



MINUTES

Seven Valleys Tourism Committee

held at

Council Administration Centre
176 - Training Room
180 Mort Street, Lithgow

on

Wednesday 21 January 2026

at 4:00 PM

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The Chairperson declared the meeting open at 4:00pm.

1. Acknowledgement of Country

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

Present: Mayor Coleman, Clr Evangelides, Clr Statham, Clr Ring, Clr Goodwin, Clr Mahoney, Mark Thomas, Graeme Pike, Andrew Chalk, Ann Thompson,

Officers: Shaun Elwood (Director People & Places) & Simon Francis (Tourism Manager)

3. Apologies

Trevor Evans, Lucy Novakova, Sharon Howard, Wendy Stephens, National Parks & Wildlife Service, Mandy Wiggins

4. Declaration of Interest

Nil

5. Confirmation of Minutes

THAT it be noted the Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2025 were to be presented to Council at the upcoming Ordinary Meeting of Council on 28 January 2026

6. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

Nil arising from previous minutes

7. Staff Reports

7.1. 7V Marketing

**Item combined
with 7.2**

Overview

An update was provided on the Destination Store's digital performance, content development, and upcoming website launch activity.

E-Newsletter & Social Media Performance

- Social media following currently sits between 13,000–14,000 followers, providing a strong foundation for the new website launch.
- Recent performance recorded approximately 8,000 website clicks, with strong engagement levels.
- All activity to date has been organic, with paid activity planned to follow.
- Micro influencers are actively tagging Seven Valleys, with increasing instances of destinations previously labelled as Blue Mountains now being tagged as Seven Valleys.

Website Development

- A new Seven Valleys website is currently in development.
- The website will be experience-led, featuring itinerary-based guides designed to:
 - Support user journeys
 - Allow visitors to learn about experiences
 - Enable booking pathways
 - Itineraries will act as key drivers for navigation through the site.
- The website will be primarily digital-first improving accessibility via digital and social channels, replacing a previous traditional reliance on hard copy print materials.

Content Capture & Creation

- Ongoing content capture includes imagery, video, and written content for use across:
 - The new website
 - Always-on digital and social media activity
 - Some content is seasonal, while gaps remain in other areas and will continue to be developed post-launch.
- The website will continue to evolve after launch as additional content is created.

Campaigns & Future Activity

- A communications plan is being developed for the website launch.
- The primary objective in the second half of the year is to increase click-throughs to the website, supported by a full industry campaign.
- Paid digital activity will commence following the initial organic phase.

Influencer Strategy

- Engagement with macro influencers, including K-pop influencers from the Blue Mountains

region, is underway.

- Continued focus on influencer activity to reinforce Seven Valleys' point of difference and reclaim regional identity.

Key Outcomes

- The committee noted the strong digital foundation and organic performance to date.
- The Seven Valleys brand positioning is strengthening, with growing recognition and correct destination tagging online.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

THAT the committee note the marketing priority actions to be delivered by Destination Store.

MOVED: Mark Thomas

SECONDED: Mayor Cassandra Coleman

CARRIED

7.2. 7V Website Item combined with 7.1

Summary

Destination Store will present the 7V website which has been further populated since the December presentation by Headjam.

Commentary

Attachments

Nil

Recommendation

THAT the committee note the progress of the website to be launched in early March.

7.3. Business and Tourism Industry Engagement

Council & Industry Engagement

- It was noted that Council leads industry engagement, however there is an industry perception that Council's role is primarily marketing-focused.
- Concerns were raised that some businesses felt they did not receive value from previous campaigns they contributed to.
- The importance of Council working closely with industry was emphasised, particularly in relation to planning and approval processes.

Committee Purpose & Format

- Suggested the group may function more effectively as a *working group* rather than a committee.
- Support of the committee structure, noting its role in encouraging debate.
- It was suggested meetings would benefit from being shorter with fewer presentations.
- It was noted that the current format was appropriate, acknowledging the region is not as evolved as coastal destinations.
- The committee was described as a critical strategic forum for engaging with Council and discussing future tourism opportunities in the Seven Valleys.

Industry Participation & Discussions

- Support maintaining the committee structure, noting it provides a strong platform for discussion and allows industry participants to attend and contribute.
- A query was raised how actions arising from meetings are tracked; it was noted that confirmed minutes are provided to Council.
- The value of workshops was discussed, with support for holding more to increase awareness.
- It was noted there is strong interest in branding from non-tourism businesses, sometimes more so than tourism operators.
- Discussion occurred around allowing broader industry attendance at meetings, even if attendees are not formal members.

Broader Tourism Assets & Businesses

Highlighted the importance of supporting local businesses, including retail operators.

Examples of tourism and experience opportunities for additional promotion, including:

- Miniature Railway
- Ferrero
- Mines Rescue
- Thales site tours
- Birdwatching opportunities in the valleys

It was noted that the region offers tourism experiences comparable or superior to nearby destinations such as Bathurst, and local businesses should not be overlooked.

Committee Scope & Alignment

- Questions were raised regarding potential duplication with the Chamber of Commerce.
- It was noted the Chamber is member-based and expressed willingness to work with Council on industry attendance, acknowledging that industry funding is required.
- Queried whether the proposed approach is allowable under the Local Government Act.
- The question was asked whether there is an Economic Development Officer in place.
- Further discussion occurred around boundaries and alignment between LEEP, Tourism, and the Chamber, including the distinction between strategic and non-strategic roles.
- It was noted that LEEP should be integrated across all Council departments, but broader community buy-in remains a challenge.
- It was emphasised that tourism is the gateway to broader economic and community outcomes.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

That the committee confirms it remains a Council committee, with:

- Less presentation and more dialogue
- Broader invitations extended to industry across Greater Lithgow
- Open attendance for wider industry participation

MOVED: Mayor Cassandra Coleman

SECONDED: Cr Tom Evangelidis

CARRIED

8. General Business

- A query was raised whether any significant hotel developments are being planned within the Seven Valleys region.
- It was noted that Workies is extending
- Significant hotel investor, with involvement linked to the Federal Government.
- An update on Emirates was provided, advising that:
 - Emirates has invested approximately \$50 million to purchase four-wheel-drive vehicles.
 - A new operator will be managing Emirates.
 - Discussions are underway within the valley regarding a co-operative tourism arrangement.
 - Progress has stalled over the past three years due to road access issues; however, clearer timeframes for access are expected to allow discussions to recommence.
 - There is a sense of despondency in the Wolgan Valley, with an opportunity identified for a low-scale, carefully considered tourism approach for the area.

ACTION / RECOMMENDATION

That the items raised in general business be noted by the committee.

MOVED: Cr Steve Ring

SECONDED: Mark Thomas

CARRIED

9. Meeting Close

There being no further business the Chairperson declared the meeting closed at 5.39pm.