

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

**Present:** Michael Batt (Uralla Rivercare Group), Adam Blakester (NESSie), Jackie Bowe (SNELCC), Kate Boyd (Armidale Tree Group), Carol Davies (UNE Talloires Group), Bob Furze (Guyra Shire Council), Jo Leoni (Sustainable Living Armidale), Rodney O'Brien (Department of Lands), Darren Ryder (UNE), Ray South (Armidale Tree Group), Bev Stubberfield (Uralla Rivercare Group), Kath Wray arrived later (Citizens Wildlife Corridors), Patsy Asch (Sustainable Living Armidale), Susen Smith (UNE), James Browning (New England Weeds Authority), Cherrie Pethard (GlenGRO Landcare Group), Tanya Cutmore (Banbai), Douglas Cutmore (Banbai), Julian Prior (UNE), Tom O'Connor arrived later (Uralla Shire Council).

### Item 1

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**Apologies:** Ross King (Lower Apsley Landcare Group), Nanette Lamrock (Uralla Council), David Lisle (Lower Apsley Landcare Group), Arlene Packer (TAFE), Ruth Tremont (Consultant Botanist), Steven Gow (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Paul Hutchings (Border Rivers - Gwydir CMA), Alex Pawlow (NSW Department of State and Regional Development), Warren Sellings (Uralla Council), David Steller (Armidale Dumaresq Council), James Street (BOZO Landcare Group), Bruce Whan (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Sally Croker (Border Rivers Gwydir CMA), Gerry Moran (Walcha Council), Brian Conners (Sustainable Living Armidale).

### Item 2 Overview of Agenda

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Julian Prior (J Prior) presented an overview of the agenda. J Prior clarifies terminology: the term 'grant' refers to the broad level or whole project level while 'site' or 'project' refers to individual specific proposals or projects.

### Item 3 Introductions

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J Prior asked all present to state their name, organization and position and what currently engaged in.

- Jackie Bowe –Southern New England Landcare project management.
- Carol Davies – UNE Talloires Group. Linked to projects in Armidale about environmental management and education.
- Susen Smith – UNE Talloires Declaration Implementation Committee, and will be involved in the monitoring and evaluation and education component.
- Darren Ryder – UNE Senior Lecturer - Ecosystem Rehabilitation. To provide scientific advice in terms of how to measure and monitor biodiversity, and the technical support from UNE. Will also be involved in the planning and development of the monitoring, evaluation and education component.

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

- Adam Blakester– Convener of NESSie. To communicate why regeneration of the landscape is the highest priority; it creates jobs and skills and opportunities for business and outdoor education.
- Bob Furze - Director Development and Environmental Services, Guyra Council
- James Browning – New England Weeds Authority involved in weed control in urban areas.
- Cherrie Pethard– GlenGRO Landcare Group, currently involved in the planning of the native revegetation work on the southern edge of Walcha and various other things with council.
- Michael Batt – Chair of the Uralla Rivercare Group with a number of on-ground projects
- Bev Stubberfield– Secretary of Uralla Rivercare Group
- Tanya Cutmore– Banbai – In Guyra, project starting at the Mother of Ducks Lagoon and the Federation Viewing Platform, how to enhance that and encourage visitation
- Douglas Cutmore – Banbai
- Jo Leoni- Sustainable Living Armidale.
- Ray South – President of Armidale Tree group. Support role and to provide trees in the future
- Patsy Asch– Sustainable Living Armidale. Current interest is energy, for example rebates and insulation and how to move from environmental projects to social projects.
- Kate Boyde– Bushland regeneration volunteer leader and project leader for Armidale Tree Group; representative on the Steering Committee for this grant project; also involved in Sustainable Living Armidale. Projects include Snow Gum Reserve and lookout and some involvement in the bushland area in Manna Gums Park.
- Rodney O’Brien – Program Manager Land Management Section, Department of Lands now called Land and Property Management Authority.
- Julian Prior - UNE

### **Item 4 Minutes of last meeting**

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Julian asked for any corrections to the minutes that were sent, and if not that the minutes be accepted as correct.

J Bowe presented a request from Sally Croker (S Croker), Border Rivers Gwydir CMA in regards to Item 8 Steering Committee Representative Selection. The minutes stated that organizations already represented on the Steering Committee did not vote. It is S Croker’s recollection that the UNE representative did vote.

There were no objections or corrections to the existing minutes from the committee. It was unanimous that they were correct and should be accepted.

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### Item 5 Update of the Grant

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#### 5.1 Activities

J Bowe provided details regarding her actions since previous meeting. Main activities included meeting with relevant people and organizations to develop the Business Plan and liaison with the Trust on administrative matters.

#### Walcha and Guyra

At previous meeting, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2009, J Bowe noted projects for Guyra and Walcha were not as numerous, which prompted several visits and meetings to those towns, including some walks and site inspections.

A common theme to emerge from all 4 towns was biodiversity walks as a way to connect the town to natural areas and build up a broad understanding of biodiversity assets in urban areas.

While in Guyra, J Bowe visited the Aboriginal Corporation, Banbai Business Enterprises and learned that they had begun environmental restoration projects in urban areas with projects started for the Mother of Ducks Lagoon and Federation Viewing Platform, which in particular is surrounded by a patch of Ecologically Endangered grassy woodland.

#### Local Government Biodiversity Planning

J Bowe informed the committee that the NESAC Councils had already proposed and (unsuccessfully) applied for funding from the State Planning Department for biodiversity surveys in urban areas to inform LEP and development consent processes. These LGAs requirements will be built into the wildlife corridor plans for this grant so that the plans can be used by council in their day to day business and by community.

Adam Blakester (A Blakester) requested clarification on how councils are financially constrained in regards to implementing biodiversity surveys?

J Bowe responds that councils do have some funds to put towards the biodiversity surveys, for example the Armidale Dumaresq Council has \$25,000 but it is not enough to execute the required surveys. The councils were attempting to use their budget to level additional funds from State Government.

A Blakester comments that there is great potential to use this grant to get additional extension funding. A Blakester suggests that the Advisory Committee put forward their support to the Steering Committee at this time to identify additional funding opportunities during the lifetime of this grant as there may be a greater likelihood of leveraging extra funding because of what can be achieved from the funding in this grant. A Blakester offers to draft this proposal.

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

Kate Boyd (K Boyd) reiterates that there is an issue of how much this grant can fund towards biodiversity surveys. It was expected that some funds would go towards some biodiversity survey work that would contribute as part of the monitoring in the initial phase. But it still remains to be seen how much, how thoroughly and how far those funds can go towards meeting the council's criteria. If council's still have that \$25,000 perhaps the next step is to discuss how to combine grant funds with council funds and what can be achieved with that and what else may be necessary to achieve good outcomes.

J Bowe responds that it would be appropriate for funding to be allocated from this grant towards council biodiversity surveys as it was in the application to carryout corridor planning that integrates with Local Government operation, but it does need to be assessed further with the potential that some funding may also come under the Monitoring and Evaluation budget particularly for baseline monitoring.

Rodney O'Brien (R O'Brien) suggests it may be possible to leverage funds from the CMA

Bob Furze (B Furze) explains that in his experience, the CMA is more restricted in the current climate, that Guyra Shire Council has approached the CMA recently and had their request denied.

**Action:** Communicate to Steering Committee that the Advisory Committee proposes to support local government requirements in biodiversity surveys through this grant and involve the community in the process. Also propose that if possible assess early on if funding will be sufficient and then seek additional external funding using this grant as leverage.

### 5.2 Business Plan

J Bowe showed a slide of 1 page summery "Biodiversity in High Country Urban Communities Project Framework" emailed prior to the meeting. She gave a brief explanation of the logic of the grant objectives and planned activities .

K Boyd queried the intention of blank dot points in outputs and example activities. Is there a request for suggestions for additional outputs?

J Bowe responds that to fit it to one page, the activities listed were examples, and did not represent all the activities included in the Business Plan. Also, drafting of the Plan will continue in the next two weeks and that contributions are still welcome and invited with a cut-off date of 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2009. The Steering Committee has seen the draft and they were satisfied with the direction it is heading in. J Bowe will email a draft to Advisory Committee members with information on how to edit or make suggestions.

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

The draft plan was sent to the Trust today with the expectation of Kelly beginning her review Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September, 2009.

**Action:** J Bowe to email the Business Plan and associated documents to the Advisory Committee.

**Action:** Advisory Committee members to submit any suggestions on the Business Plan to J Bowe by 16<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### 5.3 Next Steps

J Bowe conversed with Kelly from DEC on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 and confirmed that sign-off is now expected in late November, 2009 with confirmation in early December, 2009. J Bowe explained to Kelly the intension to plant in October due to climatic conditions in this region which provide a small window of opportunity to maximize successful planting. Kelly suggested that an early implementation of some on ground works would be approved providing we submit a letter of explanation. The J Bowe and UNE will be working together next week, 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> September, 2009 to develop the monitoring and evaluation section.

## Item 6 Community Participatory Plan

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### 6.1 What works well?

J Prior requests feedback from AC from their personal experience or observation as to what works well and thus should be included in the planning process. Summery of ideas is as follows:

What works well?

- Put out a vision for people to discuss and build upon
- Promote process, invite, be inclusive, design for diversity of responses
- Advertise variety of ways to engage
- E.g. creative village – shop front in Uralla CBD, umbrella coffee tables. Easy for people to enter not “council space” for people to say this is what we want rather than being told what the organisation wants
- Mindful of history of the site, learn from the past
- Respect diversity of values even if not agreed upon by everyone
- Good technical knowledge eg of what plants species to be used
- To be inclusive, map key players such as landcare groups, but also non obvious philanthropists and potential volunteers

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

- Shop front idea could be enacted at displays e.g. SLEX
- Incorporate our project activities in other programs already happening
- Aspects that are defined is consultation, aspects that are undefined is participatory; challenge is to deal with that and clarify that for community
- Identify the community builders
- Self organising tool such as internet website for collective to make comments, post video or photos of their activities
- Stated outcomes so you can see which groups are relevant to you this makes it easier for new individuals to link groups, or groups to link to other groups
- Visit other groups see what they are doing and share common experiences
- Important to build volunteer base or community capacity, careful of the groups dream getting bigger and bigger without the capacity to achieve.
- "Couple of big rocks to engage more volunteers"
- To engage volunteers current group members could ask themselves "why should people join our group?"
- Production of a book or other record, photos, what project achieved (could be fundraiser)
- Need to publicise what is working and counter negativity
- Define the hook, what is special about this site / project?

### What hasn't worked well

- Consultation in the limited sense, being asked for your opinion then not reflected back in proposals or activities
- The very active, veteran volunteers may seem intimidating to newer people
- Opening things up so much that too many ideas on the table and disappointment when some miss implementation
- Don't spend too much time reinventing the wheel, too much time on planning
- Plans that don't have flexibility to allow for scenarios
- Group has a plan, new comers enter and ruin past efforts
- Rushing in with on ground works and other activities without enough planning or defining desired outcomes
- Good punchy communication for participants and community so everyone knows where their contribution goes
- Top down e.g. Council Management Plan, people aren't interested won't have input so it ends up being top down
- Entering a group as a fresh volunteer, no ideas of what we are doing, simple explanation would be good of key outcomes and achievements

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

- Top down need to happen sometimes, but need to be careful of language used e.g. condescending
- Need to have technical plan that doesn't alienate
- Be mindful of new ones entering this project, permission to be where they are at

### Break for supper

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### Item 7 Monitoring and Evaluation

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J Prior introduces the session. Monitoring and evaluation can encompass biophysical, social, economic, and cultural factors. UNE has developed some core set of outcomes and refers to the handout supplied with a list of high level outcomes and requests other ideas.

Focus questions:

1. Additional outcomes? (at Grant and Project level)
2. What questions would you like answered by the Monitoring and Evaluation process?

Responses from the committee

- In terms of volunteering, we need to ask probing questions – what has been rewarding? Why are you involved?
- We need to measure community capacity - how?
- Community capacity can be measured, beginning with baseline measures on awareness, connection, level of interaction, surveys
- Sense of community/place should be measured - open ended questions to do this
- Need to survey non-project volunteers
- What affect are we having on the general community?
- Level of community attitude to biodiversity/sustainability in the broader community
- Stories as a way to measure community changes
- What are our community relationships? Eg. Ask people how do you *feel* about creeklands?
- Aspect of collaboration – we want to see community groups with access to mapping (in Council and State agency) and other technical support
- Mapping of multi attributes is necessary to plan and engage
- Maps could be displayed in public buildings

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

- Use M&E tools that leave a legacy – eg mapping on Google – always there and accessible on the web
- Put data in public domain
- Ask: Can our technology be used by the community after the project? (Ask this at all levels)
- Ask : what the community cares about? – This will drive project into the future
- Ask: what is councils involved in project activities and maintenance?
- Project activities included in management/maintenance plans of LGAs

### Item 8 Terms of Reference for the Advisory Committee

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J Bowe explains terms of reference were emailed out for comment and that J Bowe has made some amendments according to information received from people not present at this meeting but who are on the AC. Request for any comments?

The following comments were made:

C Davies – In relation to the ‘vision’, delete the first few words and perhaps even work programs and start simple, for example, “To develop projects that improve etc etc”.

K Boyd – Mention the AC as a liaison between our own community groups and the SC, there needs to be a reference back to the wider community.

A Blakester – Still need a point in there for SC relationship, perhaps something like “respond to requests from SC periodically” or “accept direction and report”, there has got to be an interaction there.

K Boyd – Also to provide feedback on how grant is progressing.

T O’Connor – As Chair of the SC, we certainly want to empower the AC and see a fairly open communication link between the individual and the organization and through the SC onto the project director.

<p><b>Action:</b> J Bowe to amend the Terms of Reference as per these comments, the resulting draft to be circulated for adoption at the next meeting.</p>
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### Item 9 Upcoming Events

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J Bowe – Several events upcoming, the first being SLEX on the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> of September, 2009 followed by events in Walcha and Uralla in October and then Guyra in January. J Bowe suggested the following objectives for such displays:

- Launch the Name
- Say what the project is
- Inspire people to get involved
- Show people how they can get involved

## Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Wicklow Hotel Armidale, 6pm, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2009

- Opportunity to commit to contributing time, and money?

J Bowe explains what SLEX is and calls for people to attend a meeting to develop ideas for a display at SLEX and finalise a name. B Stubberfield and K Boyd indicated they would be interested in attending.

**Action:** J Bowe to send an email invitation to the Advisory Committee to attend a display and name workshop week beginning the 14<sup>th</sup> Sept, date and time to be determined.

A Blakester – A suggestion for building the collaboration, next AC meeting can we schedule in that everybody around the table give a brief account or advertise what they are doing. We could allocate some time at the beginning of the meeting for each person to talk about their activities in terms of practical or specific actions, and keep building on that each meeting while being mindful not to repeat past material.

K Boyd – Seconds the idea that it would be good to share.

**Action:** J Bowe to build this into the agenda of the next meeting

K Wray – Queries the need to request donations when there is the \$2 million. Raises possibility that the public might find it off putting being asked for money if they are aware of the funding.

General consensus was to emphasis that this grant funding is a mere drop in the bigger picture as to what it will take to get anywhere near being sustainable, and that the goal is to establish a trust fund to continue after the grant funding period ends. The Credit Union is part of the Advisory Committee and has agreed to establish an independent trust fund for this grant. It was agreed that any fund raising activities would need to be accompanied by a clear message that funds were going to this Trust Fund.

**Meeting concludes: 8:45pm**