

Community Reference

Our Western Shores - Community Reference

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This document brings together key information, concerns and questions surrounding the proposed reclamation of a new “Western Island”. It is intended as an accessible resource for members of the general public who want to better understand the full implications of the proposal and participate more meaningfully in conversations about its future. It will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

Crucially, **this is not a script**. This resource brings together available scientific information, facts and key areas of uncertainty to provide a shared factual foundation for public discussion. It does not prescribe what you should think or say; rather, we hope it equips everyone to ask informed questions and bring their own experiences and perspectives into the conversation, while keeping that conversation grounded in evidence.

Contents as follows:

1. What is being proposed?
2. What do we stand to lose?
3. What are the community’s main concerns?
4. What happens next?

Feedback can be shared via the link [here](#). Responses will be collated by the Friends of Marine Park and communicated to the relevant agencies.

If you would like to make a contribution to this document, feel free to contact us at sgyouthvoicesbiod@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

The Singapore Youth Voices for Biodiversity



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1. What is being proposed?

During the 2026 National Day Rally, Prime Minister Lawrence Wong announced plans to reclaim the islands and submerged reefs in the southwest, creating a new “Western Island” in the process.

The new island has been presented as part of Singapore’s long-term planning for at least the next 50 years, with potential uses including petrochemicals, advanced manufacturing, power generation and defence.

However, many key details have yet to be determined or made public. These include but are not limited to: the final reclamation footprint, the precise uses of the land, the environmental impacts, the alternatives considered, and what parts of the proposal remain open to change.

Further technical and environmental studies will be undertaken, and more details about the proposed reclamation are expected to emerge as planning progresses. As more information becomes available, these will be important issues for public information and participation.



2. What do we stand to lose?

Several islands with coastal habitats ranging from mangroves, seagrass meadows, mudflats and sandy shores and submerged reefs of ecological significance are implicated in the proposed footprint of the “Western Island” reclamation project.



The directly impacted shores with expected ecological significance include:

- Pulau Jong
- Pulau Hantu
- Pulau Semakau
- Pulau Sudong
- Pulau Salu
- Terumbu Bukom
- Terumbu Semakau
- Terumbu Raya
- Terumbu Bemban
- Terumbu Menalung
- Terumbu Palat
- Terumbu Hantu
- Terumbu Pempang Kecil
- Terumbu Pempang Darat
- Terumbu Pempang Tengah
- Terumbu Pempang Laut
- Beting Bemban Besar

where...

Pulau - Island

Terumbu - Submerged rock or reef exposed during low tides

Beting - Shoal or sandbar exposed during low tides

Nearby shores at Terumbu Pandan (also known as Cyrene Reef), Pulau Pawai, Pulau Senang, Pulau Biola, and Pulau Satumu (Raffles Lighthouse) may also be indirectly affected by changes to the hydrodynamics caused by the reclamation.

2.1 An Interconnected Ecosystem

These habitats support a significant proportion of Singapore's last remaining coastal and marine habitats, including coral reefs, seagrass meadows and mangroves. Together, these habitats support a remarkable diversity of marine life, including nationally threatened species such as the Noble Volute and Hawksbill Sea Turtle.



The Noble Volute (Cymbiola nobilis), a large sea snail laying its egg capsules. This species is exclusively found in Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia, and is a frequent sighting on our shores. Image: Rachael Goh.

But these shores are important for more than just the wildlife found within them. Collectively, marine ecosystems are deeply connected: fish move between reefs, seagrass meadows and mangroves to feed, shelter and reproduce, while currents carry larvae and other marine life between shores.

Many of these islands are home to virgin reefs and shores, and are known to play important roles as [a source of biodiversity for nearby ecosystems](#). These “**mother shores**” serve as important sources of marine life that can help replenish and sustain populations elsewhere. The corals and seagrasses now returning to some of Singapore’s reclaimed shores (such as those along East Coast Park or Tanah Merah Ferry Terminal) may in part owe their recovery to marine life dispersed from long-established habitats such as these.



The rock revetments along Tanah Merah Coastal Park Connector have been naturally colonised by a wide variety of different types of corals. Exposed at low tide, this habitat is one of the few reefs on the mainland, offering a glimpse of how even reclaimed and artificial shores can support rich marine life - provided there are healthy “mother shores” nearby to help replenish them. Image: Dylan Seng

Their value therefore extends far beyond the boundaries of any single island: what happens here can affect the health and resilience of Singapore’s entire marine environment. These western shores are best understood not as a collection of separate habitats, but as parts of a living, connected marine landscape.

2.2 A Piece of Our History



Pulau Jong. One of Singapore's last remaining islands with a natural rocky shore supports an extraordinary diversity of intertidal life, even against the backdrop of one of the world's busiest and most industrialised coastlines. Image: Ria Tan.

While a majority of our coastlines today have been reshaped by reclamation and development, much of the western shores remains the exception. Pulau Jong is one of the last remaining natural rocky cliff and shore habitats in Singapore, offering a glimpse of what much of Singapore's southern coastline would have looked like prior to large-scale reclamation.

The reefs of Pulau Hantu and Semakau [date back around 8000 years](#), to around the time Singapore's present-day coastline was taking shape as sea levels stabilised after the last Ice Age. They have been part of this seascape for almost as long as there has been a Singapore coastline recognisable to us today. Across those millennia, generations of people have lived with, travelled through and depended upon these waters.

These ancient reefs and their stored coastal sediments act as natural archives of thousands of years of environmental history, helping researchers reconstruct past sea levels, coastlines and ecosystems, and understand how they responded to environmental change. Such records are particularly valuable today as Singapore prepares for rising seas and an uncertain climate.

2.3 A Cultural Connection

The western and southern islands are not just natural landscapes. Coastal communities have had a long history in these waters, living on and travelling between islands and relying on the surrounding seas as part of their everyday lives. These connections predate many of the changes that have since reshaped Singapore's southern coastline.

Any discussion about the future of these shores therefore also intersects with the living histories and communities with longstanding connections to the area. Their perspectives and relationships with these places are theirs to articulate, and should be heard directly as conversations about the reclamation continue. For more on the Orang Laut community's response to the "Western Island" reclamation announcement, see their [Instagram post here](#).

These relationships with the sea continue today in different forms. Fishers, divers, researchers, naturalists, photographers and other users of our shores have built their own connections with these places through repeated encounters, shared experiences and communities formed around them. The cultural value of these shores therefore lies not only in their history, but also in the relationships Singaporeans continue to form with them today.

These connections, old and new, are part of what gives these shores meaning beyond their ecological value. There are reefs elsewhere in the world, but these reefs are uniquely our own.

2.4 A Living Laboratory

Singapore's reefs are quite remarkable when you think about it. They are subject to immense pressures - these reefs exist alongside one of the world's busiest ports, industrial islands and an incredibly urbanised coastline. Waters here are naturally slightly turbid, with most of the current murkiness attributed to added sediment coming from a long history of land reclamation. They have also endured multiple mass global-scale coral bleaching events in 1998, 2010, 2016 and 2024. Still, these reef communities persist!

Pulau Hantu, for example, sits right on the edge of Pulau Bukom, a major oil refining and petrochemical complex operating for decades. Yet against this industrial backdrop,

Hantu continues to support a remarkably diverse reef community, with [more than 100 species of coral](#).



Industry and reef, side by side: Pulau Hantu's coral reefs still persist, even at the foot of the heavily industrialised Pulau Bukom. Image: Ria Tan.

This makes our reefs valuable living laboratories. Understanding why some corals and other marine organisms are able to survive, recover and even thrive under these pressures can offer important insights into how reefs might be conserved in a future of warmer seas, increasing coastal development and other environmental stresses.

These lessons extend beyond Singapore. Southeast Asia contains some of the richest coral reef ecosystems in the world, supporting fisheries, tourism, livelihoods and coastal protection for communities across the region. As climate change and development place these ecosystems under immense pressure, knowledge gained from Singapore's unusually resilient and highly urbanised reefs could help inform how marine habitats are managed and restored throughout the region as well.

Collectively, these shores are far more than the sum of their individual habitats. Some of these values can be difficult to quantify, and many cannot simply be recreated elsewhere. Reclamation would therefore mean more than the loss of individual reefs or patches of seagrass. It could mean the permanent transformation of an ancient and interconnected marine landscape, and the ecological, historical, cultural and scientific values it holds.

3. What are the community's main concerns?

The announcement of the “Western Island” has raised significant alarm amongst members of Singapore’s nature community. A proposal of this magnitude warrants scrutiny, particularly where its consequences are impossible to reverse. Beyond concern for the affected shores themselves, it also raises broader questions about how Singapore navigates difficult choices between our natural heritage and other long-term national needs.

The following are some of the key issues we hope will be addressed as planning and engagement continue.

3.1 Sheer Scale and Irreversibility of the Proposal

The proposal presents a potential transformation of an entire marine landscape. Rather than affecting a single reef, island, or stretch of coastline, the indicative footprint implicates numerous islands, submerged reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves, and the waters connecting them.

This distinction is important. Marine ecosystems do not stop at the boundaries of individual reefs - reclamation on this scale could result not only in the direct burial of habitats, but also changes in hydrology, sediment movement and ecological connections across the wider area. Habitats outside the eventual reclamation footprint will therefore be indirectly affected too.

Especially concerning is the potential loss of many of the long-established mother shores mentioned above. If much of the remaining source habitat is removed, the consequences will extend well beyond the reclamation area. Fewer corals, seagrasses and other marine organisms would remain to supply the larvae and propagules that replenish other shores, weakening the capacity of marine habitats elsewhere in Singapore to recover and regenerate.



Corals thrive in the clear waters around Raffles Lighthouse, Pulau Satumu. Though some distance from the proposed reclamation, reefs across Singapore's southern waters are connected by currents and the dispersal of marine life. Changes to important source habitats can have consequences far beyond the shores directly affected. Image: Ian Mun.

The scale of this loss also raises serious questions about the limits of mitigation. Singapore currently has a goal to transplant 100,000 corals, and has deployed artificial reef structures as part of current and past restoration efforts.

While these initiatives have an important role to play, they cannot come close to replacing the ecological complexity and function of entire natural reefs that have developed over thousands of years. Mitigation should therefore not be treated as an equivalent substitute for retaining existing habitat. Once natural shores and reefs are buried beneath reclaimed land, these losses will effectively be permanent. The scale and irreversibility of the proposal therefore warrant a correspondingly high level of scrutiny before decisions are made.

Core message: We risk losing not just individual reefs, but natural habitats of irreplaceable ecological significance that help sustain Singapore's wider marine ecosystem. Changes at this scale would permanently reshape an ancient and interconnected marine landscape.

Key Asks:

- Identify all habitats, ecological functions and processes, and heritage values for which impacts may be irreversible, irreplaceable or cannot meaningfully be mitigated.
- Place **avoidance of significant impacts** as the very first priority, rather than assuming that losses can subsequently be mitigated or compensated for.
- Assess how the loss of important source habitats could affect the recolonisation and recovery of existing and future artificial shores, including Long Island, Great Southern Waterfront and Changi Bay.
- Assess the cumulative impacts of major reclamation projects occurring within overlapping timeframes, including works at Brani, Changi, Great Southern Waterfront and Long Island.

3.2 Consideration of Alternatives and Planning Footprint

Singapore faces legitimate long-term needs for land, energy, economic security and defence. The question is not whether these needs matter, but whether meeting them requires environmental loss at the scale and configuration currently being considered. Crucially, we must avoid reducing this to the false dilemma of “development vs conservation”, or **risk treating major environmental trade-offs as inevitable** before the alternatives have even been established.

Before such losses are accepted, there needs to be a clear understanding of what the new land is required for, how much is actually needed, and what alternatives have been examined. These could include different reclamation configurations, smaller footprints, alternative locations, or different ways of accommodating some functions on existing land. Environmental considerations should form part of this comparison from the outset, rather than only after a preferred reclamation footprint has been selected.

Destroying virgin reefs should be a last resort, only after all reasonable alternatives have been properly examined and exhausted. The burden should not fall on civil society to prove that another solution exists; the agencies proposing the development should demonstrate why losses of this magnitude are necessary in the first place.

Of particular concern is the idea of reclaiming land now to preserve options for uses that have yet to be determined. During the same 2026 National Day Rally, Prime

Minister Lawrence Wong announced that, once completed, the reclamation at Pulau Tekong would provide additional training space for the SAF, while leaving around 500 hectares (about the size of Toa Payoh) for future civilian uses. He then goes on to say, “We have not decided what to use this land for. And we do not have to decide now.” The value, he explained, was in having the space available as a future option.



Pulau Tekong's northern coast in 2016 and 2025. The reclamation has substantially reshaped the coastline, including areas that previously supported mangrove habitat (visible as the darker areas within the red circles). Images: Google Earth.

This approach should warrant particular scrutiny when **creating this optionality comes at the expense of significant natural habitats**. Historically, Pulau Tekong supported extensive mangroves along its northern coast, once regarded as among Singapore's best remaining mangrove habitats. If land is created before there is a clearly established need for it, there is no meaningful way to weigh that need against the natural values being lost, or to ask whether less damaging alternatives could have achieved the same outcome.

The narrative of “future-proofing Singapore's land supply” cannot, in itself, be a mandate for environmental losses whose necessity cannot yet be demonstrated. Creating options for the future also means recognising the options we permanently close when natural habitats are lost. Nature should not simply be treated as a land bank to be drawn upon in anticipation of needs that have yet to materialise.

This is especially pertinent to the “Western Island”, where the eventual uses and land requirements remain broad and long-term. Singapore rightly prides itself on planning for decades ahead. That same commitment to planning should mean pinpointing our needs, understanding our options and their consequences, and safeguarding what cannot be replaced **before committing to irreversible reclamation**, not after.

There should be a clear understanding of what the new land is required for, how much is needed, and what alternatives have been examined. We recognise that legitimate national security considerations may limit the level of detail that can be publicly

disclosed for defence-related uses. These constraints should be respected. However, this **need not preclude meaningful environmental considerations**. Where information cannot be shared publicly, closed-door engagement with relevant members of the nature and scientific communities, subject to appropriate confidentiality arrangements, could allow ecological expertise to inform the planning process without compromising sensitive information.

Core message: Long-term planning should not mean “reclaim first, decide later”. Where reclamation would cause irreversible environmental loss, there must first be a demonstrated need for the land taken, and serious consideration of less damaging alternatives.

Key Asks:

- Clearly establish the intended functions and land requirements of the Western Island before determining the scale of reclamation.
- Where detailed information cannot be disclosed, provide as much high-level justification as reasonably possible, including the broad basis on which land requirements and alternatives have been assessed.
- Conduct and publish a transparent alternatives assessment for aspects of the proposal that are not security-sensitive, including smaller footprints, different configurations, alternative locations and use of existing or already-modified land.
- Demonstrate that environmental impacts have been meaningfully considered alongside other national priorities, including within aspects of the planning process that cannot be made fully public.
- Where security considerations prevent information from being shared publicly, engage trusted representatives from the nature and scientific communities with appropriate confidentiality arrangements where necessary, so that ecological expertise can still meaningfully inform the consideration of alternatives.

3.3 Meaningful Application of the EIA

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is an important tool for understanding the potential consequences of a development and informing decisions about how it can be mitigated. For a project of this scale, however, its value will depend heavily on its scope, how stakeholders are included in the process, how already existing science informs planning, and whether its findings can meaningfully change the eventual plans. Environmental findings should inform the footprint itself. This includes its size, configuration, phasing and construction methods, and whether particularly significant areas should be avoided altogether.

This is critical because mitigation has limits. Coral transplantation and artificial reefs can be useful, but the ecological functions of complex, large-scale seascapes are simply incomparable and irreplaceable. The mitigation hierarchy should therefore be applied faithfully: impacts should first be avoided, then minimised where avoidance is not possible, with restoration and offsetting considered only for remaining impacts.

The assessment should also take a broader view and look beyond the direct project footprint. As discussed earlier, changes to currents, sediment transport, water quality and ecological connectivity (among many other factors) could affect reefs and shores elsewhere. These impacts should be considered alongside the cumulative pressures from other major coastal developments and reclamation projects occurring over similar timeframes.

Finally, the EIA process should be transparent and participatory, with the nature and scientific communities meaningfully involved throughout: from scoping and study design to reviewing findings and shaping avoidance and mitigation measures. The wider public should likewise be provided opportunities to be involved, as will be elaborated in the next section.

Core message: The EIA must have real consequences for the eventual plan. Where significant impacts cannot be adequately mitigated, the EIA should meaningfully change the scale, footprint and design of the reclamation.

Key Asks:

- Apply the mitigation hierarchy rigorously: avoid significant impacts first, before considering minimisation, restoration or offsetting.
- Where impacts are particularly significant or cannot be adequately mitigated, allow the EIA to result in areas being redesigned, reduced or excluded from reclamation altogether.
- Assess impacts across the wider marine landscape, including indirect and cumulative effects on hydrodynamics, sediment movement, ecological connectivity and other nearby habitats.
- Meaningfully involve the nature and scientific communities throughout the EIA process, while providing accessible opportunities for the wider public to understand the implications, express their priorities and have them considered in subsequent decisions.

3.4 Transboundary Impacts of Reclamation

The environmental footprint of reclamation does not stop at Singapore's borders. A project of this scale will require enormous quantities of material, raising questions about where our sand and other reclamation materials are sourced, and the impacts their extraction may have on ecosystems and communities elsewhere. Legal sourcing alone does not necessarily mean sustainable sourcing. As Singapore pursues several major reclamation projects concurrently, with Changi Bay already under way and Long Island in the pipeline, greater transparency over these impacts is warranted.

Our shared waters matter too. Singapore lies in the confluence of interconnected waters such as the South China Sea, the Java Sea and the Malacca Strait. Large-scale reclamation can alter coastal processes beyond the immediate project area, and currents can transport sediment beyond Singapore's borders.

3.5 Social Impacts and Public Participation

Western Island is planned to shape SG for the next 50 years and beyond, and the public deserves a meaningful say about what their collective future looks like. For instance, when PM Wong said that “[Our pioneers] planned and built for our generation, and now we will do so for the generations that follow,” have these future generations - youths of today - actually been asked what kind of Singapore they want to inherit?

A recurring source of public frustration surfaced during the discussions on Maju and Gillman is not simply that difficult trade-offs need to be made. Most people rather reasonably and responsibly recognise that Singapore faces competing needs and that conservation may not always take precedence. The harder questions are how those trade-offs are assessed, whose perspectives inform them, and importantly, where the public has a meaningful role in the process.

Meaningful participation therefore requires more than informing the public about plans or inviting feedback after the broad direction has already been determined. Engagement must begin **while genuine choices remain open**, with clarity about what has already been decided and what remains open to change. Otherwise, the public can be left feeling that a conclusion has been reached on their behalf, and that **their role is simply to understand and accept it.**

This is particularly difficult when decisions involve questions of values: how much nature we are prepared to lose, what we consider a necessity or a want, how urgently those needs must be met, and what we want to leave for future generations. These are not purely technical questions with a single correct answer. **They are choices about the kind of Singapore we want to build, and Singaporeans should have a meaningful stake in making them.**

Having that stake also means making participation genuinely accessible. Meaningful participation should not require reading a 600-page EIA; agencies should actively communicate the choices and trade-offs in ways that allow everyone to participate.

At the [launch of the PA Youth Charter](#) in 2025, PM Wong called on young Singaporeans to participate in shaping the country's future: "[the Government] will do our part to secure Singapore's future. But we cannot do it alone. We need your support too. [...] Singapore's future is not just something you inherit; it is something you will create. **If young Singaporeans are expected to help create that future, they should also have a meaningful voice in the decisions that will shape it for decades to come.**

Core message: Public participation should not simply help people understand decisions made on their behalf. It should give them a meaningful role in shaping the choices and trade-offs that affect our collective future.

Key Asks:

- Engage while meaningful choices remain open, before major decisions are finalised.
- Present genuine choices for discussion, rather than seeking feedback only on a single preferred option.
- Make participation accessible by actively communicating the choices, evidence and trade-offs rather than relying on technical reports alone.
- Involve the public in weighing the trade-offs, particularly where decisions involve societal values rather than purely technical questions.
- Create multiple avenues for participation, including public forums, smaller dialogues, written submissions and other formats suited to different communities.
- Include younger Singaporeans meaningfully, recognising that they will live longest with the consequences of decisions made today.
- Sustain engagement throughout the planning process, rather than treating consultation as a one-off exercise.
- Close the feedback loop by explaining how public input was considered and why major decisions were ultimately made.

3.6 Implications for the Vision of a City in Nature

How the announcement of the “Western Island” was framed during the National Day Rally also raises important questions about how Singapore’s City in Nature vision applies to major development decisions. Shortly before announcing the proposal, PM Lawrence Wong reaffirmed the Government’s commitment towards becoming a City in Nature. Yet while the “Western Island” was subsequently presented in terms of the economic and energy opportunities it could provide, there was no corresponding acknowledgement of the marine habitats and natural heritage potentially affected by the reclamation.

This is significant beyond the announcement itself. Development plans are necessarily presented in terms of what a place could become - new homes, infrastructure, industry or other national needs. But this can sometimes obscure what already exists there, and what must be altered or lost for those plans to materialise.

Environmental impacts may subsequently be documented through EIAs and other technical studies, but **assessment is not the same as representation in the wider decision-making process.** When major developments are introduced principally through the needs and benefits they will serve, while the existing values and potential losses are left to later environmental studies, this can shape how the choice itself is understood by the public: **development becomes the starting proposition, and nature becomes an impact to be managed.** A City in Nature raises the question of whether nature should instead be visible from the outset as one of the considerations shaping how problems, alternatives and trade-offs are framed, rather than only as something assessed once a development proposal has emerged.

To us, a City in Nature invites one to think about that relationship differently. Living in nature implies a recognition of nature as the backdrop and setting for our lives, practices, cultures, and, of course, policies and decision-making processes. It shows that we value nature beyond a strategic asset or capital. It signals that we are deeply embedded within the broader environment, and that our relationship and interaction with nature forms a core part of the Singaporean identity. Nature is therefore not simply something to be accommodated alongside development, but part of the context within which decisions about Singapore’s future should be made.

This does not mean that every natural area must be preserved, or that biodiversity must always take precedence over other national priorities. This distinction is especially important for the “Western Island”, where the proposal is intended to support fundamental national needs such as economic and energy security. Acknowledging the environmental costs of meeting these needs does not diminish their importance, nor does it predetermine what the eventual balance should be.

Rather, the question is what becoming a City in Nature should change about the way these decisions are made. The “Western Island” therefore presents an important test of what the City in Nature vision means in practice when there are genuinely difficult choices to be made.

Core message: A City in Nature should mean considering nature not just as an environmental impact to be assessed, but as a value that helps shape how our needs, choices and trade-offs are defined from the outset.

Key Asks:

- What should being a City in Nature change about the way Singapore conceives, frames, evaluates, weighs, makes and communicates major development decisions?
- Can City in Nature form the basis of nature-first planning when it comes to development?

4. What happens next?

4.1 Breathe.

If the news has left you feeling overwhelmed or uncertain about the future, you are not alone. For many of our dearest friends who've dedicated their entire lives documenting, researching, and interacting with these shores, the possibility of such a significant change can be extremely difficult to process.

There is still much that we do not know. The indicative plans are the beginning of what will be a long, iterative process of studies, planning, trial, and engagement. There is no need to arrive at a position immediately, nor to understand every last technical detail before taking part in the conversation. Breathe.

Even alongside one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, dealing with murky sediment-filled waters from past reclamations and repeated mass coral bleaching events over the years, **the corals have not given up yet. Why should we?**

Whether you've been on these shores for years, or are now just beginning to discover its wonders, take the time to learn, ask questions, and form your own views. We invite you to [join our Telegram group](#) - let's navigate this as a community and organise our concerns and emotions into meaningful conversations and actions. There will be difficult conversations ahead, but they will be better for having more people informed, curious and willing to participate.

**Note: As of Sep 11 2026, we've created a new Telegram group. Thank you all for your patience and support. We're really heartened to see many people caring about our shores.*

For context, an initial group was created in mid August 2026 but was subsequently taken down by Telegram due to a violation in their terms of services (which we still have yet to find out the reason behind). We've reached out to Telegram via email but have yet to hear back. Hence, we decided to create a new chat group to facilitate community resource sharing and updates.

4.2 See This Island... Maybe Not Every Grain of Sand

Ah, *The Road Ahead*. How apt.

Written for National Day in 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the song invites us to come together in the face of uncertainty. Its chorus will be familiar to many:

*See this island, every grain of sand
Hear this anthem, it's the voices of our friends
Come whatever on the road ahead
We did it before, and we'll do it again*

So let's see this island. Singapore today looks very different from the island our grandparents knew. Reclamation has been a significant part of that transformation - a quarter of our land is reclaimed, creating space for homes, industry, ports and other infrastructure. Even some of the shores we treasure today, like Changi and East Coast, owe their present forms to reclamation.

But seeing this island also means seeing what remains. Our reefs, seagrass meadows, mangroves, rocky shores; the wildlife that depends on these habitats; the histories they hold; and the communities whose relationships with these waters stretch across generations. Before deciding what we are prepared to lose, we invite you to first understand what we have.

And as more Singaporeans come to understand what is at stake, we hope more will find their voices, too. In the days following the announcement, residents, researchers, nature groups and communities have begun asking questions, sharing what they know, and speaking up about the future of these shores. If the anthem is the voices of our friends, then these voices deserve to be heard too. To those making the decisions, we ask that you listen with an open mind, make space for these conversations, and let what you hear have a meaningful place in shaping the choices ahead.

We have faced difficult choices before, and we will face them again. But doing it again does not have to mean doing the same thing again. We know far more today than we did when Singapore's earlier reclamations were undertaken. Our needs have changed. Our knowledge has grown. Our aspirations for nature, for our place in shaping Singapore, and for what progress for our nation should look like have evolved. The challenge before us is therefore not simply to reproduce the solutions that worked for an earlier Singapore, but to ask what solutions are right for the Singapore we want to become.

That also means taking a fuller view of the path that brought us here. Jurong Island has, by many measures, been an extraordinary economic success critical to our prosperity

as a nation. But it cannot be understood just through the lens of what it created. We should remember what was lost, too. Seven islands - Pulau Merlimau, Pulau Ayer Chawan, Pulau Ayer Merbau, Pulau Seraya, Pulau Sakra, Pulau Pesek and Pulau Pesek Kecil - no longer existed. With them went the homes of communities who had lived there for generations, and the shores that had been there for millenia before.

Those costs are also part of Singapore's development story. And part of what we inherit from the generations before us.

So when we are told that it is now our turn to think boldly for the next generation, perhaps boldness should not mean simply building another Jurong Island. Creating options for future generations should also mean being careful about which options we close today.

Perhaps that is the optimism of *The Road Ahead* worth holding on to. "We did it before, and we'll do it again" need not mean recreating the past.

The road ahead does not have to look exactly like the road behind us.

4.3 So, What Now?

There is no single "right" way to care about these shores, nor do you need to be a marine biologist or a people of the islands to have a stake in their future. If this document has made you curious, concerned, angry, hopeful - or simply left you with more questions - here are a few places to start.

DO:

1. Get to know our shores. Start by finding out what's actually out there!
 - [Coral Reefs of Singapore](#) (by NUS Reef Ecology Lab) has maps, photographs, survey data and information on reefs across the southern islands.
 - [WildSingapore](#) (by Ria Tan) is an enormous archive documenting wildlife and habitats on our shores dating back decades.
 - [WildSingapore's Flickr](#) is a photo and video archive of the shores dating back to 2006 with almost 100,000 photos.
 - [WildShores](#) is a running diary of Singapore's shores, documenting them through regular (almost annual) intertidal surveys of every

shore and sharing survey reports, photographs and news from the coast.

- [Hantu Blog](#) (by Debby Ng) After two decades, they no longer run public tours but remain an incredible resource for divers keen to discover Pulau Hantu and our Southern Islands.

Better yet - experience our marine life for yourself!

- [Pulau Hantu](#) - the only western shore that can be easily accessed by the public as there is a proper jetty for landing. However, as there are no regular boat services to the island you will need to either charter your own boat, or join an organised tour.
- [Sister's Island Marine Park](#) - Singapore's first and currently only marine park.
- [Marine Park Outreach and Education Centre \(MPOEC\)](#) - located on St John's Island.

You don't need to travel out on a boat to see what our shores have to offer. Our mainland shores in Changi, Pasir Ris and East Coast have plenty to see, too! Look out for guided intertidal walks, dives and other public programmes. The [Telegram channel](#) has a dedicated tab for events like these.

2. Share what you know, and what these places mean to you.

Marine biologists are not the only people with stories to tell. Maybe you know someone who dived at Hantu for twenty years, or you remember as a kid fishing around some of the islands. Perhaps you have photographs, observations, family stories, research or simply memories of your first encounter with Singapore's marine life.

Share them, and listen to others and their stories, too! The value of these waters cannot be captured by an ecological survey alone, and the conversation will be richer if we understand the many different relationships people have with them.

3. Never stop asking questions!

Check in with your MPs. Write to the relevant agencies. Fire off emails to the ministers in charge. Participate in public consultations and engagement sessions once they commence. Ask what alternatives have been considered, what remains open to change, how impacts will be assessed, and how public feedback will eventually influence the plans.

But don't stop there. **Question us, too. Question this document.** Look at the evidence for yourself. Seek out perspectives that differ from ours. Think critically. If you think we have overlooked something, tell us. If you disagree with one of our concerns, ask why we think so - and decide for yourself whether you find the answer convincing.

We're not asking you to take our word for it. This document is far from comprehensive and is not a script, and we don't want everyone repeating the same talking points. **We would much rather have a community asking good questions than one simply echoing our answers.** Meaningful engagement requires all of us - government, subject-matter experts, advocates, and members of the public - to be willing to explain our reasoning, test our assumptions and change our minds when the evidence calls for it.

4. Create.

You don't have to write policy briefs, or scientific reports. You don't need to be an expert to participate. Artists, photographers, filmmakers, writers, designers and other creatives can help make these shores visible, tell their stories, and help others imagine what their loss (or their future) might mean.

Document what you see. Draw, photograph, write, film, design, perform. Help translate the science. Explore the histories of these places. Or simply make something that gets someone else curious enough to learn more. There are many ways to participate in a conversation about our future - creativity is one of them, too!

And remember to #SeaOurShoresSG #SouthernIslands when you post on Instagram!

5. Come with an open mind.

None of us sees the whole picture. Scientists may bring ecological evidence; engineers, economists and planners may see different possibilities and constraints; divers have years of observations; and communities with longstanding relationships with these waters hold perspectives that others cannot speak for. You don't need to be an expert to participate, but do take the time to understand perspectives beyond your own.

We may not always agree. That's okay. The point of engagement is not to produce a room full of people saying the same thing - it's to make better decisions by having more of the picture in the room.

6. Be kind.

Emotions are understandably running high. There will be disagreements about the proposal, about what should be protected, about strategy, and even among people who broadly want the same things.

Ask hard questions. Challenge arguments. Demand evidence and accountability where they are warranted. But please remember to be kind - both to the people engaging with us, and especially to one another. Personal attacks, hostility and infighting will only distract from the conversations that need to happen.

And **please don't turn nature into a partisan battleground**. These shores do not belong to one political party, organisation or community. They are part of our shared natural heritage, and the benefits they provide are shared too. There should be room here for people with very different political views to care about them, ask difficult questions and work towards better outcomes together.

Attempts to hijack the conversation for partisan point-scoring, xenophobia, personal agendas or attacks on particular groups do not help these shores, and instead risk drowning out the more critical questions that deserve our attention.

Keep the focus on the issues, make room for disagreement. And remember that we will achieve far more by bringing people into this conversation, than by pushing them out.

DON'T:

1. Don't love our shores to death.

While we're thrilled that more people want to see these places, please don't rush out to unfamiliar reefs and intertidal areas on your own.

Many offshore reefs are only exposed during particularly low tides, can be difficult to access safely, and are sensitive to trampling and disturbance. Some have no proper facilities for getting on and off the reef at all. A sudden increase in visitors can do real damage to the very habitats we are trying to protect.

Where possible, join established guided programmes or visit places with the infrastructure to receive visitors safely. Curiosity is welcome, but crowds are not always harmless.

[See how to visit our shores safely and responsibly here.](#)

2. Don't "tapao".

For those newly exploring our shores recreationally: leave the animals, plants, shells and other natural material where you find them. Take photographs, don't litter, make observations and leave as little trace of your visit as possible.

And remember that these places have histories and users that precede our newfound interest in them. Responsible appreciation also means respecting the people and communities with longstanding relationships with these waters.

3. Don't give up on these shores.

The announcement of plans for reclamation is not the end of the story.

There are still studies to undertake, impacts to understand, alternatives to examine, questions to answer and conversations to be had. We should neither assume that nothing can change nor assume that change will happen simply because we care.

So learn. Ask. Question. Speak. Listen. Show up when it matters.

And keep on going.

We're in this for the long haul. Hope you packed snacks!

