



MINUTES

WARREN BLACKWOOD ALLIANCE OF COUNCILS BOARD MEETING TUESDAY 28 JANUARY 2025, 5PM HOST: SHIRE OF BOYUP BROOK

Meeting opened: 5pm

1. Welcome

Cr Donelle Buegge welcomed everyone to the meeting.

a) Acknowledgement of Country

Cr Richard Walker acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which we meet today and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

b) Attendance:

Voting:

Cr Donelle Buegge SOM (Chair)
Cr Richard Walker SOBB
Cr Helen O'Connell SOBB
Cr Tony Dean SON
Cr Vicki Hansen SON
Cr Tracy Lansdell SOBG (arrived 5.14pm)
Arthur Kyron SOBG (arrived 5.14pm)
Cr Lisa Glover SODB (arrived 5.14pm)
Ben Rose SOM

Non-voting:

Cr Vivienne MacCarthy SODB (online)
Leonard Long SOBB
David Taylor SON
Katie McDonnell Executive Officer (EO)
Billy Wellstead (SWDC)

Apologies for absence:

Cr Alexis Davy SODB
Nick O'Connor DODB
Cr Sean Mahoney SOBG
Cr Steve Miolin SOM

2. Presentation: Southern Forest Food Council (SFFC)

Dr Arthur Wilson, Chair & Laura Bolitho, General Manager.

Update from SFFC

- Operational for 12 years to shine spotlight on growers and produce within their region.
- Shire of Manjimup have supported the SFFC from concept.

2024 summary:

- 2024 was a good year for the SFFC, although they needed a new chair, new plan to be created and funding to secure operations for the years ahead.
- Business plan 2024-2028 has been approved by DIPRD.
- Pilot for TV show
- Carbon strategy for growers – funded through the Synergy Community Giving Fund, South West WA Drought Hub, Shire of Manjimup and Department of Agriculture.
- Made good progress on securing funding for next 2 years.
- Looking at sustainability and exploring options.
- SFFC adds value to growers, community and region.
- Services that they provide are well received by community.
- Marketing – annual retail marketing in Perth, seasonal photography, capture information about growers, support local events (cherry festival, Truffle Kerfuffle), communications, social media.
- Challenges: Climate impact on crops – supporting growers to be more responsive, international markets, state government recognition of importance of the region.
- SFFC have a small staff and good support from community.

Focus on 2025 and beyond:

- Focus of 2025 and beyond is outlined in Business Plan. The 3 key projects for 2025 are:
- TV Series development – filming has just finished for the pitch. Now need to pitch it to organisations to get funding for pilot series. If funding is secured, SFFC will be working with each of their member areas to participate in this.
- Carbon strategy: Has been broken down into basic elements to help SFFC learn how to support producers. Pilot project has confirmed funding and will start in March 2025 with eight producers from the region to measure carbon.
- Growers network series: Received funding to meet with growers to help them have a better understand of resilience. A network series of events and outreach to younger farmers (18 – 24) on soil health, water security, mental health and wellbeing, and nutrition farming. Events in March and August and details will be on the SFFC website.

SFFC activities:

- All activities are for the SFFC region (Greenbushes, Bridgetown, Nannup, Manjimup, Pemberton, Northcliffe & Walpole), not just Shire of Manjimup.
- SFFC would like to engage with local governments by sending information through WBAC.
- SFFC aim to have collaborations with organisations, like the WBAC.

Discussion:

- Farmers struggle with carbon to get functional methodologies. It hasn't yet been identified what the standard will be for Western Australia, SFFC pilot should help this process.
- Challenges for growers: Securing workforce, overwhelming regulations.
- Plantation are coming into our agricultural area, SFFC don't have a formal position on this but provide growers with avenues to gain information on this.
- SOM are supportive of the SFFC (financially and in kind), SFFC are working on their sustainability models moving forward securing long term funding – grants, etc.

- There are 400 farming businesses in Shire of Manjimup, of which 100 are paid members of SFFC. SFFC hope that by increasing value add, this will increase membership.
- SFFC to provide Kaite with a copy of the Business plan and carbon strategy.

Action: Katie circulate SFFC plans to all members.

3. Declarations of Interest

None

Everyone in room introduced themselves for the benefit of our new members.

4. Minutes of last meeting & matters arising

a) Minutes of meeting 10.12.2024

Minutes of WBAC board meeting on 10.12.2024 are confirmed as true and correct.

Moved: Cr Vicki Hansen

Seconded: Cr Helen O'Connell

Carried 9/0

5. Finance

a) 2024 – 2025 financial report

- WBAC to put in a value proposition to the SWDC
- Invite SWDC new CEO to the next board meeting.

The WBAC year to date financial report for the 2024 – 2025 financial year is confirmed as true and correct.

Moved: Cr Richard Walker

Seconded: Cr Helen O'Connell

Carried 9/0

Budget noted by all members.

6. WBAC Climate Alliance

a) Climate Alliance Project Officer: Work Update

Climate Alliance Project Officer work report was circulated with the board paper which details progress with:

- Energy Audit Kits Program
- Strengthening Rural Communities Grant
- Calendar for CARG Members
- Waterwise Councils Program
- Funding opportunities

Next Climate Alliance meeting is next Friday.

7. WBAC Tourism: Southern Forests & Valleys

a) SF&V Project update

Tourism project update was circulated with the board papers, which detailed:

- **Road Safety Grant towards the Heritage Festival**
 - \$5,000 received to support their key messaging
- **Shire Grants for Heritage Festival**

- Each shire was asked to apply for a grant from the Heritage Council to run activities in their towns.
 - Grants of up to \$10,000 were available.
 - Shire of Bridgetown – Greenbushes and Shire of Boyup Brook applied.
- **STRA regulations**
 - SF&V website fully complaint but individual visitor centre websites are still listing accommodation providers without STRA details listed.

Action: Shires to email VCs to remind them about listings having to be removed or include registration number
- **Boyup Brook Visitor Centre**
 - The Boyup Brook Visitor Centre has agreed to streamline its online presence by transitioning to a single landing page which integrates with the SF&V website, following the successful model used by Bridgetown and Greenbushes.
 - WBAC staff have been assisting the VC with this transition by working collaboratively with our website developers to design and deliver the new page.
 - The Shire of Boyup Brook fully supports this change and has made it a condition of funding for the VC.
 - There have been ongoing challenges with the VC committee in relation to taking their current website offline.

Action: WBAC email VC to confirm timeline for transitioning to new webpage
- **2026 Conference**
 - Quote received from Pemberton Sports Club to host 2026 conference is \$7,039 inc. GST which is much higher than expected.
 - Look at other venues across the region and go back to sports club to review their quote.

Action: Explore all venues.
- **UCI event**
 - WBAC are forming a working group for the UCI to support activities and event logistics.
 - Need nominations from CEOs for Shire representatives

Action: WBAC arrange first meeting with representative from UCI
- **Tourism WA Tourism Experience Development Managers**
 - Minister Rita Saffioti has announced the Tourism Experience Development Managers from the regions (Tonia Home for our region) will be moving to Tourism Investment Development Division under JTSI.
 - WBAC advocate to keep these positions in the regions.
 - Announcement in 2 weeks with new plan until June.

Action: WBAC to send a letter advocating for the positions to stay in the region.
- **EV Travel**
 - Looking to partner with Bridgetown Greenbushes Tourism Association to develop a map of EV Travelling charging stations, SF&V have the locations but not the specifications of each.
 - Once all specs are known, we will develop itineraries and suggested road trips based on locations of charging points.
- **Event with ASW**
 - ASW have asked if WBAC would co-host an event with them in March 2026 at Aerial Adventures in Pemberton.

- Only ASW members would be invited.
- We haven't budgeted for this event and are unsure what the benefits of co-hosting would be, it also opens us up to having to co-host events across the region. Funding should be reserved for our own events across the region that are strategically planned.

Action: Thank ASW for opportunity but decline. Suggest they speak to DBCA

- **Accessible Tourism**

- Since launching our accessible tourism itineraries, we have been receiving several requests from operators about how to become more accessible.
- SF&V would like to develop a fact sheet for operators to get them started and point them in the right direction.
- Should Shires develop this as regulations in each shire will differ or can we do an overarching sheet based on disability act?

Action: Develop a fact sheet based on the disability act but refer to their Shire for local regulations.

b) Social Media statistics for December & January 1 – 20th

Instagram

- Followers 8,586
- 29.8K Views
- 5.5K Reach
- 1.1K Interactions
- Link clicks: 112 - link in bio as can't have in posts

Facebook

- Followers 3,487
- 30.4k Views
- 39.7k Reach
- 357 Content Interactions

c) Website statistics:

December:

- 184,535 visits
- 16.7 clicks per visit
- 2,760 click from google

January 1st – 20th: 172,403 visits to website

Reached 1m views in first 18 months, then received 500,000 in last 3 months. Total Views since launch in August 2023: 1,518,711

8. Warren Blackwood Stock Route

a) Giblett Family

Greg Giblett has contacted WBAC and gave us a long history of his family and their ties to the moving of stock in the early years dating back to 1880. They are also owners and builders of Bolghinup Hut and its preservation group, which is the only droving hut still in existence. Preservation and hut info: <https://bolghinuphut.com.au/>

He had recently been to Wheatley camp and was perusing the information board and was unhappy to see that his family was not included on any campsites anywhere. He

feels this is a massive oversight because they are one of the founding stock route families.

WBAC to:

- ***Explore original documents to explore process of selection and audit the families we have.***
- ***Capture all their history using initial oral histories format***
- ***Add a section on the website with their family information***
- ***Add an interpretive sign with QR code along the route (at relevant place), to scan to read / listen to Giblett story***

Moved: Cr Richard Walker

Seconded: Cr Tony Dean

Carried 9/0

b) Horsemanship program

The Ride Free program, proposed by Warren Blackwood Mental Health Services, is designed to support at-risk and disadvantaged youth in the Warren Blackwood region. This program combines equine skills training, mental health services, nature-based activities, and cultural education to provide alternative pathways that reduce anti-social behaviour and foster a strong sense of belonging and purpose within the community.

Key Components of the Ride Free Program:

1. **Equine Skills Development:** Participants will learn horse riding, care, and grooming, which encourage responsibility, teamwork, and self-confidence.
2. **Mental Health Services:** The program integrates consistent mental health support, empowering youth to build emotional resilience and well-being.
3. **Cultural Learning:** First Nation leaders will deliver education on local history and songlines, fostering cultural awareness and inclusivity.
4. **Nature-Based Activities:** Engagement with the region's forests, parks, and trails will promote environmental stewardship and pride in the local area.

Program Benefits:

1. **Strengthening Community Cohesion:** By fostering a sense of ownership and pride in the region, participants will build lasting connections to the community and its natural resources.
2. **Reducing Youth Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour:** Providing positive pathways for at-risk youth will divert them from the criminal justice system and contribute to a safer, more inclusive community.
3. **Enhancing Mental Health and Well-Being:** A focus on mental health will create a healthier, more self-reliant population, reducing the burden on health services.
4. **Building Future Opportunities:** By developing adaptable skills, the program equips youth for employment, entrepreneurship, and active community involvement.

The program will utilise the Warren Blackwood Stock Route and other trails in Pemberton, Shannon, Manjimup, and surrounding areas, promoting regional tourism and sustainability. Warren Blackwood Mental Health Services has applied for \$864,000 in funding from the Attorney General's Office to implement the program for this \$1.2m project.

WBAC supports the Ride Free program proposed by Warren Blackwood Mental Health Services and is happy to provide a formal letter of support confirming the program's use of the Warren Blackwood Stock Route.

Moved: Cr Tracy Lansdell

Second: Cr Vicki Hansen

Carried 9/0

9. Warren Blackwood Futures Forum

An invitation list was circulated for the forum:

- Minster Don Punch has been invited to speak but cannot confirm until after the election.
- WALGA invited to speak and confirmed.
- Chris Buckland to be removed from invitation list
- Once election has taken place, invite new local member.

Action: Members to let Katie know of amendments.

Action: Invitations to be sent by Executive Officer on behalf of the WBAC Chair.

10. Project Priorities for 2025

A list of priority projects for 2025 was circulated for discussion:

Climate Alliance

Advance Key Sustainability Initiatives

- Progress the Waterwise Councils program across participating shires.
- Support the delivery of energy audits and promote energy efficiency measures in the region.

Secure Funding Opportunities

- Identify and apply for grants and funding that support climate action, sustainability, and community well-being.
- Encourage collaboration on joint funding applications to maximise impact.

Investigate Regional Waste Management Solutions

- Collaborate with regional bodies to explore sustainable and innovative waste management practices tailored to local needs.

Develop a Sub-Regional Climate Change Communication and Engagement Plan

- Investigate and draft a plan that outlines strategies for effective communication and community engagement on climate change across the region.

Evaluate the Feasibility of a Climate Change Grant Category

- Support shires in assessing the potential to establish a dedicated grant category for climate change-related community projects.

Monitor and Report on Progress

- Develop a framework for tracking and reporting on regional climate and sustainability initiatives.
- Use measurable outcomes to evaluate success and refine strategies for greater effectiveness.

Promote Regional Climate Resilience

- Support projects that address climate risks, including water conservation, energy transition, and forest management.

- Collaborate with community and council stakeholders to ensure long-term sustainability in the Warren Blackwood region.

Southern Forests & Valleys

- **Heritage Festival:** Plan, coordinate, and execute the annual Southern Forests & Valleys Heritage Festival, celebrating the region's cultural, natural, and historical heritage through events, workshops, performances, and family-friendly activities across multiple towns.
- **2026 Conference:** Organise the 2026 Southern Forests & Valleys Tourism Conference, including speakers, breakout sessions, workshops, sponsorship, marketing and all event logistics.
- **TV Adverts:** Develop high-quality television advertisements showcasing the region and targeting both domestic and international audiences.
- **Website Maintenance and SEO:** Regularly update and maintain the Southern Forests & Valleys website, optimising search engine performance, and ensuring information on operators, events, and attractions is accurate and up to date.
- **Toolkit Expansion:** Enhance the tourism toolkit with additional resources, including marketing materials, planning guides, branded templates, high-quality imagery, customisable and downloadable promotional content, and practical tools to assist local businesses to attract visitors while aligning with the regional brand identity.
- **Image Library Expansion:** Grow the library of high-quality images and videos showcasing the regions key attractions, events, and landscapes for use in marketing campaigns and promotional materials.
- **Social Media Sustainment:** Maintain active engagement on social media platforms, while fostering connections with visitors and the local community.
- **Visitor Centre Relationships and Website Linking:** Strengthen partnerships with Visitor Centres (VCs) to ensure information sharing and integrate VC websites into the Southern Forests & Valleys website.
- **Regional Road Signage:** Seek funding to design and install regional road signage.
- **UCI Event:** Establish a working group to leverage the Nannup UCI event for regional tourism. The group will focus on promoting the Southern Forests & Valleys as a premier cycling destination, encouraging visitors to explore the region's attractions, trails, and communities.
- **Partnerships:** Develop partnership with the regional organisations (such as Southern Forests Food Council) to support Agri-business development throughout the region.

Trails Development

- **Support Shires, Community Groups, and Visitor Centres:** Collaborate with local governments, community groups, and Visitor Centres to identify opportunities for new trail development and improvements to the existing regional trail network.
- **Integration of Trails with SF&V Initiatives:** Embed trails into broader regional tourism activities by developing itineraries that link trails with key attractions, events, and local businesses. Highlight trails as central components in promotional campaigns, encouraging exploration of the region's natural and cultural assets.
- **Trail Imagery Collection for Marketing:** Build a comprehensive library of high-quality imagery and videos showcasing trail landscapes, activities, and user experiences.

- **Strengthen Connections with Heritage Attractions:** During the SF&V Heritage festival, develop interpretive materials that tie trails to nearby heritage attractions.
- **Trail Mapping and Digital Integration:** Work with Trail Managers to have all regional trails accurately mapped and detailed, providing information on difficulty, amenities, and points of interest. Integrate trail maps into digital platforms that link with the Southern Forests & Valleys website.
- **Investigate the development of a Regional Trails Strategy:** Review the existing 2011 Trails Master Plan and develop a new Regional Trails Strategy.

Warren Blackwood Stock Route

- **Re-Launch Campaign:** Reintroduce the WBSR with a comprehensive marketing strategy, updated mapping, and enhanced visitor experiences.
- **Website Updates:** Review and update the WBSR's online content to include trail conditions, detailed maps, user guides, and FAQs.
- **Printed Maps and Brochures:** Develop and distribute high-quality printed materials to promote the trail and provide essential information for visitors.
- **FAQ Development:** Create a comprehensive list of frequently asked questions to address user concerns and enhance the trail experience.
- **Social Media Promotion:** Implement a targeted social media strategy to increase awareness, share trail updates, and engage with the trail's community.
- **Streamlined Maintenance Reporting:** Improve the process for reporting and addressing maintenance issues by coordinating efforts between shires, DBCA, Visitor Centres, and campsite managers.
- **Collaborative Partnerships:** Establish and strengthen partnerships with complementary trail networks (e.g., Munda Biddi, Bibbulmun Track, Cape to Cape etc.) and tourism organisations (neighbouring LTO's, Tourism WA, ASW, etc.) to promote the WBSR.
- **Trail Standards Compliance:** Align all trail documentation and management strategies with the latest DBCA Horse Trail Standards to ensure compliance.
- **Support Services and Business Identification:** Map and promote nearby services (horse friendly accommodation, food services, support services, equipment providers, etc.) to enhance the user experience.
- **Imagery Expansion:** Develop a portfolio of high-quality images to support marketing efforts across digital and print platforms.
- **Spur Trail Identification:** Explore opportunities for additional trails that connect the WBSR with nearby attractions.
- **Family History Integration:** Incorporate pioneering families oral and written histories into the WBSR.

Priority list noted by all members.

11. Regional Trails Strategy

The Warren Blackwood Alliance of Councils (WBAC) has an out of date 'Trails Master Plan for the Warren Blackwood Region' which was developed from 2009 - 2011. The Master Plan includes the Shires of Bridgetown Greenbushes, Boyup Brook, Nannup and Manjimup.

Annual desktop reviews of the master plan took place until 2016 when the group became the working group for the development of the Warren Blackwood Stock Route.

Several priorities from the Master Plan have been accomplished by individual local governments, as well as larger projects by the WBAC:

- Mapping of the Blackwood River
- Development of Warren Blackwood Stock Route
- Total Trails website developed – now part of SF&V website
- Trails Marketing

Relevant Documentation

- The Western Australian Strategic Trails Blueprint 2022-2027 provides a roadmap for consistent and coordinated planning of trails across the state.
- The Warren Blackwood Regional Growth Plan actions the WBAC to “Continue to support the development of recreational trails throughout the region and cross-regional connectivity” with specific projects listed as:
 - Promote/leverage Warren Blackwood Stock Route (WBSR).
 - Link WBSR with neighbouring LGA's to extend network and profile.
 - Support the development of recreational, nature based and produce-related trails within the region.
 - Utilise and promote external trails websites.
 - Work with relevant regional Noongar Corporations and the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council to support the development of new trails.

Decision:

Seek funding to appoint a consultant to:

- Review the 2009-2011 Trails Master Plan, audit of existing trails and review individual shire trails plans.
- Develop a new Regional Trails Strategy for the Warren Blackwood region.

Proposed funding: DLGSCI Community Trail Planning Grants Program

- Master Planning: \$5,000 - \$50,000, open now and closes 14th February, 4pm.
- Organisations must make a co-contribution of financial and/or in-kind support to the value of at least 50 per cent of the total project costs.
- [Community Trail Planning Grants Program guidelines | DLGSC](#)

Action: WBAC to submit an application to the DLGSCI Community Trail Planning Grants Program.

Action: Each Shire to provide a letter of support for the application

12. Staff Pay awards

Katie left the room whilst the board discussed staff pay awards.

- Board unsure about the status of all WBAC staff – if they are contractors or employees.

Action: Katie to meet with Chair & Manjimup CEO to discuss governance of contracts

Action: Ben Rose to engage a HR contractor to undertake a review of all staff contracts and provide advice on future awards

13. Shire updates

Shire of Boyup Brook

- Long term planning and upgrading processes.
- Sandakan Park Playground funded by Talison has begun, aim to be finished by June 2026.
- The new Evacuation Centre / sports pavilion should be started this year.
- New council chambers are now complete, and offices have replaced the old one.
- Currently working on 2 master plans – Recreation Master Plan and Sandakan Park Master Plan.
- Boyup Brook have 4 councillors up for election, additional they are dropping 1 councillor position to change from 8 to 7 councillors. Richard and Helen are both up for election.

Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes

- Bridgetown has 6 councillors of 9 councillor up for election.
- Very successful Australia Day celebrations with multicultural dinner (grant funded) attended by 470 people.
- Bridgetown Town Hall refurbishment is now complete and looks fantastic. Now looking at programs to activate the town hall.
- Arthur started as Acting CEO mid-December, he will be undertaking a review of Council and shire operations.
- Review of Community Strategic Plan will start in February.
- Reviewing staff who were moved on from the Shire and reemploying people.
- Meeting with new CEO of Talison and will be building the relationship.

Shire of Donnybrook Balingup

- There were 4 or 5 councillors only elected for 2 years in last election as they were governed by the commissioner, therefor there are several councillors up for election this year.
- Recently had first function at VC Mitchell Park for Australia Day which was very successful. Formal opening happening soon with ministers.
- Had minister attend Donnybrook last week who has made election commitment for the Argyle fire shed from Labour.

Shire of Manjimup

- Lots of state election commitments to the Shire of Manjimup from all candidates.
- Capital works projects being undertaken.
- Focus on operations – asset management, strategic planning, long term financial planning, internal rates reviews, etc.
- Manjimup have 6 councillors out of 9 up for election.

Shire of Nannup

- Main focus for next 12 months is infrastructure for UCI event.
- Nannup have 4 councillors out of 7 councillors up for election this year. Tony Dean has another 2 years left on his current term.
- Currently projects include:
 - Mountain Bike Park Number 2 which is underway with trail alignments and concept plans and estimated completion of December 2026.
 - Southern Bridges Projects, issue with prices increase.
 - Nannup Arts, Tourism, Recreation and Liveability Master Plan - the plan area includes the Timber Mill site and surrounding properties, extending

to the Golf Course and the surrounding Recreational Precinct areas (approximately 175 acres). Includes housing options, retirement village, sporting upgrades, skills and learning precinct, and tourism elements.

- New Suitability Officer started beginning of January at 0.6 FTE and new 0.5FTE Grants officer.

14. Lotterywest

A reminder that we have Lotterywest as an option for a project in the future.

15. Dates of future meetings:

- a) Tuesday 1st April 2025, Shire of Manjimup
- b) Tuesday 6th May 2025, All Shire meeting, Manjimup
- c) Tuesday 3rd June 2025, Shire of Donnybrook Balingup
- d) Tuesday 12th August 2025, Shire of Bridgetown Greenbushes

Close meeting: 7.03pm