

ECO ISSUES: A proposed resort at Kingscliff (far right) could be derailed by the endangered beach stone curlew (below).

Rare bird ruffles resort's feathers



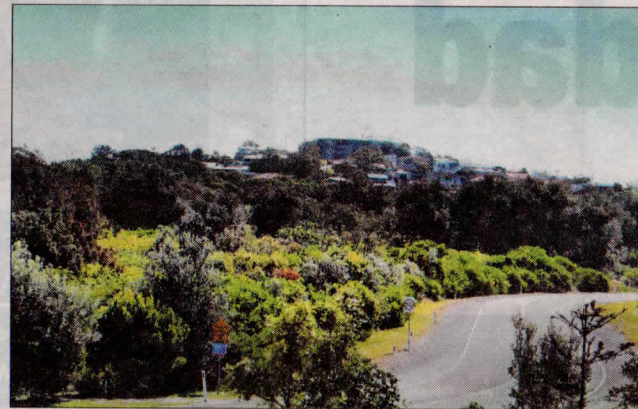
Jeremy Pierce
GOLD COAST BUREAU

A MULTIMILLION-dollar resort planned for the Tweed Coast could be derailed by a rare bird.

The beach stone curlew is officially listed as critically endangered, with just 16 known birds remaining in NSW, but Kingscliff locals claim at least one has been spotted living it up on prime real estate earmarked for a swank eco-resort.

The bird sighting, captured by a local wildlife photographer, has ruffled the feathers of locals, who have long been campaigning against the resort, a project years in the planning.

The resort, yet to be given final approval, will be assessed by the NSW Government's



Planning Assessment Commission and the presence of a rare bird could have major implications.

Known as Lot 490, the resort's proposed site is a vacant stretch of coastal land between Kingscliff and the Salt township that has long been sought after as blue-chip development land.

The latest proposal, from development giant Leighton Properties, would feature 180 tourist bungalows and "a range of com-

munity facilities", but the project is no certainty to receive approval.

Lot 490 is home to more than a dozen endangered species of birds and mammals.

Kingscliff residents' spokesman Jerry Cornford said the sighting of the curlew had given protesters new hope in their fight against the project.

"This is a very important wildlife corridor and it is home to many species of animals, some of them endangered," he said. "This project should not be going ahead.

"There's still a lot of question marks over it."

Leighton Properties managing director Mark Gray would not comment on the impact the bird's discovery could have.

Instead, he released a statement saying the group would await the findings of the Planning Assessment Commission.

"We have undertaken extensive analysis and studies, including detailed community consultation, which has been provided to the Planning Assessment Commission and they are conducting their process," he said.



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