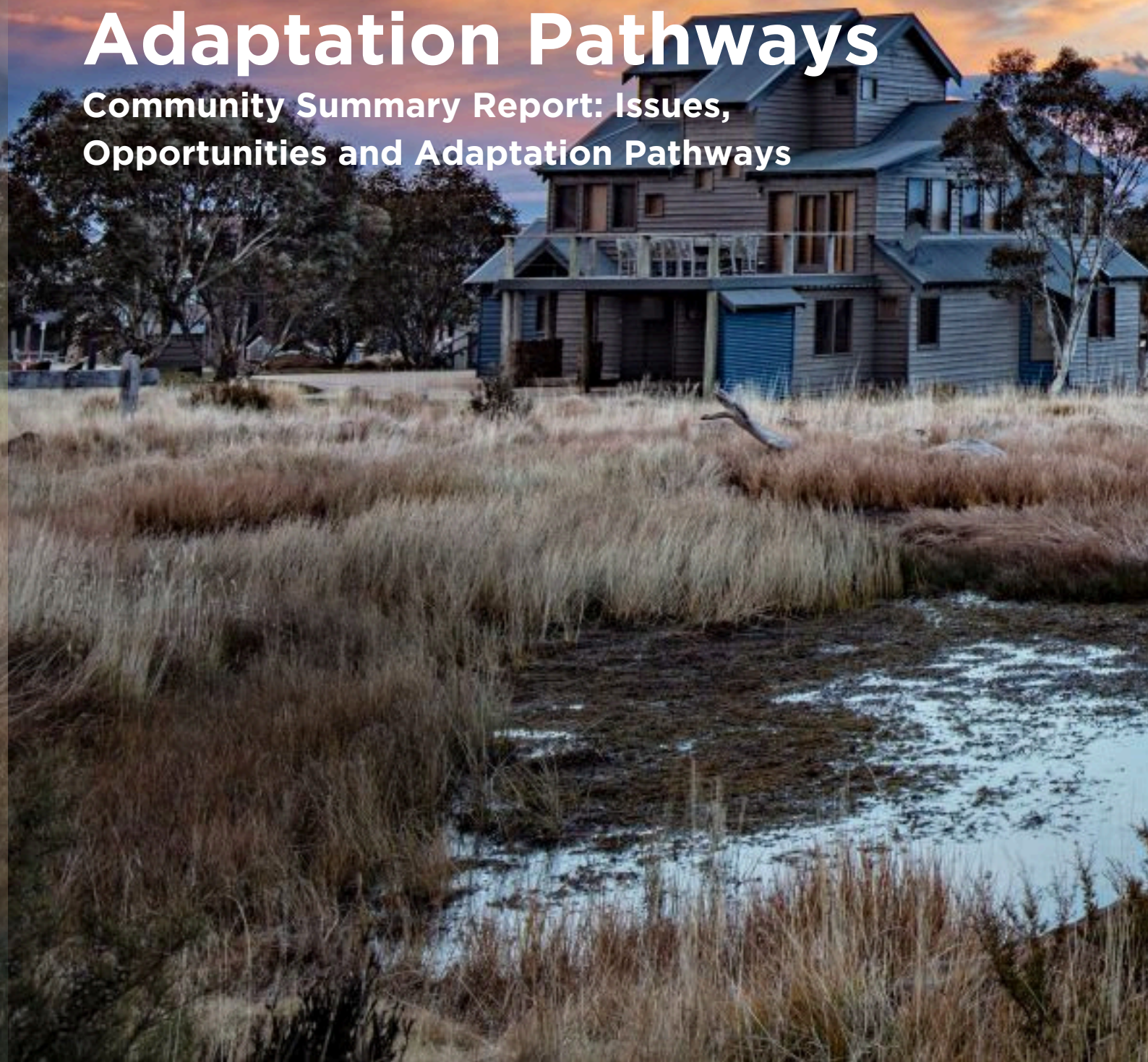




Dinner Plain Future Directions and Adaptation Pathways

Community Summary Report: Issues,
Opportunities and Adaptation Pathways





Contents

What is the project and why are we doing it?	2
What makes Dinner Plain special?	3
Key Issues Facing Dinner Plain	4
Bushfire Risk	4
Climate Change and Declining Snow Reliability	5
Native Vegetation and Environmental Management	6
Planning Controls and Existing Buildings	7
Economic Sustainability and Governance	8
Adaptation Pathways	9
Feedback we are seeking	10

About this document

This report is a summary of the Dinner Plain Future Directions and Adaptation Pathways Issues and Opportunities Paper which will be available in the near future.

Council and stakeholders have been working collaboratively on this project, and want to test the issues and opportunities identified with the wider community, prior to the next step of the project.

Details on how to make a submission are included in this document.



What is the project and why are we doing it?

Dinner Plain is one of Victoria's most unique alpine villages. Its alpine setting, snow gum landscape, family-friendly atmosphere and distinctive architecture are highly valued by residents, visitors and the wider community.

However, Dinner Plain is also facing significant long-term challenges.

Climate change, declining snow reliability, increasing bushfire risk, ageing infrastructure, high operating costs and outdated planning controls are all placing pressure on the village's future.

The purpose of the Dinner Plain Future Directions and Adaptation Pathways project is to:

- Understand the key issues facing Dinner Plain
- Identify realistic opportunities for the future
- Develop a long-term vision for the village
- Create practical adaptation pathways to guide future decisions
- Ensure Dinner Plain remains safe, sustainable and economically viable over the next 30+ years

This summary report brings together the key findings from the detailed Issues and Opportunities Paper and outlines the major themes identified through stakeholder engagement, technical investigations and Council discussions.

Have your say

Council welcomes community feedback on the key issues, opportunities and future directions identified in this report.

Feedback from residents, landowners, businesses, visitors and stakeholders will help inform the next stage of the project and the development of the long-term strategy for Dinner Plain.

For more information and to provide feedback, please visit **engage.alpineshire.vic.gov.au/dinner-plain-future-directions** or scan the QR code.



Please make submissions by 13 July, 2026.

What makes Dinner Plain special?

Dinner Plain is:

- Australia's only freehold alpine village above the snowline
- A unique alpine village with a strong architectural identity
- Surrounded by the Alpine National Park and snow gum woodlands
- A family-friendly snow and nature destination
- Closely connected to Mount Hotham while maintaining its own distinct identity
- Home to a small but important permanent community

The community strongly values:

- The alpine village character
- The snow gum landscape
- Family snow-play experiences
- Affordable alpine access
- Nature-based recreation
- A quieter, less commercial alpine experience
- A strong sense of community and belonging

The project recognises these values as central to Dinner Plain's future.





Key Issues Facing Dinner Plain

Bushfire Risk

Bushfire is now one of the most significant issues shaping Dinner Plain's future.

The 2019–20 Black Summer fires highlighted the village's exposure to extreme bushfire risk.

Technical investigations confirm Dinner Plain is highly vulnerable due to:

- Dense surrounding vegetation
- Increasingly severe fire weather
- A single access road
- Ember attack risk across the village
- Older buildings not built to modern bushfire standards
- Limited emergency refuge options

Future planning must prioritise life safety.

What this means

- Future development opportunities may become more limited
- Existing buildings may require upgrades over time
- Better vegetation and fuel management will be needed
- Emergency planning and evacuation arrangements will become increasingly important

Opportunities

- Village-wide bushfire planning
- Better fuel management and vegetation strategies
- Improved emergency preparedness
- Coordinated building retrofit programs
- Creating a more fire-resilient alpine village over time

Climate Change and Declining Snow Reliability

Dinner Plain's traditional economy has relied heavily on winter tourism and snow-based visitation.

However, climate projections show:

- Shorter and less reliable snow seasons
- Rising temperatures
- Increased rainfall variability
- Longer bushfire seasons

Dinner Plain sits lower than Mount Hotham and is likely to experience these impacts earlier. While good snow years will still occur, the long-term trend is toward reduced snow reliability.

What this means

- Greater uncertainty for tourism businesses
- Pressure on snow-based infrastructure investment
- Increased operational costs
- Need for greater economic flexibility

Opportunities

- Continue supporting affordable snow play experiences
- Develop a stronger year-round tourism offer
- Grow nature-based and green-season visitation
- Position Dinner Plain as a unique alpine village experience rather than only a snow destination
- Explore wellness, hiking, trail running, cycling and cultural tourism opportunities



Native Vegetation and Environmental Management

Dinner Plain's landscape and vegetation are central to its identity and environmental value.

At the same time, vegetation management has become increasingly complex due to:

- Bushfire risk
- Biodiversity protection requirements
- Existing planning controls
- The absence of a coordinated vegetation management framework

What this means

- Tension between vegetation retention and fire safety
- Complex approval processes
- Uncertainty for landowners and Council
- Ongoing environmental management challenges

Opportunities

- Develop a coordinated vegetation management approach
- Better map and understand biodiversity values
- Establish clear fuel management priorities
- Create a Native Vegetation Precinct Plan
- Balance environmental protection with community safety



Planning Controls and Existing Buildings

Dinner Plain's planning framework was developed under very different conditions to today.

Restrictive covenants and older planning controls have helped protect the village character, but they now create challenges because they often conflict with modern bushfire and development requirements.

Many buildings were also constructed before current bushfire standards existed.

What this means

- Planning processes can be difficult and inconsistent
- Existing buildings may be vulnerable to bushfire
- Development approvals can be complex
- Some existing expectations no longer align with current safety standards

Opportunities

- Simplify and modernise planning controls
- Clarify design expectations
- Improve consistency in approvals processes
- Support practical retrofit programs for existing buildings
- Maintain village character while improving resilience



Economic Sustainability and Governance

Dinner Plain is expensive to operate.

The village requires:

- Snow clearing
- Trail grooming
- Waste management
- Specialist alpine infrastructure
- Significant ongoing maintenance

At the same time, the village has:

- A very small permanent population
- Strong seasonal fluctuations
- Limited revenue sources
- High insurance and operational costs

There are also questions around:

- Long-term funding models
- Governance arrangements
- Service delivery responsibilities
- Coordination with Mount Hotham and Alpine Resorts Victoria

Opportunities

- Better understand the true cost of operating Dinner Plain
- Explore shared services opportunities
- Improve coordination with Mount Hotham
- Investigate sustainable user-pays models
- Strengthen long-term governance and planning
- Support a more resilient year-round economy



Adaptation Pathways

What could happen next?

Rather than relying on a single solution, the project is exploring a series of adaptation pathways.

These pathways recognise that:

- Conditions will continue to change over time
- Different actions may be needed at different stages
- Decisions made today should keep future options open
- The village must become more resilient and adaptable

The project is considering actions across six key themes.

Action Area	Focus
Bushfire Adaptation	Improving safety, evacuation planning and village resilience
Vegetation Management	Balancing biodiversity, landscape character and fuel management
Climate and Tourism Adaptation	Reducing reliance on snow-only tourism
Planning Reform	Simplifying planning controls and improving certainty
Existing Buildings	Supporting safer and more resilient buildings
Governance and Operations	Improving long-term financial and operational sustainability

Potential future initiatives being explored include:

- Village-wide bushfire risk reduction planning
- Better emergency evacuation arrangements
- Coordinated vegetation management
- Review of planning controls and covenants
- Improved infrastructure planning
- Tourism diversification and events
- Stronger alignment with Mount Hotham
- Shared services opportunities
- Sustainable funding and governance models

Feedback we are seeking

We are seeking community feedback to make sure we have identified the issues and options that are important to you.

We would also like to know your thoughts on the big questions below.

What are the big questions for the future?

The project is ultimately asking several important questions:

- What should Dinner Plain look like in 2060?
- What level of bushfire risk is acceptable?
- What type of growth, if any, is appropriate?
- How should the village balance tourism, environment and community?
- What services and infrastructure are sustainable long-term?
- How can Dinner Plain remain financially viable?
- How do we maintain the alpine character people value while adapting to change?

These are not simple questions and there are no easy answers.

However, there is broad agreement that continuing with “business as usual” is unlikely to be sustainable in the long term.

What happens next?

The next stage of the project will:

- Continue community and stakeholder engagement
- Refine the long-term vision for Dinner Plain
- Further investigate adaptation pathways and options
- Explore future governance, planning and servicing models
- Develop a Future Directions and Adaptation Pathways Strategy

Community input will continue to play a critical role in shaping the future direction of Dinner Plain.





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