

## 5.6. BLOOMFIELD TRACK TRAIL PROJECT

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**DEPARTMENT:** CEO Unit

### RECOMMENDATION

**That Council notes the progress of the Bloomfield Track Project.**

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bloomfield Track project is a multi-agency project that was identified to enhance the visitor experience, share knowledge and Indigenous culture while highlighting the Shire's environmental assets North of the Daintree River. In 2014/2015 Council committed \$10,000 towards the delivery of the project, and gratefully acknowledges the financial, design and content contribution by WTMA to the development of the e-book. Officers also acknowledge and thank all participants, particularly Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation and the Traditional Owners and Elders of the Eastern Kuku Yalanji peoples. A link to the e-book is at the end of this report.

### BACKGROUND

The concept of promoting the Bloomfield Track as a wilderness drive experience and the history associated with it, has been discussed for many years.

In August 2014, Council took on the coordination role for this initiative and formed the initial key stakeholder group comprising Douglas Shire Council, Wet Tropics Management Authority (WTMA), Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council and Cook Shire Council, later to be joined by Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation (Jabalbina) and Tourism Port Douglas Daintree (TPDD).

The initial discussions for the project proposed a number of interpretative signs along the 33 kilometers of Track. The general consensus was that signage needed to be tasteful and allow visitors to gain and experience a greater understanding of the Indigenous values and cultural history, and the wilderness experience, including an introduction to the flora and fauna of the area.

The group agreed to develop an interpretative signage plan which helps present the Track as a tourist experience, promotes the region, promotes the cultures (Indigenous and historical), the environments and community values.

Given the collaborative nature of the project and the different elements required there were a number of stakeholder meetings held throughout the year. These meetings progressed the project concept from only physical signage along the Track to a project that would take the form of a web-based application such as an e-book.

Many options for dissemination of information were explored and disregarded due to the impact on the environment, the ability to share and update content appropriately and to ensure the currency of the information.

Options that were considered included:

- Interpretative signage along the road - concern of signage pollution and lack of suitable pull over areas in the environmentally sensitive wilderness.
- Hard copy maps – Currently a range of maps are available and would not hold the content required.

In recognition of importance of the wealth of Kuku Yalanji culture that may be shared through the e-book and to ensure information was correct and inclusive, Jabalbina was engaged jointly by Council and WTMA to identify and facilitate meetings with the Traditional Owner groups, each of whom provided very valued information.

To make the e-book accessible, there are sections throughout that are narrated and have wildlife calls identified with text and images. The inclusion of audio also provides opportunity for the Traditional Owners to share appropriate Stories telling of the significance of certain areas along the Track.

Extensive engagement was conducted with the four identified Traditional Owner groups and other stakeholders with an interest being:

- Douglas Shire Historical Society
- Bloomfield Track author, Bill Wilkie
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland
- Bloomfield Track tour operator, Mike D`Arcy.

Feedback from a tourist perspective was provided along with an emphasis on ensuring that the infrastructure to support the project, such as scenic stops, was maintained.

Officers explored the options available to providing a wifi type of arrangement at the newly re-developed Daintree Gateway. Provision of wifi would encourage people to download the book prior to travelling across on the ferry.

Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service has since offered to assist with the establishment of wifi at the Daintree Gateway and this is still being explored.

Council had committed \$10,000 in the 2014 – 2015 Annual Budget towards the project and WTMA had committed \$15,000.

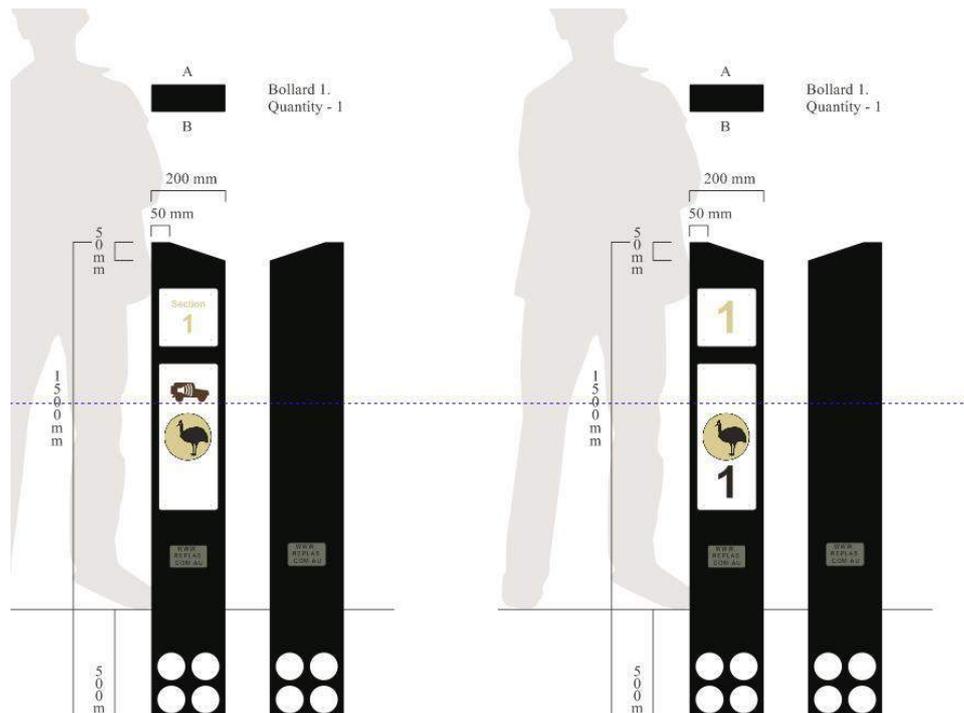
## **COMMENT**

This project has provided an opportunity for many organisations to collaborate and produce a product that is innovative in the way it shares information and in the way it is delivered.

Engaging with the Traditional Owners to share stories and information about areas of cultural significance has resulted in an e-book that not only focuses on the environment, but one that highlights the importance of Indigenous culture in the Douglas Shire.

The e-book will be marked at the beginning of the Track at Cape Tribulation.

This will then be post marked along the 33 kilometers of track to Bloomfield Falls with identifying markers.



Housed on the Council web site, marketing will be conducted by Council in conjunction with WTMA, TPDD and TTNQ.

There is also opportunity for the Douglas Chamber of Commerce, Daintree Marketing Cooperation and business throughout the Shire to promote the e-book to visitors.

There has been discussion regarding the opportunity to provide advertising via the e-book but this is an option that requires further exploration.

## PROPOSAL

That Council note the progress of the Bloomfield Track Project and the final draft of the e-book developed by WTMA in conjunction with the key stakeholder group.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Council has committed \$10,000 in the budget towards the project and WTMA has also committed \$15,000.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

**Economic:** The e-book provides the opportunity to deliver an economic stimulus to businesses north of the Daintree River.

**Environmental:** There will be limited impact upon the environment due to this project. Signs will be constructed from recycled plastic materials. The wifi configuration is anticipated to utilise existing infrastructure.

**Social:** The inclusive and collaborative nature of the project has seen input from communities that are traditionally vulnerable and unheard. The information and cultural story telling will significantly enhance the visitor experience and appreciation of this magnificent location within the Wet Tropics.

## **CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE**

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### **Corporate Plan 2014-2019 Initiatives:**

#### **Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities**

*1.2.4 - Network, advocate and partner with stakeholders to achieve positive outcomes.*

#### **Theme 2 - Building a Sustainable Economic Base**

*2.1.4 - Identify, resource and implement opportunities for engagement in the digital economy.*

*2.2.5 - Expand tourism and agricultural business opportunities and benefits through collaborative planning and promotion.*

*2.4.2 - Collaborate with communities in the north of the Shire to identify and pursue opportunities for increased tourism market share.*

#### **Theme 4 - Engage, Plan, Partner**

*4.2.2 - Provide leadership to secure beneficial social, environmental and economic outcomes for the Shire.*

*4.2.4 - Identify opportunities to form partnerships with the Traditional Owners.*

### **Operational Plan 2015-2016 Actions:**

This project was identified in the 2014 – 2015 Operational Plan. Due to the extensive engagement required with key stakeholders it was continued into the 2015 – 2016 Operational Plan.

## **COUNCIL'S ROLE**

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

<b>Advocate</b>	Supporting communities and groups by advocating for certain actions from other organisations (usually other levels of government)
<b>Facilitator</b>	Bringing people together to develop solutions to problems
<b>Information Provider</b>	Bringing people together to develop solutions to problems.

## CONSULTATION

### Internal:

Consultation has taken place with the Mayor and Councillors, the General Manager of Operations, General Manager of Corporate Services, Executive Officer, the Manager of Infrastructure and various engineers and officers from the CEO Unit and Civil Works department.

### External:

This project has been extensively consulted upon with;

- Wujal Wujal Shire Council – Mayor, Councillors and Chief Executive Officer
- Cook Shire Council – Mayor and Manager of Community and Economic Development
- Wet Tropics Management Authority
- Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation and four Traditional Owner groups
- Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
- Tourism Port Douglas Daintree
- Douglas Shire Historical Society
- Bloomfield Track author, Bill Wilkie
- Tourism Tropical North Queensland
- Bloomfield Track tour operator, Mike D`Arcy

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 -

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/f94li9ceodr0tqi/bloomfield%20track%20e-book%20edit%2015%20Jan16.pdf?dl=0>