

4.4 Point Boston Eco residential subdivision

4.4.1 The problem— Point Boston

Local councils are under pressure to maintain community services and a population base necessary for economic development. These pressures are more acute for regional councils (Wild River 2006). New property developments situated in desirable coastal areas, following the ‘sea change’ phenomena, are one way of meeting these objectives (Burnley and Murphy, 2004). Point Boston, on the Eyre Peninsula serves as such an example. In the 1990s through a local government Development Plan Amendment, Point Boston was zoned to allow rural ‘lifestyle’ development. However, little development occurred during this period. In the early 2000s three Point Boston landholders (farmers) formed a partnership with an Adelaide based property developer, John Culshaw of Pentroth Pty Ltd. In 2001, this group contacted the District Council of Lower Eyre Peninsula (DCLE) with a new residential proposal. This proposal was for a concentrated holiday and tourist accommodation at the coast. It included a requirement to conserve existing native vegetation across the peninsula.

4.4.2 The place— Point Boston

Point Boston is a small peninsula situated approximately 12km north of Port Lincoln on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia (See Figure 15). This peninsula features a mix of scrubby mallee vegetation on gently undulating slopes. Two extensive coastal dune systems flank the isthmus. The site of the Point Boston residential subdivision proposal is adjacent to a long sandy bay (See Figure 16 for an artist’s impression of the site). Current land uses include farming, mining and offshore aquaculture.

Through negotiation between the District Council of Lower Eyre (DCLE) and developers, including a site visit to explain the future layout and vision of the residential development, the Council instigated a Development Plan Amendment (DPA). DCLE saw this new vision for Point Boston as aiding regional economic development goals while supplying coastal housing to accommodate population growth following mining expansion in the State’s far north. Through an Adelaide-based planning consultant a Statement of Intent was drafted which listed the environmental risks posed by the development and that was subsequently signed off by the then Minister for Planning. The Statement of Intent required the consultation with state agencies on coastal, vegetation, fire, and health issues and formed the basis of the DPA. Through this process the CPB and a coastal engineering contractor

were consulted on cliff stability and on the recommended allowance for an erosion buffer on a coastal reserve which abutted a cliff face above the beach adjacent to the proposed development. The CPB recommended:

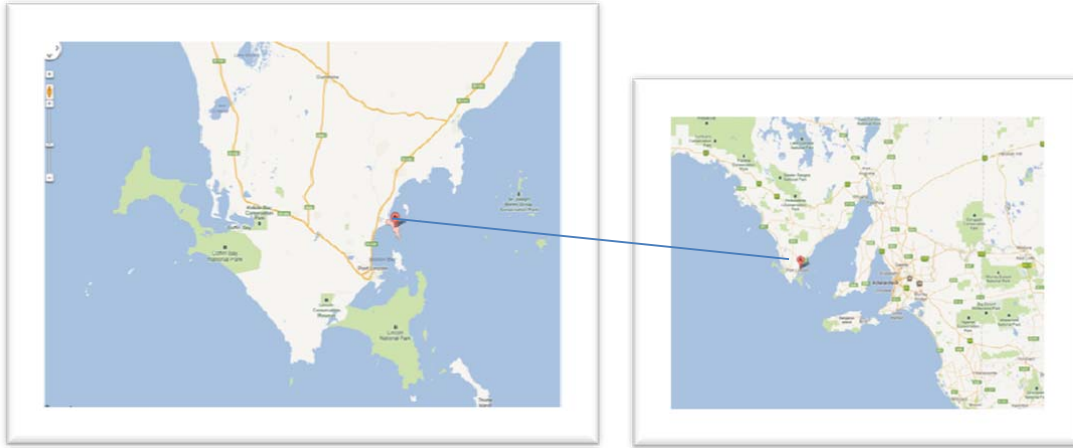


Figure 15: Location map of Point Boston, South Australia (Source: Google Maps 2013)



Figure 16: Point Boston—an artist's impression of development (Source: Kemp Real Estate, n.d.)

In order to ensure that public access is maintained along this part of the coast and that future development is not threatened from an erosion hazard, the Board recommends that the adequacy of a 30m buffer be investigated further.

With completion of the Statement of Intent the Council could apply for a re-zoning of the peninsula. The DCLE submitted a DPA for: a land division of three lots into seven; the re-zoning from agricultural to residential; a network of public reserves around the coastline;

and the approval of the new residential zones. This DPA was approved by the then Minister for Planning Paul Holloway on 1 June 2006. At this stage in the planning procedure the 'Mixed Use (Point Boston) Zone' was consolidated into the Council's Development Plan and building work commenced on South Australia's 'largest coastal residential development'. More detailed developer plans envisioned a \$400m staged development comprising 1100 homes and 3000 people. Stage one, which allowed for around 250 houses, commenced construction. However, Point Boston faces an uncertain future. Despite the long development period, incorporation of ecological principles, and stylish marketing materials the Point Boston development went into receivership in 2010, perhaps a victim of the Global Financial Crisis.

4.4.3 The SNA— Point Boston

Data collection for this case began in December 2011 and concluded in March 2012. Secondary data identified potential respondents and five interviews were conducted. The Property developer did not participate due to the legal restraints of being in receivership. From the interviews 28 actors were identified as being involved in Point Boston development.

4.4.4 The Key players— Point Boston

As a development requiring re-zoning the key players in the Point Boston case include council, the developer, council planners, planning and coastal engineering consultants, the CPB, the Country Fire Service, the Health Department, and the State Minister for Planning.

4.4.5 Network Form— Point Boston

The individual network map (Figure 17) has a clique-like form at the centre which acts as a hub for a periphery of wheel-star forms. This feature illustrates the role of consultants and government departments in feeding information into the DPA process. The institutional network (Figure 18) condenses actors into the organisations they represented. Here the DCLE's co-ordinating role is illustrated as it is at the centre of a wheel-star form.

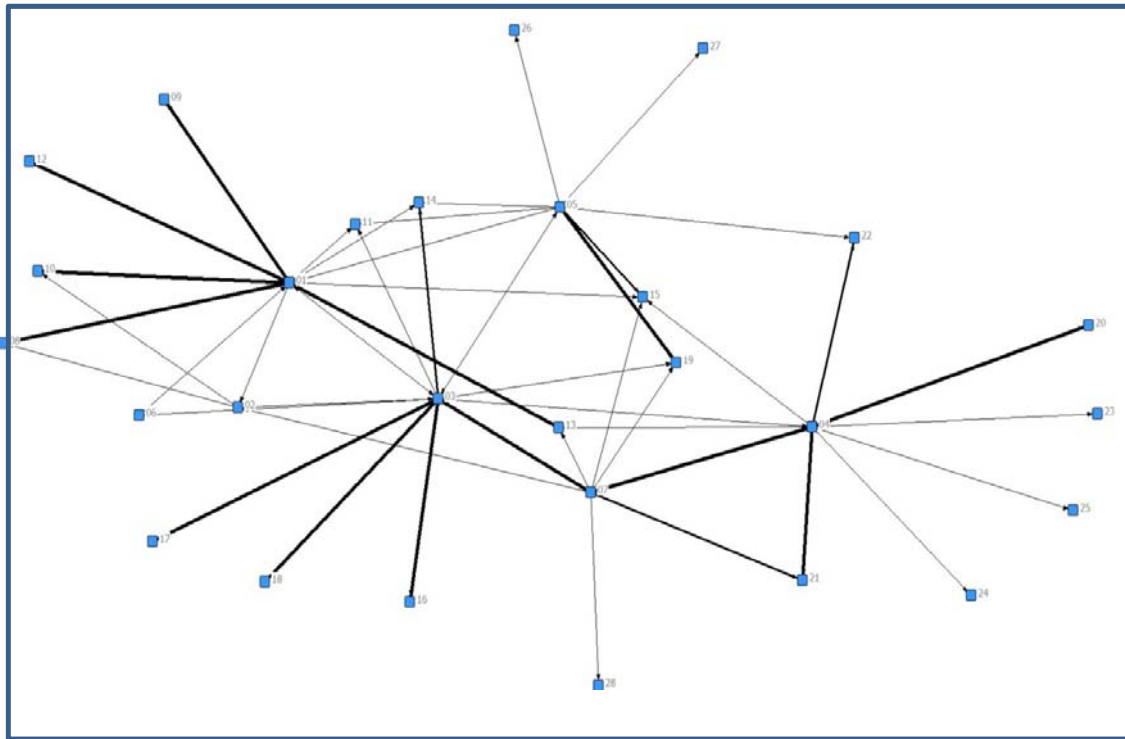


Figure 17: Point Boston Individual

4.4.5.1 Density— Point Boston

Although there appears to be a group of central actors in a circular form at the centre (which is connected to the periphery of the network), they are not densely connected. Instead they are connected through indirect ties. The density measure therefore reflects that the central actors themselves were not tightly bound together, and therefore those actors with high betweenness centrality scores were important in co-ordinating the overall network.

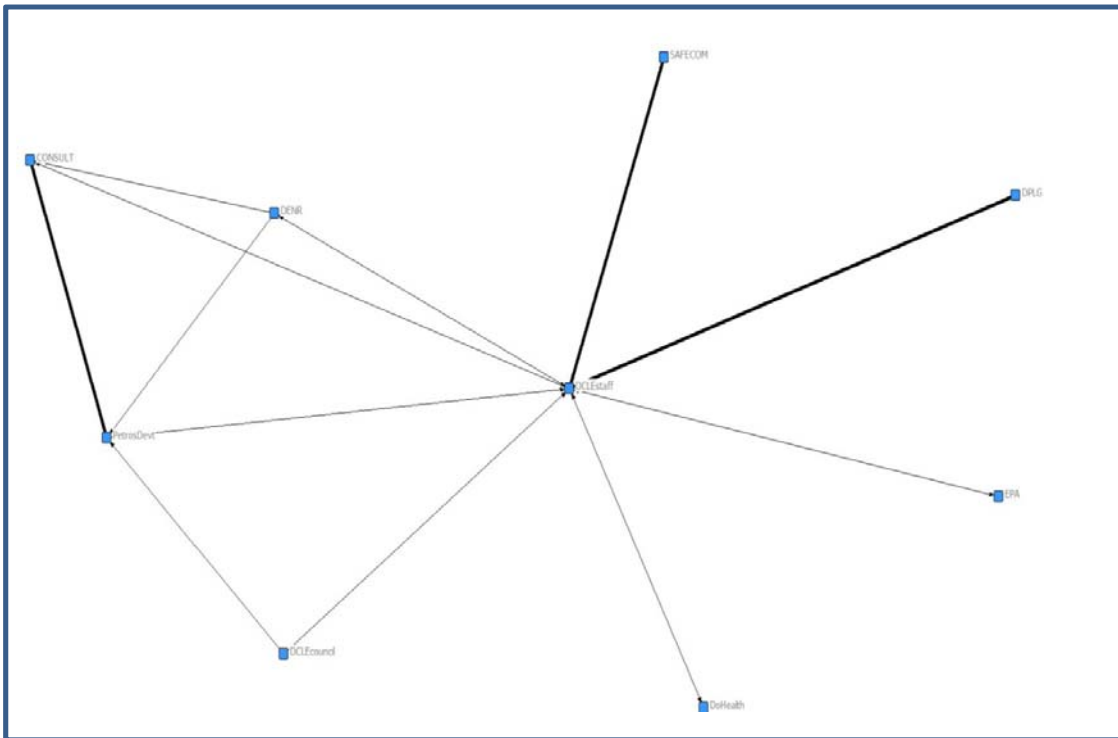


Figure 18: Point Boston institutional

4.4.5.2 Centrality— Point Boston

Point Boston’s betweenness centrality scores indicate those who were active in co-ordinating the different components of the network. The Pentroth property developer had the highest betweenness centrality score (96.5), followed by the DCLE Planner (35); the consulting planner to DCLE (33); and the CPB planner (23). From the individual network map (Figure 17) the co-ordinating position of the property developer is visually demonstrated by their position in the centre of the map and the many ties with other actors in the network. From a connectionist viewpoint this illustrates the key brokering role the property developer played in drawing on the resources of other actors to initiate the development proposal to council and in meeting the planning requirements in negotiation with council and CPB staff.

4.4.6 Conclusion—Point Boston

The overall wheel-star network proved to be efficient in producing the DPA. Yet for the coastal zone, the physical features of Point Boston influenced the areas finally designated as coastal buffer zones. As the coastal engineering consultant comments (Interview ID37, 2011) in regard to the coastal assessment: ‘I think this is a piece of cake—the cliff is stable, it hasn’t shown any movement in the past 50 years, the vegetation is returning, its solid rock

and where it's not solid rock, it's vegetation returning, it's well above the wave line, we don't see SLR as a problem'. In addition, the developer's values were influential in gaining a positive outcome for the coast, as a CPB informant notes:

In the early parts of the process, the developer did see the coastal issues as being important and did engage us in particular in regards to the setback issue. From our perspective we see the issues there as having coastal reserves adequate to provide a buffer to the development from coastal processes I was impressed with the extent with which (the developer) was interested in addressing environmental issues was genuine (Interview ID 8 2011).

In a connectionist frame, the network was able to draw in scientific expertise from state agencies and consultants, and there was trust and shared vision for the coastal aspects of the development.