

Minutes

Minutes of the Koala Beach Wildlife & Habitat Management Committee Meeting held Wednesday 7 October 2021

Venue: Virtual

Time: 1:00pm

Present: Mayor Chris Cherry (Chair), Irene Timmins, Yvonne Gardiner, Rosealie Vallance (Community Representatives), Scott Benitez Hetherington, Frances Smith-Wright (Minutes) (Tweed Shire Council).

Residents: Noel Hart, Helen Hart

Apologies: Jane Lofthouse

Mayor Cherry opened the meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country.

Minutes of Previous Meeting:

Moved: Yvonne Gardiner

Seconded: Rosealie Vallance

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Koala Beach Wildlife & Habitat Management Committee meeting held Wednesday 4 August 2021 as tabled be accepted as a true and accurate record of the proceedings of that meeting.

Business Arising:

BA1. Friends of Cudgen Nature Reserve Community Day.

Discussion held about an assistance dog which was brought on site and legislative rights around these animals under NSW *Companion Animals Act 1998* and *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. Scott discussed the issues raised and noted that Council is seeking legal advice to assist in clarifying this matter. Council is also in the process of reviewing the Companion Animals Policy and this may be an appropriate option for identifying Council's approach to managing this issue.

Chris informed the committee that Council had received a request from a Koala Beach landowner for an emotional assistance dog to reside on their property.

Agenda Items:

A1. Social

A1.1 Logo and Signage Project

The working group has progressed ideas for the estate entry sign assisted by Noel Hart.

Email from Irene on 5 September detailed several suggestions to be forwarded to Council's graphic designer and sign makers for input. The focus initially is on the entrance sign and road signs with the educational trail signs to be the next project.

The proposed entry sign is recommended to be located on the left side of entrance (direction of travel) in front of the existing entry walls, onsite meeting needed with sign makers confirm design and construction elements. It was also agreed that the preferred approach to the remnant walls is to leave them in place and allow them to weather.

Area between the bridge and the entry sign could also be used for “You are entering a wildlife area” sign.

Discussion regarding painting a mural on the bridge at the entry to the estate. The committee could use this exercise as a community development opportunity for the school children. This would need to be approved by the public art reference group and have the support of the local residents.

Action: 1021-1: Jane to present design and construction ideas to sign writers and graphic design team to prepare mock ups for a site visit.

A1.2 Communication – resident survey.

Discussion on using Survey Monkey for the proposed community survey. Jane has reviewed the options with the communications unit and recommended purchasing a Survey Monkey licence for 12 months (approximate cost \$380), during which time two surveys could be issued. This would also allow increased scope on the questions. The survey will be promoted through the Koala Beach E-news mailing list, Tweed Link and a targeted social media post.

Action: 1021-2: Rosealie to circulate the questions to the committee for final review and to contact Frances to confirm process to purchase the licence.

A1.3 Working Group report on progress

Welcome pack – Yvonne has put together a very simple design for the folder for the welcome pack. Need to agree on the wording before giving it to a designer.

The pack will contain the Koala Beach brochure and flyers on:

- dog and cat restrictions
- fencing rules to allow for free movement of wildlife

A further print run of 500 Koala Beach brochures was requested.

Action: 1021-3: Yvonne to send draft folder design to Jane requesting graphic design input and an additional print run of 500 KB brochure.

Non –compliant fencing- Irene and Kirsty Wallis have done an amazing job to put the Koala Beach Fencing Compliance report together from information gathered. Results indicate 48% of lots within the Koala Beach estate may be in breach of the covenant restrictions as identified in the Koala Plan of Management for the site.

The committee discussed the ways in which this situation could be improved. This included the need for education, ongoing awareness raising and potential compliance actions.

It was agreed that Jane and Scott would prioritise completion of the previously proposed letter and that the letter would:

- clarify that fencing restrictions apply to all lots in the estate although there is some variation in heights and requirements
- identify the reasons for this covenant and the benefits of wildlife being able to move freely in the estate
- note that an audit had been completed and that there was a very high level of non-compliance
- encourage residents to modify their fences to be compliant and include some simple suggestions as to how to achieve this
- encourage residents to sign up to the Koala Beach e-news to continue to receive information

Jane and Scott will also discuss the audit report with the Development Compliance Unit of Council and identify potential future compliance actions.

A2. Environmental

A2.1 Wildlife Surveys

Updates on wildlife survey status covered in economic section.

A2.2 Road Toll on Wildlife Report

The report has been given to the road safety section and the committee will wait on their report before proceeding.

A2.3 Significant tree register

Scott confirmed the council is in the process of updating its significant tree register and is preparing a protocol for management of street trees in Koala Beach.

A2.4 Creek erosion and threat to established trees

Rosealie confirmed contacting council regarding trees subsiding into creek (images sent through with Working group progress report on 10/09/21). Council staff visited site and confirmed it would entail considerable funds to correct erosion and that this in turn could have implications downstream. An assessment by Council's arborist has also been requested for any further advice. Scott noted that given there is no motor boat use of this section of the creek, that it is likely a natural process that will result in the creation of snags and habitat for fish and other animals.

The committee discussed the potential value of the existing park in this area for an integrated habitat enhancement and education project.

Action 1021-4: Scott to coordinate a site visit with Tanya and the committee to discuss development of a concept plan for planting areas, educational signage and other activities and access management.

A2.5 Habitat Restoration Plan

Scott confirmed that the Habitat Restoration Plan has been updated and Rhonda James from Bushland Restoration Services has been invited to the next meeting to present to the committee. It was noted that this plan relates to bushland restoration not street scapes. The Plan is available on the TSC website.

Scott enquired of the committee if they would like input into the plans such as the Habitat Restoration Plan in the future as they are being prepared. The committee expressed interest

in being involved during plan development and having input in areas that interface bushland, parklands, wetland ponds and streetscape.

Considerable discussion on the degradation of the bushland areas by trail construction for mountain bike riders and the difficulties with addressing these issues. Scott confirmed that Council was allocating considerable time and resources to correct the damage at Koala Beach and many other locations.

As part of addressing this issue, Council has identified a management approach based on two different responses being used for:

- Areas that are not of high environmental value - tracks not removed but identified as unauthorised and not maintained by Council. Signs to be installed at these locations noting that any use is at their own risk and specifies there is to be no impact to any trees or bushland areas.
- Areas of significant environmental importance. Signage to be installed specifying the tracks are unauthorised and will be removed and the site restored.

Discussion on finding a suitable degraded area to allow the building of bike tracks noting that construction of bike tracks and jumps is prohibited in Koala Beach due to its conservation values. The committee discussed the need for Council to prioritise this issue and find an alternative area in Pottsville, outside of Koala Beach estate. This would support local youth needs without impacting on wildlife habitats.

Moved: Yvonne Gardiner
Seconded: Irene Timmins

RECOMMENDED That Council prioritises identifying a location for a bike track facility in Pottsville.

A3. Economic

A3.1 2021/22 Budget update and finance report.

Scott discussed the budget and finance report as distributed to the committee prior to the meeting.

- Vertebrate Pest Management
 - Fox detection work has been completed with no active dens in Koala Beach. Due to activity in surrounding areas, baiting has been completed nearby and monitoring confirmed that baits have been taken. Trapping program also completed for foxes and hares at Hastings Point.
- Koala Management & monitoring
 - Approximately 60% of sites have been completed of the Tweed Coast koala activity assessment, which includes Koala Beach. The remainder of the sites are recommencing next week.
- Artificial hollow maintenance and monitoring
 - Unable to commence as the usual contractor has retired and the only other known options are in Queensland.
- Project management
 - This line item has been confirmed as being reduced as the allocation is now only covering 1% of one staff member for the purpose of coordinating and delivering the works funded by the levy and required to meet the conditions of consent.

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- Next newsletter in production.
 - send through any articles to Jane for inclusion.
- Reactive maintenance
 - Major issue is bike tracks.

General Business:

GB1. Irene's petition 'Make Koala Beach roads safe for children and wildlife' has been sent through to Council with 72 confirmed local people signing. This should go before Council at the next meeting on 28 October 2021.

GB2. Scott thanked Noel for his assessment on Upper Grey Gum Gully. Recommend this be considered further as part of the agenda for the next meeting, including to discuss with Rhonda James.

GB3. Scott informed the committee that Friends of Cudgen Nature Reserve, as part of their current restoration project within the Koala Beach bushland reserve, are designing and installing educational signage. Scott says they are mindful of consistency across estate and that he would be reviewing their designs.

They have also applied for more funding and have asked Council to contribute. They have requested \$7,000 for native tree planting. The committee confirmed that they are happy to support this out of the Koala Beach fund.

Next Meeting: TBA

The meeting closed at 3.30 pm

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S COMMENTS:

Nil

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S RECOMMENDATIONS:

A2.5 - Habitat Restoration Plan

That Council prioritises identifying a location for a bike track facility in Pottsville.

Minutes

Meeting date	No.	Action	Status
4 Nov 2020	1120-2	<i>Senior Program Leader Biodiversity to arrange for a 'Code of Conduct for Council Committee Members' briefing at the next Committee meeting.</i>	Deferred to new committee.
4 Nov 2020	1120-7	<i>Development of an integrated communication strategy to include estate entry and traffic warning signs to be included in next 2021/22 budget and to be included as an Agenda item for next meeting.</i>	JL to organise meeting with Communications & Engagement Unit- complete Maintain on agenda
3 Feb 2021	0221-1	<i>JL to check and provide feedback on gutter cover trials.</i>	Trial with new materials and design put in place. If successful to be used more widely next breeding season.
7 April	0421-2	<i>Jane to report on status of traffic calming investigations and forward Irene's email with hotspot map to relevant staff.</i>	Ongoing – report due Oct/Nov Report provided to road safety officer (note RSO resigned and not yet replaced)
7 April	0421-5	<i>Scott to arrange a site visit (2 hours) for the committee to feature the habitat restoration program, nest box program and common blossom bat monitoring and management.</i>	9.00am Monday 16th August 2021. Postponed – Scott to reschedule
4 August	0821-1	<i>Jane and Scott to seek clarification on Council's position on assistance animals in public areas including sensitive locations and whether a policy should be developed.</i>	In progress – may sit in the review of Companion Animals Policy
4 August	0821-2	<i>Working group to walk around site and consider areas for different types of signage placement.</i>	Entry signage and road signs first priority
4 August	0821-3	<i>Scott and Jane to draft letter re: fencing regulations for Koala Beach residents.</i>	In progress
7 October	1021-1	<i>Jane to present design and construction ideas to sign writers and graphic design team to prepare mock ups for a site visit.</i>	
7 October	1021-2	<i>Rosealie to circulate the questions to the committee for final review and to contact Frances to confirm process to purchase the licence.</i>	
7 October	1021-3	<i>Yvonne to send draft folder design to Jane requesting graphic design input and an additional print run of 500 KB brochure.</i>	
7 October	1021-4	<i>Scott to coordinate a site visit with Tanya and the committee to discuss development of a concept plan for planting areas, educational signage and other activities and access management.</i>	