

STK backs lesser of nine evils

By STEVEN HOUNSOME

THE Save the Kimberley (STK) campaign has publicly backed one of the nine potential sites for an LNG processing hub – as identified by the Northern Development Taskforce (NDT) in their interim report – describing it as “the best of the evils”.

Gourdon Bay, 160km south of Broome, falls in line with what STK stands for, vice-chair Kevin Blatchford said.

“We don’t think it’s the best option, we’d still rather see it in the Pilbara or floating offshore, but of what they’ve listed it’s the best,” he said.

While the NDT has yet to rule out Gourdon Bay, it is not among the sites selected for further study as it has been deemed to require further evaluation.

Although more than 500km from the Ichthys gas fields, dredging of shoal banks would probably be required, along with a 3.5km jetty and long breakwater.

The other sites still being considered are Quodong Point, James Price Point, North Head, Perpendicular Head and Packer Island – all on the Dampier Peninsula – Koolan Island, Wilson Point and the Maret Islands.

Mr Blatchford said he would never support development at the Maret Islands, which is being proposed by Japa-

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nese firm Inpex.

“If they go ahead with it, it will be one of the biggest environmental battles this country has ever seen,” he said.

He said his group might pursue legal action against Inpex if the Maret Islands looked like going ahead.

STK chair Peter Tucker described the Maret proposal as “ill-conceived and fatally flawed from its inception”.

“We will not stand by and watch the region stripped, pillaged and ultimately discarded in the same way the Pilbara region has been,” Mr Tucker said.

Inpex external affairs manager Sean Kildare said the company was currently reviewing the interim report.

“We are interested to note the Maret Islands is one of the sites still being looked at,” he said.

While they are not ruling out operating from a hub, Inpex prefers an independent site and are now seriously looking at options in Darwin.

Mr Kildare said there would be a decision on which option they pursue by the end of the year.

A Woodside spokesperson said they support the sites that have been listed, adding that they are still looking at the possibility of processing on the Burrup Peninsula in the Pilbara.

The company declined to nominate a preference for any one of the nine sites and said a decision would be reached by the end of September.

Shire president Graeme Campbell said all sites, of which five fall within Broome Shire boundaries, are of some concern.

“What concerns me mainly is the social impact, it could severely change the way Broome is,” he said.

“If there’s a huge demand for accommodation prices will go up and there’ll be a whole raft of infrastructure needed.

“Whatever they choose they need to take that into account.”

A short-list is expected in early August.