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HiCUB – High County Urban Biodiversity A08/4305 (ADC Reference)
Guyra, Armidale Dumaresq, Uralla and Walcha Councils

Steering Committee Meeting Minutes

2:30pm Wednesday 15th February, 2010, Uralla Shire

Present: Jackie Bowe (SNEL Ltd), Kate Boyd (Community Rep), Robyn Bartel (UNE – Talloires), Sonia Williams (SNEL Ltd), David Steller (Armidale Dumaresq Council), Tom O'Connor (Uralla Shire Council)

Alice Devlin (SNEL Ltd).

Item 1 Apologies:

Bob Furze (Guyra Shire Council), Gerry Moran (Walcha Council)

Item 2 Confirmation of minutes of previous meeting:

2.1 Confirmation of previous minutes

<p>Motion: That the Minutes of the Steering Committee Meeting held on 13th January 2010 be confirmed as a true and correct record.</p>
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<p>Moved: David Steller Seconded: Robyn Bartel</p>

Item 3 Declaration of interests

No interests were declared.

Item 4 Guest Speaker – Dr Andrew Huggett, InSight Ecology

Dr Andrew Huggett gave the presentation - 'From the ground up – monitoring and evaluating community-based NRM projects'.

- There were questions and discussion after the presentation, the following points were made:
- *Baseline* data are measurements relating to the current situation (before our intervention). *Background* condition relates to the past situation eg before willows were planted
- Its important to be strategic with our choices of what we measure, its important to be clear about what issue we want to monitor and choose indicators accordingly.
- Tom – what sort of benchmark would you recommend for M&E in a project
- The importance of M&E is now recognised such that it's often justifiable to spend up to 80% of project time (not budget) on M&E. To efficiently give due attention to it, M&E needs to:
 - Be an integral part of staff's roles.
 - Tied in with education
 - Have community involved
- Continued community involvement is difficult to achieve without project staff providing the impotence. Some solutions:
 - Community ownership with rare species
 - Set-up schedule and easy to follow mechanism

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- Use committed groups we already have, expanding on these from there
- Having a UNE units doing farm sustainability monitoring year after year has worked. Could be applied to HiCUB
- HiCUB is ahead in stakeholder engagement because the community applied for the Grant, so have quite a deep investment. There is risk of losing some of that investment through long start-up process. Re-engagement of all stakeholders is important and should quite quickly bring them back on board.
- Types of monitoring proposed by UNE team include: ecological data, longitudinal data, social indicators. Building a place narrative, community engagement, political engagement. It will be interesting to document urban involvement in this project, monitor social engagement, social ownership, comparative study between all four towns.
- Potential indicators in social attitude is litter, cigarette butts, shopping trolleys in the creek.

Tom thanked Dr Huggett, going to ensure M&E will be a key part of HiCUB.

Sonia will follow up with Dr Huggett about reporting to ET.

Item 5 Business Plan Feedback from the Trust (Letter from the Trust rec. 4/1/10)

The plan was assessed and approved by the Trust providing the following conditions:

5.1 “The offer of free accommodation for the project team from Guyra Shire Council should be accepted. Funds currently allocated to the accommodation and associated utilities are to be redirected to on ground works.”

S Williams circulated the cost benefit analysis. The Committee reiterated the previous arguments that the benefits of HiCUB staff being located in Armidale far outweigh any savings made by accepting the offer from Guyra Shire Council.

5.2 “Greater information on monitoring and evaluation of community awareness, and engagement and increased capacity for self management, needs to be included in the business plan.” And “An analysis of stakeholder needs and barriers to participation should be undertaken, and a rationale of stakeholder activities prepared before commencement of project activities.”

J Bowe tabled work that had been developed last year with R Bartel and Julian Prior and reported that the analysis of stakeholder needs and barriers is still in draft form. The Committee recommended more detail be included.

5.3 Greater information on the maintenance of on-ground works

J Bowe invited the Councils to add more detail in this section. The Committee agreed on the importance of including maintenance plans.

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5.4 Invite a representative from the Border Rivers Gwydir CMA to sit on the project Steering Committee.

T O'Connor made the point that the strategic level of the project is the Advisory Committee and this may be a more suitable position for the BRG CMA rep to hold. The committee agreed.

Action for item 5, J Bowe: Send a letter to the Trust on HiCUB letterhead, with T O'Connor signing. Include the additional information requested by the Trust and the committee's responses to the other conditions.

Action T O'Connor: Speak to David Cushway regarding the office of accommodation.

Item 6 On-ground Works For Approval

J Bowe reminded the Committee that the next step in allocating funds to on ground works will be bringing together the Local Government based committees for each town.

Action, J Bowe: to organise meetings in each town over the next few weeks.

Item 7 Project Director's Report

7.1 Financial Report

S Williams referred to the 'actual against budget' sheet. There was approximately \$10,800 left at the end of year 1 funds. A copy of the cashbook was also provided, which shows all expenditure.

D Steller asked whether ADC needs to send an invoice to the Trust for the 10% of year 1 payment due at business plan acceptance. J Bowe suggested sending an invoice along with the letter to address feedback. An invoice for the \$855,000 payment will be sent with the interim report by the end of March.

Motion: That the Financial Report of 15th February 2010 be accepted as a true and correct record.

Moved: David Steller **Seconded:** Kate Boyd

Action D Steller: to arrange an invoice for the next payment from the Trust.

7.2 Vehicle Lease

S Williams told the Committee that Walcha Council have a suitable vehicle which will be coming off line shortly. Negotiations are currently being conducted with Andrew

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Livingstone. Until this is finalised, a hire car or SNELCC vehicle will be used and charged out accordingly.

7.3 Allocation of Council Cost (Staff Time and Other) to the Project

The committee reviewed the procedures developed by S Williams for recording council and other partner contributions to the project. The committee were happy with these procedures.

7.4 Project Staff

S Williams explained that she had a meeting with J Bowe and SNEL Board members regarding HiCUB project staffing. It was decided that Alice Devlin and Bec Ballard will look after some projects in Armidale, Guyra and Walcha, and Sara Schmude will be the schools and youth coordinator. This will mean that one position will be made up of existing staff, utilising their existing knowledge and networks. The second position will be advertised, with the hope of gaining an experienced person with particular experience in M&E.

SNEL identified the delay in engaging an M&E team as a current weakness of the project set-up. SNEL proposed that the M&E be coordinated by an employee or consultant to SNEL with appropriate experience coordinating such a team and that separate contracts be negotiated between SNEL and the range of UNE academics, or others that would be providing M&E services to the project.

T O'Connor said he had discussed this strategy with S Williams and J Bowe prior to the meeting and he agreed that this was a good approach to establish an M&E team utilising UNE expertise as intended by the project proposal.

The Committee agreed that this approach should be adopted.

7.5 Project Operation Review

The review of year 1 of the project was deferred to the Advisory Committee Meeting.

7.6 Project Monitoring and Evaluation

J Bowe explained that a process for monitoring and evaluating the Steering Committee will be established. This will involve individual interviews with members. This process will also occur with the Advisory Committee and Southern New England Landcare.

Item 8 Matters Arising from minutes of Previous Meeting

8.1 Contract(s) for Monitoring and Evaluation – process to be resolved with guidance from the trust

Refer to 7.4

8.2 Response to feedback on the Business Plan

Refer to 5

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Item 9 Correspondence

9.1 Incoming – Nil

9.2 Outgoing – Nil

Item 10 General Business

D Steller raised the issue the issue of the provision of mulch to HiCUB projects, D Steller clarified that Armidale Dumaresq Council will not provide mulch to projects on private land, but will donate mulch and transport to projects on public land in Armidale. ADC would also donate mulch for use on public land in other Councils' areas, but they would have to provide transport for the mulch.

Item 11 Time and date for next meeting

A meeting of the Steering Committee will be held on the 10th March 2010 at the Uralla Shire Council Chambers in Uralla commencing at 2.30pm.

Action: Agenda items and apologies to jackie@snelcc.org.au prior to the 1 st March
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Meeting concluded at 5.00pm.