

Group builds its cassowary case

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CASSOWARY conservationists who are calling for a year's ban on new development approvals at Mission Beach will take their campaign higher after being turned down by their council.

The C4 group says development has escalated so much in the rainforest town south of Cairns that it is in danger of losing its cassowary population and the natural values prized by both residents and tourists.

The group has asked the Cassowary Coast Regional Council to impose a temporary local planning instrument to halt new development, review the impacts of current approvals and identify cassowary habitat for a buy-back scheme.

Councillors voted unanimously against the idea on Thursday, saying the council's planning decisions were sound and its focus needed to remain on developing a

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new planning scheme for the entire amalgamated shire.

Planning officers said a temporary local planning instrument, usually in place for a year, could not enforce a ban on development and could not trigger land buy-backs.

They said the State Government had more power and options.

A disappointed Liz Gallie, spokeswoman for C4, said the group would be lobbying state ministers tomorrow at Innisfail's Community Cabinet event.

It had also written to Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

Ms Gallie said a temporary local planning instrument had been imposed in 2006 by the former Cardwell Shire Council to

put a check on multiple dwellings and on subdivision in conservation zones at Mission Beach and Cardwell.

The same instrument was used by the Douglas Shire in 2004 in the Daintree.

Ms Gallie said a 12-month halt on development approvals would not affect the building industry.

"There are already enough vacant blocks of land here," she said.

"We need to make sure there is no more clearing of cassowary habitat and no more unit intensification in residential areas."

Planning officers told the council it would cause major delays to the new all-shire planning scheme if they had to "drop everything and create a TLPI".

Mission Beach's Cr Jennifer Downs said a perception that development was "out of control" in the town "may or may not be valid".