

MINUTES

THE ROSS LOCAL DISTRICT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE READING ROOM, ROSS, ON TUESDAY 4th OCTOBER 2022, COMMENCING AT 11.15AM.

1 PRESENT

Arthur Thorpe (Chairperson), Christine Robinson, Michael Smith, Jill Bennett, Sally Langridge, Ann Thorpe (Hon Secretary).

2 IN ATTENDANCE

Dr Neil Davidson, Councillor Michael Polley, Councillor Janet Lambert, Margaret Papa, Herbert Johnson, Leisa Gordon, Phil Brown (until 11:55am), Keith Blacklock (until 11:55), Dennis Rule, Martin Cullodie, Russell Thompson.

3 APOLOGIES

Councillor Andrew Calvert, Marcus Rodrigues, Helen Davies, Candy Hurren.

4 DECLARATION OF ANY PECUNIARY INTEREST BY A MEMBER OF A SPECIAL COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL

In accordance with the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993*, Part 5, S48A – S56, a member of a Special Committee must not participate in any discussion or vote on any matter in respect to which the member:

- a) has an interest; or
- b) is aware or ought to be aware that a close associate has an interest.

A member has an interest in a matter if the matter was decided in a particular manner, receive or have an expectation of receiving or likely to receive a pecuniary benefit or pecuniary detriment.

It should be noted that any person declaring an interest is required to notify the General Manager, in writing, of the details of any interest declared within 7 days of the declaration.

Nil Declared

5 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

*That the minutes of the meeting of the Ross Local District Committee held on **Tuesday 6th September, 2022** be confirmed as a true and correct record of proceedings.*

Christine Robinson / Jill Bennett

6 BUSINESS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

6.1 Clearing The Macquarie River

The issues of concern are infestations of Cumbungi weeds and debris from previous floods needing removal.

Correspondence with various Government Departments regarding weed management and debris removal have been forwarded to Council, who advise that they are in discussions with NRET (previously DPIPWE) and will advise when spraying is scheduled. A low river level is necessary for debris clearance.

Probably summer before the river is low enough to commence work.

No further update. Matter ongoing.

6.2 Condition Of Trees in Ross

Council's Works Manager, Mr Leigh McCullagh, has advised that the Victorian tree inspection company ENSPEC have inspected the Elms in Church Street, and will be returning to Ross in April to inspect the trees in other streets.

The August inspection was conducted and NMMC are awaiting a final report. ENSPEC conducted inspections for a number of Tasmanian Council areas, therefore the report may not be available for some time.

Awaiting report. Matter ongoing.

6.3 Weather Damage to Ross Reading Room

The cornerstones and the bottom course of sandstone bricks at the entrance of the reading room are weathering away and in need of attention.

NMC has carried out cleaning and rectification of the southern gutters of the building, which should now route rainwater directly to the stormwater drains. It is still to be determined if a drain does in fact run along the eastern base of the building.

Inspection revealed no drain has been found. The fine fill currently in the trench will be removed and coarser aggregate will be inserted to aid drainage. The sandstone is actually in quite good condition and remediation work to the damaged sandstone will be carried out by a stonemason once the weather warms up.

No further update. Matter ongoing.

6.4 Missing (Stolen) Street Sign Nivelles Street

Customer request 61740 has been lodged with Council requesting the missing (stolen) sign be reinstalled. Chair followed up and was advised that the sign was ordered 12 months ago, however has not yet arrived.

Matter ongoing.

6.5 Damaged Wall South End Of Church Street

Wall at the top (south end) of Church Street has top stones missing and looks very disordered. Customer request 61699 has been raised requesting rectification. Council's Works Manager has advised that repairs to this wall will be a major undertaking; it almost needs rebuilding.

Part of the issue is sourcing the appropriate sandstone as a large amount required.

No update. Matter ongoing.

6.6 Damaged Sandstone Kerbing.

Kerbing in the centre car parking area opposite the Town Hall has been damaged by a truck, needs to be repaired.

Chair has asked Council to repair the kerbing in conjunction with the sandstone wall at the southern end of Church Street, refer Customer request 61699.

No further update. Matter ongoing.

6.7 Warning Sign High Street Pedestrian Rail Crossing

The warning sign on the village side of the High Street pedestrian railway crossing is dilapidated and requires upgrading. Chair advised that Council has been instructed by TasRail that the pedestrian crossing is dangerous and must be closed off.

Chair to follow up with Mr McCullough.

A number of Ross residents are unhappy with the closure of this crossing, including Mr Rule, who addressed the meeting and distributed correspondence he received from TasRail. Mr Rule said the rumours circulating were that the RLDC recommended the crossing be closed, however he knew this to be untrue as he had documentation from TasRail stating they were insisting it be closed. TasRail advised that the crossing does not meet their safety standards. If a crossing is required, it is up to NMC to put forward a plan to reinstitute the crossing to TasRail and they would consider it. However, NMC would be required to fund the crossing.

A number of Ross residents and visitors use this crossing, including those that camp at the sports ground. High Street itself was originally open to car and foot traffic many years ago, however no-one can recall why it was closed off. The rail line is a double line and this issue would make the pedestrian crossing more complicated.

Community members advised the Committee, that NMC staff had already closed the crossing. Mr Brown stated to the meeting that the committee recommended the crossing should be closed. The Chair advised that at no time did the Committee ask for the crossing to be closed, the directive came from TasRail directly to the NMC on safety grounds. The Chair then read the previous meeting minutes, which stated:

“Councils Works Manager advised that they will not be replacing the signs if the crossing is to be closed. Chair mentioned to the Works Manager that it would be pertinent to close the crossing before any houses are built on the new subdivision adjacent to the rail crossing, before residents came to expect an open pedestrian railway crossing”.

Mr Brown and Mr Blacklock then left the meeting 11. 55.

After discussions, the Chair advised the RLDC would liaise with NMC regarding the prospect of legalising and rebuilding the crossing. At this point Mr Rule was asked if he was happy with the outcome, as he was the person initially raising the issue. Mr Rule replied he was happy with the discussion and outcome.

Councillors Lambert and Polley would take this matter back to NMC and Chair to follow up formally with NMC.

Mr Rule’s email from TasRail which he tabled at the meeting is attached, and forms part of these minutes.

6.8 Bus Parking Sign for School Bus Area

Discussion was held regarding the correspondence received from State Growth and NMC regarding signage for the morning pick up area for the Launceston Redline school bus.

Committee does not support the installation of a “buses only between 7:00 – 7:30am” sign being installed outside the historic Ross Post Office. There are no other parking advisory signs in the main heritage block in Ross. NMC staff were understanding of this fact, however State Growth were harder to convince.

Discussions have been held with the Redline Bus Driver, who has no problems with picking up outside the Town Hall in Bridge Street. Awaiting return from leave of State Growth’s Brendan Moloney to progress this matter further.

7 NEW BUSINESS

7.1 Dr Neil Davidson, Restoration Ecologist, Senior Lecturer UTAS

Presented on the Species Hotels site, tree planting around Ross including on either side of the Midlands highway where it crosses the Macquarie River at Ross. The biodiversity of the Midlands, the experiments being conducted to identify hardy trees that will suit the new climate of the Midlands and the concept of landscape scale connection.

The Species Hotel Site, has been a multi-disciplinary project between a number of disciplines at UTAS. Dr Louise Wallace, (Lecturer in the School of Architecture and Design at UTAS) thought to set an exercise where Architectural Design students could be involved in a totally different design field. They in turn liaised with botanists, ecologist, etc., to complete this exercise.

After 200 years of farming, we are all aware of how the landscape has changed. One concern is that birds, bats and small animals have nowhere to hide. Neil became involved as he has been working on rural tree decline and is aware of Julian von Bibra’s interest in this area.

The projects aim was to make a biodiversity corridor, via the most significant natural remnants in the landscape. There are two significant remnants; one is through Ross and the other through Epping Forrest.

Bush Heritage, DPIPW, the University and local farmers are all working together to achieve a successful outcome. Corridors along the river which are not good for stock, are happily being returned into riparian corridors.

How do you establish plants in not ideal conditions? The project used tree plantation techniques which has worked very well, where other models have failed. Climate change also dictates what trees / plants will grow. The project has so far, 1,800 hectares of trees / plants. Also need to consider that a warmer climate will change the evaporation rate and cause desiccation of the landscape. Dr Davidson has collected tree populations from all over Tasmania and looked at which genus will survive in the altered climate. Normally they would grow local indigenous plants, but now climate provenance is changing. A number of PhD students looking at animals and what plants they will need to survive.

This is one of the few projects in the world where there are multi-disciplinary units working together to achieve the success of the project.

Dr Davidson said that education is clearly needed; an experiment where school children were shown African animals versus Australian endangered species and the children could pick the African ones over the Australian ones. Another project that is very popular is where outdoor classroom teaching at night shows the animals in their habitat and the information is absorbed by both children and adults alike.

When asked how the RLDC could assist, it was mentioned that a sign pointing to where the Species Hotel is and what it is would be of assistance. The Committee will follow up with NMC regarding this request, once Dr Davidson has formalised and advised the RLDC as to what the sign should contain.

Councillor Lambert mentioned it would be a great story for the Midland Courier (Lana Best) to publish and enable the information to be given to the public.

7.2 Round Table Discussion

A Thorpe

- Advised the insulation and wire that had been left by Tas Networks has been cleaned up and removed.
- Sports ground sign near the Town Hall; Chair has requested either remove or add additional signs to the next two eastern intersections.
- Apologised that he had neglected to bring the matter of washed out footpaths to Works Managers attention, however will include in the next lot of requests. If Michael would be able to obtain some photos, this would help explain the situation.

Clr M Polley

- Addressed the meeting and stated that being a member of any committee can be a thankless task, however he felt the committee was doing a good job and were quite passionate about their town. Clr Polley also confirmed that Minutes of all NMC Committees are included in the meeting papers for Monthly Council Meetings, and are also on the NMC website for public viewing.

S Langridge

- Town Hall guttering needs cleaning out as it has vegetation growing in it. This is causing

flooding which is leaking into the supper room. Chair to photograph and raise Customer Request.

M Smith

- There is a non-council sign on the footpath outside the small playground near the swimming pool, which looks very decrepit and untidy, and which has been there for a considerable period of time. Could this please be removed.

Margaret Papa

- Margaret presented a petition asking NMC to allow dogs on leashes in the Village Green and to install a doggie bag container. As a business owner opposite the Green, she sees visitors on a regular basis with dogs on and off leash, ignoring the signs. Locals would use the green on a more regular basis, if dogs were allowed. Discussions followed which included the issue of Tasmanian State law not allowing dogs within 10 metres of a children's playground. The petition was handed to Councillor Lambert for submission. This matter will be discussed by Council to look at possible solutions.

8 NEXT MEETING/CLOSURE

The Chair closed the meeting at 12:09 pm.

Next meeting – Tuesday 1st November 2022 commencing 11.15am in the Ross Reading Room.

Closure of Railway Crossing in High Street Ross Tasmania.

From: Jennifer Jarvis <Jennifer.Jarvis@tasrail.com.au>

Sent: Monday, 3 October 2022 10:49 AM

To: taourist52@hotmail.com <taourist52@hotmail.com>

Cc: Online Enquiries <onlineenquiries@tasrail.com.au>

Subject: FW: Closure of Railway Crossing in High Street Ross Tasmania.

Hello Dennis, thank you for contacting TasRail.

The reasons why the legacy crossing at High Street is closed include (1) it is not a formal and licensed/authorised crossing (2) it has not been constructed as a crossing and does not have a safe surface nor other safety controls required to protect public safety and (3) it does not comply with the required Australian Standard (AS1742:7) for pedestrian crossings.

The informal status of the crossing was identified in 2021 when TasRail and the Northern Midlands Council were finalising their joint Safety Interface Agreement (SIA). The SIA is a mandated requirement under National Rail Safety Law and applies to all level crossings. Under this Law, a pedestrian crossing has the same meaning as a Level Crossing meaning the NMC Council has the same legal obligations as apply to any other road/rail crossing within its municipality. The SIA sets out the respective roles and responsibilities for the responsible management of all rail interfaces within the municipality including all Level Crossings and any other relevant interfacing assets such as cycleways etc. The SIA also lists each of these interfaces along with other information including the surface type, safety controls etc. FYI I have included below an extract from the current NMC SIA for listed Council Pedestrian Crossings and which specifically includes a footnote about the status of the informal access at High Street.

In short, it is a matter for the Council to determine if it wants to make an application for a pedestrian crossing on High Street. The Council is aware of the process to apply for a pedestrian crossing on High Street. FYI it's a matter of the Council submitting a formal request/application to TasRail, and then TasRail and NMC undertaking a formal and joint risk assessment to determine the required safety controls commensurate with the location and use. Council would be responsible for the cost to install a compliant pedestrian crossing.

I can confirm that TasRail has not received any such request or application, and therefore the access remains closed. I trust the above information provides clarity as to the reasons for the closure as well as the process for an authorised crossing at High Street should Council wish to pursue this.

Kind regards Jennifer