

NATURAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING REPORT

ATTENDANCE: Cr Julie Boyd (Chair and Councillor Representative), Joan Fitzsimmons (Community Representative), Bruce Milles (Community Representative), Stuart Holley (Executive Manager Infrastructures Services) and Lisa Kermode (Senior Environmental Officer).

The meeting commenced at 2.08 pm.

APOLOGIES: An apology was tendered on behalf of Helen Paulsen (Acting Manager Parks and Facilities) and Cr Alison Jones (Councillor Representative)

1. REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES/MATTERS ARISING

1. Process for Evaluating Projects to be funded via the levy

An update of the process for evaluating projects was provided to Committee members.

It was proposed to continue to allocate a minimum of \$50,000 annually from the levy to be used for special projects. Small projects under \$3,000 would be determined internally by Council's Environmental Officers. These small projects could be applied for by friends groups, school groups etc and be used to produce educational/interpretive material, purchase tools, material and equipment for small community habitat management projects etc. Regular updates will be provided to the Committee.

It was proposed to allocate \$50,000 annually for larger projects over \$5,000, which would be the subject of a formal process of assessment and funding criteria and be considered by the Natural Environment Advisory Committee which would then make recommendations to Council for approval.

It is proposed to have two funding rounds for larger projects (February and August each year) and all proposals will need to meet specified funding criteria. Projects from February funding will commence in June and those from the August funding will commence in January – all projects to be completed within twelve (12) months.

Applications will be considered by NEAC at the April and October meetings, with reports to go to Council in May and November. The Senior Environmental Officer will circulate a preliminary report prior to the April and October meetings detailing funding recommendations.

Draft documents considered by the Committee included:-

- Process for evaluating grants
- Grant Guidelines
- Application Form
- Acquittal Form
- Evaluation Form

Some comments/discussion included:-

- The application, acquittal and evaluation forms need to include provision for email as well as phone and fax.
- There needs to be a section where the voluntary labour component can be factored in
- It might be easier to enter costs needed in a table format
- State that projects need to be between \$3000 and \$15000.

Action: The Senior Environmental Officer will make the suggested changes to the documents.

The name for major project submissions be changed to 'Environmental Projects' rather than 'Environmental Grants' to better reflect the partnership arrangement.

Recommendation:

THAT Council endorse the 'Environmental Projects' process.

2. **Budget Update and 5 Year Budget**

Budgets were tabled at the Meeting for member's perusal and comment.

Tania Caldwell attended the meeting to answer various queries.

Action: Tania Caldwell to follow up with Manager Finance about setting up a separate reserve fund for land acquisition as per the previous Council resolution.

Action: Stuart Holley, Lisa Kermode and Helen Paulsen to liaise on the Draft 5 year Budget to enable it to be considered at the next Infrastructure Services meeting.

3. **Coastal Protection Brochure**

Lisa Kermode advised that the brochure was still with the printer and unfortunately not available for the meeting as had been anticipated.

4. **Land for Wildlife**

Lisa Kermode advised that Peter Alden, Consultant, was interested in carrying out the project and a meeting would be held shortly to finalise the details. Mr Alden advised he would charge \$500 per assessment. It will take a minimum of 16 hours per assessment which equates to approximately \$30 per hour. This includes two visits to each site and the production of a detailed property management plan. Mr Alden has a lot of local knowledge and having undertaken this role previously in Whitsunday Shire, would be an excellent person to carry out this work.

It was anticipated that approximately 12-16 applications per year would be received.

Recommendation:

THAT Council endorse the Land for Wildlife Program and funding be considered in the detailed five year Budget utilising the Natural Environment Levy.

Morag McNichol Reserve – Update to a Nature Reserve

Lisa Kermode reported that Stuart Fyfe had been working on this with the Environmental Protection Agency and Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service. A proposal is being developed to take to a Committee in Brisbane in order to get support. The Committee will make an initial assessment as to whether the land is acceptable to be a nature refuge. If official support from Brisbane is forthcoming, a report will be put to Council.

5. Reliance Creek

Stuart Holley had correspondence from Eco North in relation to the potential to create a reserve along Reliance Creek which will provide connectivity to the National Park. A meeting has been held to discuss this issue and further talks are planned. The process will involve designating existing Unallocated State Land as a Reserve. The potential name of any such reserve be designated as Reliance Creek Sanctuary.

Recommendation:

THAT Council officers further liaise with the State Government regarding the possibility of declaring this area as a reserve

6. Publicity of NEAC Function

The Committee was given information regarding this topic that will appear on the new Council Website.

7. Plants Distribution Proposal

Stuart Fyfe is presently on leave.

Action: Defer to next meeting for update by Stuart Fyfe.

8. Significant Tree Register Update

Council's Arborist had been contacted and there had been no progress since the last meeting. All he had been able to do is update the Inspection Form.

Action: Further information to be made available for the next meeting.

9. Tidal Plan

Hard and electronic copies were provided to Committee Members. Members attention was drawn to Page 38 – Implementation and Operational Plan and Page 43 – Action Plan.

Further discussion at the next meeting on Mackay Christian College Rugby Grounds Reserve and the Hamilton St link.

10 Land Acquisition Along Gooseponds

Stuart Holley is liaising with the owner of land along the Gooseponds who has plans to develop the area. Ongoing liaison.

2. **UPDATE ON STORMWATER PROJECTS.**

Robyn Birkett and Daniel Radovic attended the meeting to present an update on current projects including the Grant Application under the Environment Research Infrastructure Program, Stormwater Quality Guidelines for the region to develop MUSIC models for the Mackay area. A revised Funding Program will be submitted to DLG next week to identify and address some of the issues including additional monitoring of rainfall events, waterway health monitoring program, sediment sampling to look at heavy metal components in the Paget area etc.

Gooseponds Creek Catchment Management Plan

A public meeting was held on 19 June 2007. Possible future community consultation meeting proposed for 7 August 2007. Looking at notification through letterbox drops, community news and radio. Information will be on the future website and available about mid July.

Nadarmi Drive Stormwater – will be put out to tender in July 2007.

Stormwater Management Advisory Committee Meeting to be held 13 August 2007 and invitations will be sent out next week.

Butt Free Campaign

Daniel Radovic reported a project strategy had been developed and identified the steps proposed to be taken including policy review, identification of resources to fund campaign, grants available, installation of traps and cost thereof, monitoring program proposed, involvement of businesses and community in the program, education and promotional material.

Action: Stormwater officer to continue with Grants Applications and trial pollutant traps.

3. **WEBSITE DEVELOPMENT**

Lisa Kermode provided a preview of the new Council Website, including a general overview of the features and more specific detail about the contents under the heading of 'Environment'. There was a section for the Natural Environment Advisory Committee, and also pages on plants, animals, beach protection, community groups, school activities, brochures and policies. Council policies (eg the Land Acquisition Policy) and brochures (eg Birdwatching in Mackay) are able to be downloaded throughout site. The site is a work in progress and can be added to any time in the future.

Comment was made concerning the repetition of the right and left hand side columns querying whether this was absolutely necessary as it cut down the size of the page considerably.

The Committee commented on the amount of work involved in creating the information for the website and were pleased with the content and improved ease of access to a wide range of information

Action: Senior Environmental Officer will pass on feedback about the design of the website to the Web Committee.

4. COASTAL MANAGEMENT PLAN

A draft should be complete for the next meeting. Steve Moss will be invited to present it. Maps are finalised. After each coastal management unit there is a number of sub-headings which are the same as State Coastal Management Plan headings. Though draft at this stage, it is hoped they will be finalised for the next meeting. No external or internal consultation has taken place at this stage.

5. OTHER MATTERS

Fig Tree – Gregory/River Streets

This was an operational matter. It was resolved that in future, enquiries can be directed to Stuart Holley.

Barbed Wire Fences

The Committee discussed the use of barbed wire for fencing and the fact that it can be a hazard to wildlife. Council policy is not to use barbed wire for its standard fences.

Action: Arrange educational material on Council's website to discourage the use of barbed wire as a top strand on fences and provide information on alternatives.

Broad Leaf Pepper Tree Infestation

The Committee discussed providing a letter of support from Council for an Envirofund application for the eradication of a broad leafed pepper tree infestation at Slade Point Reserve. This work is part of a larger project that will see Council work with the Port Authority and local landholders to control this weed in a coordinated way.

Action: Lisa Kermode to talk to Simon McKinley concerning the preparation of a letter of support from Council.

Keelys Road Wetland

There was discussion on the terminology to be used along the Keeleys Road frontage to the Wetlands. Members were advised Council Officers were currently liaising with the Mackay Port Authority on the issue.

5. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Committee will be held on Thursday 16 August 2007 from 9.00 am to 11.00 am.

RECORDED BY: JAN GUY (INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES)