

MINUTES

WBSA BOARD MEETING 5:00 PM 4 AUGUST 2009 – NANNUP

- 1. Present:** Margaret Bird (Chairperson), Shane Collie, Alan Lamb, Tony Goode, Don Punch, Tim Clynch, Shirley Broadhurst, Roger Downing, Tony Pratico (Deputy Delegate - Councillor Bridgetown-Greenbushes), Paul Omodei, Carol Pinkerton (observer – for Barbara Dunnet), Greg Power (Dept of Agriculture), Jodie Bowling (Dept of Agriculture).
- 2. Apologies:** Wade DeCampo, Brian Moore, Jeremy Hubble, Barbara Dunnet, Louise Kingston, Brian O'Hare.
- 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting:**
Motion: That the minutes of the meeting on 2nd of June 2009 (held in Manjimup) are accepted as a correct record.

Moved – Tony Pratico

Seconded – Shane Collie

Carried

Report on Business Arising:

Matter: That the CEO arranges a workshop to review the Strategic Plan. The CEO has discussed this further with a number of stakeholders and is now looking to conduct a review after the release of the consultancy project into Local Government Reform and the October Shire Council elections.

Matter: Royalties for Regions – Country Local Government Fund. The CEO will prepare a modified table showing indicative funding based on the agreed allocation approach for dissemination amongst the Working Party before submitting for formal approval at the next Board meeting. A table has been circulated and approved by all shires.

Matter: Recreation Trails Project. The shire of Boyup Brook had rejected an initial request for seed funding for a project officer. Therefore, in respect of this particular project, the Alliance decided to deactivate the project unless a positive funding outcome from at least one of the two funding submissions lodged was achieved. Subsequently, funding submissions through Lotterywest and the South West Development Commission (Royalties for Regions) have been successful and the seed funding request has now been resubmitted.

Matter: Honorary Membership of the Alliance. It was agreed to elect Mr Omodei as an Honorary Member and accordingly, the CEO was asked to write a letter extending an invitation to join the Alliance Board. A letter was written and Mr. Omodei has accepted our invitation and been inducted into the Alliance.

4. Correspondence (as circulated):

Motion: That the Correspondence in was noted and the Correspondence out was approved.

Moved – Tony Pratico

Seconded – Shirley Broadhurst

Carried

5. Guest Speaker(s) – Greg Power and Jodie Bowling (Dept of Agriculture)

The role of the Agricultural Department has changed with the new State Government placing a greater emphasis on focussing more strongly on economic development. The Government was elected at a time when the State was experiencing a high level of growth and the economy was robust and this therefore created a climate of strongly expanding work for the Department. Since that initial period the economy has faltered and this has had an impact on how the Department can operate.

It was recently decided to form small teams of two to three people to work in designated areas of the state to help develop the agriculture industry. Greg and Jodie are working primarily on intensive agriculture projects assisting them to get off the ground between here and Geraldton. There are other units covering pastoral regions, the north of the state and less intensive agriculture zones. The purpose of the teams is to help significant projects in a range of ways including removing or reducing government blockages (e.g. water, power, environmental issues), providing expertise and generally to encourage setting up enterprises. About seven or eight major projects have been assisted in recent times. The teams also assist major investors who come to the Department from interstate and overseas to setup here by helping with Tax advice and other localised information. Greg and Jodie are trying to interest mining companies to be involved in agricultural enterprises, for example in rehabilitating mining operations (e.g. Collie mine site – by using water in mine voids for marron farming).

They recognise that there are key issues of infrastructure (power, roads etc) and are trying to facilitate fairer arrangements e.g. for getting power connected – at the moment not all parties are being treated equally. The team is trying to bring these sorts of matters to the state government. The teams are also actively engaged in promoting the place of agriculture in other Departments. For example, ensuring that the Department of Planning is making due provision for agricultural precincts with appropriate buffers etc. However, we need to be much faster in assisting new enterprises and unfortunately other states are able to move projects along for major investors faster than in WA. This is part of our lobbying role. We should be optimistic about being able to attract people away from the Murray Darling region because we have much better access to water and have a more reliable climate.

Greg and Jodie are committed to being in our region for two days a month. Whilst the team has only recently been in place, quite a few things have been happening. For instance, green tea production is being undertaken and evaluated,

dairies have been approved, export markets opened, a noodle/pasta production factory has been setup, an investigation into seaweed processing (for fish feed etc) is underway and lucerne pellets are being exported into Japan. The water issue remains a key issue and the team is continuing to work with people on this matter. Carbon trading is becoming increasingly important with serious questions being raised in relation to impacts on agriculture.

In summary, Greg and Jodie are actively engaged in the Warren Blackwood and are keen to work with the Alliance, the SWDC and other key stakeholders to promote agriculture. They have a goal of contributing to increasing agricultural investment in WA of \$30 million per annum. Following his opening address, Greg responded to a range of questions from Alliance members.

6. Discussion/Status of Other Key Regional Identified/Possible Issues inc:

- **Royalties for Regions**

The table showing allocations of funding by project and shire was re presented. A number of potential issues were touched upon such as how funding would be impacted if project delays were experienced (Nannup is unlikely to spend their allocation for the Recreation Centre Project this financial year) and the particular requirements of the acquittal process. The CEO advised that specific arrangements were still being determined and some conditions were being reviewed by Departmental staff such as Dr Chris Berry. Our request to improve the flexibility of spending provisions and allowing for Alliance overheads were again matters to be determined or reviewed.

Motion: That the Royalties for Regions project funding for 2009/2010 be endorsed, subject to revision where project parameters and other salient information emerges.

Moved – Tony Pratico

Seconded – Shane Collie

Carried

- **Recreation Trails Project**

Carol Pinkerton provided an update. We were very pleased to have been successful in our grant submissions and were now awaiting funding contributions from shire councils. This was especially important in order to engage a project officer. Carol also went to the Trails Conference in Perth. The 50 Top State Trails internet site was demonstrated and we are expecting to become linked with this facility. Feedback from the recently held Camping Show demonstrated that there was a high level of interest from people wanting to undertake activities in the Blackwood River Valley. Knowledge of access and egress points was important and mapping people were about to commence working on this aspect. Carol stressed the importance of this project in terms of providing impetus for our tourism industry and the economic flow on effects, supplemented by the increased exposure for our region.

Following the reactivation of the Project, Nannup, Bridgetown and Boyup Brook shires were in the process of reviewing their budgets to have their project contributions reinstated. The CEO mentioned that the data collection phase would commence Thursday 6th August with Canoe WA staff, based in Bridgetown, kayaking down the river.

- **Timber Industry – Native and Plantation Update**

The CEO, in the absence of Louise Kingston, advised that there is a facility through the Warren Blackwood Small Business Centre whereby people could be provided with advice regarding matters such as contracts and legal issues. Information on obtaining specialist services could also be supplied where warranted. Any leaseholders seeking support were encouraged to contact the Centre in Manjimup for further assistance. Paul Omodei noted the difficulties within the FPC and that they in effect were being reviewed – this was indicative of structural problems for the way in which the industry operated. He also made mention of a range of other outstanding industry issues.

- **Local Government Reform Project**

Shane Collie provided background information on the project making reference to the recent update letter from the Alliance CEO on this matter and the notable success for the Alliance in obtaining a \$75,000 Government grant. This enabled us to, after developing a scope of works, call for consultancy submissions. A total of seven consultants provided submissions for the project and then Shane, Jeremy and Tony met to evaluate and select a consultant to undertake the work. In the end an easy decision was made and the best people available were selected from a team lead by John Gilfellow. The team included Ron Back, Steve Smith and Anne Lake, who were all acknowledged industry leaders in their particular disciplines.

By now each shire will have received and responded to numerous requests for information and survey data to go into the consultancy report. We are on track to have an Interim Report for 31 August and will hopefully have a draft of the Interim Report available before end of August for us to review and to provide feedback. We expect to complete the Final Local Government Reform Report by the end September with the Report issuing early October. The Report would look at various options and make appropriate recommendations. We have deliberately pursued a policy of waiting for the reform project to have made progress before consulting the community because we felt that it was important for the community to have access to quality information.

Carol Pinkerton mentioned attending the Ministers community briefing at Bridgetown and noted that a group of people from Balingup spoke at that meeting in favour of becoming part of the Bridgetown-Greenbushes shire. Tim Clynych advised that Bridgetown-Greenbushes was aware of those sentiments but that they were very sensitive to taking a responsible and non-predatory approach in response and also made it clear that it was up to the community themselves to bring forward those views. Shane expressed frustration at a lack of parameters provided by the Minister when initiating Local Government reform processes. In

particular, it would have been helpful for the Minister to have stated up front what sort of outcomes the Government was seeking in terms of the number and size of shires.

- **Other Issues**

The matter of industrial sites was raised with mention being made of the status of the 2007 regional study. The CEO was requested to ask the Director General of the Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Eric Lumsden) to attend an Alliance meeting to discuss this and other important planning matters.

7. Honorary Member's Introduction – Paul Omodei

Paul was very pleased to be part of the Alliance and looks forward to making contributions. He is optimistic about the future citing the near completion of the new Bunbury Highway and the eventual construction of Mowen Road as having significant impacts. In that regard, it is important to have good strategically placed signage to our region for the travelling public. A lot more people will become exposed to our region with people now looking east of the coast. LG reform was very important and he is keen to have a look at the final Project Report. We should make sure that we try and leverage as much as possible from the amalgamations push to be compensated by grants relief, and possibly endowments of crown land which could then be used for light industry and other developments.

Paul is not sure whether Royalties for Regions funding will in fact, upon proper analysis over time, actually have provided more regional funding compared with previous funding approaches. He stressed the significance of achieving South West Highway improvements, especially south of Manjimup. The question of providing incentives to establish new industry to broaden our economic base was raised. We must not forget the importance of having accommodation available to attract the workforce to meet the needs of new industry and to that end Paul noted the high level of unspent federal Government funds for housing.

Paul made mention of several projects that he was becoming involved including transportable self contained accommodation and a hydrogen production project. Blackwood River was the most undersold feature in the state and we needed to make much better use of this fabulous attraction for our region. Sorting out water issues was becoming increasingly critical.

8. Executive Officers Work Report:

In the previous period good progress had been made in relation to establishing useful contacts with Minister Brendon Grylls and his staff and this activity was very much part of the networking and advocacy components of the Strategic Plan. The LG Reform and Recreation Trails projects were major matters taking up the bulk of his time during the preceding period.

9. Finance Report:

Alliance funds were being expended at a rate commensurate with our Budget. The remaining sticking point for the Budget was a resolution of the Royalties for Regions funding parameters - otherwise everything was on track. Minor adjustments to the Budget had been made to reflect the availability of contributing funds. Those adjustments had been to the Royalties for Regions dividend and to the contingency components.

10. General Business:

Tim Clynch raised the issue of Water Corporation savings in terms of disproportionate regional impacts. He is concerned that perhaps we were an easy target with projects such as in-fill sewerage and the Pemberton to Northcliffe pipeline being delayed. It was agreed that the CEO should contact the Water Corporation and express our concerns.

11. Next Meeting – Tuesday 6th October 2009 at Boyup Brook at 5:00pm