

# Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Record 9 September 2020



Location:	Zoom Meeting
Date:	9 September 2020
Time	Started at: 3.01pm Closed at: 5.22pm
Chair	Councillor Chris Holstein
File Ref	F2018/01648

## **Present:**

Councillor Chris Holstein, Councillor Jilly Pilon, Councillor Jane Smith (left 4.45pm), Councillor Jeff Sundstrom (left 3.58pm), Bob Diaz (joined 3.38pm), Bill Jackson, Nadia O'Connell (joined 3.05pm), Emma Perham, Catharine Retter, Glenn Caldwell – Destination Sydney Surrounds North, David Jewell – Central Coast Tourism Inc, Russell Mills – Tourism Central Coast

## **External representatives present:**

Rod Hillman – Eco Tourism Australia (joined 3:30pm, left 4.01pm)

## **Council Staff present:**

Phil Cantillon – Acting Director Connected Communities (joined 3.15pm), Sue Ledingham – Unit Manager Community Engagement, Luke Sulkowski – Unit Manager Environmental Management (joined 3.20pm, left 3.30pm), Larry Melican – Section Manager Natural Assets and Biodiversity (left 3.30pm), Gemma Axford – Team Leader Marketing and Tourism, Brent Evans – Project Officer Natural Assets and Biodiversity (left 3.30pm), Myra Pettinger – Marketing Officer, Zoie Magann – Advisory Group Support Officer,

## **Item 1 Welcome, Acknowledgement of Country and Apologies**

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Apologies received: Tim Faulkner

Councillor Chris Holstein welcomed the Advisory Group and completed an Acknowledgement of Country.

## **Item 2 Disclosures of Interest**

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Councillor Jane Smith declared a less than significant non-pecuniary interest as she had done so previously, as a member of the Marine Discovery Centre Trust Committee.

Councillor Jane Smith declared a less than significant non-pecuniary interest for Item 5 with regard to the Eco Destination Program, as the Marine Discovery Centre is a registered Eco Tourism destination.

### **Item 3 Confirmation of Previous Meeting Record**

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The Advisory Group confirmed the Meeting Records from 3 June 2020.

The Advisory Group discussed the Action Log, noting most actions were listed to be addressed at this meeting or the next.

### **Item 4 Presentation on Winney Bay Designs**

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Brent Evans (Project Officer Natural Assets and Biodiversity) provided a presentation on the draft Concept Plans for the Winney Bay Cliff Top Walk and Captain Cook Lookout.

The following key points were noted:

- Archaeological assessments have been completed and nothing was identified.
- Environmental assessments have been completed and no significant vegetation was identified. Majority of vegetation in area is Bitou Bush and Boneseed.
- Existing carpark infrastructure doesn't meet standards and requires improvements for safety and accessibility.
- Three concept plans (A, B and C) developed in accordance with Council Resolutions and will be placed on public exhibition at [www.yourvoiceourcoast.com](http://www.yourvoiceourcoast.com) for feedback (expected late September/early October).
- Upgrades to Captain Cook Lookout included in Concept Plan C. There are four options for consideration which vary in key design elements.
- Noted that project has been in development for 5-6 years and funding is a constraint.
- Concerns raised about orange plastic webbing in area. Staff noted webbing will be removed and was previously put in place for safety from cliff edge.

### **Item 5 Eco Destination Program**

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Rod Hillman (CEO, Eco Tourism Australia) provided a presentation on the Eco Destination Program.

The following key points were noted:

- Ecotourism Australia (EA) is a not for profit organisation focused on inspiring environmentally sustainable and culturally responsible tourism in Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific.
- EA owns and operates a range of ecotourism certification programs which provide official recognition following completion (1-2 years). Awards for high performing organisations are provided at ITB Berlin.
- Douglas Shire Council (QLD) is a noteworthy example – received 'Best of Communities and Culture' at 2020 Sustainable Destination Awards in ITB Berlin.
- WWF and EA have partnered to provide funding and support for 8 bushfire affected destinations – Central Coast was selected via EOI process. Funding covers financial cost for 2 years of ecotourism certification program.
- Central Coast was selected due to high number of existing ecotourism operators (Tree Tops, Noonaweena, Aquafun, Marine Discovery Centre and Peak Potential Adventures), high proportion of area that is National Park or other protected areas, and bushfire recovery funding already received.
- Noted that ecotourism is valuable for economy as ecotourists tend to stay in areas longer, generate more revenue for businesses and are genuinely interested in the local community, nature and culture.

- Current COVID stats show communities within 3-4 hours of capital cities are faring quite well as people are looking to connect with family/friends in nature following a period of isolation. Nature based providers are doing extraordinary well considering this.
- Lack of international visitors means activity market is struggling – domestic tourists typically don't do as many activities.
- Current trends are expected to continue for some time yet, meaning it's a good opportunity to focus on ecotourism values and outcomes.
- Expected timeframe for Central Coast to commence ecotourism certification is around November 2020. Limited by COVID as Rod is based in QLD and border restrictions mean cannot travel to area. Noted there is 2 year timeframe to work in though.

**Action:** Advisory Group Support Officer to circulate Rod's presentation to members.

## **Item 6                    Tourism Opportunity Plan Update (Standing Item)**

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Sue Ledingham (Unit Manager Community Engagement) provided the Advisory Group with an update on the Tourism Opportunity Plan (TOP) with regard to the top ten priority actions and their status – all are either complete or in progress.

The following key points were noted:

- Other areas in Council have works planned that will benefit tourism. Natural Assets are looking to complete some natural restorative works in 2020/21. Open Space have funds for virtual sports channel in partnership with Sports Central Coast – have requested that some water-based activities be included.
- Members asked for stats about business impacted by COVID. Noted that national visitor survey stats for January – May only show state level not regional (LGA).
- July was profitable for local accommodation providers and August was comparable to last year. However, many businesses are suffering from no conferences/business events midweek.
- Concerns raised about when arts and entertainment sector will open back up. Noted that theatres due to reopen in November but will operate on restricted capacity. Regional Gallery is open and functioning, but no special events are being held.
- Lighting in Terrigal commended for aesthetics (welcoming, feels safe, festive) – would be great to see similar in other town centres.
- Noted that State Government recently announced entertainment industry would be running number of events and Central Coast was earmarked as possible concert location. Staff unaware of this though.

Gemma Axford (Team Leader Marketing and Tourism) noted that Council recently received \$30,000 for Central Coast Create event to help activate town centres and showcase local arts and culture. Event planned for early 2021 but COVID pending. It was also noted that the out of home campaign for Destination Brand is running end of the month.

Myra Pettinger (Marketing Officer) provided a presentation on the recent tourism studies completed and opportunities for exploration.

The following key points were noted:

- The Eco and Rural Tourism and RV Feasibility Studies were recently completed, and staff are now considering suggested actions for prioritising. Advisory Group members were invited to comment on proposed suggestions – no objections were made.

- Members noted importance of small wins that can be used to elevate region and improve existing infrastructure (i.e. provision of parking at headlands, water fountains).
- Staff invited suggestions on approach for eco certification and Rod's program. Comments noted:
  - Suggest holistic approach with all areas of Council (ensure sustainable practises).
  - Make clear outcomes that are practical and measurable, not just token.
  - Consider liaising with Port Douglas Shire Council given success with ecotourism.
- Staff looking at options with upcoming Lakes Festival, but note that many events stifled due to covid

**Action:** Sue Ledingham/Russell Mills to share stats regarding businesses affected by COVID in region.

**Action:** Representative from Economic Taskforce to be invited to next meeting to discuss current situation with COVID. Any info to be circulated prior to meeting if available.

**Action:** Updates on ecotourism certification program to be provided as available.

**Action:** Advisory Group members to provide feedback on Canoe, Kayak and Paddle Sport Consultation Report (circulated via email Friday 4 September) by Wednesday 30 September for staff consideration.

## **Item 7            Green Grid Project**

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*Item deferred to future meeting as staff required more time to prepare information.*

## **Item 8            General Business and Close**

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- a) Advisory Group members were invited to share comments on how COVID has affected them/their organisation. The following points were noted:
- Publication businesses impacted as no advertising being undertaken.
  - Accommodation and hospitality providers amongst the largest impacted.
  - Noted significant amount of uncertainty created, for both businesses and the community. Would be good to provide roadmaps that indicate what is happening in response and way forward.
  - Many businesses operating in fear that they may be closed again if case numbers rise.
  - Optimistic for regional NSW as Sydney hotels are running at 5-10 occupancy – Central Coast is doing comparatively well. Good opportunity to capitalise on pending warmer weather and upcoming school holidays.
  - Supply chains affected – sales continue but unable to get supplies from stockist given restrictions.
  - Noted important of Council displaying positive leadership in community and making commitment to uplifting region.

The meeting closed at 5.22pm

**Next Meetings:            Wednesday 11 November 2020**  
**3pm – 5pm**  
**Location TBC**