

Minutes

Minutes of the Tweed Coast Koala Advisory Committee Meeting held Tuesday 5 July 2022

Venue:

Mt Warning Meeting Room, Tweed Shire Council, Murwillumbah

Time:

1.30 pm

Present:

Jenny Hayes, Rhonda James, Lorraine Vass, Scott Benitez Hetherington, Marama Hopkins, Jo Green, Cr Meredith Dennis.

Apologies:

Stewart Brawley, Bill Hoskins, Mark Kingston.

Scott opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Lorraine Vass

Seconded: Rhonda James

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Tweed Coast Management Committee meeting held Tuesday 22 March 2022 be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Actions carried over:

Action: Scott to contact Cheyne Flanagan at Port Macquarie Koala Hospital and discuss potential visit.

Action: Marama to prepare a map of 'paper road' road reserves on the Tweed Coast for distribution amongst the committee and further discussion at the next meeting.

Business arising:

BA1. Potential visit to Port Macquarie Koala Hospital (PMKH) to discuss fire response and other koala conservation and management actions

Further action postponed due to ongoing travel restrictions and lack of capacity to coordinate and implement. To reconsider in 2022.

BA2. Preparation of a map of paper roads on the Tweed Coast

Council resolution made in consideration of the May meeting minutes requesting review of the *Road Closures and Private Purchase Policy* to identify if amendments required to ensure that environmental values and potential use of these lands for wildlife habitat is considered. No action taken to date due to resource constraints

BA3. Scott to request clarification as to how the relevant groups associated with current members will be notified and invited to nominate a representative for the new committee

Complete – Direct notification confirmed and actioned.

BA4. Scott to request an update from finance unit on the donations made to date and the process for making donations.

Actioned but response not provided at date of meeting.

Agenda Items:

A2. Welcome and thanks to the committee

Scott acknowledged this as the last meeting of the current committee and noted that for some of the members, that this has been an ongoing, mammoth contribution over the past 12 years (since 2010).

Scott noted that the committee has met 19 times since commencement in March 2017 and identified the following as some of the key achievements to which the committee has made a critical contribution:

- Tweed Brunswick endangered population listing
- Significant land acquisitions on the Tweed Coast
- Numerous Kings Forest Mods, offset negotiations and KPOM finalisation
- DCPA19 Biodiversity and Habitat Management
- Wildlife Protection Area declarations
- Koala activity surveys in 2018 and 2021
- ARC Linkage research project resulting in regional koala activity surveys in 2018 and 2022, together with 6 peer reviewed journal papers
- More than 900 sightings in the koala sightings database
- Tweed Coast koala research hub
- Funding for koala habitat restoration
- 19,000 trees (21 ha) planted
- Tweed Coast KPOM approval under the NSW Koala SEPP 2020
- Submissions to the NSW Upper House Inquiry into koalas and their habitat
- 300+ ha of Voluntary Conservation Agreements in high koala conservation value areas
- Regional koala group growth, development and influence
- 2021 Australia Day Awards - Tweed Citizen of the Year Award for Jenny Hayes
- 2021 Australia Day Awards - Member of the Order of Australia for Lorraine Vass

Scott also shared some of the issues that have been talked about consistently throughout this period. This included Black Rocks Sports Field, Kings Forest, Dunloe Park, Environmental Zones, Roads & Maritime Services (RMS) and the Pacific Motorway, koala food tree plantations, drought and Clothiers Creek Road.

Scott acknowledged the people who have contributed along the way – Cr Katie Milne, Mark Kingston, Dave Norris, Bill Hoskins, Tanya Fountain and Tracey Stinson. Scott thanked the committee members specifically for keeping us on track, reminding us that there are many people and organisations working together on the issue and regularly and genuinely offering recognition for the work that we do.

A3. Habitat restoration

Jo provided an update on habitat restoration actions:

- DPE funding allocated (8 sites, 19 ha).
- Cudgen Nature Reserve (Johannsen's) tracks have been repaired and restoration works now ready to recommence when the current rain ends.

A4. Regional koala conservation actions

Marama provided an update on the regional koala conservation actions:

- Koala activity survey is currently continuing across Tweed, Byron, Ballina, Lismore, Kyogle and Richmond Valley Councils. All private sites in Kyogle now completed. Richmond Valley still to do. Marama noted that this is work on an amazing scale that has not been done before or anywhere else.
- Angie Brace now employed at Friends of the Koala to assist councils deliver KPOMs. Funded by NSW Koala Strategy through DPE with an initial focus on regional habitat restoration and communication & engagement.
- Regional Koala Conservation Strategy – consultant engaged and work commenced.

A5. Update on Clothiers Creek Road resolution

Scott provided an update on the progress of the resolution to prepare a concept plan and viability analysis for installing traffic calming devices in the koala zone on Clothiers Creek Road:

- Councils' environmental scientists are currently completing the viability assessment as per the resolution.
- Vegetation mapping is complete, identification of potential locations for slow points is underway; and a clearing and cut and fill assessment will be done once the concept layout is complete. Environmental impact assessment and options analysis to follow.
- Lorraine noted the significance of the NSW endangered population status and the need to secure investment through the state government. Lorraine also noted the need for a major effort on community engagement and education should the traffic calming proceed.

A6. Committee role and function – recommendations

The committee reflected on the role and function of the committee and identified some key issues and opportunities to be used to assist the new committee. These included:

- Representing the community, including the specific stakeholder organisations, to achieve the aims and objectives of the Tweed Coast KPOM is the critical function of the committee.
- This can involve seeking to change or improve the approach taken by all levels of government where they have an impact (positive or negative) on achieving the aims and objectives of the plan.
- The listing of the koala as endangered in NSW and the Commonwealth increases the importance of recognising the role of the committee in relation to the operation of government. There is also a strong associated need to effectively communicate what endangered really means and what actions each individual can take to contribute.
- The committee has a key role in communicating important messages, achievements and challenges and this role should be improved through implementing actions such as reinstating the development and distribution of an annual report, identifying key messages to share and distribute after each meeting (3 key items identified at the end of each meeting as a standard agenda item).
- The committee is well regarded and supported by council and this should be acknowledged and acted upon to continue to make a significant positive difference for koalas and their habitat.

A7. Koala Plan of Management (KPOM) review

The committee agreed that review of the Tweed Coast KPOM is a high priority and also agreed on the following approach to initiating and completing the review:

- List the item on the agenda of the first meeting of the new committee
- That the committee will play a key role in the delivery of the review
- Discuss and confirm an agreed process anticipated to include one or more dedicated workshop sessions working through each theme of the plan. It was also recommended to include 'legislative context' as a theme for consideration

A8. Kings Forest update

Scott provided the following update:

- Commencement of civil works for initial stages pending.
- All management plans, bonds and key issues are currently addressed based on current status and information.
- The committee discussed the extensive offset plantings required and noted that some of these had been flood affected.

A9. Dunloe Park update

There has been no recent engagement from the landowners / development proponents.

General Business:

GB1. State government response to letter from council regarding NSW Koala SEPP and Private Native Forestry

Scott provided an overview of a response received from the NSW state government to the letter sent as resolved by council in April 2022. The response does not address council's concerns in relation to Private Native Forestry or having Tweed Shire listed in Schedule 1 of the NSW Koala SEPP.

GB2. Tree over fence on Tweed Coast Road

Jenny noted that a tree had fallen over the koala fence on Tweed Coast Road and that a request had been lodged for it to be removed. Scott to call Jenny to confirm no further action required.

Next Meeting: To be confirmed subject to the committee renewal process resulting from the new term of council

The meeting closed at 3.25pm

Action Summary

Nil

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

Nil

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

Nil