

OBERON COUNCIL

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Present: Peta Heffernan, Community and Customer Services Manager (in the chair);
Tim Charge; Wayne Cooper and Peter Austen, Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust.

Observers: Brian Harman, OPTA; Jennifer Youman, Tourism Development Officer;
Joanne Barton, HR/Special Projects Officer and the Executive Assistant,
Sharon Swannell

Apologies: Mayor Don Fitzpatrick, Councillor Keith Sullivan, Acting General Manager,
Alan McCormack, Andrew Bird and Anna Watt.

Due to the lack of a quorum the meeting progressed as a discussion forum.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 October 2011 were noted as due to the lack of a quorum the previous meeting was held as a discussion forum.

Declarations of Interest

Peter Austen declared a conflict of interest in the agenda item to discuss the proposed privatisation of Jenolan Caves.

Code of Conduct

HR/Special Projects Officer, Joanne Barton provided code of conduct training to the members of the committee.

Product Development Funding – update

Jennifer Youman provided an update in relation to Council's application for Product Development Funding.

The State Government through the Forum of Regional Tourism Organisations (FORTO) has made available a total funding pool of \$3,250,000 for tourism product development initiatives under the Regional Tourism Product Development Funding Program. Each NSW Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) is allocated \$250,000 for product development initiatives within its region.

The Blue Mountains Lithgow Oberon Tourism (BMLOT) will receive these funds and that an allocation of \$20,000 will be made to each of the participating Councils which includes Oberon Council. OPTA has also submitted an application for funding under this program.

Minutes of the Oberon Promotion Committee Meeting Discussion held at the Council Chambers, Oberon on Thursday 2 February 2012, commencing at 9.30am.

General Manager

Chairperson

After some discussion and to meet the criteria of the program the preferred project for the Oberon LGA as recommended by Council officers is the development of a destination based iPhone application (App).

Destination NSW has approved funding for 113 projects, as part of 'Stream One' of the Regional Tourism Product Development Funding program, as announced on 25 January. Full list of approved funding for the Blue Mountains Lithgow Oberon Tourism is as listed below:

- Get in Tonight, Get in Now and Attractions Rewards - \$50,000
- Blue Mountains product and experience visitor touchscreens - \$20,000
- Oberon "on the map" mountain biking and digital visitor app - \$45,000 (in conjunction with OPTA)
- Visitor product directional signage Lithgow (attractions and heritage digital content) - \$45,000
- Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Trails (export ready product content, pricing and booking) - \$35,000
- Commercialisation of indigenous and nature based tourism products - \$35,000
- Regional Festivals Multi Venue Product Content and Online Ticketing Capability – commencing with Roaring 20s Festival - \$20,000

Final confirmation and details for completion dates have yet to be received from Destination NSW / Blue Mountains Lithgow Oberon Tourism.

Jenolan Caves has also received informal advice that they will receive \$122,000 Product Development Funding to be spent in conjunction with the Muggadah Tours.

Jenolan Caves Tourism Facility Privatisation – update

Peter Austen declared a conflict of interest in relation to this item and did not participate in the discussion.

Joanne Barton provided a verbal update in regards to Council's actions to date in relation to this matter.

A report was provided to the December Ordinary Council Meeting outlining the Council's ongoing support for the Jenolan Caves to remain in public ownership and the actions taken to date in relation to the matter. Council resolved to lobby both State and Federal Governments to commence discussions to develop a joint public funding model for the ongoing viable operation of the Jenolan Caves.

At this point Brian Harman indicated that the report which was provided to Council did not accurately represent the views of OPTA and OBA. He indicated concern with the record of a meeting held between Council, OPTA and OBA last year and all views should have been presented to Council.

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Brian advised that he is definitely concerned about the current operating arrangements of the Jenolan Caves and the three monthly budget cycle. Brian believes that in the short term the Jenolan Caves should remain under the control of the Trust and the facility should be bought up to standard and in the future some aspects of the operation could be privatised.

He also indicated concern that the minutes of the meeting were not circulated to all who attended the meeting.

Tim Charge also commented that he understood the minutes of the meeting were to be circulated to those who attended the meeting prior to going to Council and this did not occur.

Peta Heffernan requested that Brian put the current views of OPTA in writing to the Council.

Joanne Barton advised that Council will provide a copy of the minutes of the confidential discussion along with a letter outlining the actions to date and seeking the position of Oberon Plateau Tourism Association and Oberon Business Association with respect to this matter.

Wayne Cooper commented that OPTA were keen to see that the process is not delayed and advised that they can call a special Committee Meeting to expedite the process.

Brian Harman commented that it is very important that the expression of support is on the right track and reflects the position of the members. This comment was endorsed by Wayne Cooper and Tim Charge.

Entry Signs to Oberon - update

Jennifer Youman advised that information had been forwarded to Councils Engineering staff to ensure that all signs have the hooks to allow additional signage to be hung onto the bottom of the Welcome to Oberon entry signage. This matter is now complete.

Promotion Board at Jenolan Caves - update

Jennifer Youman has been speaking with Dan Cove of Jenolan Caves to pursue this matter. It is felt that an alternative form of communication which gives guests a flyer or print out of What's On could be an option.

Jennifer is also pursuing options for the possibility of having an area where Android and iPhone Apps about Oberon can be downloaded.

Wayne Cooper commented that a lot of people are still not using the full technology of their electronic devices and whilst we need to keep up with this emerging technology other forms of marketing also need to be engaged.

Peter Austen commented that at this point in time only Telstra phones have network coverage at the Jenolan Caves. There is no wireless hotspot in place at Jenolan Caves.

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General Business

Peta Heffernan advised that there is an opportunity for Council to apply for funding under the Festivals Australia program for the introduction of a new project to an existing festival. As this year is the National Year of Reading and also the National Year of the Farmer a project which enhances these themes is suggested. The applications for funding close on 10th Feb 2012.

Peta has suggested engaging a touring theatre company to perform Shakespeare's "Mid-Summer Nights Dream" in one of the local gardens. The funding requires letters of support and Peta asked both OPTA and OBA if they would be willing to provide this.

Jennifer has had preliminary discussions with Mayfield Garden in relation to this, however this is a very busy period for them and they are unlikely to be able to assist.

Peter Austen commented that there is an opportunity to expand this concept in future years at Jenolan Caves.

Recommendation to Council: That an application be submitted to the Festivals Australia Program to engage a touring theatre company to perform Shakespeare's Mid-Summer Nights Dream in Oberon as an additional activity for the Oberon and Villages Festival.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Oberon Promotions Committee is scheduled to be held on Thursday 5 April 2012 commencing at 9.30 am.

This concluded the business and the meeting rose at 10.27am.

Confirmed this _____ of _____ 2012.

General Manager

Chairperson

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