



MINUTES

Seven Valleys Tourism Committee

held at

Council Administration Centre
Committee Room
180 Mort Street, Lithgow

on

Monday 27th November 2023

at 3:00 PM

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The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 3:05 pm.

1. Acknowledgement of Country

The Chairperson acknowledged Wiradjuri Elders past and present of the Wiradjuri nation - the original custodians of the land on which the Lithgow communities reside and extended respect to our neighbouring nations.

2. Present

Present: Daniel Zolfel - Zig Zag Railway, Louise Wallace - NPWS, Wendy Stephens - Belle Bois Luxury B&B, Natalie Hagopian – Lithgow Halloween contractor, Councillor Eric Mahoney,

Officers: Simon Francis - Tourism and Events, Jonathon Edgecombe - Director Infrastructure and Economy, Verity Brookes - Community Culture, Deborah McGrath - Corporate Communications

3. Apologies

Apologies: Emily Seliscar – Hometown Café, Kat Alexander – Blue Fox , Mayor Maree Statham, Councillor Almy Bryce, Ann Thompson - MTA Travel, Sharon Howard - Gang Gang Gallery.

Officers: Craig Butler - General Manager

4. Declaration of Interest

The Chairperson called for any declarations of interest. There were none received.

5. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held 25 September 2023 were endorsed at the Ordinary Meeting of Council held 23 October 2023, resolution number 23-194.

6. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

No matters arising were raised.

7. Staff Reports

7.1. Destination Action Plan Update – Destination Marketing Store – Carl Solomon – Held on Tuesday 12th December via Zoom

Present – Cllr Maree Statham, Craig Butler, Jonathon Edgecombe, Simon Francis, Wendy Stephens, Daniel Zolfel, Sharon Howard

Apologies – Cllr Almudina Bryce, Ann Thompson, Kat Alexander, Emily Seliscar,

The consultants were unable to present to the committee at this time, and a standalone Zoom meeting was scheduled, held on Tuesday 12th December between 2.30pm and 4.30pm.

Presentation by Carl Solomon of Destination Marketing Store –

Destination Action Plan has been completed to the draft stage, with the Situation Analysis being completed before industry consultation, and the Draft Strategic Directions being completed after the industry consultation.

Some feedback on the Situation Analysis, mostly positive, and almost exclusively around resourcing and community spirit and engagement.

Since development of situation analysis, changes to the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area, including the reduction in the outdoor adventure capacity of the project requires a slightly different approach to the original intention as the project is still a very important project to Lithgow and The Seven Valleys.

A place branding strategy is highly recommended to accompany the Destination Action Plan as this would align the position of Seven Valleys with Lithgow City Council and give a brand framework to leverage off.

DMS gave a review of the Strategic Directions broken down into Demand – Supply – Enablers.

Destination Network Central West have been consulted and have given their perspective on regional issues relevant to the Seven Valleys for inclusion in the Destination Action Plan.

General conversation took place surrounding Civic Pride and council contribution towards it, revolving around Main Street revitalisation, Christmas decorations and Great Western Highway beautification.

DMS was assured resourcing will be factored into any actions recommended in the DAP as this is essential to ensuring that the actions are achievable and measurable.

Council would only be interested in projects going ahead that are properly costed and resourced.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT The committee note the presentation by Carl Solomon, Destination Marketing Store about the current progress of the Destination Action Plan.

MOVED: Sharon Howard

SECONDED: Daniel Zolfel

CARRIED:

7.2. Gardens of Stone update - Louise Wallace

Louise Wallace NPWS provided an update on the Gardens of Stone.

Lost City Zip line and via ferratta is not going ahead with a decision from the Minister of Environment.

Minister for the Environment has made a public statement. Working through communications with Wild Bush Luxury, involved in other commercial partnerships beyond the Zip Line.

Plan of Management amendment process about establishment of walking tracks through SCA. An email regarding the Wollemi Great Walk sent through to Committee members for comment and support. Proposal for plan of management amendment process relates to southern (Lithgow) end of the Wollemi Great Walk. Needs to be new track found to avoid using Glow Worm Tunnel Rd. Process runs until December. Missing input from Tourism Community and key stakeholders for the

need for the walk, and how it will support visitors and tourism. Continuing with Wild Bush Luxury on readvertising Intent to grant a lease process. Directly after amendment process, readvertise leases for Wild Bush Luxury about April, then continue with planning from Lost City to Glow Worm Tunnel section of walk.

Engage with local Tourism Operators to discuss more broadly what the visitor experience looks like and how they can leverage it. The walk is 90kms and connects Lithgow to places further north. The southern track is dual use, then walking track only, then just walking on the pipeline pass, then existing road through the Capertee Valley, 20kms of road more suitable to cycling. Working out how to break into user friendly stages. Working through a stakeholder engagement plan, trying to get new and existing operators to engage.

Hearing from Treetops Adventure that they are looking for other Zip Line options, chamber has talked about how they can continue to advocate for the adventure component. The great Walk Track must be user friendly with services. A cohesive offering for visitors. Partnership opportunities. Because of complexities of terrain, distances, continue to think about how it can be presented to be appealing. Gardens of Stone multi day walk, 35km hero component up to Glow Worm Tunnel, Wild Bush Luxury committed to using Lithgow as the base. Talking with conservation groups. Have been highly engaged with walking track alignments, some personal connections with some of the tracks from environmental lobby. Has been slow process because of the multifaceted aspects.

State Mine mountain bike project working with Council, Crown Lands, CTMBC, State Mine. World Trail engaged to do some groundwork later this month. No final reports yet on cultural values, ecologies, Geotech.

Mountain Biking in SCA pared back. A range of criteria that need to be met to attract the volume of visitors intended.

Coming up to period where there is a lot of construction happening for next 12 – 24 months in GOS SCA. Road upgrades, closed over rolling periods.

Vandalism has been a big issue, particularly with works at the Glow Worm Tunnel. Only takes a few people doing the wrong thing to impact timelines.

More planning required for northern part of the walking track. Working with NPWS experience team about PET licenses. How to create easements to help with the track. Midwestern Regional Council interested in talking about other regional connections.

Upper Nile Road section will need buses or other transport. Easements needed in Upper Nile.

Some of route only suitable for cyclists due to distance on roads.

Cycling Tours are already running through the Capertee Valley.

Gaps in accommodation. Very much needs to be a coordinated effort. A commitment to something that works, to link Lithgow with the north.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT The committee notes the presentation by Louise Wallace, NPWS, on Gardens of Stone State Conservation area.

MOVED: Daniel Zolfel

SECONDED: Sharon Howard

CARRIED

7.3. Halloween Report – Natalie Hagopian & Simon Francis

The event ran well, good feedback from shop owners and vendors, putting out surveys to gather more feedback, Turnout was great.

Had about 15 – 17,000 people attend Lithgow Halloween 2023, Format was a bit different, Natalie (contracted event organiser) was asked to make it different to previous year, try to negate any event drop-off, new initiative like Childrens Zone, Caricaturist, Silent Disco, Psychic Medium. Would like to make it completely different next year, whether on Main Street or in a completely new format.

Will be doing a community and industry survey, ask questions around did you engage with Halloween, what are your thoughts about the future of Halloween. Know what the thoughts of people are going forward, Surveys have shown a drop off in locals, personal friend group not attending because it's the same each year. Need to protect our investments to be ahead of the game, to get as much into the visitor economy, a bit of a drop off in engagement of local shops. Not as many cafes and money into the Visitor Economy. Need to plan and protect the amount of money flowing into the Visitor Economy.

Complaint about a Van trading near a local shop and that van was a Lithgow local.

Tried to save budget by getting outdoor department to do traffic management. A few teething issues but otherwise successful. Hard road closure needs to be enacted. Contractors turned up without full contingent of staff.

This year a little bit of a violent incident spilled over into the event. Had a debrief with the Police, want to protect the reputation of the event. Try to get youth involved in a 'social way'.

Events with bands needed, teenagers don't want to enter a parade, think about taking them out and putting them into another setting.

Next year will be different. More security, security zones, pay per use Policing. Deterrent is important. A full report to Council going to the upcoming Council meeting with detail about what worked, and what future measures of success are.

Preparation needs to start at the beginning of the year, work with High Schools, makeup workshops, waste to art etc. and attract local participation.

Really good idea to involve the age group, short films projected etc. If peers are involved they will get involved. A big family feeling is good.

Police have recommended Police youth liaison officers go into schools in the lead up to the event.

Very important to use any levers possible.

Doing something away from Main Street for youth is a good thought like night Skate Park event with a band, but still have alcohol management issues.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT The committee note the report on Lithgow Halloween 2023.

MOVED: Wendy Stephens

SECONDED: Sharon Howard

CARRIED:

7.4. Tourism Managers Report - Simon Francis

A report including a marketing report from Leonards advertising and details of social media activity since the last meeting of council by Simon Francis, Tourism Manager.

Print out from Leonards presented, dominated by Halloween, putting a 2,000 investment per month into HTML5 ads, Commissioned Goodness Gravel to do an audit of gravel tracks, They have provided 6 tracks, would have been 7 with the Wolgan Valley, and will be when it reopens. Looking to get an event out of it. Major highways are an issue in the area. Goodness Gravel have events in Glen Inns, Mogo etc.

Gravel Riding is more leisurely and accessible for all riders, the largest growing component of the industry. Rides are Hassans Walls, Gardens of Stone, Tarana Gravel, Tarana and Oberon, Capertee Mega Loop, Lake Lyel.

Top Gear Australia filming in the area. First franchise outside of the UK. BBC is the production company. Previous videos of one of the people on the show didn't mention Seven Valleys, Portland. BBC is willing to make the title 'Day out in the Seven Valleys' and explain the Seven Valleys Concept.

Geotourism is related to places like the State Conservation area. Have been approached by Geotourism Australia to liaise with National Parks about getting a classification for a Geopark in Lithgow. Big opportunities for linkages with China. Helping with the rollout of the Gardens of Stone SCA. Will be contacting Glen Innes council who are quite proactive.

Tourism Manager recently attended a familiarization visit to Mt Blaxland to assess the tourism potential. Some land issues with access. Some local residents who aren't sympathetic. A lot of historical features, most westerly crossing point by Blaxland Wentworth and Lawson in 1813. Land managers want to promote this as a side project of the Great Western Walk which has been completed to Mt York, but next stage is to Bathurst. Is very close to the original Cox's Road alignment. Mt Blaxland has picturesque river frontage and has great potential but needs track building and Crown Lands cooperation. Will report back to future meetings.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT The committee notes the update on Tourism

MOVED: Sharon Howard

SECONDED: Daniel Zolfel

CARRIED:

8. General Business

Introduction of Verity Brookes as the new Cultural Development Officer

Verity gave the committee a run down on her experience. An introduction of committee members took place.

Zig Zag has a delegation from a forestry company from Taiwan coming to visit the railway on 28th November. There is also a famous TikTok personality visiting the Zig Zag Railway, Francis Dubois. Revisit the networking event to get the local Seven Valleys industry working with Zig Zag Railway to maximise opportunities.

A survey was conducted of the Opera Gala event that indicated people had come from as far as the Central Coast. It also asked what they did pre-event, post event, what they are willing to pay, what they thought about the event. Will continue with events visiting the Union Theatre.

Would be good to have opera at the Zig Zag.

Need to add some new members to the committee, including indigenous rep. Committee members asked to provide recommendations for future meeting.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT Items of general business be received from committee members and those items noted by the committee.

MOVED: Wendy Stephens

SECONDED: Sharon Howard

CARRIED:

9. Meeting Close

Next Meeting: 23 January 2024 at 3pm.

There being no further business the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 4:32 pm.