



# MINUTES

Seven Valleys Tourism Committee

held at

Council Administration Centre  
Committee Room  
180 Mort Street, Lithgow

on

Tuesday 23 January 2024

at 3:00 PM

# ORDER OF BUSINESS

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The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 3:02pm

## **1. Acknowledgement of Country**

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Lithgow City Council acknowledges Wiradjuri Elders past and present of the Wiradjuri nation - the original custodians of the land on which the Lithgow's communities reside. The Council also extends our respects to our neighbouring nations.

## **2. Present**

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Present: Daniel Zolfel - Zig Zag Railway, Mandy Wiggins - Zig Zag Railway, Louise Wallace - NPWS, Wendy Stephens - Belle Bois Luxury B&B, Mayor Maree Statham, Ann Thompson - MTA Travel, Sharon Howard - Gang Gang Gallery.

Officers: Craig Butler - General Manager, Shaun Elwood – Director People and Places, Jonathon Edgecombe - Director Infrastructure and Economy, John Malcolm - Project Manager Main Street Revitalisation.

## **3. Apologies**

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Apologies received from: Councillor Almy Bryce

Apologies not received: Emily Seliscar – Hometown Café, Kat Alexander – Blue Fox

Officers: Simon Francis - Tourism and Events, Deborah McGrath - Corporate Communications

## **4. Declaration of Interest**

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There were no declarations of pecuniary interest made.

## **5. Confirmation of Minutes**

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The minutes of the Seven Valleys Tourism Meeting will be sent to the Committee with the minutes of this meeting for ratification and presented to the 26 February 2024 Ordinary Meeting of Council for endorsement.

## **6. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes**

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The Chair called for any matters arising from previous minutes.

The Director of People and Places informed the Seven Valleys Tourism Committee the structure change moving Tourism from under the Infrastructure and Economy Directorate and placing Tourism under the directorate of People and Places.

## 7. Staff Reports

### 7.1. Presentation by Amanda Byrne of Wild Bush Luxury about Gardens of Stone SCA

Amanda Byrne, General Manager of Wildbush Luxury presented to the Committee on their guided multi-day walk and associated 'bush camp' accommodation proposed for Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area.

<https://www.wildbushluxury.com/>

<https://experienceco.com/>

- This presentation is an Introduction to the local Tourism community.
- Wild Bush is based in NSW and has extensive expertise and experience in operating in sensitive locations in the NT, SA and Tasmania.
- Will work with Traditional Owners of the Land to develop indigenous product as well as education and career pathways for indigenous students.
- Conservation, Community, Culture and Commerce are all adhered to within the core practices of sustainability by Wildbush Luxury.
- Outline of the Wildbush Luxury properties was reviewed as an example of current accommodation provided at different locations in Australia.
- The proposed level of experience is popular within the projected tourism niche.
- Wildbush Luxury has a high profile within the other tourism niches also, and is owned by Experience Co.
- The focus is on immersion in nature.
- Properties and projects are designed to connect and blend with the environment.
- They aim to use expert field guides from within the local area.
- Extensive experience in sales and marketing to enable promotion of Lithgow and the Gardens of Stone along with local businesses.
- Database of 58,000 customers with a dedicated sales and marketing team.
- Looking for a partnership with Lithgow City Council, National Parks & Wildlife and Destination NSW
- Employ and work locally whilst supporting the local operators (i.e. fresh produce and local items) to service clients. Community opportunity - use local suppliers, hire locally etc.
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- Design approach would be around connecting to the environment. Built in structure would be working with the environment.
- Sustainable designs that showcases the views and environment.
- Conservation - light footprint. Solar energy, species monitoring throughout the park.
- Already in discussion with Wiradjuri people. Meetings have occurred with local groups to establish a relationship.
- NPWS is intending to re-advertise in February the Intent to Grant a Lease for the Wild Bush Luxury proposal (3 accommodation sites in the SCA)

The Committee thanked the Amanda for attending and went on to discuss the following matters.

- Five accommodation nodes were proposed within the NPW proposal.
- The Minister for the Environment has publicly endorsed the multi-day walk.
- The 28 day public exhibition process for the Intent to Grant a Lease should run through February – March..
- The multi-day Walking track will be publicly accessible and NPWS will be constructing some remote bushwalker campsites with a totally diverse offering to that of the Wild Bush Luxury experience.

The Lost City Walking track has started the first stage of construction with the next stage

commencing later in the year.

Letters of support from the tourism sector for the Intent to Grant a Lease was suggested by Amanda from local Tourism stakeholders feel.

Having a significant nationally established tourism operator and investor with experience in the industry, marketing and sales will be a significant benefit to the Seven Valleys.

The Committee asked what does the stakeholder relationship / partnership look like to Wild Bush Luxury?

- an office to work out of in Lithgow as start of walk and where guest would arrive
- Source local produce from for the guided walk
- Raise profile of other operators within the areas, how can they work together and promote the region

Time frame for the construction of the track - end of 2025.

This will be the first accommodated multi-day walk in a national park or State Conservation Area within NSW. Products and experiences of this type are already well established in every other state.

People that do not have the extensive bushwalking experience or equipment want the natural immersion and that remote exploration experience of the wilderness with the strong sense of safety and security provided by a guided walking option.

Lithgow has the opportunity to build on this with the largest funding allocation to a new tourism project (\$50M to NPWS for the Gardens of Stone SCA).

National Parks & Wildlife have been reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce.

Use of the networks within Lithgow to promote and support this project.

It was noted that the Wiradjuri representative groups have been approached by Wild Bush Luxury on the proposal within the Gardens of Stone.

One of the main issues - the information and messaging that NPWS were putting forward on the guided walking opportunity and accommodation proposals were misrepresented by many of the environmental and outdoors advocacy groups against the project.

Lithgow will build a mini campaign to promote and bring back to the Seven Valleys Tourism Committee.

Amanda was once again thanked for the presentation to the Committee.

### **Recommendation**

THAT The committee notes the presentation by Amanda Byrne of Wild Bush Luxury about the multi day walk in the Gardens of Stone State Conservation Area

Moved: Daniel Zolfel

Seconded: Louise Wallace

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## **7.2. Main Street revitalisation presentation and discussion**

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The Mayor put to the Committee to move ITEM 7.3 Mt Blaxland Presentation to this point in the meeting due to the external presenters already being present.

The Committee voted to agree to the change in order of items of the business paper.

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Following Item 7.3 Administration gave an update on Stage 2 of the Main Street Restoration. Finalisation of the draft concept will be completed by 2 February 2024.

Sharon Howard advised the Committee that the planned mural for Australia Post Building / Cook Street Plaza, organised by Maldhan Ngurr Ngurra – Transformation Hub was now being put on hold as a result of 'council advice'. The Administration advised it was unaware of that advice and confirmed that earlier Council approvals for the mural had not changed.

A member of the Committee raised concerns of the decisions and recommendations of the committee are not being followed through on.

Administration was asked about the grant funding for the Main Street Revitalisation that was received in 2019:

How much did the Stage 1 of the Main Street Revitalisation cost including grant funding? The Administration advised this was \$2.7M.

- The public exhibition of the current proposal is to commence in mid-February.
- Administration will be approaching the Chamber of Commerce for feedback.
- Every shop will be engaged with QR code to be able to access the full concept and plan.
- Radio 2LT interview spot
- Library
- local paper.

The General Manager indicated that the Committee will be further engaged for an online presentation on the project concept.

Proposed online presentation to be Wednesday 1 February 2023 3pm venue to be confirmed.

#### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the committee reconvene for a online presentation of the Main Street Revitalisation design concept on Wednesday 31 January.

**MOVED:** Sharon Howard

**SECONDED:** Daniel Zolfel

**CARRIED**

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### **7.3. Mt Blaxland presentation - Ramsay Moodie and Wyn Jones**

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The Hartley Vale / Mt Blaxland Reserve Land Managers presented the proposed walking track for the Cox's River / Mt Blaxland area.

Proposal is mainly situated on Crown Land reserve which is land locked. There are no land claims and Crown Lands are also supportive of the development of a walking track along the Cox's River. The walk is a 2km walk either way.

There is an easement that is along the river riparian edge walk and determining where this easement is adjacent to the boundary of the private landowner. The land managers will be contacting this landowner again to discuss the project.

There is a parcel of land on the site (by the McKanes Falls Road bridge) that would allow twenty cars parking and also an area for camping on a current public camping reserve.

The Current landowner has no interest in supporting the project with no view to change their minds. The land around Mt Blaxland is privately owned and although the track does not impact their land they would be approached as the landowner being impacted. Hartley Vale / Mt Blaxland Reserve Land Managers are seeking a motion of support from the Committee to support this project to go to Council.

Grant applications would be required to pay for the project.

A copy of the economic impacts and indicative project cost advice was requested by the committee.

Administration will engage with the Hartley Vale / Mt Blaxland Reserve Land Managers to discuss the proposal further and clarify what is being requested of Council.

#### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT the committee note the presentation by Ramsay Moodie and Wyn Jones and offer feedback on the proposal and what the committee can offer to help expedite greater tourism potential for the Mt Blaxland reserve.

**MOVED:** Sharon Howard

**SECONDED:** Louise Wallace

**CARRIED**

#### **7.4. Update to Seven Valley Tourism Committee Terms of Reference**

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The Administration outlined the changes to the ToR to amend.

the following:

- Change the reference of reporting from 'Economic Development Committee' to 'Council' as per the Section 355 committee change.
- Include missing details under 'SVTC Member Responsibilities to include
- the need to tender apologies for any missed meetings.
- the protocol of addressing more than 2 missed meetings, and breaches of the meeting code of conduct.

#### **ACTION / RECOMMENDATION**

THAT The committee endorse the change to the Seven Valleys Tourism Committee Terms of Reference and recommend endorsement by council.

**MOVED:** Sharon Howard

**SECONDED:** Louise Wallace

**CARRIED**

#### **8. General Business**

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The Administration informed the Committee of the intent to seek the views on the strategic direction and role of the Committee at the next meeting.

## **9. Meeting Close**

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Next Meeting: 26 March 2024 at 3pm in the Committee Room.

There being no further business the Chairperson declared the meeting closed a 5:07pm.

DRAFT