

Pool might feature in harbour project

by Alison Martin

Apollo Bay community leaders applauded the chance to include sea baths and a heated swimming pool in a new harbour plan.

Representatives of the coastal town's chamber of commerce, Otway Forum, health foundation and community bank board say the community wants development options at the harbour left open, which Colac Otway Shire Council supported this week.

Councillors unanimously voted for a last-minute amendment this week, permitting "an indoor swimming pool-sea baths and other health and well-being uses" at the Apollo Bay Harbour.

The planning scheme amendment, which rules out a hotel but also allows for an Aboriginal and cultural centre, café, small-scale retail, the sailing club, barbecues and other facilities, follows years of community and council division over development at the harbour.

Community members opposed the council's proposal to include a hotel at the harbour in 2011, and

a new consultant started work on a revised master plan in 2012.

Apollo Bay councillor Frank Buchanan, who moved the amendment, said the council resolution would leave the door open for development to benefit the community and tourism.

"Really this is the starting point to plan for a decent economic outcome," Cr Buchanan said.

"The essential part is to make it happen now, get everybody on board.

"Importantly the new plan will retain more people in the town, it becomes a hub for the community and is a real tourist attraction with an economic driver," he said.

"What we had before was a plan that would have locked us in to a situation where wouldn't have been able to do anything."

The council, which met on Wednesday, also agreed that a new harbour plan could include "leisure and recreation" use, "excluding a motor-racing track and major sports ground".

Cr Brian Crook said that if the council had approved what council officers had recommended,



WIN: Apollo Bay's Carol Wilmink, Tony Webber, Jane Gross, Frits Wilmink, Andrew Buchanan and John Riches were at this week's Colac Otway Shire Council meeting to hear the council decision on future development of the town's harbour.

it would have "effectively ruled out any opportunity for a pool or well-being centre in the harbour".

"The hotel was to fund the pool and wellbeing centre; when the hotel got ruled out, the pool and wellbeing centre got lost," he said.

"But by adding an opportunity for the panel to investigate if this is a possibility, I think we've done the right thing by the community of Apollo Bay, albeit at the last minute."

Apollo Bay community bank director Jane Gross said Tourism Victoria and Regional Development Victoria were more likely to fund the harbour development if it includ-

ed a pool, sea baths and more community use.

Apollo Bay Chamber of Commerce president John Riches said the council decision to allow more scope for land use at the harbour was more likely to attract private investment.

Apollo Bay and District Health Foundation's Andrew Buchanan said he was pleased united community support for the pool and other health-focused facilities at the harbour had influenced the council.

Submissions to the planning scheme amendment will now go to an independent panel before the development of a new detailed master plan.