintenance:

#### Buildings and structures:

There are 60 buildings/structures across Coal Creek.

#### Building inspection:

A 2023 inspection of 13 priority buildings/structures showed some, including the Machinery Shed and Locomotive and Carriage Shed, had defects and are potential safety risks.

#### Investment requirements:

The current budget does not meet the maintenance requirements for all buildings/structures and an injection of funding is required.

#### Unknowns:

The condition of the roads, paths, and other infrastructure is limited, and there is currently no budget allocated for their repair and maintenance.

### Financial overview and economic impact:

#### Current budget:

The operating budget for 2023-24 financial year is \$838,073; major expenses include administration and wages, utilities, and tramway maintenance and insurance. There is also a capital works budget of \$114,000 to maintain all of Council's heritage buildings (not only Coal Creek).

#### Income:

The current budget includes a forecasted income of \$59,767 from events, school groups, and donations for the financial year.

#### Budget allocations:

In the 24/25 financial year (FY), the proposed budget is \$819,449 (income \$61,066); for the 25/26 FY, it is \$842,370 (income \$62,397); and for 26/27 it is \$864,193 (income \$63,762).

#### Economic contribution:

The Park's direct and indirect annual economic impact was estimated at approximately \$2 million in the 16/17 financial year.



## Overview of events in 2023/24

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**March 23:**

Vintage Chrysler Club - more than 50  
1920s Chryslers on display

**March - May 23:**

THREADS exhibition - first exhibition in the  
revamped auditorium

**June 23:**

Southern Lights - first large-scale event to secured  
for Coal Creek

**August - September 23:**

Changed Forever: Legacies of Conflict - Shrine of  
Remembrance touring exhibition (externally funded)

**October 23:**

All Hallows Eve - Halloween family fun

**October 23:**

Children's Week

**December 23 - February 24:**

Rona Green Exhibition and visions of South  
Gippsland promoting the region

**December 23:**

Carols at the Creek

**March 24:**

Easter Egg Hunt

**February - March 24:**

Summer in the Park Series - three evening music  
events

**March 2:**

Coal Creek 50th Anniversary celebration

**February 24:**

Charley Crockett national tour

## Strategic planning context

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In shaping the future of Coal Creek, the development of the Strategic Plan needs to be considered within the context of existing planning controls, strategies and plans adopted by Council, and the role of the State Government.

A range of planning controls govern Coal Creek. The Public Park and Recreation Zone (PPRZ) frames its recreational and limited commercial use, while environmental and heritage overlays safeguard its ecological and historical facets. These guidelines ensure that any developments at Coal Creek respect its natural and cultural legacies.

The Strategic Plan for Coal Creek must consider the South Gippsland Community Vision for 2040.

*“South Gippsland: sustainably adapting to protect and enhance our unique natural environment, towns and villages through community-led planning and initiatives.*

*We celebrate our diverse people, culture, environment, heritage, agriculture and industries while empowering positive change through education and action.*

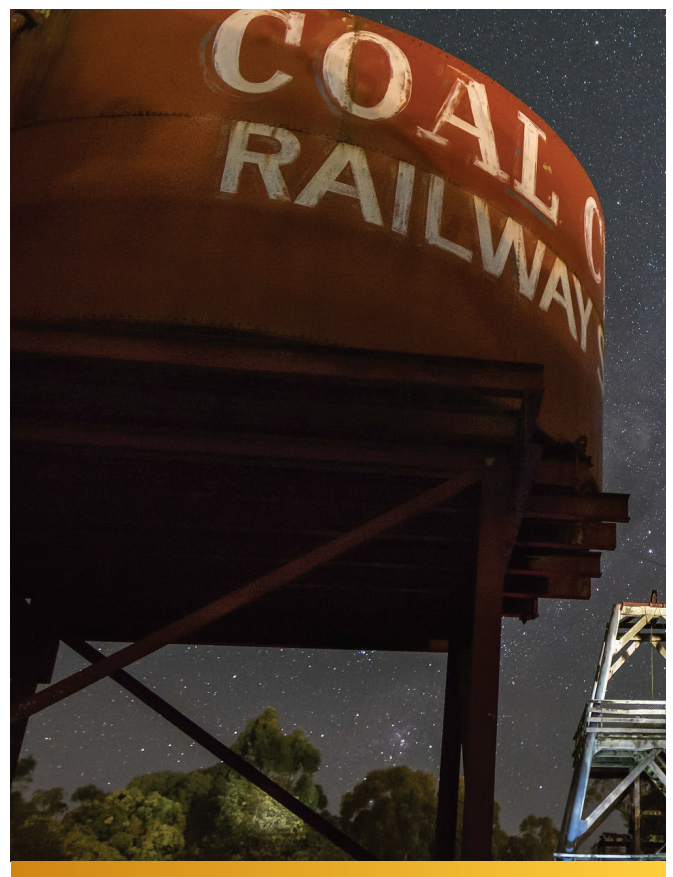
*We’re a leading destination, a place where people come to visit and want to stay.”*

Relevant objectives in the Council Plan include the development of environmental and cultural partnerships with the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people, the creation of engaging spaces for activities and events, and the enjoyment of natural areas.

The Visitor Economy Strategy integrates Coal Creek as a key element in the broader vision for the region. Recognising Coal Creek’s status as the largest cultural heritage site in South Gippsland, the Strategy aims to evolve its role, enhancing its identity as a cultural tourism asset.

The Strategy calls for the enhancement of the visitor experience at Coal Creek, aiming to offer more interactive and varied narratives that could encourage repeat visitation.

The Arts, Culture, and Creative Industries Strategy recognises the site’s potential not just as a static display of the past but as a dynamic, interactive space that can evolve and resonate more deeply with local and broader communities. The Strategy aligns with the vision of reinventing Coal Creek, focusing on enhancing the visitor experience through more cohesive, changing narratives and interactive displays. This approach aims to increase repeat visitation by offering fresh perspectives and engaging experiences.



### Planning and zoning

- Zoning: Coal Creek is zoned as Public Park and Recreation (PPRZ), acknowledging its purpose for park and recreational use while allowing some commercial activities linked to public land use.
- Crown Land reservation which allows for Temporary Reservation for the Promotion of Tourism.
- Planning Scheme Overlays: The mine entry site is also listed in the Vic Heritage Inventory Place ID 43998.
  - Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).
  - Environmental Significance Overlays (ES05 and ES09), covering erosion-prone areas and the Giant Gippsland Earthworm Habitat.
  - Heritage Overlay (H054), specifically recognising three historic structures: the former Korumburra Court House, Kilcunda Road State School and the Wattle and Daub Cottage.
  - Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the lower part of the site.

### Alignment with Council Plan objectives

- Environmental and cultural partnerships: Development of strong relationships with the Bunurong and Gunaikurnai people, focusing on environmental, cultural, social, and economic goals.
- Community Engagement: Creating engaging spaces for local activities, events, and enjoyment of cultural and natural areas.

### Alignment with the Visitor Economy Strategy

- Event support and cultural leverage: Identifying opportunities to support events and leveraging cultural assets for tourism, with Coal Creek positioned as a key cultural tourism asset.
- Art, culture, and technology: Supporting art, culture, and creative industries and investigating digital technology feasibility in key locations.

### Alignment with the Arts, Culture, and Creative Industries Strategy

- Creative and cultural support: Investigating support models for creative industries and practicing artists, including creative hubs and event attraction.
- Event policy and night-time activation: Developing policies to grow cultural event tourism and enabling night-time activation in towns and attractions.
- Heritage and reconciliation: Strengthening engagement with traditional custodians and contributing to Council's commitment to reconciliation.
- Community and business partnerships: Collaborating with local businesses and community associations to support events in smaller towns.



**What does the South Gippsland Planning Scheme say about Coal Creek Community Park and Museum?**

**Zoning:** The site is zoned Public Park and Recreation (PPRZ). The zone recognises areas for park and recreation purposes, protects and preserves areas of significance, and allows some commercial uses, where they are associated with public plan use.



**Overlays:** The site also has a number of Planning Scheme overlays:

- Partly covered by the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)
- Environmental Significance Overlay (ES05) which covers areas subject to erosion.
- Partly covered by the Environmental Significance Overlay (ES09) - Giant Gippsland Earthworm Habitat Protection.
- The top part of the part is covered by Heritage Overlay (HS054) which specifically recognises the Court House, Wattle and Daub cottage and former Kilcunda Road State School Building.
- The bottom part of the park is an area of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity.

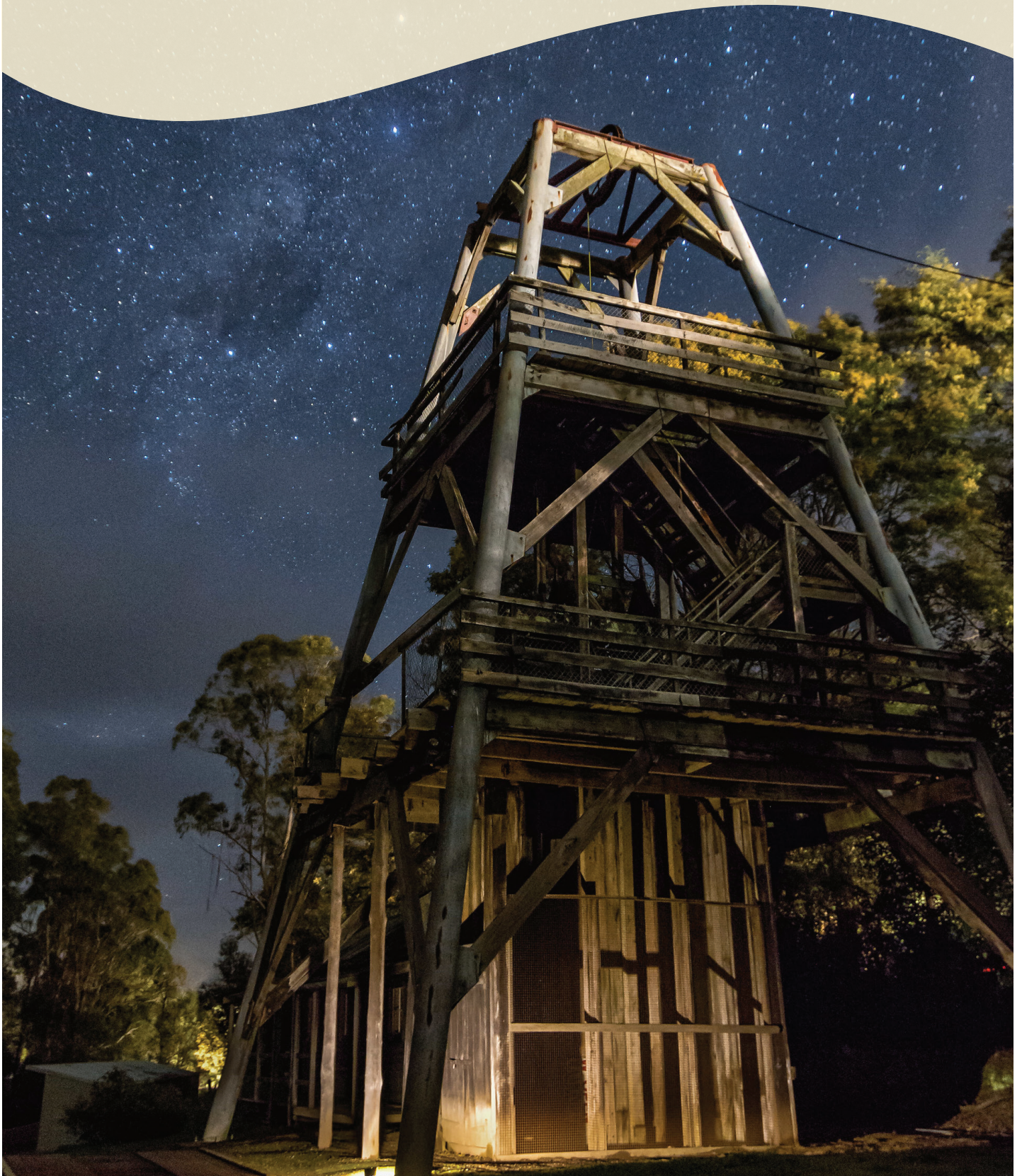


- BMO - Bushfire Management Overlay
- ES05 - Environmental Significance Overlay 5
- ES09 - Environmental Significance Overlay 9
- HS054 - Heritage Overlay 54

The Coal Creek site has a Crown Land Reservation that allows temporary reservation for the value of tourism.



# Issues and Opportunities





## Summary of key issues

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Coal Creek is at a critical juncture where financial pressures and operational challenges converge with a range of possibilities and opportunities for the future of the site.

### **Declining visitor numbers:**

Visitor numbers have been steadily declining for some years, leading to a decrease in revenue and increased financial strain on the Park. It should be noted that the Park visitor numbers are now heading in the right direction, with an increase of 8,000 in the past year.

### **Aging infrastructure:**

The Park's infrastructure is aging and in need of significant financial investment just to maintain its current state, which is not covered in the long-term financial plan.

### **Limited revenue streams:**

In the past visitor numbers and entrance fees provided significant income. However, entry has been free for more than 15 years. Diversifying revenue streams is essential for the Park's long-term sustainability.

### **Lack of a clear vision:**

The Park lacks a clear and compelling vision for its future, making it difficult to attract visitors, secure funding, and justify ongoing investment. The new Strategic Plan is essential to apply for state and federal funds.

### **Community concerns:**

There are concerns within the community about the ongoing cost of operating the Park and the perceived value of Council's investment.

The Strategic Plan needs to address these key issues if Coal Creek is to be viable in the long-term



## Considerations for the Strategic Plan

### Previous reviews and analysis

Over the years there have been numerous studies and reports that have provided a financial and strategic analysis of Coal Creek. While identifying significant opportunity, the reports have consistently highlighted challenges related to operational deficits, the need for investment, and the exploration of new revenue streams.

Efforts to implement the recommendations from these reviews have been met with varying degrees of success. For instance, attempts to lease the Pig and Whistle Café have been unsuccessful, leading to its closure, which, despite reducing operational costs, also removed a revenue source. Financial measures, such as the decision to continue running the train without a full-time paid driver and to increase education program prices, only partially addressed the financial challenges facing Coal Creek and increased reliance on volunteers.

### All options require additional funding

Whatever the decision is about the future of Coal Creek, all options will require additional funding and will need to be implemented over a number of years. For example, revitalising the Park would require additional investment to maintain and upgrade the existing buildings and infrastructure. Ceasing operation as a Community Park and Museum would entail substantial costs, including demolition, collection management, and legal and security expenses.

This significant financial outlay underlines the complexity and impact of any decision regarding the Park's future.

### Financial Sustainability

Ongoing issues such as funding, operational efficiency, and maintenance continue to pose challenges. A clear, actionable Strategic Plan that addresses these issues while recognising Coal Creek's cultural and historical value is needed. The Plan needs to balance the Park's heritage importance with practical considerations of financial sustainability and operational viability.



## Options Council is seeking feedback on

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Council has identified three options for the future of Coal Creek, other options may be identified through the engagement process. Each option has varying degrees of complexity and cost that will need to be worked through in detail by the Community Assembly.

Council will provide further detail on timing and cost for their consideration. Whatever option is chosen, additional funding - beyond what is forecast in Council's long term financial plan - will be required. Ultimately Council will make a decision on what is best for South Gippsland based on the recommendations of the Assembly.

#### OPTION 1: REVITALISATION

This option involves continuing Coal Creek's current operations while adding new activities and attractions. The key challenge is the need for funding to address operational and safety issues and the necessity to innovate beyond current offerings to significantly boost appeal. The opportunity lies in the potential for increased visitation, enhanced community engagement, and a positive impact on the local economy, particularly through hosting diverse events, festivals, and educational programs.

#### SUMMARY

Continuing current operations with additional activities and attractions to increase appeal.

#### Challenges and limitations

- Depending on the direction this could require an injection of funding to address operational and safety issues.
- Need to innovate beyond current offerings to significantly boost appeal.
- Investment required depending on scale of vision.

#### Opportunities

- Increased visitation, community engagement, and economic impact.
- Potential to host diverse events, festivals, educational programs and cultural activities.
- Potential to partner with third parties to attract new offerings and investment.





**OPTION 2: NEW DIRECTION**

The community may identify a new direction for Coal Creek through the engagement process, provided it meets the strategic planning requirements outlined earlier.

This ambitious approach may require significant investment, including external funding, and the challenge lies in managing large-scale development while aligning with community values. The opportunity here could be transformative – turning Coal Creek into a sustainable tourism attraction that offers long-term benefits to the community.

**SUMMARY**

A substantial shift based on recommendations from the engagement process.

**Challenges and limitations**

- Investment required depending on scale of vision.
- Requires investment and external funding.
- Managing large-scale development and aligning with community values.
- No allocation for maintenance or renewal of infrastructure. This is beyond the current budget.

**Opportunities**

- Transform Coal Creek into a new, sustainable tourism attraction.
- Long-term community benefits and setting a new standard in environmental stewardship.
- Potential to partner with third parties to attract new offerings and investment.



**OPTION 3: CEASING CURRENT OPERATIONS**

Ceasing operation as a Community Park and Museum is not a simple task. It involves deaccessioning the collections and dismantling the buildings and will require extensive community consultation. The challenges here are significant – it would be an expensive and lengthy process. The costs would include wages, demolition works, storage and deaccessioning of the collection, legal fees, and security during the closure period. It's noteworthy that the collection's removal, a more time-consuming process than demolishing buildings, would necessitate three full-time curators over three years to complete.

Council would face a significant financial burden in managing this process, ensuring appropriate standards in handling the collection, and meeting its obligations to the community and the site's heritage.

The process also involves complex logistical challenges and potential resistance from the State Government regarding asset relinquishment. However, this option offers the opportunity to re-purpose the land for new community needs and reduces long-term ongoing operational expenses.

**SUMMARY**

Ceasing operations involving deaccessioning collections, dismantling buildings, and extensive community consultation.

**Challenges and limitations**

- Expensive and very lengthy process.
- Complex logistics, including handling collections and demolishing structures.
- The State Government expects that Council will retain responsibility for the site as the Committee of Management, which would still incur an operational cost.
- Would require significant financial investment.

**Opportunities**

- A chance to re-purpose the land for new community needs.
- Maintain as open space.
- Redirect funding to other community assets
- Close the park, with minimal land maintenance for safety purposes and no public use.

## Opportunities

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Despite facing many challenges, Coal Creek possesses potential for growth and activation. Drawing inspiration from recent successful activities and aligning with Council's strategic plans, the themes below will be explored through the engagement process.

The themes are by no means exhaustive but rather a starting point for discussion and deliberation.

### Heritage

Heritage forms the essence of Coal Creek, encapsulating a rich tapestry of stories and traditions that have shaped South Gippsland. At the heart of this narrative lies Coal Creek Park, a living museum where history is not just preserved, but vividly brought to life. Equally important is the recognition and celebration of First Nations heritage, where integrating this rich history into the Park's fabric offers a more holistic understanding of the region's past. By deepening community engagement and developing innovative heritage education programs, Coal Creek aspires to be more than just a repository of the past; it aims to become a dynamic hub for cultural and heritage education. This vision invites locals and visitors alike to explore, learn, and appreciate the diverse historical and cultural narratives that make South Gippsland uniquely compelling.

### Thought starters

#### Enhancing rail heritage:

Continue the restoration and operational improvements of the Coal Creek Bush Tramway, further integrating it into the heritage narrative of the Park.

#### Dynamic museum displays:

Regularly update and curate museum displays to keep the history and heritage engaging and relevant for all age groups.

#### First Nations heritage:

Explore the potential of including parts of Coal Creek as a place that invites and celebrates First Nations history and culture.

#### Community engagement:

Strengthen community involvement in preserving and presenting local history, ensuring Coal Creek remains a living testament to the region's heritage.

#### Heritage education programs:

Develop innovative educational services that highlight the social and cultural significance of Coal Creek's history.

### What if Coal Creek...?

What if Coal Creek became a hub for cultural and heritage education, where every visit offers a new perspective on the rich tapestry of South Gippsland?

## Culture and arts

Coal Creek stands as a pivotal cultural and artistic hub in South Gippsland, offering a rich array of events and exhibitions. It hosts a diverse range of activities, such as the recent “Changed Forever: Legacies of Change” and Threads exhibitions and a dynamic two-year rolling program for artists. Key events like the Summer Series, Halloween, and Carols at the Creek draw significant community participation. The Southern Lights Festival, a unique event in the region, and the attraction of the national tour by Charlie Crockett in February 2024 has added to the Park’s attraction as a cultural destination.

Coal Creek’s unique historical environment has attracted various film and TV projects, including ‘Adam & Poh’s Great Australian Bites’, ‘MONSTER’, and the feature film ‘Dying Breed’. Its recognition on VicScreen as a prime location for shoots further highlights its status as a key cultural venue in the film and television industry.

### What if Coal Creek...?

What if Coal Creek became the heart of South Gippsland’s cultural scene, known for its eclectic mix of events like the Southern Lights Festival, and recognised as the region’s premier venue for arts, culture, and entertainment?

### Thought starters

#### Expanding event portfolio:

Introduce more varied cultural events, including enhancing the Southern Lights Festival, to attract different demographics.

#### Collaboration with local artists:

Encourage greater participation from local artists and community groups in cultural activities and exhibitions.

#### Major events hub:

Position Coal Creek as the key venue for major events and exhibitions in South Gippsland, leveraging its unique setting and facilities.

#### Film and TV partnerships:

Continue to promote the Park as an attractive location for film and TV projects, bringing wider recognition.

#### Cultural workshops and education:

Develop workshops that combine arts, crafts, and heritage, promoting sustainable practices and learning across generations.



## Environment

Coal Creek is a site of significant ecological value, representing an important Council managed and operated parkland in South Gippsland. It features diverse environmental aspects, including a stream and two ponds/lakes, Mountain Ash trees, and extensive canopy cover. The area is under Environmental Significance Overlays (ESO5 and ESO9), protecting against erosion and preserving the Giant Gippsland Earthworm Habitat. The lower part of the site is recognised for its Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sensitivity.

### Thought starters

#### Partnership with First Nations:

Collaborate with Traditional Custodians to develop the middle and lower park as an indigenous origins parkland, opening access to significant funding opportunities.

#### Biodiversity enhancement:

Implement the second phase of native plantings to strengthen the Park's ecological framework.

#### Cultural and educational integration:

Incorporate sculpture gardens and native edible interpretations to foster a deeper understanding of local ecology and sustainable practices.

#### Rehabilitation and conservation:

Identify funding sources for the remediation of Coal Creek's watercourses, drainage, roads, and pathways.

#### Community engagement:

Develop a model for ongoing community involvement in the Park's environmental stewardship.

### What if Coal Creek...?

What if Coal Creek was celebrated for its biodiversity and cultural heritage and a place where ecological sustainability and community engagement intertwine to create a vibrant, educational, and sustainable environment for all of South Gippsland?

## Technology

Recent upgrades at Coal Creek have set the stage for a fusion of the past with the present. The Park's lighting infrastructure has been revamped, paving the way for spectacular light shows that could transform the visitor experience into something truly magical. This theme aligns with Council's Visitor Economy Strategy's objective to investigate the feasibility and cost of digital technology in key locations, underscoring a commitment to finding innovative ways to enhance the Park's appeal.

### What if Coal Creek...?

What if Coal Creek became a pioneering heritage park that integrated cutting-edge technology with its rich heritage, offering immersive and interactive experiences that connected the past, present, and future of technology?

### Thought starters

#### Renewable energy narrative:

The potential to transition from the story of the 'Steam Turbine' to the 'Wind Turbine' offers a compelling narrative shift. This move not only aligns with global trends towards renewable energy but also provides an educational platform to discuss sustainable practices.

#### First Nations technology:

Incorporating a deep understanding of the land, ecology, and sustainable living practices of First Nations people can enrich the visitor experience, offering insights into traditional technologies and their relevance today.

#### Augmented reality experiences:

Utilising augmented reality (AR) to develop new 'demonstrator' options in the Park could revolutionise the way visitors interact with the environment, offering immersive and interactive storytelling experiences.

#### High-tech tourism space:

Re-purposing the main entrance building's corner alcove into a high-tech tourism space, complete with touchscreen 'live maps', leverages existing technology to enhance visitor orientation and engagement.

#### Immersive auditorium:

Transforming the auditorium into a gallery equipped with immersive video capabilities can serve as a versatile space for arts and tourism, offering a dynamic platform for storytelling and cultural exhibitions.

## Feedback and next steps

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### Shaping Coal Creek's future: Your voice matters.

As we embark on the journey to decide the future of Coal Creek, we invite you to join us in shaping its future. Your knowledge and views are invaluable in making a decision about Coal Creek that reflects the needs and desires of the South Gippsland community.

### Why your input is crucial

#### Local knowledge:

Residents and stakeholders have unique insights into Coal Creek's cultural and historical significance, what's working and not working, and its social and economic impact.

#### Diverse perspectives:

Input from a broad cross-section of the community ensures the Strategic Plan is inclusive and reflects the views of South Gippsland.

#### Ownership:

When the community contributes to the planning process, there is a stronger sense of ownership and commitment to the Plan's success - your input is essential for this process to be successful.

### Launch and initial consultation:

The engagement process will kick off in January 2024, starting with broad engagement to provide the opportunity for everyone in South Gippsland to have their say on the future of Coal Creek.

### Community assembly:

Using the outcomes from the broad engagement as their starting point, a randomly selected group representative of the people of South Gippsland will come together in March to deliberate on the options outlined in this Discussion Paper and provide recommendations to Council.

### Ongoing input and feedback:

We will provide regular updates and opportunities to provide comment throughout the engagement period.

### Finalisation and review:

The Strategic Plan, incorporating community input, is expected to be finalised and presented for review by June 2024.

### Next Steps

From late January until Easter, Council will be seeking community feedback via pop-up events across all of South Gippsland, via online survey and a community panel. For more information on upcoming consultation opportunities, please visit:

**[yoursay.southgippsland.vic.gov.au](https://yoursay.southgippsland.vic.gov.au)**



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Shire Council