

Bass Coast Unlocking Rural Tourism Draft Strategy (BURT)

Summary Paper

What is BURT and where has it originated?

The purpose of the strategy is to facilitate sustainable tourism development in appropriately located rural areas and assist with the ongoing COVID-19 recovery, through examining real and perceived barriers to investment and removing them where appropriate.

The strategy was originated by officers in response to feedback from various sectors of the community that the current controls in the planning scheme are insufficient to effectively manage tourism developments outside our townships.

In 2020, Council was awarded a grant by the Victorian Planning Authority to undertake this work.

The strategy reviews the strategic context of rural tourism in Bass Coast, recent planning outcomes as well as investigating tourism, environmental and agricultural strategies and assessments to determine the appropriate way forward for rural tourism in Bass Coast

What did these assessments find?

In short, the strategy's review found that:

- There is no overarching tourism strategy that covers the entire Bass Coast Shire,
- While Bass Coast saw a 54% drop in visitation from 2019 to 2020, this will recover and grow over the next 10 years with Phillip Island projected to accommodate the majority of this growth (62%)
- Tourism development has been a key driver for positive conservation outcomes on Phillip Island, however the Rural Activity Zone does not formally recognise nature conservation as a valid reason to allow tourism development in rural areas.
- The Rural Activity Zones (where the planning scheme directs tourism development) do not reflect demand for investment or visitation patterns and further create substantial limitations on Rural Tourism
- Existing planning policy strongly encourages agritourism to complement agricultural land use, however in Bass Coast the predominant broadacre agricultural land use is large lot cattle farming, which is not conducive to agritourism
- A number of rural tourism proposals have received significant community backlash, which is representative of planning controls not matching community expectations.

Where has rural tourism been taking place?

A review of previous planning proposals for tourism uses undertaken as part of the strategy found that 59 of 68 proposals (87%) were in the Farming Zone and only 6 proposals (8%) were located in the Rural Activity Zone despite it being set aside for these uses. Figure 1 shows further detail on this audit proposals.

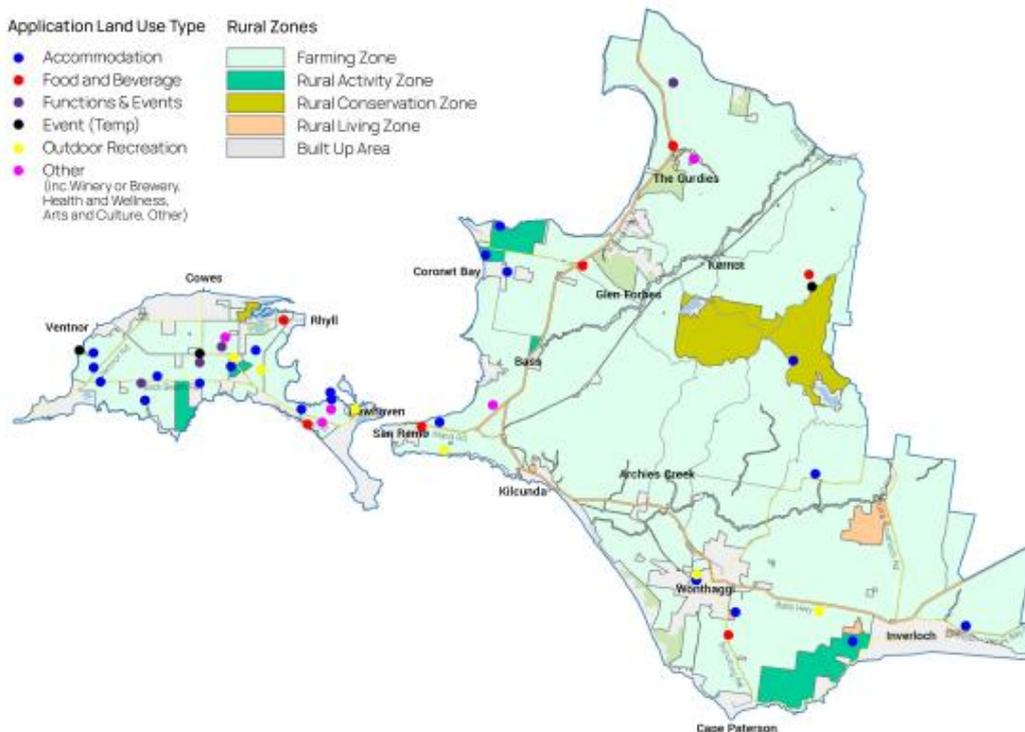


Figure 1: All Tourism Applications in Rural Zones - July '14 to October '21 (Urban Enterprise 2022)

Does the Strategy align with the State Government DALs Program (Distinctive Areas and Landscapes)?

The draft strategy is consistent with the draft Statement of Planning Policy which was released earlier this year and delivers on Objective 6a, which reads:

To build a sustainable, responsible, year-round visitor economy that aligns with the declared area's significant landscape, environmental and Aboriginal cultural and historic heritage values

Does the strategy consider the landscape impact of tourism development?

Yes. Part C of the strategy considered the Landscape impacts.

In addition, any landscape controls including planning zones and overlays will continue to apply, including the Significant Landscape Overlay. If the Distinctive Areas and Landscape program expands these controls, they will apply in addition to any considerations in the strategy.

How does the draft strategy align with the 2021 Council Plan?

The project seeks to accomplish several Council Plan strategic priorities, including (but not limited to):

- *Take a Shire-wide approach to enhancing and diversifying our visitor economy and attraction.*
(Growing our Economy)
- *Ensure land use planning and economic development are aligned to facilitate business investment.*
(Sustainable Development)

What other Strategies and Policies have been considered?

The strategy has considered and distilled a number of policy positions at the state, regional and local level, which includes (but isn't limited to):

- Victorian Visitor Economy Strategy Action Plan 2016
- Gippsland Regional Plan
- Victorian Visitor Economy Recovery and Reform Plan
- Victorian Wine Industry Development Strategy
- Phillip Island and San Remo Visitor Economy Strategy
- Gippsland Destination Management Plan
- Bass Coast Rural Land Use Study
- Bass Coast Shire Council Plan 2021
- Bass Coast Shire Economic Development Strategy

What does the Strategy Recommend?

In short, the strategy recommends:

- Rezoning all “Rural Activity Zones” to the “Farming Zone”
- The creation of four “Rural Tourism Subregions” which identify appropriate tourism uses in each part of the shire. (See figure 2) The subregions are as follows:
 - Phillip Island and San Remo
 - Bass Hinterland
 - Waterline and Bass River
 - Kilcunda to Inverloch Coastline
- Rewrite Local Planning Policy to incentivise tourism development that contributes to nature conservation and restoration, preservation of heritage or areas with cultural significance as well as the enhancement of other rural industries in addition to agriculture.
- Undertake further strategic work including
 - Undertake consultation with landowners and further technical assessments to investigate the need for bespoke controls at designated areas
 - Undertake a detailed Agricultural Land Assessment for Bass Coast

- Work with Phillip Island Nature Parks to develop a vision for Phillip Island ecotourism

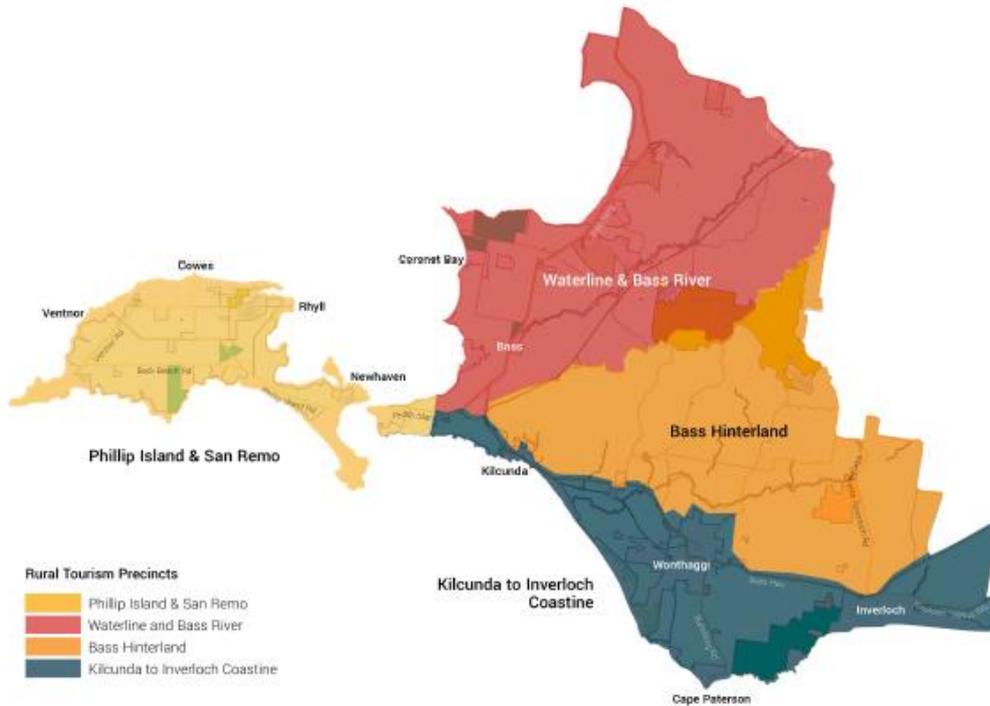


Figure 2: Proposed Rural Tourism Subregions (Urban Enterprise 2022)

How do the Rural Tourism Subregions operate?

The Rural Tourism Subregions are intended to guide and facilitate appropriate tourism investment and roughly align to the areas outlined in the Bass Coast Distinctive Areas and Landscapes program. They are not intended as hard borders and are instead intended to identify potential rural tourism land uses which are more appropriate having regard to agricultural land capability and varying visitor markets and diversity.

For use as an example some of the identified land uses include:

Phillip Island & San Remo

- Environment
- Nature Based
- Food
- Wellness
- Events

Waterline and Bass River

- Gourmet Food and Wine

Bass Hinterland

- Agritourism
- Food & Farmgates

Kilcunda to Inverloch Coastline

- Nature Based
- Agritourism

Where does the Rural Activity Zone apply?

The draft strategy recommends the rezoning of land in the Rural Activity Zone to the Farming Zone. The Rural Activity Zone applies at the following locations:

- Former 'Fantasia' Site, The Gurdies
- Between Corinella, Coronet Bay and Tenby Point
- Along Bunurong Road between Inverloch and Cape Paterson
- Between Bass Highway and Massie Road, Bass
- North of Sunset Strip, toward Cowes on Phillip Island, and
- West and South-West of the Phillip Island Racetrack

Maps of these six areas are included at the back of this information sheet.

How will these changes to the Planning Process affect me?

While the strategy makes recommendations to change the Bass Coast Planning Scheme, any actual changes will need to go through an additional *planning scheme amendment process*. Further consultation with the community, Council meetings, approval from the Minister for Planning as well as potentially an independent panel process will be required as part of any planning scheme amendment process.

The proposed rezoning of the Rural Activity Zone back to the Farming Zone recognises that these areas do not align with either community expectations or investment demand and should be treated equally to other rural land in the shire.

The proposed changes to the planning policy and the creation of four sub-regions will allow a more straightforward planning application process where applicants can create bespoke proposals that are sensitive to and respect the surrounding area's landscape, people and environment.

Will this allow residential development outside towns?

No. The draft strategy does not propose any changes to existing settlement boundaries and solely relates to the sensitive and sustainable development of rural tourism and does not relate to permanent housing.

Will this allow further fragmentation and subdivision of our farming areas?

No. The draft strategy does not recommend changing the existing minimum subdivision area controls in the farming zone.

What is the purpose of this consultation?

Now that Council has prepared a draft strategy, we are seeking feedback on the findings and recommendations to ensure they align with the community's experience and aspirations for rural tourism in Bass Coast.

To assist with providing feedback Council officers have prepared a video summary about the BURT strategy. In addition, Council Officers are hosting three drop-in sessions where officers are will be available to discuss the BURT Strategy and any questions.

Three in-person drop in sessions are proposed:

- 28 June 2022 4.00pm-7.00pm – Phillip Island Information Centre, Newhaven
- 7 July 2022 1.00pm-4.00pm – Inverloch Hub
- 11 July 2022 1.00pm-4.00pm - Phillip Island Information Centre, Newhaven
- 14 July 2022 2.00pm-5pm – Kernot Hall
- 16 July 2022 12.00pm-3.00pm – Corinella Community Hall

In addition, community members can learn more about this project through the following avenues:

- Scheduled virtual meetings with Council's strategic planners to facilitate technical discussion
- Hard copies of the draft strategy are available at Council service centres in Wonthaggi, Inverloch, Newhaven and Grantville

How do I lodge a submission?

To lodge a submission during this stage of consultation, it must be in writing and sent to: Strategic Planning, Bass Coast Shire Council, PO Box 118, Wonthaggi Vic 3995 or via email to strategicplanningadmin@basscoast.vic.gov.au by: **Wednesday 27 July 2022.**

What are the next steps of the project?

Once the consultation period concludes on 27 July 2022, Council officers will review the feedback from the community and make any appropriate revisions to the draft strategy before returning a final strategy to the councillors for adoption. If Council adopts the final strategy, officers will begin preparing to implement the strategy through a planning scheme amendment or other appropriate means.

Will I be kept informed of progress?

If you lodge a submission or ask to be included on the register of interest, you will be kept informed of the project as Council progresses it.

Who can I speak to about this project?

Council's Strategic Planning Team is available to discuss any issue with you relating to this amendment. The Strategic Planning team can be contacted on 1300 BCOAST (1300 226 278) during business hours.

Appendix: Rural Activity Zone Areas *(proposed to be rezoned for farming)*

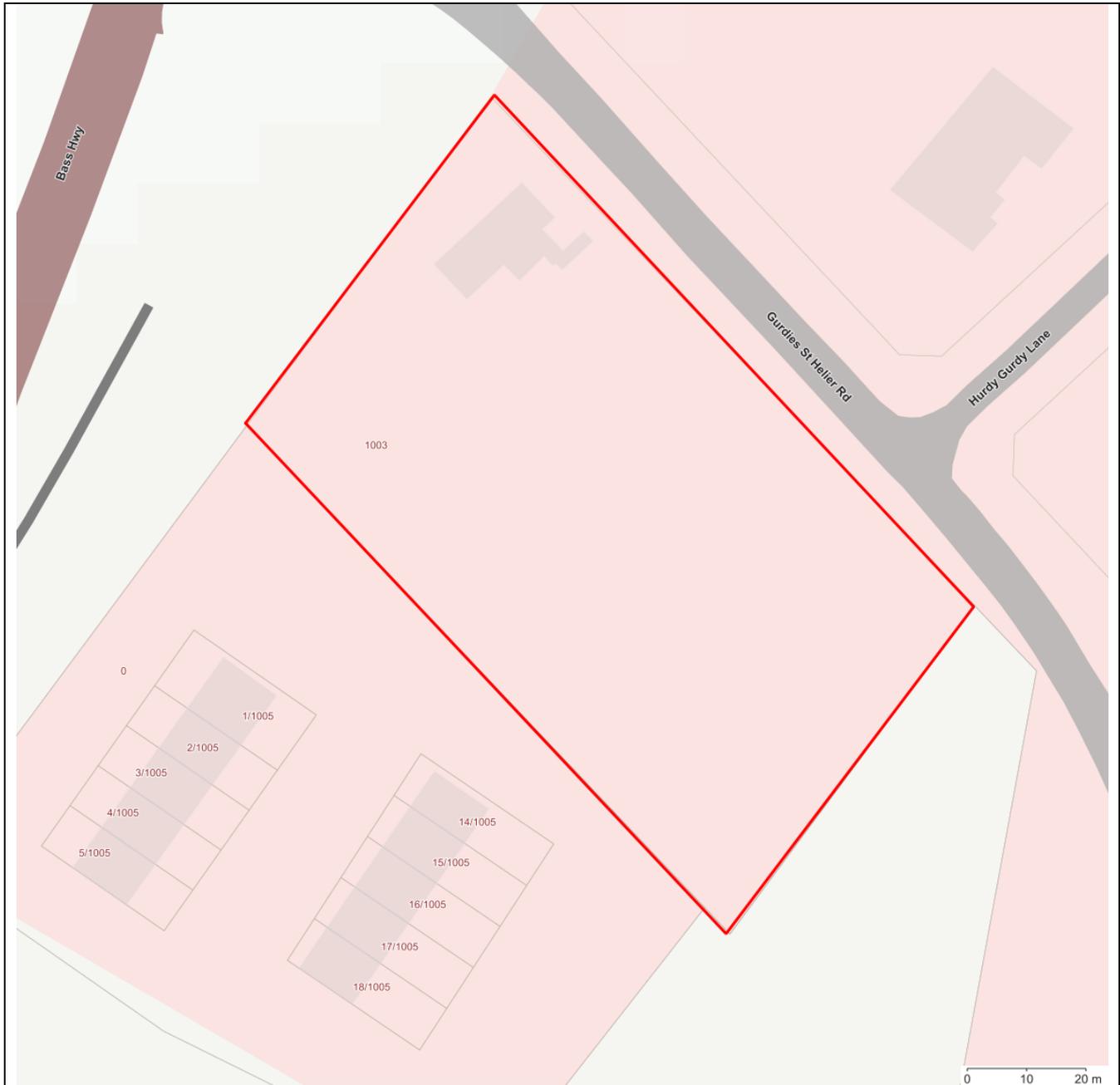


Figure 3: former 'Fantasia' site, The Gurdies *(proposed to be rezoned for farming)*

To be included in Waterline & Bass River Subregion



Figure 4: Waterline Rural Activity Zone (*proposed to be rezoned for farming*)

To be included in Waterline & Bass River Subregion



Figure 5: Bunurong Road Rural Activity Zone (proposed to be rezoned for farming)

To be included in Kilcunda to Inverloch Coastline Subregion



Figure 6: Bass Rural Activity Zone (*proposed to be rezoned for farming*)

To be included in Waterline & Bass River Subregion



Figure 5: 'Five Ways' and Racetrack Rural Activity Zones (proposed to be rezoned for farming)

To be included in Phillip Island & San Remo Subregion