

Coal River Working Party Meeting

1st September, 2014 1:00pm – 3:00pm

University Council Board Room, IDC Building, University Drive

Minutes

Start: 1:00

1. **Welcome to Country:** Acknowledgement to Country by Gionni di Gravio.

Present: Gionni di Gravio (chair), Ann Hardy (minute-taker), Emeritus Professor John Fryer, Maree Shilling, Ken Shilling, Keith Parsons, Brian Roach, Doug Lithgow, Suzanne Martin, Robert Watson, Jane Ison, Damien Egan, Russell Rigby, Helen Denzin, Ziggy Szyda, Bruce Cooper, Howard Dick.

2. **Apologies:**

Emeritus Professor Maree Gleeson, Ruth Cotton, Member for Wallsend Sonia Hornery, Coralie Watson, Kerry Grant, Kerrie Brauer, Ron Barber, Margaret Henry, Marilla North, Tim Adams, Rob Jones, Jane Ison, Lyndall Ryan, Bronwyn Law, Brian Walsh, Peter Sherlock, Charles Martin, Sarah Cameron, Lesley Gent.

Visitors: Kris Leck (Nctle NOW), Michael Neilson (Nctle NOW), John Webber (Webber Architect), Scott Brown (Town Planner)

3. **Confirmation of Previous Minutes:** The minutes for 4th August 2014 was confirmed (minor change as suggested by Suzanne Martin) by Maree Shilling and seconded – Ken Shilling.
4. **Business arising from previous minutes:** Nil

5. Presentations-

a) **Presentation (Kris Leck- Nctle NOW, Michael Neilson- Nctle NOW, Jon Webber- Webber Architect), Scot Brown (town planner) Newcastle Now & Nobbys Headland.**

Representatives of Newcastle Now provided an overview of plans for Nobbys Headland. They are currently engaging with key stakeholders in order to get feedback and comments about future use and activation of the site. Nobbys is owned and managed by Newcastle Port Corporation who has leased it to Newcastle Now for 5 years, with a 5 year option. Newcastle Now is a non-political group that aims to bring stakeholders together. At this stage Newcastle Now are looking at sources of funding.

Phase 1 is complete. The headland has been opened to the community for three years and seen 100,000 visit there. Plans are for low level activation due to the sensitivity of the headland. Restoration of the cottages is complete thanks to a successful program that saw people from corrective services and Job Net involved in meaningful work at this historic site. Corrective services and Jobfind participants worked there 3 days/week. Many of the participants found working at Nobbys a valuable experience, giving them a sense of pride and some have gone onto to gain permanent employment. Cottages have had a complete fit-out, repaired/replaced roof, new toilet suite and modified sewerage systems. There is also now free Wi-Fi available at the headland. Local businesses and tradesmen have contributed up to \$300 000 pro bono to help restore and there are many major sponsors involved including a Media Company who has produced a video documenting the transition of the headland. The plan is to eventually have Nobbys opened every day.

Scot Brown described phase 2 of the project to better facilitate community engagement and key stakeholders in ideas about the use of the site. Scot emphasised the importance of inclusiveness, full public access, accessibility, and activities that help maintain and sustain the historic headland. He talked about concepts of diversity and flexibility, low impact use that does not require a lot of infrastructure to be built.

Some ideas of appropriate and low impact uses for the different zones at the site, these are:

1. Public art- open perimeter around headland
2. Building zone- minimal (support demolition of garage next to lighthouse)
3. Activity zone- child play area, fitness area

Cottages 1 & 2 lend themselves to connecting with viewing platforms, cafés, play area, space for artists. Cottage 2 could be for short term accommodation. Temporary space that includes a marquis structure on a platform that could easily be dismantled to reopen at any time. Interpretation centre (history) is also a possibility.

Scot spoke of the heritage significance of site and requirements to seek approvals for certain works to be undertaken and need to consider local, state and national heritage legislation. For example if garage was to be demolished consultation with NSW Heritage office and Newcastle Port Corporation would be necessary. Ideally sustainable options are preferable for the site and Newcastle Now would like to engage further with CRWP around heritage issues and future use of the site.

Keith Parsons asked about vehicular access as the pier is popular with walkers and cyclists. Kris advised that people will be encouraged to walk, however special allowances will be made for disabled visitors.

Gionni explained that the CRWP as a research group interested in proper heritage conservation and historical interpretation. There comes with a site such as this the need to generate income, however must be mindful that future projects and uses are compatible with the place. CRWP has undertaken extensive research of Nobbys; there are some fantastic stories to be told, for example the proposed blowing up of the island in the 1850s. Doug Lithgow also mentioned that an interpretative device could be to reinstate the old signals there, possibly to signal when the next ship is due to enter the harbour. Brian Roach told the story of the Nobbys convict gang who worked at the island making cabbage tree hats, perhaps an interesting activity and sale item to consider. The CRWP thanked representatives from Newcastle Now for their presentations. For more information see <http://www.newcastlenow.org.au/nobbys>

b) Presentation (Russell Rigby) – 'Coal Exploration in Newcastle 1830'.

Russell Rigby presented what he prepared for the recent Earth Science Conference 'Coal Exploration in Newcastle 1830' in July. He spoke about the history of the AA Company and gave an overview of numerous maps from 1829 showing many of the early mine workings in Newcastle. Many of the maps are quite accurate and show depths and locations of pits, coal seams and wells etc. Russell spoke about John Henderson (coal inspector and manager at Newcastle) and his work before coming to NSW, also of research undertaken by Rod Caldwell. The CRWP thanked Russell for his wonderful presentation. Further information is available on the CRWP blog.

<http://coalriver.wordpress.com/key-documents/>

6. Reports and Updates:

Updates- (Gionni di Gravio) – Gionni advised that he had received correspondence from Lillian Eastwood (Newcastle Council) about recommendations by the Geographical Names Board in regard to dual naming of Newcastle places. The board has rejected the original spelling of names suggested to them by various Newcastle groups (including the CRWP) and have recommended much different spellings to places. Gionni has liaised with Lillian and supports retaining spelling of names consistent with that of the Guraki Committee. John Fryer also gave some background about how the idea for dual naming for Newcastle places came about, it has been many years in the process and it would be good to get a positive outcome.

a) National Trust (Ann Hardy) – NIL

b) Update (Sarah Cameron) – NIL

7. General Business- NIL

8. Close: 3:00

Date of next meeting will be after the long weekend, Monday, 13th October, 2014 in the IDC Building, 1-3pm.