

Draft Goolwa Wharf Strategy

Goolwa Wharf Precinct Holistic Review

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1.0 Introduction

The Goolwa Wharf Precinct is (the Precinct) one of Alexandrina's most significant community, heritage and tourism assets. Following substantial public investment in the revitalisation of the wharf, surrounding public realm and Council-owned buildings, the Precinct has continued to evolve as an important destination for residents, businesses, volunteers and visitors alike. As interest in the Precinct's future continues to grow, so has the range of ideas, expectations and opportunities being presented for its ongoing activation and development.

In May 2025, Council made the decision to pause further activation initiatives within the precinct and undertake a holistic review of the Goolwa Wharf Precinct (the Review) utilising what would be a new *Service Review Framework* adopted by Council (the Framework).

Rather than considering individual proposals in isolation, Council recognised the need for a coordinated and evidence-based approach that would establish a shared vision for the precinct and ensure future decisions were aligned, strategic and reflective of community aspirations.

Extensive engagement has been undertaken with precinct users, businesses, volunteers, community organisations, Industry Partners (such as Regional Development Australia and Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism) Government Agencies, Council Members and the wider community. This process has sought to understand not only what is working well within the precinct, but also the gaps, challenges and opportunities that should inform its future direction.

The *Draft Goolwa Wharf Strategy* (the Strategy) presents a stakeholder-led plan with a clear set of priority actions for implementation over the next 1-2 years. These actions have emerged through collaboration, evidence gathering and community insight. It reflects a shared commitment to ensuring the Goolwa Wharf Precinct remains a vibrant, authentic and sustainable destination that celebrates its heritage, embraces new opportunities and continues to serve the needs of both current and future generations.

2.0 Background

The *Service Review Framework* (the Framework) consists of five (5) phases, from initiating a review, through to delivering on agreed actions to improve the service being analysed. Having completed Phase 1 - Initiate, Phase 2 – Discover and Phase 3 – Define, the Review now progresses to Phase 4 – Develop.

In accordance with the Framework, the Develop Phase marks a transition from information gathering and analysis, to idea generation, testing and distilling into potential improvement opportunities. Through a Human Centred Design approach, ensures the experiences, needs and insights of service users are placed at the heart of the process.

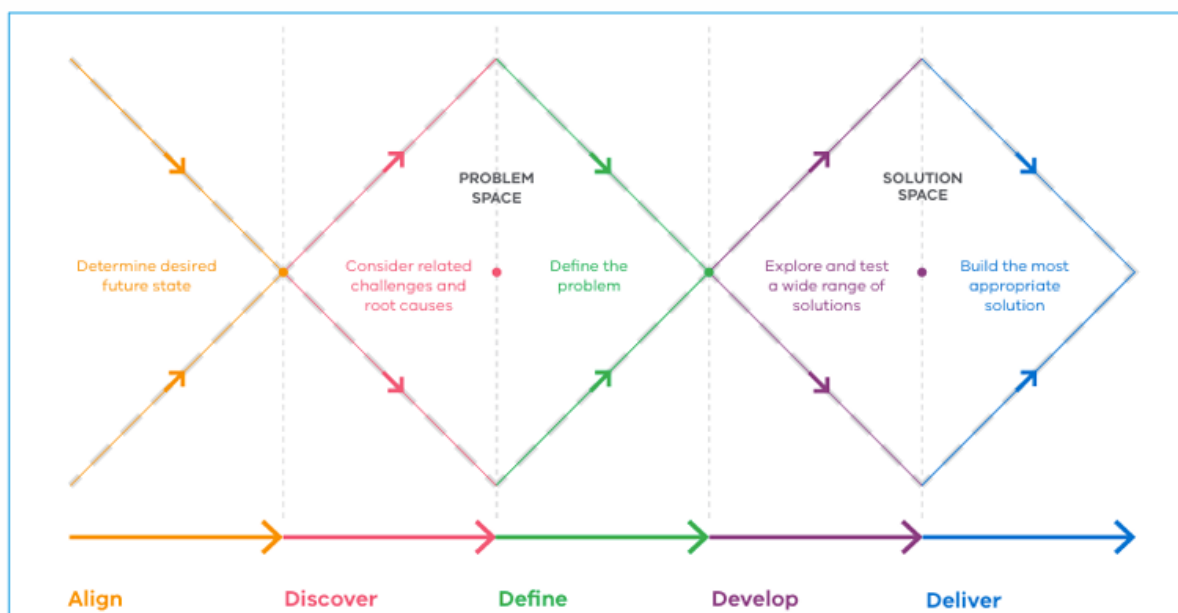


Figure 1 - Example of Human Centred Design Framework and associated phases

During May 2026, a series of collaborative workshops were undertaken with Tier 1 and 2 Stakeholders (approved by Council February 2026), together with Council Members. This process generated more than 100 ideas, aimed at addressing current challenges, and leveraging opportunities to enhance the long-term vitality of the Precinct.

The ideas produced through this engagement process were then cross-referenced with the Precinct gaps and enhancement opportunities identified throughout earlier stages of the Review. This critical analysis has informed the development of the *Draft Goolwa Wharf Strategy* (the Strategy), capturing a suite of improvement actions proposed as short-term.

The draft Strategy focusses on the prioritised short-term actions, with a 12 to 24 months delivery. It is important to note that the Strategy is an iterative process and not intended to be a definitive end-state. As actions are implemented and further insights are gained, additional opportunities may be identified and refined into future strategies and actions, to support the continued activation of the Precinct.

2.1 Stakeholder Engagement

The Framework is based on Human Centred Design, of which is powered by extensive stakeholder input and ensures users are at the centre of decision making. These Stakeholders include precinct users, businesses, volunteers, community organisations, Industry Partners (such as Regional Development Australia and Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism) Government Agencies, Council Members and the wider community.

The Economic Development Team and Strategic Team wish to acknowledge the Tier 1 and 2 Stakeholders, for their valued contribution throughout this holistic review process.

Their willingness to share their time, knowledge, experience and perspectives has been instrumental in shaping a meaningful and authentic engagement process. The commitment, openness and constructive participation demonstrated throughout the journey have greatly enriched the review and its outcomes. Administration and Council Members extend their heartfelt appreciation for the important role these stakeholders have played in helping inform the future direction of this work.

Tier 1 Stakeholders are Steve Grieve AM and Michael Veenstra.

Tier 2 Stakeholders listed below:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| • Cittaslow | • Armfield Slipway | • Captain Sturt Marina |
| • Spirit of the Coorong | • SteamRanger | • Manager Community Connection & Activation |
| • Wharf Wine Bar | • Imbiss On The Elbow | • Team Leader Community Activation |
| • Goolwa Riverport Experience Centre (PS Oscar W) | • Fleurieu Distillery | • Arts and Culture Development Officer |
| • Alex FM | • Rotary Markets | • Regional Development Australia |
| • Goolwa Visual Arts Group | • Tenants in Stables at Sth Coast Regional Arts Centre | • Council Arts and Culture Volunteers |
| • Friends of Little Scotland | • Hectors Australian | • Fleurieu Peninsula Tourism |
| • Artworx & Goolwa Community Centre | • Hay St Bar and Kitchen | |
| • Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation | • Goolwa RSL | |

2.2 Purpose and Intended Outcomes of the Review:

To set the scene for the Strategy, it is important to highlight the purpose and intended outcomes of the review, as approved by Council (C048/02/26),

The purpose of this Service Review is to:

Craft a vision for the Precinct encapsulating the key themes that underpin its identity

Investigate ways to maximise, enhance and activate Council owned buildings, public infrastructure and open spaces within the Precinct

Define gaps in the Precinct's current offering and develop methods to fill these gaps

Identify additional layers of activation and complementary activities that will build upon the precinct's existing and ongoing areas of success.

Explore the potential for destination branding and marketing of the Precinct

Delve into opportunities for storytelling, interpretation and wayfinding

Empower volunteers to support Precinct operations

Reduce the reliance on Council resourcing and in turn minimising Council's operational costs.

The Review aims to achieve the following outcomes:

Decreasing vacant tenancies in the Precinct

Activation through complementary new investment and experiences

Increasing visitation and economic activity

An **enhanced** experience for all users of the precinct (locals and visitors alike)

Empowered volunteers actively contributing to the vibrancy of the Precinct

Reduced operating costs for Council.

3. Gaps

During the 'Discover' and 'Define' phases of the Review, an extensive list of gaps was identified. These gaps were identified through extensive consultation with Tier 1 and Tier 2 stakeholders, along with inviting comments from the wider Tier 3 group as well.

A high-level summary of the identified gaps was presented in the Discovery Report. To enable the broad list of gaps to form part of the refinement approach during the 'Develop' phase, the gaps have been further grouped into the following 12 categories:

- Activation & Experience
- Vacant & underutilised assets
- Waterfront & Marine Function
- Arts, Culture & Creative Infrastructure
- Retail, Food & Visitor Offer
- Accommodation
- Connectivity & Access
- Wayfinding, Interpretation & Storytelling
- Amenity & Comfort
- Governance, Coordination & Management
- Funding, operational capacity & Precinct self-sufficiency
- Branding & Identity

4.0 Approach to ‘Develop’

Moving into the ‘Develop’ phase of the Framework, key activities include facilitating brainstorming and creative idea generation sessions, sorting and organising generated ideas and evaluating ideas to identify those worth ‘prototyping’. As the Review is a somewhat more complex project being conducted under the Framework, a customised approach was developed and applied to the idea refinement process. The approach resembled a funnelling effect and ensured:

- The integrity of the Framework and the Human Centred Design methodology were retained
- Insight was drawn from the A2040 Strategic Delivery Plan Priority Actions methodology
- The actions remain consistent with, and support the achievement of, the purpose and outcomes of the Project Brief as approved by Council
- The actions address one or more of the identified gaps and/or enhancement opportunities
- The value, budget impact, effort and delivery timeframe along with any reference to the action in existing strategic work was considered
- The frequency and sentiment of the action during stakeholder workshops also informed the assessment of the actions’ level of priority



Figure 2 – Graphic illustrating action refinement process

More than 120 ideas were generated during stakeholder and Council Member workshops. The actions contained within this strategy are the immediate priority actions, having the strongest alignment with: the project brief, the identified gaps and the stakeholder sentiment.

4.1 Council's Role

As the custodian of many of the buildings and spaces within the Goolwa Wharf Precinct, Council undoubtedly has a role to play in activating and futureproofing it.

Having said this, there is only so much Council can do alone; as a Local Government organisation we are best placed to advocate for and support a future defined by rewarding partnerships, and proactive approaches to growth for our economy and communities. Alexandrina is a collaborator.

The A2040 vision sees Council pursuing advocacy and partnerships to progress our community's vision. Council's role in delivering for not only for the Goolwa Wharf Precinct, but for the whole of Alexandrina include:

Advocate for our community by influencing decision-makers and championing regional priorities

Deliver sustainable assets, funded projects, and improvements that create long-term value

Facilitate collaboration and supporting community-led initiatives aligned with strategic priorities

Lead through strategic direction, policy, planning, and governance to shape a resilient and thriving community

Partner with stakeholders to co-design and deliver initiatives that maximise community benefit

Regulate to uphold community wellbeing, safety, and compliance with legislation and policy.

Where it is appropriate for Council to deliver or take the lead on an action, implementation will remain consistent with the *A2040 Strategic Delivery Plan*. This includes the *Long-Term Financial Plan* review process and subsequently would feed into the relevant *Annual Community Plan and Budget*. It is important to note that each of these actions constitute a project in themselves, and hence will require consideration in the respective *Annual Community Plan* (ACP) and budget process.

5.0 Action Plan

The proposed actions within this Strategy are short-term, meaning the delivery timeframe is 1-2 years. It is important to note that this process also yielded many other unfiltered ideas and concepts that have been captured, which could be considered as longer-term projects. Once the short-term actions are delivered, Council may choose to turn its mind to future activities/projects to continue

developing and improving the Precinct. These longer-term actions would require further investigation, refinement and stakeholder engagement with the proposed Community-led Governance Group, before considering any presentation to Council.

Each action is presented individually and contains an overview of the action, deliverables and timeline broken down into ‘*scope*’, ‘*consider*’ and ‘*deliver*’. In some instances, there will be crossover between these timeframes.

For clarity, the actions themselves and the timeframe for delivery only, have been summarised in the following table:

No.	Action	Delivery Year (if approved in ACP)
1.	Establish a Community-Led Precinct Governance Group	2027/28
2.	Develop and implement a Destination Branding and Marketing Plan	2027/28
3.	Complete Public Realm Improvements	2027/28
4.	Improve usability of public jetties and moorings from the water	2027/28 and 2028/29
5.	Develop and implement Public Open Space Activation Plan	2027/28 and 2028/29
6.	Develop and implement a Council Building Tenancy Plan	2027/28 and 2028/29
7.	Develop and Implement a Wayfinding (Directional) & storytelling signage suite	2028/29
8.	Develop and implement a Heritage Trail (self-guided tour)	2028/29

Table 1 – Summary of actions and delivery year

The following section describes each action in alignment with Council’s *A2040 Delivery Plan* approach, and is presented in order of delivery year only, not in order of perceived preference or pre-conceived priority.

1

Establish a Community-Led Precinct Governance Group

This action directly responds to stakeholder feedback about the need for stronger coordination and shared responsibility across the precinct.

Importantly, this project is not proposing a predetermined model. Rather, it would involve investigating and developing the most appropriate governance structure for the precinct. This could range from an informal advisory group through to a more formal incorporated organisation.

Whatever form it takes, this action will result in a coordinated and community-led governance structure being implemented that provides clear leadership, strengthens collaboration and identity, and drives the long-term success of the Precinct.

Deliverables

- Develop the appropriate governance model, stakeholder roles, funding framework and operational arrangements.
- Develop a shared vision, strategic priorities and implementation plan, seek Council endorsement, and establish the Governance Group.

Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Facilitate Partner	Governance, Coordination & Management Funding, operational capacity and Precinct self-sufficiency	Yes (op-ex)	New Operational Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2026/27 → Consider 2027/28 → Deliver 2027/28

2 Develop and Implement a Destination Branding and Marketing Plan

Stakeholders consistently highlighted the need for a stronger and more unified identity that better communicates what makes the Goolwa Wharf Precinct special.

The aim is not simply to create a logo or marketing campaign, but rather a strong and distinctive destination brand that builds community pride, strengthens the precinct's identity, attracts visitors and investment, supports local businesses and community groups, and creates a shared vision for the future of the Precinct.

Importantly, the outcome of this project should be leveraged by the Community-Led Governance Group, and would be closely aligned with future wayfinding, storytelling, heritage trail and governance initiatives to ensure a consistent visitor experience across all precinct activities.

- Deliverables**
- Develop a destination brand framework that defines the precinct's identity, value proposition and shared story, connecting its heritage, culture, businesses and visitor experiences.
 - Deliver a coordinated marketing, communications and visitor engagement program that promotes the precinct, strengthens partnerships and aligns with the Wayfinding, Storytelling, Heritage Trail and Governance Framework projects.

Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Governance, Coordination & Management Branding & Identity	Yes (op-ex)	New Operating Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2026/27 → Consider 2027/28 → Deliver 2027/28

3 Complete Public Realm Improvements

This action focuses on enhancing the physical environment of the precinct to make it a more attractive, welcoming and comfortable place for both locals and visitors. Community feedback consistently highlighted the importance of creating spaces where people want to spend time, connect and enjoy the precinct.

- Deliverables**
- Landscaping completed
 - Additional seating and shade/wind shelters installed
 - Bike rack installations
 - Water fountains installed
 - Lighting infrastructure installations for night-time economy
 - Additional Power outlets installed (for events)

Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Connectivity & Access Amenity & Comfort	Yes (cap-ex)	New Capital Expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2026/27 → Consider 2027/28 → Deliver 2027/28

4 Improve Usability of Public Jetties and Moorings from the Water

There are more than 1000 registered boats in the Goolwa area and whilst the wharf is a working wharf for the large tourist vessels such as PS Oscar W and Spirit of the Coorong, the Wharf's jetty and mooring infrastructure lacks easy usability for recreational vessels.

This action includes reviewing the infrastructure from a usability perspective for private vessels and working out what needs to be done to increase the usability, in turn, unlocking a whole new group of regular local users to the precinct who are accessing it from the water. This will assist in reinforcing the identity of the Wharf as a riverport destination.

- Deliverables**
- Audit of infrastructure (from an access to and from the water perspective)
 - Consider how private vessels and passengers can easily moor and embark/disembark
 - Undertake works to implement recommendations

Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Activation & Experience Vacant & underutilised assets Waterfront & Marine Function	Yes (combination op-ex and cap-ex)	New Capital Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2026/27 → Consider 2027/28 → Deliver 2027/28 & 2028/29

5 Develop and implement Public Open Space Activation Plan

There is significant opportunity to better activate the public open spaces at the Wharf. This includes spaces such as Jaralde and Jekejere Parks, Amelia Park and the Signal Point Lawns and Deck. This action isn't about displacing the existing activations that may be in place at these locations, but rather complementing them with more mid-week, evening, weekend and seasonal activations for a more consistent user experience.

Successful implementation of this action will result in increased precinct vitality through events and long-term activations that complement bricks and mortar offerings. This action is closely linked to the Building Tenancy Plan.

Deliverables	• Being closely linked with Building Tenancy Plan • Activate public places across the week and seasons • Spaces being offered to market through curated Expression Of Interest (EOI) process • Spaces include: Jaralde Park, Jekejere Park , Signal Point Lawns and Deck, Amelia Park, The Square, The Morgue
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Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Activation & Experience Vacant & Underutilised Assets Retail, Food & Visitor Offer	Yes (combination op-ex and cap-ex)	New Capital Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2026/27 → Consider 2027/28 → Deliver 2027/28 & 2028/29

6 Develop and Implement a Council Building Tenancy Plan

The Building Tenancy Plan will include the 6 Council owned buildings within the precinct that are currently vacant or have a lease that is approaching expiration in the next 12 months. The buildings are the Old Police Station, Old Post Office, Customs House, Railway Shed, Superintendents Cottage and the Chart Room.

These Council-owned buildings represent some of the most prominent and valuable commercial opportunities within the region. These buildings are not simply leasehold assets; they are foundational elements of the visitor experience and serve as key anchors within the broader precinct ecosystem.

For clarity, the following Council owned buildings and tenancies are not recommended to form part of the EOI, due to Council previously resolving longer term tenancies and leading to them not being considered a short-term priority for consideration in this review:

- The Wharf Shed: Goolwa Riverport Heritage Centre and Imbiss on the Elbow
- Signal Point Experience Centre: Wharf Wine Bar, Visitor Information Centre, Art Gallery and Yuntulun Ku:li-war
- Lot 1 Cadell Street: Cittaslow Goolwa

This plan will be closely linked with the public open space activation plan and will involve a carefully curated EOI process, ensuring that it addresses the gaps or enhances the opportunities that have been identified during this review process. Successful delivery of this action is critical for the precinct and its success into the future.

The EOI Process will be deliberate in addressing things such as more variety in food and beverage offerings, including family friendly options, the need for more night-time activity, music, entertainment, and a premium accommodation offering in the precinct. Goolwa has a fantastic reputation for being a talented artistic and culturally rich community, but this presence could be strengthened in the wharf precinct through something like an artist in residence program or a regional makers showcase with retail, which can be specifically sought through the process.

More than just a typical EOI, this process will demonstrate an expert level of strategic thinking coupled with progressive implementation to bring together the grand vision for the Precinct. The EOI will not be restrictive, welcoming proposals across any approach for activation including lease, redevelopment or purchase models. Importantly, the EOI will seek a holistic, strategically positioned mix of offerings that is vital in ensuring the Precinct becomes the thriving and economically sustainable destination it has the potential to be.

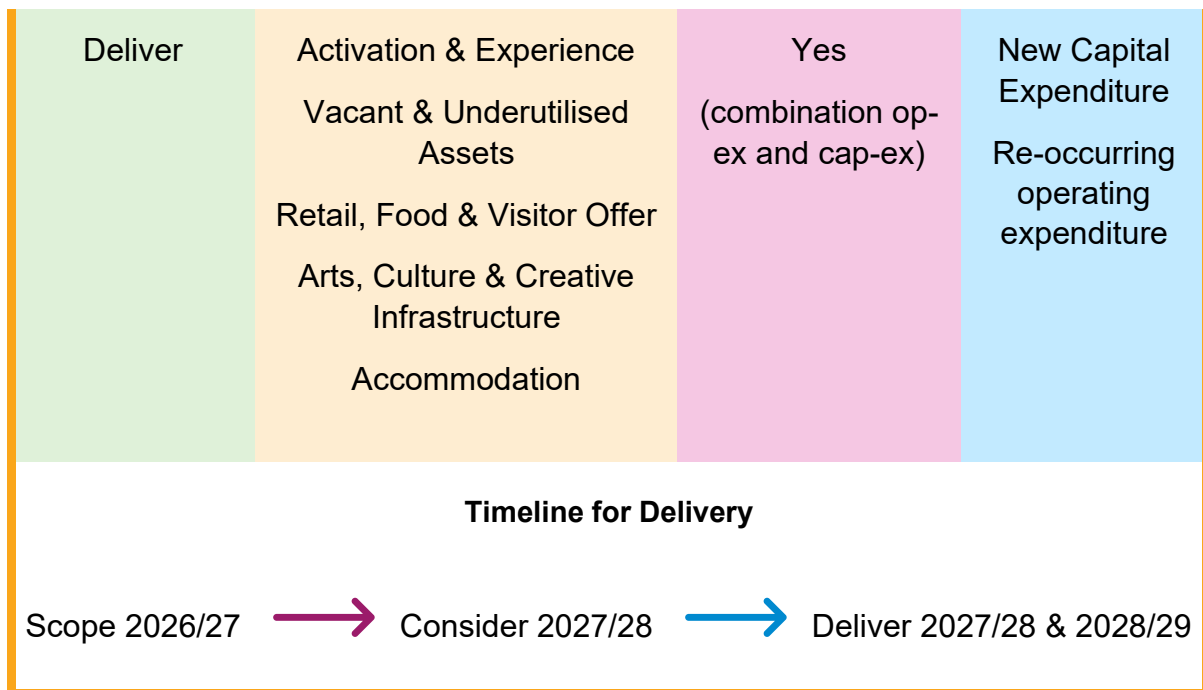
As this process is progressed, there will undoubtedly be a period of change for the Precinct. The EOI and implementation of the tenancy plan will be a journey leading Council, the community and visitors through this period of change, ultimately resulting in a harmonised and activated Precinct for the future.

To successfully do this, all six buildings must be considered together in a strategic and methodical way and Council must prepare to make brave and progressive decisions for the benefit and future success of the precinct.

In simple terms, contributing to the prosperity of the Wharf will not depend on whether each individual building tenancy is successful. It will depend on whether all six buildings work together with the existing offerings, to create a destination that offers visitors compelling reasons to visit, stay longer, return more often and experience the precinct throughout the day and into the evening.

Deliverables	• Being closely linked with Public Open Space Activation Plan • Implement a holistic and strategic curated tenancy mix for Council's buildings • Spaces offered to market through curated EOI process: ▪ Old Police Station ▪ Old Post Office ▪ Customs House ▪ Railway Shed ▪ Superintendents Cottage ▪ Chart Room
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Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
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7 Develop and Implement a Wayfinding (Directional) & Storytelling Signage Suite

This action is focused on improving how people navigate, understand and engage with the precinct. Community consultation identified an opportunity to strengthen both directional signage and the sharing of local stories and heritage throughout the area.

The action aims to create a more connected visitor experience by helping people easily find their way to and in the precinct, discover local history and gain a deeper understanding of what makes the precinct unique.

Deliverables	• Signage audit • Tourism and storytelling plan (Goolwa & Wharf Precinct) • Digital resource • New signage installed
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Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Connectivity & Access Wayfinding, Interpretation & Storytelling	Yes (combination op-ex and cap-ex)	New Capital Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2027/28 → Consider 2028/29 → Deliver 2028/29

8 Develop and Implement a Heritage Trail (Self-guided tour)

This action is reflective of what was heard during the stakeholder workshops early in the Develop phase. There are existing heritage trail products in Goolwa and throughout the Wharf precinct, but stakeholders strongly believe that there is an opportunity for review, consolidation and enhancements of these products to create a refreshed and interactive experience for visitors to learn about the significance of the riverport of Goolwa.

As such, this project includes the delivery of an audit of the existing products and a piece of work to develop a product inclusive of both physical and digital resources.

- Deliverables**
- Review existing heritage trails
 - Consolidate, refresh and enhance content
 - Linked to wayfinding and storytelling action
 - Develop digital resources
 - Replace existing/install new signage

Council's Role	Gap/s Being Addressed	Budget Impact	Funding Source
Deliver	Connectivity & Access Wayfinding, Interpretation & Storytelling Activation & Experience	Yes (combination op-ex and cap-ex)	New Capital Expenditure Re-occurring operating expenditure

Timeline for Delivery

Scope 2027/28 → Consider 2028/29 → Deliver 2028/29

6. Next Steps - Plan for Implementation and Success

In accordance with the Framework, this Strategy will be presented to the Tier 3 (wider community) stakeholders through a formal community engagement process. Following this process, the outcomes of community engagement and the Improvement Report will be presented to Council for endorsement.

The Framework articulates that the reports created during the Develop phase should remain flexible, with scope to update and continue to refine as implementation occurs. As such, success measures for the identified actions will be ongoing, and more relevant as each of the individual actions progress to the Deliver phase in their own right.

The completion of this Holistic Review marks the beginning of the next phase in the evolution of the Precinct. The Review has identified a clear set of priorities that respond to current challenges, while positioning the Precinct to maximise future opportunities arising from increased visitation, investment and activation.

The immediate focus will be on progressing the short-term priority actions identified in this Strategy. Recognising that not all actions can be delivered simultaneously, implementation will occur in a staged and coordinated manner. Over the next 12 to 24 months, Council will collaborate closely with business, community organisations, Strategic Partners and Government Departments, to begin with the foundational initiatives that establish the governance, planning and strategic direction required to support future investment and activation.

Importantly, this Strategy should be viewed as a living document rather than a fixed plan. The Goolwa Wharf Precinct will continue to evolve, and Council's approach must remain responsive to changing community expectations, market conditions, visitor trends and investment opportunities.

The success of the Strategy will ultimately be measured not only by the completion of individual actions, but by the extent to which the Precinct becomes a more vibrant, connected, economically sustainable and celebrated destination for residents and visitors alike. Through continued collaboration and a shared commitment to the Precinct's future, the actions outlined in this Strategy provide a practical pathway towards achieving that vision.