

REPORT TITLE: 7.32 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS REPORT AS AT 31 JANUARY 2021

ECM INDEXES:

**Subject Index: CORPORATE MANAGEMENT: Reporting
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Planning**

Customer Index: NIL

Property Index: NIL

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APPROVER/S: Graham Price - Director of Development, Planning and Regulatory Services

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the progress of Council's Economic Development function and Delivery Program Actions 2017-2021 and the Operational Plan and Budget for 2020-2021.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council notes the information contained in this report

Moved Cr A Parsons Seconded Cr J Smith

36.02/21 RESOLUTION

That Council notes the information contained in this report.

A division was called for, voting on which was as follows:

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| For | Against |
| Cr C Sparks | Nil |
| Cr G Frendon | |
| Cr A Parsons | |
| Cr C Price | |

Cr J Smith
Cr S Toms

The division was declared CARRIED by 6 votes to 0.

CARRIED

REPORT

(a) Background

Economic Development is one (1) of the five (5) strategic directions of the Glen Innes Severn Community Strategic Plan. This function is part of the Development Planning and Regulatory Services Directorate of Council and is responsible for the delivery of the economic development strategy, programs and initiatives incorporating:

1. Developing business, industry, and investment;
2. Tourism and Events and the Visitor Information Centre;
3. Grants Funding; and
4. The marketing and promotion of Glen Innes Highlands.

(b) Discussion

This report includes statistical data and updates from 1 December 2020 until 31 January 2021 relating to the strategic priority objective of:

“Facilitate a growing local economy by continuing to support an attractive business climate.”

This is delivered through the four (4) Delivery Program areas of:

1. Facilitating market and business opportunities;
2. Developing a strong brand for the Glen Innes Highlands;
3. Facilitating business growth and development; and
4. Recognising and supporting the agricultural sector as the most significant local industry in the **Local Government Area (LGA)**.

FACILITATE MARKET AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

1. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The table below outlines the progress of the project to deliver a place-based Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan.

PHASE 1

| | |
|--|--|
| Economic Analysis and Research | Completed. |
| PHASE 2 | |
| Community and Stakeholder Consultation | Completed. |
| PHASE 3 | |
| Strategy Development and Delivery | Draft completed and on Public Exhibition until 12 February 2021. |
| PHASE 4 | |
| Action Plan Development and Delivery | Draft completed and on Public Exhibition until 12 February 2021. |

Table 1.1 – Economic Development stages

The final PLACE Strategy 2020-2040 and PLACE Action Plan 2020-2025 will be presented to Council for adoption at the March 25, 2021 Ordinary Council Meeting incorporating community feedback received during Public Exhibition.

2. DESTINATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

Council has received the draft Destination Management Plan and the detailed background and analysis report. A report will be provided to Council in March for endorsement from Council to seek community comment through the public exhibition of the draft plan.

3. COMMUNITY AND TOURISM PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

New England High Country (NEHC) Sound trails is a project to develop four (4) new sound trails and a promotional campaign to promote nature-based tourism experiences in NEHC. This is a fully funded grant project.

The four (4) new sound trails are in different stages of development and production and will be completed by September 2021.

The associated marketing campaign, utilising the assets from new and existing sound trails as well as existing NEHC content has been briefed to Performics Mercer Bell following their appointment under procurement guidelines. This project will be delivered by March 2022.

Escape Rooms entails the establishing of an Escape Rooms in Glen Innes Highlands. This project is fully grant funded and being delivered in partnership with Mystery Rooms.

Mystery Rooms were appointed following a procurement process with the first funding milestone being completed to secure a partner for the delivery of an escape room. Locating a suitable venue is under investigation.

An application for funding has been submitted to the **Bushfire Local Economic Recovery (BLER)** fund on 28 January 2021 for the construction of the Glen Innes to Ben Lomond section of the **New England Rail Trail**.

Council is collaborating with a local working group including representatives from the History House and New England Heritage Traction Club to develop a potential **Regional Powerhouse Museum** in the old Essential Energy Building in Church Street. This building also has the potential to house the Escape Room project.

Council is collaborating with the local Glen Innes Motor Sports Club to develop the idea of utilising the Stonehenge Recreational Reserve or Glen Innes Airport to build a **motor-sports complex**.

DEVELOP A STRONG BRAND FOR GLEN INNES HIGHLANDS

1. GLEN INNES HIGHLANDS LOCAL AREA BRAND

The **Glen Innes Highlands (GIH) website** is the main information platform to drive marketing activity to, and the key information source on Glen Innes Highlands as a place to VISIT, LIVE, INVEST.

December 2020 and January 2021 saw the progression of ongoing website optimisation projects, ensuring continual improvement of the GIH website content, user experience and functionality.

These include:

- **Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)** – SEO indicators for the website will be reviewed again by the end of the third quarter of 2020-2021 to analyse trends and make recommendations for SEO improvement across the website. The main goal for this project is reducing the amount spent across digital search marketing;
- Advertising Functionality – in January 2021, the functionality was developed for testing which is ongoing. The expected launch is in the fourth quarter of 2020-2021. This will enhance our Glen Innes Highlands advertising prospectus, creating more opportunity for local businesses to be promoted through our digital platforms;
- **Google Analytics (GA) Review** – a kick off meeting was held in October 2020 and a review of the existing GA set up was conducted in December this will enhance efficiencies with reporting on the GIH website and marketing campaigns;
- Accommodation Listings – in December 2020, the web developer was briefed to incorporate **Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW)** for our accommodations listing page. This will ensure accurate information is available through our website and re-enforce the ATDW as the one source of information for tourism operators; and
- Updating Content – This is an ongoing project to ensure changes in our community offering across Visit, Live and Invest are accurate.

Glen Innes Highlands (GIH) Marketing and promotion of Glen Innes Highlands as a place to VISIT, LIVE, INVEST.

In December 2020 and January 2021, marketing and promotions continued, promoting the GIH brand across all channels, improving brand awareness and promoting our region as the place to visit, live and invest.

Channels include:

- The development of a new GIH Visitor Guide which will be delivered by the end of 2020-2021. This new visitor guide will provide an opportunity for local businesses to advertise in the printed version and/or online on the GIH website;
- “Would you rather” VISIT and LIVE digital marketing campaign continues as a **business-as-usual (BAU)** activity and is modified monthly based on results and learnings. A brief was provided to the agency to produce two (2) new executions: ‘arts, community and culture’; ‘food and shopping experience’ to rotate into the BAU program;
- “Where you’d rather be” LIVE and INVEST campaign – the new campaign is in production. This new campaign will target tree changers, families, professional services, investors, innovators and start-ups and promote GIH as the place to move to and invest in. This campaign is grant funded through the BCRERF1 grant funding and will be delivered by the end of 2020-2021;
- Delivery of the Glen Innes Highlands Monthly Newsletter. The December newsletter can be viewed here: <https://gleninneshighlands.com/news.html>; and
- Glen Innes Highlands Social Media. December 2020 saw a reduction from November 2020 in engagement across Facebook and Instagram, however, the paid “Would you rather” campaign influenced more impressions. This is also reflected in January 2021 with engagement and impressions significantly higher than December and November largely due to campaign optimisation.

2. NEW ENGLAND HIGH COUNTRY REGIONAL BRAND

The **New England High Country (NEHC) Marketing Program** continues developing and delivering targeted interest group programs and updating NEHC visitor guides (Council funded).

The interest groups include Motorcycle, Recreational Vehicles and Car Clubs. Glen Innes is the lead on Council delivering the Car Clubs campaign which will be launched by June 2021. Inverell Council is leading the RV campaign and Armidale is leading the Motorcycles campaign in partnership with Emprise Group.

The new NEHC Visitor Guide Map has been produced. Discussions are currently underway with the NEHC group to facilitate an additional budget for a print run of maps, to be available at the Glen Innes Visitor Information Centre, replacing the discontinued Cartescope map and providing highlights on NEHC.

A new website for NEHC is currently being procured to incorporate the NEHC brand and strategic framework. Glen Innes is working closely with Tenterfield as project leads for the website development.

The **Visitor Information Centre (VIC)** continues servicing the local visitor economy and supporting local business product and produce.

Visitor numbers reduced through the VIC in December 2020 to 951, being 206 residents, 438 visitors from New South Wales and 206 visitors from Queensland. In January 2021 we welcomed an increase to 1,162 visitors, 149 residents, 560 visitors from New South Wales and 351 from Queensland.

The recorded number of enquires increased in December 2020 and January 2021 with 1,053 enquiries received across both months.

December 2020 and January 2021 retail sales saw a positive increase with an average of \$11,621 across the two (2) months up from \$8,616 in November.

3. EVENTS, FESTIVALS AND SHOWS

The following is an overview of the key council led events and other events supported through Government funding.

Minerama Fossicking, Gem & Jewellery Show – is set for 12 to 14 March 2021 at the Glen Innes Showgrounds.

Council has supported the Committee in the following areas:

- Attending monthly committee meetings to provide advice and support for running a COVID-19 safe event;
- Updated a marketing plan and obtained additional funding through the Regional Bushfire Recovery Agency;
- Continued to provide administration, creative, web enquiries and ticket sales support; and
- Provided field trip support and securing an event marquee.

The **Australian Celtic FRINGE Festival** is scheduled for 1 and 2 May 2021 at Centennial Parklands. With COVID-19 changing the way we interact, in 2021 we are bringing a new experience for our loyal Festival goers and encouraging a new audience with our first Australian Celtic FRINGE Festival.

There will be five (5) ticketed concerts featuring three (3) hours of exclusive access to an eclectic line up of Celtic entertainment. We will have the popular Boar N Drum Bar and food stalls. Indoor and outdoor seating options will be available; however, tickets will be limited.

There will be a FREE market event around the Australian Standing Stones and everyone is welcome to explore the Celtic cultural markets, listen to buskers, visit Celtic Societies and Clans, enjoy the Celtic Kids Fairy Marquee as well as the many Celtic Symposium demonstrations around the site along with the Poets Breakfast.

Check in will be required upon entry using QR code or manual sign in.

Glenfest from 1 to 16 March 2021 will be held at various local venues with a series of concerts including:

- An Older Persons Concert on Tuesday, 9 March featuring Heather Rose and Peter Harries Jnr at the Glen Innes Town Hall including a silent movie from 1pm to 3pm;
- Youth Music workshop at The Youth Booth;
- Music concerts in local venues; and
- A Pop-Up Art exhibition engaging businesses with artists.

Council is supporting the Glenfest event with:

- Cross promotion with Minerama;
- COVID-19 planning enquiries;
- Art exhibition and attending committee meetings with Life Choices-Support Services representation; and
- Support of posters and publicity.

Glenrock from 14 to 16 June 2021 will also be held at various local venues. This is a music event launching in 2021 with concerts and music swap meets. Tickets are on sale in March 2021.

Council is supporting the Glenrock event with:

- Publicity;
- Attendance at committee meetings; and
- COVID-19 planning enquiries.

The **Glen Innes Agricultural Show** was held on 12 to 14 February 2021 at the Glen Innes Showgrounds. Some of the normal scheduled events did not occur this year and exhibitions in the pavilions were limited.

Council supported the show event with:

- Publicity;
- Event funding of \$20,000 from the Event Prioritisation Policy;
- Provision of local gift cards (500 x \$25) from Bushfire Recovery Agency funding; and
- COVID-19 planning enquiries.

Cancelled events for 2020-2021 include the Deepwater Races, Margaret Fulton The Musical, and the First Nations Festival.

FACILITATE GROWTH AND SUPPORT BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

INTEGRATION OF AUSTRALIAN TOURISM DATA WAREHOUSE (ATDW)

The ATDW is aimed at improving efficiency of content management through digital platform integration. The program will be completed by 28 February 2021 and encourages accommodation providers to ensure their business is listed on ATDW as the 'source of truth' directory.

CENTENNIAL PARKLANDS CONCEPT MASTERPLAN

Council has consulted with the **Australian Standing Stones Management Board (ASSMB)** on delivering the conceptual design for the project. This is now completed, and a Quantity Surveyor will be procured to complete the conceptual costing in preparation for ensuring the project is shovel-ready for future grant opportunities.

A lessee has been secured for Crofters Cottage and the lease agreement is being finalised.

Council and the ASSMB have met on-site to survey the pathway system to cost the project and utilise grant funding for part-construction. This project is funded under the Federal Government Bushfire funding.

The proposed Skywalk is part of the master concept plan designed to improve utilisation and attraction of the parklands and showcase Celtic and Ngoorabul connections and culture.

Council included this project in the list of projects to be funded under the Public Spaces Legacy Program, which has been successful for the full project cost of \$2,000,000. The next step is to obtain quotations to undertake detailed design and final costing of the project. Council can expect 10% of the project in the current financial year, which will be an amount of \$200,000.

Full funding is dependent on Council improving development application approval turnaround times.

The ASSMB has created two (2) new interactive 'things to do' with cultural relevance at the Australian Standing Stones. The Human Sundial is one project and the second is 'Brandubh' which is an interactive Celtic strategy game.

Both projects are funded under the Federal Government Bushfire funding.

LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Local businesses can access free self-paced crisis marketing training conducted by Brand Local. To access the course please follow the link <https://www.brandlocal.com/000473-73>

PLATFORMS, PROJECTS, INITIATIVES, FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

Tourism Packages & Itinerary Planner is a new and innovative web-based system that will provide a seamless end-to-end experience for discovery, planning and booking trips for Regional Australia. Councillors were presented with the concept at a Councillor Workshop in 2020.

The platform will benefit local business, community and Government with the aspiration of benefiting Regional Australia into the future by enhancing and improving local tourism outcomes.

The final proposal and business case are completed and an application for funding has been submitted to the BLER Fund on 28 January 2021.

The Glen Innes Highlands **Business & Community Hub (Physical)** project will create a central place where community and council come together with a common purpose of creating a thriving local economy and a socially prosperous community.

This is a key initiative from the new PLACE Strategy and Action Plan for Glen Innes Highlands. An application for funding has been submitted to the BLER Fund on 28 January 2021.

The funding would enable the fit-out for an inspiring training facility to run workshops and programs, as well as enabling the attraction of more conferences and business events. The funding would enable programs to be conducted at the Hub that support the breadth of community needs including a start-up incubator.

Glen Innes Highlands **Business and Community Hub (Digital)** is a project that creates a Business and Community Hub utilising the Localised platform to provide our community with a central online space where they can connect, support and collaborate from each other with the objective of reducing local economic leakage through the 'marketplace' function.

The Highlands Hub – Business was launched in April 2020 and now has 78 businesses registered on the platform.

Highlands Hub – Developing the Community platform has been briefed to Localised to design and develop to provide a digital space for community to connect and communicate as well as housing a local jobs and candidate function to enable local jobs to be advertised and local candidates to find opportunities.

The **BREED Australia Start-up Incubator Hub** is an education program which will deliver know-how and mentors to start ups seeking to establish and validate their business ideas. It will assist micro and small businesses develop a vision to become large enterprises by growing their domestic sales and capturing niche overseas markets.

BREED Australia has been successful in its **Expression of Interest (EOI)** to fund a start-up incubator in Glen Innes Highlands through the Entrepreneurs' Programme. Council is collaborating with BREED Australia to move to the next stage of the funding application process.

RECOGNISE AND SUPPORT THE AGRICULTURAL SECTOR AS THE MOST SIGNIFICANT LOCAL INDUSTRY WITHIN THE LGA

AGRI-INNOVATION BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Following the successful launch of the Glen Innes **Agri-Innovation Business Development Program (AIBDP)** in late November 2020 the first workshop was held on 3 December 2020 with attendance by 18 participants.

An excellent mix of on-farm business opportunities exist within the group including value-add, native grass grain production, gin made with botanicals, branded produce, product diversification (repurposing waste into value-add products) to decrease waste and on-farm innovation. Within the group dynamic there is strong potential for collaboration.

Workshop One (1) of the AIBDP introduced participants to a 'Values Framework'. Participants were asked to complete a worksheet and encouraged to have a conversation discussing their core values, and how they can best align these values with their business, family and personal goals.

Participants were also asked to introduce themselves, their business and what they aimed to get out of the Business Development Program. This session enabled participants to begin to collaborate and understand how they can develop a strong cluster of agritourism experiences, attracting visitors from within and outside the New England Region.

GRANTS AND FUNDING

December 2020 and January 2021 were very busy months for grant applications with deadlines for BLER following Council's resolution to support three (3) applications including:

1. A Cultural Precinct Package comprising upgrades to the Wilson Park Sporting Precinct including upgrades to the proposed Warwick Twigg Indoor Sports Centre, upgrades to the Skate Park and Glen Innes Aquatic Centre and improvements to access to these facilities;

2. An application for a major tourism product development comprising the development of the Glen Innes to Ben Lomond section of the New England Rail Trail; and
3. A business and industry package including upgrades to the Dumaresq Street Industrial area, development of a tourism package and itinerary platform, and further develops the Highlands Business and Community Hub concept.

Following discussion with the grant's administrators around the application requirements the above three (3) project packages were divided into six (6) separate applications which are outlined in Table 1.3 – Grants Applications Approved 2020-2021 below.

Council also supported the **Glen Innes Arts Council (GIAC)** in an application to the **Restart Investment to Sustain and Expand (RISE)** Fund for \$1,053,944.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

GRANTS – FINANCIAL YEAR SUMMARY

| Description | 2020-2021 | 2019-2020 | 2018-2019 | 2017-2018 |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|--------------------|
| Number of Grants Approved | 11 | 11 | 29 | 12 |
| Total | \$4,646,000 | \$4,504,252 | \$11,005,216 | \$1,051,535 |
| Number of Unsuccessful Grants | 2 | 4 | 6 | 0 |
| Total | \$4,326,548 | \$1,880,691 | \$1,837,753 | \$0 |

Table 1.2 – Grants Financial Year Summary

GRANTS – DETAILS AND VALUE OF GRANTS APPROVED

| Grant Description | Value of Grant |
|---|-----------------------|
| Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant (RTBR) – Stream 2 – Escape Rooms | \$145,000 |
| Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant (RTBR) – Stream 2 – National Park Soundtrails – Joint application with NEHC \$248,680 total application - \$120,000 promotional programme allocation to be led by GIS | \$120,000 |
| Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant (RTBR) – Stream 2 – ACF and Minerama Events – Joint application with DCNO | \$20,000 |
| Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant (RTBR) – Stream 1- Application 1012 - GlenRock | \$20,000 |
| Regional Tourism Bushfire Recovery Grant (RTBR) – Stream 1- Application 1012 - GlenFest | \$10,000 |
| NSW Safer Roads/Federal Black Spot program – 3 Projects within the LGA (Bald Knob Road Approved) | \$398,500 |
| Fixing Local Roads - Round 1 - NSW Government - Furracabad Road Project | \$900,000 |
| Bridges Renewal Program (BRP) Round 5 and Heavy Vehicle Safety and Productivity Program (HVSPP) – Yarrow Creek Bridge Renewal | \$472,500 |
| Essential Public Asset Reconstruction Works. Disaster Recovery. Old Grafton Road Bridge at Wyaliba over Mann River | \$2,300,000 |
| The Festival of Light – Summer Fund. Feel the Light lighting event. | \$10,000 |
| Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) Phase 2 Stream 1. Wyaliba Anniversary Distraction Event, Fire and Seasons Calendar, Recovery & Resilience Plan and Council-led Community Grants Program | \$250,000 |
| Total value of grants approved | \$4,646,000 |

*Table 1.3 – Grants Applications Approved 2020-21***GRANTS – DETAILS AND VALUE OF GRANTS UNSUCCESSFUL**

| Grant Description | Value of Grant |
|--|-----------------------|
| NSW Safer Roads/Federal Black Spot Program – two (2) projects within the LGA | \$4,316,548 |
| Business Events Boost Program | \$10,000 |
| Total value of grants unsuccessful | \$4,326,548 |

Table 1.4 – Grant Applications Unsuccessful 2020-21

GRANTS – LODGED AND PENDING DECISION

| Grant Description | Value of Grant |
|---|-----------------------|
| Bushfire Community Recovery and Resilience Fund (BCRRF) Phase 2 Stream 2. Mental Health Training, Remote Work and Leadership Capacity Building Programs, Mentor Walks and Marketing | \$300,000 |
| Fixing Country Bridges (FCB) Round One. 5 Bridges in total. Shannon Vale Road bridge over Mann River, Mount Mitchell bridge over Yarrow Creek, Wentworth Street bridge over Rocky Ponds Creek and Furracabad Road over Furracabad Creek | \$4,430,600 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - Tourism Packages and Itinerary Planner | \$801,190 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - New England Rail Trail Stage 1 - Glen Innes to Ben Lomond | \$8,721,095 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - Highlands Business and Community Hub and Programs | \$616,861 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - Infrastructure Shared Pathways, Carpark and Dumaresq Street Industrial Area | \$772,720 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - Warwick Twigg Indoor Sports Stadium Upgrades - Stage 2 | \$1,000,000 |
| Bushfire Local Economic Recovery Fund (BLER) - Sporting Precinct Skate Park and Aquatic Centre Heat Pump | \$550,001 |
| Community Grants Hub – Life Choices Sensory Garden | \$30,000 |
| Fixing Local Roads Round 2 - OTTA Seal Eight Unsealed Roads. Strathbogie Road, West Furracabad Road, Pinkett Road, Mount Mitchell Road, Maybole Road, Yarraford Road, Ten Mile Road, Tent Hill Road | \$3,019,278 |
| Total value of grant applications lodged and pending decision | \$20,241,745 |

*Table 1.5 – Grant Applications Lodged & Pending Decision 2020-21***(c) Options**

Nil.

IMPLICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED**(a) Financial**

Nil.

(b) Governance/Policy

Nil.

(c) Legislative/Statutory

Nil.

(d) Risk

Nil.

(e) Social

Nil.

(f) Environmental

Nil.

(g) Economic

Nil.

(h) Asset Management

Nil.

CONSULTATION

(a) External

Nil.

(b) Internal

The information contained in this report has been collected in consultation with various staff members of Council who oversee the respective services that are provided by the Economic Development key function.

LINK/S TO THE DELIVERY PROGRAM/OPERATIONAL PLAN (DPOP)

The information contained within this report demonstrates the work carried out by staff in achieving the strategic objectives and delivery actions as outlined in Council's Community Strategic Plan 2017-2027, Delivery Program 2017-2021 and Operational Plan and Budget for the 2020-2021 Financial Year.

CONCLUSION

The information contained in this report deliver updates to Council on the key activities undertaken in Council's Economic Development function for the months of December 2020 and January 2021.

ATTACHMENTS

There are no annexures to this report.