

# **BIODIVERSITY IN HIGH COUNTRY URBAN COMMUNITIES – MEETING HELD AT THE WICKLOW HOTEL ARMIDALE – TUESDAY, 9 JUNE 2009**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MINUTES**

### **Item: Grant overview**

The project committee structure and the roles of contractors were explained.

The objectives, budget and timeline was presented. The Business Plan for the Grant needs to be prepared and submitted to the Environmental Trust by September, once the Plan is approved implementation can start, finishing February 2012.

This meeting was about gaining community input into developing a process for completing the Business Plan.

### **Item: Introduction, hopes and expectations**

Everyone present gave their name, organisation and their hopes and aspiration for the grant. Common hopes and expectations among the group:

- Significant on-ground works that improve biodiversity and create a visible change
- Increase public awareness and understanding of biodiversity
- More community ownership and participation in urban biodiversity projects, including indigenous people
- Develop partnerships between stakeholders
- Build on existing work
- Mechanisms so that work can be continued and maintained into the future

### **Item: Grant Strategies**

J Bowe listed a number of strategies that could be developed for the grant to assist in the effective implementation. They were:

Communication, Education and Capacity Building, Professional Standards and Behaviours, Best Environmental Practices and Inclusive Governance.

### **Item: Group work on developing the Business Plan**

Four groups were formed that each developed ideas for developing material for the business plan. A diversity of ideas were generated included the use of media, mapping, and engagement of further technical and other stakeholder input.

**Action:** J Bowe will collate material generated from this meeting and develop workplan recommendations to take to the Steering Committee at their next meeting, to be held Wednesday 17 June 2009. The date for the next Advisory Committee meeting will be determined from these recommendations and advised to members via email.

### **Item: Appointment of a representative from the Advisory Committee to be a member of the Steering Committee.**

Kate Boyd was appointed as the Advisory Committee representative on the Steering Committee and Rodney O'Brien was appointed as the alternative representative.

### **Item: Terms of reference for the Advisory Committee**

**Action:** The Terms of Reference will be emailed to members by J Bowe for review.

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## **FULL MINUTES**

**PRESENT:** Bec Ballard (SNELCC), Michael Batt (Uralla Rivercare Group), Adam Blakester (NESSie), Jackie Bowe (SNELCC), Kate Boyd (Armidale Tree Group), Brian Connor (Sustainable Living Armidale), Sally Croker (Border Rivers Gwydir CMA), Carol Davies (UNE Talloires Group), Alice Devlin (SNELCC), Bob Furze (Guyra Shire Council), Jane Grown (SLA), Carina Johnson (SNELCC), Nanette Lamrock (Uralla Council), Jo Leoni (Sustainable Living Armidale), Rodney O'Brien (Department of Lands), Carol Quinlivan (Galbaan), Arleen Packer (TAFE), Darren Ryder (UNE), Sara Schmude (SNELCC), Ray South (Armidale Tree Group), David Steller (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Bev Stubberfield (Uralla Rivercare Group), Bruce Whan (Armidale Dumaresq Council and Armidale Urban River Care Group), Kath Wray (Citizens Wildlife Corridors), Kath McLoughlin (SNELCC).

### **ITEM 1**

**APOLOGIES:** Angus Adair (Armidale Urban River Care Group), Patsy Asch (Sustainable Living Armidale), Robyn Bartel (UNE), Euan Belson (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Bar Finch (Sustainable Living Armidale), Steven Gow (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Mark Kingston (Tweed Shire Council), Cameron Lay (NSW DPI), Gerry Moran (Walcha Council), Margaret Schumacher (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Susen Smith (UNE), Anthony Townsend (NSW DPI), David Ward (NSW DPI).

### **ITEM 2 OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT**

<b>Acronym Alert (and apologies):</b> SC=Steering Committee, AC=Advisory Committee
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Jackie Bowe presented an overview of the Grant under the following areas.

#### **2.1 Management Roles**

So far the two bodies of management for the Grant are the Steering Committee (SC) and the Advisory Committee (AC). The SC consists of a representative and an alternate representative from the following organizations: Walcha Council, Uralla Shire Council, Armidale Dumaresq Council, Guyra Shire Council, University of New England and the Advisory Committee (to represent the community). The role of the SC is to make the Grant happen and ensure that the outcomes are achieved, finances and reporting are managed properly and that the Environment Trust is satisfied with the progress and development of the Grant. The role is referred to in the Terms of Reference.

The AC is made up of individuals and organizations. The role of the AC is to work with the Project Director and the SC to achieve the outcomes and goals as detailed in the Grant Application and the Business Plan.

#### **2.2 Implementation Roles**

Southern New England Landcare Ltd (SNEL) has been recruited by the SC as Project Director for the Grant. SNEL is a non-profit community based organisation, comprising a volunteer board of directors drawn from Landcare groups across the four council areas. A

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team approach will be adopted for the Grant through the work of Jackie Bowe, Sonia Williams and Alice Devlin and other staff and contractors engaged as required.

The role of the University of New England (UNE) is to provide research staff for the purpose of monitoring, evaluation, education and research. It is a multi-disciplinary team of staff from Ecosystem Management, Education and Social Science.

### **2.3 Project Objectives**

J Bowe displayed the project objectives:

1. Improve the ecological health of urban riparian and bush lands; reduce weeds, increase in area and quality of native vegetation, erosion and remediation and improved habitat linkages at landscape scale.
2. Improve the effectiveness of councils and community effort toward environmental rehabilitation through improved integration, collaboration and greater knowledge transfer between councils and stakeholders.
3. Monitor, evaluate and implement improvement in approaches to rehabilitation of urban areas.
4. Increase long-term participation in urban ecosystem rehabilitation targeting community volunteerism and investment from private and government sources.
5. Improve resource use efficiency – increase utilization of council mulch; increase uptake of rebates for rainwater tanks, and alternative energy technology; decrease nutrient load in town water supply.

### **2.4 Some Methods from our Application**

J Bowe listed a selection of methods that were referred to in the Application:

1. “By providing real funds and support to achieve significant outcomes previously beyond the capacity of the existing stakeholders.”
2. Utilisation of sub-catchment planning (Uralla style) in other towns.
3. Development of an infrastructure for collaboration – communication, databases and work programs that can be used by successive groups.
4. The methods for promoting the grant include SLEX and sites selected in visible areas.

It was mentioned that the UNE Landcare Group is disbanding. The Grant will provide the opportunity for Groups such as UNE Landcare to rejoin and participate in projects at a later stage.

### **2.5 Budget**

The following table of the proposed budget was displayed. It was explained that the Budget is flexible to some degree and can change as the project planning progresses. For example, it may be decided that less money than planned could be spent on administration or salaries, and this surplus could be used on more on-ground work.

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	<b>year 1</b>	<b>year 2</b>	<b>year 3</b>
Salaries and on-costs	50,400	302,400	302,400
consultancies	6,600	44,200	44,200
materials		339,660	339,660
transport costs	5,000	45,000	45,000
insurance	3,000	8,000	8,000
project publicity	5,000	22,500	22,500
evaluation and research	20,000	100,000	100,000
administration	8,960	88,760	88,760
<b>Total</b>	<b>98,960</b>	<b>950,520</b>	<b>950,520</b>

## 2.6 Timeline

J Bowe gave an outline of the project timeline.

The Grant is proposed to run over three years, February 2009 to February 2012 . The period between June and September 2009 will be a planning period. During this time, consulting processes will take place in the formation of the detailed Business Plan. No implementation money is to be spent until October 2009.

The purpose of tonight’s AC meeting is to set up a process to have the Business Plan completed by end of August 2009. A draft of the Business Plan will be submitted to the Trust at the end of August 2009, to be edited and recommended changes implemented. It is desirable to submit a copy to the SC before this happens. It is proposed to have local project teams will submitting input into the Business Plan.

## 2.7 Map of Project Area

Current projects which relate to urban sustainability will continue either internally or externally to the Grant. These include but are not limited to:

- Guyra – Urandangie wetlands and other proposals
- Armidale – Snow Gums, Armidale Urban Rivercare Group Plans, Amidale Dumaresq Council’s Creek revegetation guidelinesG, UNE Environmental Trust monitoring project, The Armidale School’s rehabilitation plans of new land, Narwan Village rehabilitation, Sustainable Living Expo (SLEX)
- Uralla – Uralla Rivercare Group, Uralla sub-catchment plan
- Walcha – Linking Apsley Gorge to town, koala habitat, GlenGRO Landcare group, Blair’s Gully.

## ITEM 3 INTRODUCTIONS

J Bowe asked all present to state their name, organization and position, and give a brief statement of their hopes and expectations of what they think the Grant can achieve.

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- Kath McLoughlin (SNELCC): That community consultation is highly valued and should not be viewed as an obstacle.
- Bev Stubberfield (Uralla Rivercare Group): There are four separate funded projects in Uralla and these should be linked to the Grant.
- Michael Batt (Uralla Rivercare Group): The construction of a walkway along the revegetated creek, linking the bushland to town. People could stop, and get out of their car. This would allow members of the community to view completed projects, but the gaps must first be filled.
- Carol Quinlivan (Galbaan): That current projects (at Narwan) continue with more participants. There should also be more training for Aboriginal people in urban sustainability.
- Bec Ballard (SNELCC): Develop strong partnerships between councils, local businesses and community groups.
- Carina Johnson (SNELCC): Improve effectiveness of urban landcare and social networks and to implement outcomes of the Malpas catchment action plan review.
- Jane Grows (SLA): Increase public understanding and awareness of biodiversity.
- Kath Wray (Citizens Wildlife Corridors): Crown Lands to be protected and weeded. Develop links between urban riparian zones.
- Sally Croker (Border Rivers - Gwydir CMA): Learn about the Grant.
- Rodney O'Brien (Department of Lands): Monitor urban impacts on Crown Lands.
- Bob Furze (Guyra Shire Council): Council will have the opportunity to meet people in the community and get involved in local projects.
- Bruce Whan (Armidale Dumaresq Council and Armidale Urban Rivercare Group): Continue the removal of woody weeds and improve the biodiversity of streams. The community taking ownership and responsibility of urban biodiversity in their town.
- David Steller (Armidale Dumaresq Council): Build on project work which has already started, as well as building on and enhancing developed networks, like Nova Anglica did.
- Adam Blakester (NESSie): Provide the opportunity for young people in the area to learn on the job and for the regeneration of the entire area.
- Arleen Packer (TAFE): Provide the opportunity for more Aboriginal people to be involved in projects.
- Kate Boyd (Armidale Tree Group): To have more community members thinking about looking after bushcare in towns. Through doing so, learning from each other and increasing enthusiasm for projects.
- Nanette Lamrock (Uralla Shire Council): For large amounts of on-ground works to be done and for greater community involvement. The results of work done should be seen in the community.
- Brian Connor (Sustainable Living Armidale): Set up mechanisms for developing environmental offsets.
- Ray South (Armidale Tree Group): The community to have ownership of creeklands in their town. Particular involvement in the Black Gully Reserve project.

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- Jo Leoni (Sustainable Living Armidale): Develop linkages between urban bushcare projects which are currently underway, and increase community involvement in all projects.
- Tom O'Connor (Uralla Shire Council): That the Grant will weld established Groups together. Specifically, to increase the quality of the water passed from the Uralla township.
- Carol Davies (UNE): To link projects, people and education together.
- Darren Ryder (UNE): To measure all the above. Collect information and evidence of improved urban biodiversity to show other communities how this can be achieved.
- Sara Schmude (SNELCC): Increase the involvement of local schools in projects.
- Alice Devlin (SNELCC): To see all proposed projects delivered.

### **ITEM 4 GRANT STRATEGIES**

J Bowe presented a series of proposed Strategies that will need to be developed to ensure that the breadth of Grant objectives are achieved. The following relate to project implementation:

- **Communication:** Within and between project teams and to the wider community. For example through newsletters, websites, media, events and displays. A project name needs to be developed to easily identify the Grant.
- **Education and Capacity Building:** Perhaps hold specific educational events, and have educational and capacity building built into other activities.
- **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Involve the community in the whole project in the form of designing, collecting and interpreting information, rather than just the University alone.

Similarly, the following strategies for management of projects were put forward:

- **Professional Standards and Behaviours:** Including democratic and transparent processes, for example a process for decision making of which projects will receive funding and which will not, through a standard selection criteria. This process must be
- **Best Environmental Practices:** Ensure correct technical input, perhaps through the establishment of a technical panel.
- **Inclusive Governance:** SC, AC and project teams. Representation and appropriate decision making processes across the three sectors. For example, the purpose of AC representation on SC is to represent, consult and communicate between committees.

J Bowe asked that everyone consider the hopes and aspiration along with the above strategies group work later in the meeting.

J Bowe explained that a representative and alternate representative for the SC from the AC will be selected at the end of this meeting.

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The question was asked whether the SNELCC position on the SC was vacant, as SNELCC is now an executive on the SC. J Bowe responded by explaining that the AC position now becomes the community representation.

J Bowe asked if there were any nominations. No nominations came forward.

A Blakester asked if it would be better to determine a process for selection at this meeting and then carry out that process at a later date.

There was discussion about the selection time and process.

T O'Connor suggested that members of the AC caucus over supper.

### **SUPPER**

#### **ITEM 5 BUSINESS PLAN REQUIREMENTS**

J Bowe displayed the following requirements of the Business Plan.

- Objectives and outcomes
- Location and activities
- Outputs and activities schedule (yr 1, 2 & 3)
- Budget
- Contractors and consultants to be used
- Stakeholder engagement
- Communication strategy
- Monitoring, evaluation and reporting plan
- Risk – Identification, Analysis & Mitigation

#### **ITEM 6 FORMATION OF WORKING GROUPS**

The suggestion was made by J Bowe to have four groups; Walcha, Uralla, Armidale and Guyra, to discuss ideas for the process of developing the Business Plan. However, there were no representatives from Walcha present and few from Guyra. Other suggestions for groups included communication, technical input, sharing resources, on-ground works, monitoring and evaluation, governance, education and community engagement.

There was a suggestion that while there are people from all different towns present, it might be a valuable opportunity to work in group with a people from a mix of areas.

D Steller suggested splitting into four randomly selected groups, as these would comprise of people from a variety of areas and have different interest groups represented. Allowing greater linkages to be developed across the four urban hubs. General consensus decided to go ahead with this approach.

Attendees were given a number, one to four, and dispersed into groups. Each group had one facilitator; Bec Ballard, Carina Johnson, Kath McLoughlin and Sara Schmude.

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### **ITEM 7      GROUPS REPORT BACK**

Each group spent 30 minutes brainstorming the following issues:

- Project activity ideas
- What resources are needed over the next six weeks to develop projects for the Business Plan?
- What are the actions required to obtain these resources?
- How can this team contribute to the broader grant strategies?

The groups were then invited to share their ideas with the rest of the attendees.

#### **7.1 Group 1**

Facilitated by Kath McLoughlin

Group 1 focused their brainstorming efforts to the three Grant strategies they felt they could have the most valuable input on: Communication; Education and Capacity building; and Monitoring and Evaluation.

Communication:

- Develop a map in each Council which projects can be added to. These maps would be both a communication tool and a project planning tool. This would be completed prior to team project meetings and would need to be advertised. It must be clear that there are project guidelines and some plans in place. Participants can include in this map native gardens, urban bushland and urban riparian zones, current projects, and potential projects- perhaps on different overlays. To do this, the boundary of 'urban' as it applies to the Grant needs to be defined.
- Another map overlay will show what the grant will be involved in.
- Advertise through the usual means such as council newsletters, radio (2AD/ABC through Warren Sheather/Caitlin Furlong), newspapers, Landchat, CWC newsletter and the like and television (Prime community announcement).

Pre Town Meeting:

- Have a number of projects that are developed within the guidelines of the Grant ready to be presented.
- Highlight Grant objectives – through advertising, reinforce objectives at the meetings
- Specifically invite (through network) key stakeholder groups such as (not an exhaustive list):
  - Armidale: TAS, Armidale Tree Group, SLA, AURC, Landcare Urban Fringe (Walcha example Lower Apsley), National Parks, UNE, CWC, NESS, Country Energy, Rail, Main Roads, Department of Lands, NEWA, LHPA
  - Uralla: URC, Fields, UNE, CWC, SLA, NESS, Country Energy, Rail, Main Roads, Department of Lands, NEWA, LHPA
- Have a broader community invitation through local advertising means

Education and Capacity Building:

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- Inspire and attract people to the Project Team Meetings through:
  - Promotion of other successful urban projects (perhaps guest speaker)
  - Peter Andrews ideas
  - Local properties with inspirational stories
  - Showcasing what has been done locally already
  - Guest speaker on water quality improvement, perhaps with biodiversity focus (technical and inspirational)
- Do not become too technical, we need a drawcard to get people to the meetings and keep information at the grass roots level.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation:**

- Develop community ownership of the objectives and in turn create greater interest and involvement in monitoring and evaluation.
- Have monitoring and evaluation planning up front at the start of the project planning process to ensure that all objectives are measurable and community has ownership of the Monitoring and Evaluation plan
- Develop greater linkages between works on-ground though:
  - Consultation
  - Lessons learned
  - Co-ordination
- Increase involvement of groups from other towns in the local meetings- like a project meeting exchange process, eg. Someone from Walcha team comes to the Armidale meeting and vice versa.

## **7.2 Group 2**

Facilitated by Bec Ballard

Develop outcomes through linkages and cross-fertilization of ideas and processes. The three processes to achieve the outcomes are community engagement and diversity during planning, on-ground works as educative tools (both present and future) and the sustainability and maintenance of project sites.

### **Community Engagement:**

- Stakeholder Groups
  - Adjoining owners
  - School groups
  - Service clubs
  - Department of Lands
  - Country Energy
  - Landcare groups
  - Garden clubs
  - Environmental groups
  - Industry groups/Councils
  - Indigenous groups
  - Social/youth groups
  - Committed individuals

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- Existing Plans (Present)
  - eg. Sub-catchment management plans (Uralla)
  - eg. Revegetation plans (Armidale)
- New Plans – ask the community for input
- Alternate methods of achieving outcomes – technical review

### **On-Ground Works:**

- Skills audit
  - What we have and the gaps we have
  - Helps to identify specialist consultants for the Business Plan, for example soil con, ATG
  - Resource inventory – plant and equipment
- Monitoring and Evaluation
  - Establish baseline – utilize existing and identify what is needed
  - Lessons learned – an ongoing guide of how to do things
  - Evaluating actual against planned
- Project Management – produced using a skills audit and monitoring and evaluation
- Risk assessment – constantly reviewed and altered

### **Sustainability and Maintenance**

To ensure future funding

- Adaptation into council management and strategic plans
  - Adaptation into State of Environment report
- To ensure a political presence
- Stewardship
  - State plan/Federal plan – link to targets
  - CMA
  - Database of people/businesses, skills and environment, resources

### **7.3 Group 3**

Facilitated by Carina Johnson

#### **Summary of key points from Group 3:**

- Continue to build on work already done in the community.
- Communication strategy should take a “grant wide” approach, with emphasis on communications between key stakeholders of projects and the broader community.
- Site selection process proposed would require the definition and promotion of criteria, the application and decision making processes.
- The group recommended Local Government take the lead in organising local forums to collate information about past & current projects, and in identifying project opportunities that build on work already done.

#### **Activity Ideas (sub-projects and strategies):**

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**Activity:** Create “community foundation” – ongoing financial structure to support future projects

**Activity:** Communication strategy:

- Education and information to key stakeholders
- Potential of web pages to present visual and interpretive information, before and after information
- Issue of how to credit work needs addressing (e.g. interpretive / education signage)

**Activity:** Grant focus:

- Focus on overarching grant with projects within (communication between key stakeholders of projects and broader community)

**Activity:** Site Selection Criteria:

- Define criteria , promote criteria (to begin raising public profile of project), determine application and decision making processes
  - Application phase to include engaging stakeholders and confirming interest, identifying new project opportunities
    - Phase 2: Reserve List – Begins public profile
- Land tenure – Resolve for on-ground works, for example with accuracy for creeks
  - Have willing landholders on board
- List past and current projects - Push along existing projects
- Don't lose the ethic of building on what has been done

**Activity:** Project idea for Armidale - Arboretum on cycle way / creeklands

The group identified resources needed for two of the above activities (Site selection and Communication strategy)

For the Communication Strategy:

- SVM Media – Laszlo Szabo
- Develop a media partner, such as The Land, with regular coverage
- Target Focus Magazine and print media with regional distribution, for example, with a two page feature in Focus Magazine and the Armidale Express, Extra, Northern Daily Leader
- Take even handed approach – avoid alienating project/papers
- Creation of own media stream – web site, community based media, television, radio, print
- Links to all council and stakeholder web sites
- Rosemary Mort promotions
- Link with schools through “Sharing of content” agreement – schools are partners, in return for regular article
- Use Newcastle Creeks Alive program which features restoration projects & data online as a model/tool/for this project

Site Selection Process for Business Plan:

- Identify projects going on in a matrix where
  - X = sites/projects
  - Y = criteria (grant outcomes), and Populate with existing knowledge

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- Each local government to organize/facilitate local forum to sort the matrix above
- Invite – broad community environmental organizations, use communication strategies

### **7.4 Group 4**

Facilitated by Sara Schmude

The importance of focusing on existing projects was discussed by Group 4. For example, the Black Gully Reserve, Narwan Village and nutrient levels and water quality projects at the Mother of Ducks Lagoon and Malpas Dam, Guyra. Projects selected for the Grant should have a focus on conservation and rehabilitation of degraded sites.

Processes to Business Plan:

A four step approach would be adopted in the period of developing the business and plan after it has been completed.

Step 1:

- Meeting of specific stakeholders in currently existing projects
- Identify, develop and prioritise projects
- To be completed in the two weeks after the AC meeting

Step 2:

- Develop project plans
- Present these plans at a second meeting of stakeholder groups
- To be completed four weeks after the AC meeting

Step 3:

A third meeting of stakeholders would be held to develop the first draft of the Business Plan.

Step 4:

Hold a public forum after the Business Plan has been developed, to inform community groups of the projects that are to be undertaken. Invite local businesses, government and non-government agencies.

Town Meeting Processes:

Meetings to be held in the four towns, however, the general public would not be invited until the fourth meeting, after the Business Plan has been developed. This meeting would extend invitations to business representatives, schools (P&C, head teacher, school environmental groups, leadership groups, farmers groups (Federation and Association) and private landholders.

### **ITEM 8 STEERING COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE SELECTION**

J Bowe again explained that the role of the AC representative on the SC is to be a representative of the community. Any nominations were called for.

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Rodney O'Brien was nominated by Sally Croker and seconded by Kath Wray.  
Accepted by R O'Brien.

Kate Boyd was nominated by Arleen Packer and seconded by Bev Stubberfield.  
Accepted by K Boyd.

Adam Blakester questioned whether a representative of the Department of Lands would have a conflict of interest with the selection of sites, Rodney O'Brien indicated that there was not.

K Boyd expressed a concern that she may have a conflict of interest in the position, as she has previously been employed in similar projects and may be interested in being employed as a contractor for this project. She stated that despite this, she would have adequate time to be available to attend SC meetings and any other duties for the position.

J Bowe explained that the SC uses that Local Government Meeting Codes of Conduct that has procedures set out for dealing potential conflicts of interest and that her conflict of interest need not preclude her from contributing as a member of the SC.

Kate Boyd and Rodney O'Brien were the only nomination. J Bowe indicated that it was necessary to have a selection process to select the primary representative.

There was discussion about the process for selection. J Bowe explained that the AC could determine its own process for nominating and voting on the SC representative and alternative. J Bowe also indicated that if required the SC has offered that the nominations could be presented to them answering some selection criteria and they would be able to choose if the AC could not decide.

General consensus decided to hold a vote in which the nominee with the most votes would become the representative and the other nominee would take the position of alternate representative. Organisations already represented on the SC (including SNEELCC) did not take part in the voting process.

By majority, K Boyd was selected as the AC representative on the SC and R O'Brien was selected as alternative representative. Both nominees accepted these positions.

The reps were congratulated with applause.

### **ITEM 9 WHERE TO NOW**

**Action: J Bowe will collate material generated from this meeting and develop workplan recommendations to take to the SC at their next meeting, to be held Wednesday 17 June 2009. The date for the next AC meeting will be determined from these recommendations and advised to members via email.**

### **ITEM 10 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The meeting ran overtime so J Bowe suggested amendments to the AC terms of reference be made via email with ratification and discussion at the next meeting if needed.

**Action: The Terms of Reference will be emailed to members by J Bowe for review.**