DRAFT

UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

2017 TO 2020

A Quality Rural Lifestyle - in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community
1.1 TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE SHIRE

The future wellbeing of our community depends on our Shire being environmentally, socially and economically sustainable. In the actions we take today, we need to consider the future generations that will live, work and play in the Upper Hunter and the kind of region we want to leave them.

We have a terrific starting point – a region with abundant natural assets including productive farmland, a plentiful water supply that includes access to the pristine headwaters of the Hunter River and rich biodiversity from more than 1600 species of plants, animals and birds.

We have a diverse local economy underpinned by the agricultural, equine and tourism sectors - industries that can readily adopt sustainable practices and support a sustainable future.

Socially we have tight-knit, supportive local communities with a track record of volunteering, participation in local activities and generally caring for each other.

In pursuing a sustainable future we have some great opportunities to leverage our natural and built assets and our proximity to major centres - creating industries around local food production, sustainable tourism and renewables that will further enhance the Upper Hunter’s clean rural image.

Of course in commencing our journey toward a more sustainable future there is a lot of work to be done. Within our organisation we need to first understand our environmental footprint, to benchmark our performance against other comparable organisations and to set appropriate targets to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Across the Shire we have an important role to play, firstly in supporting and learning from other organisations who are further along in their journey toward sustainability and secondly in showing leadership in key strategic areas that will support the sustainability of our region - for example, renewable energy.

While we are fortunate to have some fantastic assets to work with we also have some challenges.

Encroachment from extractive industries will continue to put pressure on land and water resources and will require strong land use planning and safeguards for our environment and agricultural industries. Consistent with our 2015 Position Statement on Coal and Coal Seam Gas Activities, Council will continue to actively oppose exploration and extraction of coal and coal seam gas within the Shire.

Other key challenges include our heavy reliance on road transportation, our vulnerability to drought and social and economic challenges - for example needing to provide sustainable employment and to attract and retain talented young people to maintain our economic and social diversity.

The members of the Sustainability Advisory Committee have provided invaluable input in guiding where Council can best show leadership on sustainability issues as well as identifying opportunities for improvement within Council. I wish to personally thank them for their energy and effort.

Now it’s your turn. We welcome your feedback on Council’s first Sustainability Action Plan. Have we been ambitious enough? Are there other priorities which Council should address? Are there activities identified in the plan that you’d like to be involved with or that your organisation can support?

We look forward to hearing your thoughts and to starting what I believe is a critically important journey.

Mayor Wayne Bedggood.
1.2 OUR SUSTAINABILITY VISION

Upper Hunter Shire Council’s vision is of “a quality rural lifestyle – in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community.” We know that the community value our unspoilt rural environment and expect Council to deliver a sustainable future. We also accept the science of climate change and acknowledge that Council has a role to play in addressing this issue both within the organisation and across the Shire.

This Sustainability Action Plan provides a roadmap for UHSC to progress toward being a sustainable organisation and to lead the Upper Hunter region toward environmental, social and economic sustainability. This is consistent with community priorities identified in the Community Strategic Plan 2027 to protect our natural resources, water supply and rural way of life, to promote community wellbeing and to strengthen the local economy, particularly in terms of tourism opportunities. It supports Community Strategic Plan 2027 Goal 2 - Promote wellbeing and a connected, healthy and happy community; Goal 3 - Protect the natural environment; Goal 4 - Plan for a sustainable future; Goal 5 - a sustainable and prosperous economy.

It is also consistent with Council’s obligations under the Hunter Regional Plan 2036 and under the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification RLE Action Plan. These two documents prioritise sustainable land use planning, the protection and management of natural resources - particularly land and water - and the development of strong, diverse local economies and new industries around renewables, agribusiness and tourism. They also reflect the important role that both the Shire and various NSW Government agencies will play in securing a more sustainable future.

COUNCIL’S VISION

A Quality Rural Lifestyle in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community.

OUR COMMITMENT

- We will deliver high quality, innovative, consistent and responsive services to the community.
- We respect the rights of everyone to be treated fairly.
- We will keep our community informed about Council services and financial position.
- We will continually strive to improve our services to the community and encourage community engagement.
- We will deliver increased effort in the protection of the environment.
OUR SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

2.1 UHSC SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

Based on the materiality assessment, investigation with key stakeholders and the objectives set in the Hunter Regional Plan and the plans of neighbouring Councils, the Upper Hunter Shire Council has developed the following objectives to progress toward organisational sustainability and to show leadership on this crucial issue across the Shire. These objectives focus on the well recognised ‘triple bottom line’ of sustainability – balancing a healthy environment, a happy community and a diverse and sustainable local economy.

There are a range of broader issues with implications for the potential future sustainability of the Upper Hunter Shire, which go beyond the immediate remit of the Sustainability Action Plan. As part of its commitment to supporting a sustainable future, the Upper Hunter Shire Council will actively lobby State and Federal Governments on the following issues:

- The need for effective telecommunications and broadband internet access for all regional users, which in turn will reduce unnecessary travel
- Lobby Local Government Regional Procurement to give Local Government’s freedom to undertake direct invitation tenders with suppliers that have particularly strong sustainability credentials and expertise. Lobby the same group regarding the importance of sustainability criteria as part of the assessment process at a regional level
- The need for more frequent train services via Scone between Sydney, Newcastle and the New

WITHIN OUR ORGANISATION:

1. Understand our sustainability footprint
2. Report publicly on Council’s performance against the Sustainability Action Plan and targets
3. Reduce water and energy use and increase the proportion of energy sourced from renewables and water sourced through onsite water capture and reuse.
4. Buy efficient vehicles and plant and use them efficiently
5. Reduce waste and pollution
6. Cultivate a sustainable supply chain
7. Support sustainable planning and decision making
8. Support economic sustainability and local employment through a diverse local economy
9. Adapt to climate change
10. Enhance biosecurity to protect our agricultural and equine industries
11. Resource appropriately to ensure sustainability priorities are met

ACROSS OUR REGION:

12. Protect and support local agricultural industries
13. Encourage local food production and consumption, building economic sustainability and reducing food miles.
14. Support the sustainable development of the equine cluster
15. Encourage sustainable transport
16. Promote sustainable land use and management
17. Support the development of renewable energy projects
18. Support sustainable tourism
3.0 DEVELOPING THE PLAN

3.1 HOW HAVE WE DEVELOPED THE SAP

In developing the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP), UHSC has taken guidance from leading global sustainability standards, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) Global Sustainability Reporting Standards and the AA1000 Sustainability Standard and has drawn on the knowledge of peer Councils, local agencies (such as Local Lands Services) and the community to develop an appropriate plan that reflects the aspirations of Council and the community.
3.2 COUNCIL’S REPORTING FRAMEWORK

The Sustainability Action Plan is one of a suite of strategic plans that sit under the Upper Hunter Shire Council Community Strategic Plan 2027. Council generates its four year Delivery Program and annual Operational Plans from these strategic plans. We engage with the Upper Hunter Community in developing each of these strategic plans.
3.3 SETTING COUNCIL’S SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES

In developing the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP), UHSC is seeking to establish objectives and supporting actions that:

- support tangible improvements in sustainability outcomes across the region
- support a diverse and sustainable local economy based around the equine, agricultural, tourism and renewable energy sectors
- support community health and wellbeing by protecting the region’s water, air, soil and other natural resources

The plan will also set objectives that:

- support, and are consistent with, the objectives of the Hunter Regional Plan
- lead the way on sustainability among other Council’s in the region

As a member of the Cities Power Partnership (www.citiespowerpartnership.org.au) Council has also made the following pledges for action on climate change, which are reflected in this plan.

1. Install renewable energy (solar PV and battery storage) on Council buildings including the Scone Administration Centre, Early Learning Centre and Gumman Place Hostel.
2. Investigate the feasibility of the following:

- provision of electric vehicle car charging infrastructure in Scone and other locations
- ensure Council fleet purchases meet emissions targets
- Encourage sustainable transport use
- Implement a sustainability education and behaviour change program

3.4 OBJECTIVES OF OTHER RELEVANT PLANS

The 2036 Hunter Regional Plan outlines the blueprint for the future of the Hunter Region. It includes a number of directions under each of its goals which are directly related to sustainability and which create obligations for UHSC. The NSW Government has committed to work with councils to deliver these directions and actions set out in the Hunter Regional Plan.

The sustainability directives of the Hunter Regional Plan relevant to the Upper Hunter Shire can be summarised as follows:

- Transform the productivity of the Upper Hunter - supporting diverse industries including sustainable agriculture and local food production, the critical equine cluster and renewable energy through appropriate land use management, water security, biosecurity and accommodating the supply chain in local plans
- Encourage tourism in natural areas and around local food and equine industries
- Manage land use conflicts to ensure that locations suited to agriculture and equine industries are protected from incompatible uses. Provide guidance on land uses that would be considered compatible.
- Support the development of renewable energy industries by reviewing local planning controls
- Identify and strengthen biodiversity corridors such as the Liverpool Ranges Link and the Upper Hunter Link and enhance the existing protection of, and sustainable access to, areas of high value
- Protect the quality and quantity of regional water supplies
- Increase resilience to climate change and associated natural disasters such as bushfires and floods.
- Enhance access to recreational facilities and connect open spaces

A detailed excerpt of all relevant goals is included as Appendix 1.
3.5 THE UPPER HUNTER SHIRE AT A GLANCE

The Upper Hunter Shire is located in the Hunter Region of New South Wales, approximately 250 kilometres north of Sydney. It is home to approximately 14,500 residents. The main township is Scone, with smaller townships at Aberdeen, Merriwa and Murrurundi.

The Shire is bounded by Liverpool Plains Shire and the Tamworth Regional Council area in the north, Gloucester and Dungog Shires in the east, Singleton Shire and Muswellbrook Shire in the south and the Mid-Western Regional Council and Warrumbungle Shires in the west.

The Upper Hunter Shire is predominantly rural, encompassing a total land area of 8,100 square kilometres, of which a large proportion is National Park and nature reserves.

The Shire is a major livestock and crop producer and most of the rural area is used for grazing, dairy farming, horse studs and general farming. The Shire also has a number of vineyards, a major saleyard complex and a domestic and export abattoir.

The Shire has vibrant local communities with their own unique character, with Aberdeen the home of the Australian Blue Heeler and host to the annual "Aberdeen Highland Games"; Merriwa in the west being well known for its popular "Festival of the Fleeces"; Murrurundi with one of the largest sheep dog trials in the state and the annual "King of the Ranges Stockman's Challenge", and Scone renowned for its equine industry, and the long running "Scone & Upper Hunter Horse Festival".

The Upper Hunter Shire is Australia’s equivalent to the Kentucky Bluegrass region of the United States. It has many famous horse studs and claims the title of Horse Capital of Australia, which attracts a number of related industries. As it result it has been given Critical Equine Cluster Status which helps to protect the Shire from encroachment by heavy industry.

There are currently two major proposed renewable energy projects in and around the Upper Hunter Shire, which fit with its aspiration to become a green energy hub – the Liverpool Wind Farm and the Upper Hunter Energy Park.

Council’s annual expenditure and revenue is approximately $66 million and Council employs a staff of 293 at its offices in Scone, Merriwa, Murrurundi and its various depots and community facilities. Council's assets including infrastructure, property, plant and equipment are valued at almost $500 million.
3.6 WHAT DOES COUNCIL DO WITHIN THE SHIRE

COUNCIL FACILITIES AND SERVICES

- 3 Council Branch Offices
- 3 Visitor Information Centres
- 8 Community Halls
- 5 Public Library Branches
- 3 Public Swimming Pools
- 2 Community Technology Centres
- 3 Youth Centres
- 3 Approved Children’s Education and Care Services
- 17 Independent Living Units
- 1 Aged Hostel
- 2 Low Income Units
- 3 Animal Shelters
- 5 Waste Depots
- 5 Water Supply Areas
- 4 Sewer Service Areas
- 1 Saleyard complex
- 1 Airport

Council is responsible for 1,770 kilometres of local road, 93 bridges, 27.3 kilometres of footpath and 118.8 kilometres of kerb and gutter.

Upper Hunter Shire Council maintains 119 hectares of public space, sports grounds and parks.

- 4,300 residences are serviced by a kerbside garbage collection.
- 4,292 residences are connected to our sewerage system.
- 4,642 water connections that on average consume 1899ML of treated water per year.

Each year Council receives approximately 216,000 emails, 13,000 counter enquiries, and 72,000 telephone calls.

ROADS AND TRANSPORT

We provide and maintain transport routes for vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians through planning, construction and management. We also manage the Scone Airport.

SALEYARDS

We operate the Scone Regional Saleyards – a leading regional cattle selling complex which is proposed to receive a $7 million upgrade from 2017/18.

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

We plan and manage land use to ensure the sustainable growth and development of our Shire.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

We support and enhance our community through active planning partnerships and provision of quality accessible services such as childcare, youth centres and libraries.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

We deliver a range of programs to enhance community health and safety.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

We manage our waste and recycling by collection, recovery and disposal including annual bulk waste kerbside collections.

ASSET CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

We plan, build and manage community assets including roads, footpaths, water/sewer and drainage, recreation facilities and cemeteries to meet our customers’ needs.

WATER & WASTE WATER SERVICES

We are the local water authority that provides a potable water supply and reticulated sewerage services.

APPEARANCE OF TOWNS

We deliver a range of activities to keep our towns beautiful including street trees, parks, signage, street cleaning and graffiti removal.
3.7 OUR CURRENT SUSTAINABILITY PERFORMANCE

The Upper Hunter Shire has been recording its performance on several key performance indicators since 2009/10 and will increase the scope of this environmental performance reporting from 2017/18 under the guidance of a new Sustainability Manager. In setting objectives for the Upper Hunter Sustainability Action Plan it is useful to understand the current performance across key areas such as population, energy and water consumption and waste management.

**WATER**

The annual potable water consumption for the Upper Hunter LGA is shown in Table 3, Table 4 and Table 5. The water sources vary between the different localities in the LGA. Consumption is relatively stable, with significant savings up approximately 70ML per year since 2013/14 thanks to the shift away from using potable water to irrigate parks in Scone and to a change in the water rate system which increased the percentage of rates raised from usage fees and decreased the proportion from access charges.

Council hopes to improve on this figure by investigating interest from the private sector in the beneficial use of treated wastewater from other sources throughout the Shire. Non-potable water consumption is primarily for agricultural irrigation on the Hunter, Pages and Gouburn Rivers with limited irrigation from the Dartbrook, Stewarts Brook and Rouchel Brook. A Water Sharing Plan is in place for the Hunter River. Council is pursuing opportunities to increase on site water capture and to increase the volume of water that is recycled and used for irrigation throughout the Shire. For example, onsite water capture infrastructure will be installed as part of the upgrade to the Scone Regional Saleyards complex which is scheduled to commence in 2017/18.

### Annual Water Consumption - Scone and Aberdeen

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential (ML)</td>
<td>809</td>
<td>748</td>
<td>3396</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>898</td>
<td>954</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>766</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial (ML)</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>197</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks (ML)</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>1009</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>112</td>
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<td>Industrial (ML)</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>549</td>
<td>505</td>
<td>426</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Production</strong></td>
<td><strong>956</strong></td>
<td><strong>1241</strong></td>
<td><strong>3835</strong></td>
<td><strong>1243</strong></td>
<td><strong>1542</strong></td>
<td><strong>1542</strong></td>
<td><strong>2676</strong></td>
<td><strong>1626</strong></td>
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### Annual Water Consumption - Murrurundi

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<tr>
<td>Residential (ML)</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial (ML)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks (ML)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Production</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>81</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>83</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
<td><strong>78</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>77</strong></td>
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### Annual Water Consumption - Merriwa and Cassilis

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residential (ML)</td>
<td>124</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>139</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commercial (ML)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks (ML)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Production</strong></td>
<td><strong>184</strong></td>
<td><strong>130</strong></td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
<td><strong>206</strong></td>
<td><strong>213</strong></td>
<td><strong>305</strong></td>
<td><strong>188</strong></td>
<td><strong>196</strong></td>
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TRANSPORT

The Upper Hunter LGA is made up of a number of isolated urban settlements and rural lands. Small villages located substantial distances from one another are used by the population to access goods and services. There is a heavy dependence on private vehicle usage. Scone and Murrurundi are also linked to cities, towns and localities by the railway line which forms part of the major inland line linking areas such as Gunnedah, Tamworth and Armidale to Maitland, Newcastle and Sydney. Daily services operate from Scone to these centres. The upcoming replacement of the NSW Regional Rail Fleet and proposed increase of services to strategic region centres by Transport for NSW may present an opportunity to increase the patronage and usefulness of this service.

The town of Scone has sufficient population to support some limited active transport and benefits from 4km of cycleways connecting Satur with the main town. There are few options for a cost-effective public transport beyond existing rail and bus services due to the distances involved and relatively small population. There are, however, opportunities to encourage electric vehicle users, particularly those who are Sydney-based, to make Scone a getaway destination of choice, by investigating the potential for additional electric vehicle charging stations in the Shire.

There are also opportunities to encourage greater uptake of active transport (walking and cycling) for short trips within towns such as school drop offs.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The amount of waste that the Council collects from various sources is indicative of the amount of material throughput in the local government area and the degree to which the community as a whole is creating demands on natural resources to satisfy their wants and needs. Total waste volumes across the Shire are relatively stable but there are significant opportunities to reduce the overall volume of waste produced and to recycle more.

In September 2016, as part of its work to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill, Council commissioned a kerbside bin audit. The audit found that, on average, household bins across the Shire contained 19.27kg of waste each week with only 4.3kg of this in the recycling.

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<tr>
<td>Municipal Waste</td>
<td>2,900</td>
<td>2,661</td>
<td>2,091</td>
<td>3,555-250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbside Collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Municipal Recycling</td>
<td>960</td>
<td>1,049</td>
<td>1,026</td>
<td>1,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbside Collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landfills</td>
<td>5,796</td>
<td>7,197</td>
<td>6,493</td>
<td>6,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Waste Collected</td>
<td>9,656</td>
<td>10,907</td>
<td>10,269</td>
<td>10,802</td>
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</table>

Key issues from the audit were that households aren’t sorting all their recyclables (around 12% of the weight in the main waste bin is unsorted recyclables), throw away an average of 4kg of loose food each week; don’t have access to organics bins and aren’t composting (a further 38% of weight in the main waste bin is unrecovered organics which could go into an organics bin if available or which could be composted).

Contamination of recycling is another key issue when it comes to waste with approximately 14% contamination in recycling bins.

Council is therefore investigating opportunities to improve the uptake of recycling through community education and to expand the recycling services available to residents and businesses within the Shire.

Council is also pursuing opportunities to recover more of its own waste streams. For example, the construction of a solids separator as part of the upgrade of the Scone Regional Saleyards will allow Council to process effluent waste into a dry product and to introduce a new product stream of selling manure for fertiliser. Construction commences on this upgrade in 2017/18.
ENERGY

While figures are not available to capture private energy consumption across the Shire, Council is able to report on its own energy consumption, year on year. Being a large organisation with a complex variety of assets and services, Council receives approximately 180 different accounts from its current energy providers, Energy Australia, Origin Energy and AGL. While complex, this degree of granularity will be a great help to Council as it works to identify and pursue further opportunities to save energy and reduce associated costs.

The most energy intensive sites across the Shire are Council’s water and waste treatment facilities representing approximately 40 percent of total energy charges. Water is energy intensive to treat and transport, so initiatives aimed at improving water efficiency around the Shire and the installation of equipment for onsite water capture will also be important in reducing energy consumption.

Street lighting is the second most energy intensive activity, representing approximately a further 30 percent of total energy charges. Energy consumption for Council’s major administration centres and facilities such as the Scone Administration Centre, the Gummun Place Hostel, Scone Library and the Scone and Merriwa Pools are the third greatest source of energy consumption, representing approximately 15 percent of total energy charges.

Energy consumption across the wide variety of community halls, facilities and services is negligible in comparison with these top three items. Council’s total energy consumption has reduced year on year since 2011/12 and currently stands at 25 percent less than 2011/12 levels.

In a bid to further reduce this consumption, Council has investigated and will implement a number of initiatives including the updating of lighting fixtures to LED, which is expected to generate significant savings across Council’s facilities annually once fully implemented.

In a bid to ensure that it consumes energy more sustainably, Council also aims to source an increasing proportion of its energy from renewable sources. One of the ways it will do this is through the installation of solar panels on suitable Council facilities such as the parking lot at the rear of the Scone Administration Centre, the Scone Early Learning Centre and Gummun Place Hostel.

POPULATION GROWTH

The Upper Hunter population is forecast to slowly increase from 14,200 in 2011 to 15,750 in 2031 with the trend being to an aging population, like many rural Shires (based on census data and NSW Government’s population forecast). This relatively small, steady population growth should support environmental sustainability, however in order to also support social and economic sustainability it will be important to consider how we create opportunities that can cater for the needs and interests of older people as well as providing appealing long term employment prospects to retain younger residents in the Shire.
3.8 WHICH ISSUES DO WE FOCUS ON?

Understanding more about the Shire, its activities and the current state of the environment helps us to identify the most important issues in terms of its environmental, social and economic sustainability. This is known as a materiality test, and will help Council to focus on the most important issues and also to make the best use of its resources.

The Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) is one of the leading global sustainability reporting frameworks and provides guidance on materiality testing which Council has used.

A materiality test focuses on those issues that an organisation is directly responsible for, based on the unique features of the business and the environment in which it operates.

In this case it helps us to understand the most important matters for Council to address within its own organisation. Top priority is given to those issues that make the greatest contribution to the overall sustainability of the organisation.

Based on the guidance from GRI, Council’s assets and activities, the natural features of the Shire and the industries established in the Shire, Council has identified the matters to the right as the most important sustainability issues to be addressed.
3.9 HOW HAVE OUR STAKEHOLDERS SHAPED THE PLAN?

EXTERNALLY:
Meetings with the following groups:
- Hunter Local Land Services
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- State Water
- Muswellbrook Shire Council
- Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia

Working with local people on sustainability
- Forming Council’s Sustainability Advisory Committee with an open call for expressions of interest
- Consulting with the Community Sustainability Advisory Group in formulating the SAP
- Prior consultation and surveys with the Upper Hunter Community on sustainability related issues
- Working with neighbouring Councils to understand regional sustainability priorities

INTERNALLY:
- Assembling a Council Sustainability Working Group to identify initiatives for the SAP and to champion them within Council

HAVE YOUR SAY
We welcome your feedback on the Draft Sustainability Action Plan. Submit your comments by 16 February 2018 using the contact details below.

Upper Hunter Shire Council
By Post:
PO Box 208, Scone NSW 2337

By Email:
council@upperhunter.nsw.gov.au

In Person:
Scone:
135 Liverpool Street, Scone
Merriwa:
34 - 40 Vennacher Street, Merriwa
Murrurundi:
47 Mayne Street, Murrurundi

<<IMAGE TO BE INSERTED>>
This Sustainability Action Plan focuses on two main areas of responsibility - what Council will do within its own organisation to become sustainable and what Council will do more widely across the Shire to promote sustainable practices by individuals, farms and businesses, to encourage the development of sustainable industries that will contribute to a strong and diverse local economy and to contribute to the health and wellbeing of the Shire’s residents.

As Council is at the start of its sustainability journey, these activities naturally focus on covering the fundamentals first - walking before we run.

**TERMS IN THE ACTION PLAN**
- **ID:** a unique identifier for each action so that it can be tracked in reporting
- **Action:** a description of the action to be taken under each goal
- **What does success look like:** Describes how we know the action has been implemented successfully
- **Priority:** Describes the relative level of urgency, with 1 being the highest priority
- **Who:** Provides the initials for the staff member or position responsible for this action. (SEM = Sustainability and Environment Manager; WG = Internal Working Group; SAC = Sustainability Advisory Committee; GM = General Manager; Coun = Councillors, DECS = Director of Environmental and Customer Services; DO = Director of Operations; BET = Business and Economic Development Team.
- **Fund:** Indicates how the initiatives will be funded. Nil = no cost; Neg = low cost <$5,000; Existing = a cost that is already covered within existing activities; Self = an initiative that will be self-funded through savings; Grant = an initiative for which a grant may be available; User = an initiative where users cover all out of pocket expenses; Loan = an initiative that may be funded by a low interest loan; Council = a new activity which Council must fund.
### Action Plans and Success Measures

#### 4.2 WITHIN OUR ORGANISATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>SUCCESS CRITERIA</th>
<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>WHO</th>
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<td>WITHIN OUR ORGANISATION</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objective 1: Understand our sustainability footprint</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Establish a baseline on our use of energy, water, fuel, consumables, plant and equipment, office equipment and major capital works materials</td>
<td>The four-yearly State of the Environment Report and updates to the Sustainability Action Plan report on performance against baseline data for the use of energy, water, fuel, consumables, plant and equipment, office equipment and major capital works materials from 2018/19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Benchmark this baseline against other comparable organisations and set appropriate targets to reduce consumption across all areas</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Objective 2: Report publicly on Council’s performance against the Sustainability Action Plan and targets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Develop an appropriate communication and community education strategy to raise awareness of initiatives and objectives under the SAP</td>
<td>Council produces an annual performance report on the Sustainability Action Plan from 2018/19 and promotes the presence of the SAP with appropriate communication materials.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM/Comms</td>
<td>Neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Add to and customize information on Council’s website about sustainable living and businesses.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM/Comms</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Produce an annual SAP Report for 2018/19</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM/Comms</td>
<td>Neg</td>
</tr>
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</table>
### Objective 3: Reduce water and energy use and increase the proportion of energy sourced from renewables and water sourced through onsite water capture and reuse.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
<th>SUCCESS CRITERIA</th>
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<th>WHO</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Set and achieve an appropriate target for overall energy consumption and the proportion of renewable energy consumed as part of overall energy consumption. As part of this, assess and install storage options for renewable energy.</td>
<td>Council reduces its overall energy and water consumption by 20% by the year 2020 from 2017/18 levels and increases renewable energy consumption and onsite water capture to at least 20% of total consumption in the same period.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Implement the LED Lighting Upgrade Proposal to progressively upgrade lighting in the 8 most significant Council Buildings and reduce energy consumption. (Estimated net savings over 10 years &gt;$750,000)</td>
<td>LED Lighting Upgrade is completed by 2020</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Progress Scone Admin Centre Solar Parking initiative</td>
<td>Solar Parking initiative is completed by 2018</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Set and achieve an appropriate target to reduce per capita potable water consumption across all Council facilities and the wider Shire and to increase the proportion of water sourced from onsite water capture and reuse. As part of this, assess and install storage options for renewable energy. Review Council’s Drought and Emergency Management Plan in the context of this target.</td>
<td>All new development proposals address energy and water efficiency from 2018/19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Amend the upper Hunter DCP to include development controls requiring new commercial and industrial proposals to include energy and water efficiency measures.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM + DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### Objective 4: Buy efficient vehicles and plant and use them efficiently

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<th>ID</th>
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<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>LINK</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Map vehicle efficiency and ensure this is part of the evaluation in asset management and retirement / replacement</td>
<td>Vehicle efficiency added as part of evaluation criteria for vehicle purchases from 2017/18 GPS locating program implemented during 2018/19.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Implement a GPS locating program to promote the efficient use of the UHSC vehicle fleet and to increase the utilization of each vehicle within the fleet</td>
<td>Total kilometres travelled, hours worked and fuel consumed is reported annually from 2019/20. Ratio of kilometres travelled / hours worked to fuel consumed becomes more efficient year on year after 2019/20.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Promote the use of Skype / Teleconferencing facilities internally to discourage unnecessary vehicle use.</td>
<td>In improving vehicle utilisation, Council identifies opportunities to minimize the size of the fleet post 2019/20 Proportion of meetings conducted by Skype / Teleconference increases to 30% of total inter-office meetings during 2018/19 without compromising service delivery.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Self</td>
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</table>
## Objective 5: Reduce waste and pollution

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Consider initiatives to enhance capacity, boost resource recovery and recycling and to understand potential energy generation capacity at landfills throughout the Shire</td>
<td>Council produces a summary of opportunities to enhance capacity, boost resource recovery and recycling and to understand potential energy generation capacity at landfills throughout the Shire in 2018/19. Summary includes investigations of the potential for organics collection services, the potential sale or reuse of organics and opportunities to deal with industrial agricultural waste.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Investigate the potential for organics collection services to reduce the amount going to landfills and investigate options for the management and potential sale or reuse of organics at a regional level</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Identify major producers of waste throughout the Shire and discuss opportunities to reduce amount to landfill, for example, media articles to raise awareness of the compacters for plastics recycling available at local supermarkets</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Run an education program around recycling – information in rate notices, stories on Facebook and in local media, information on Council’s website and open days / information days for local schools (including information about where local recycling goes).</td>
<td>Council delivers an education program around recycling in 2018 – as a result there is a noticeable decrease in contamination of recyclables after the 2018/19 financial year.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Look at opportunities to deal with industrial agricultural waste through a contractor based composting facility. Potentially achieve volume through combination of council and private facilities.</td>
<td>Council conduct an EOI process to determine local interest in the beneficial reuse of secondary treated wastewater at Merriwa, Aberdeen, and Murrurundi during 2017/18. Aim to issue a contract for the beneficial reuse of water from each site during the 2019/20 financial year, after appropriate investigations and planning approvals.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>User</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Conduct an EOI process to determine local interest in the beneficial reuse of secondary treated wastewater at Merriwa, Aberdeen, and Murrurundi.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM / DECS / DO</td>
<td>Self</td>
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### Objective 6: Cultivate a sustainable supply chain

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<th>FUND</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Sustainability becomes part of the evaluation process for all Council tenders (in addition to Environmental Management Requirements under the NSW Government Environmental Management Systems Guidelines) Materials purchases should include the evaluation of more sustainable substitutes for existing products Plant and equipment purchases must include an evaluation of fuel, energy and water efficiency across the equipment’s life cycle</td>
<td>Sustainability becomes part of the evaluation process for all Council tenders from 2019/20.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>In updating Council’s panel of preferred suppliers (new panel will come into effect 1 July, 2017) seek a sustainability statement from each applicant outlining how the company deals with sustainability. Provide guidance as to Council’s expectations in this area and allocate 5-10% of available marks to how well the tenderer addresses the sustainability question.</td>
<td>Council’s Panel of Preferred Suppliers (are all issued with materials around Council’s sustainability objectives and provide a statement as to the sustainability measures they are taking within their own business from 2018/19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Educate suppliers about Council’s expectations through distribution of the SAP and potentially a workshop at the end of year one featuring suppliers who are particularly skilled or innovative in managing sustainability.</td>
<td>In 2019 this extends to a sustainability education program for all suppliers with a workshop at the end of the 2020 showcasing the suppliers who are leading the way in sustainability.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM / DO</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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### Objective 7: Support sustainable planning and decision making

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Incorporate consideration of sustainability implications into all Council reports</td>
<td>All Council reports and decision papers include commentary on sustainability implications from 2017/18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GM</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Advocate for the use of the Infrastructure Sustainability Rating Tool for all State and Federal Government projects within the Shire including the Scone Bypass to support sustainable planning, design, construction and operation.</td>
<td>In 2017 Council advocates for RMS to pursue an ‘as built’ sustainability rating for the Scone Bypass through the Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia. On completion, the Scone Bypass receives an ISCA rating of at least Level 2 (on a scale of 1-3)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>DECS / GM</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objective 8: Support economic diversity and local employment

8.1 Continued support from Economic Development team for local economic diversity, particularly around local agricultural, equine and renewable energy industries. Consider engaging consultancy resources as needed to support that activity.

SUCCESS CRITERIA: Existing and new local businesses are able to easily access information that clearly explains the planning, environmental and sustainability considerations for new ventures from 2018/19.

Priority: 2

Who: BET

Fund: Existing

8.2 Develop information to support the development of local agricultural and food enterprises by clearly explaining the planning, environmental and food safety considerations for such businesses.

Priority: 2

Who: BET / SEM

Fund: Neg

8.3 Encourage a pre-DA meeting and develop appropriate fact sheets to assist proponents in their decision making around launching new, sustainable ventures.

Priority: 2

Who: BET / DECS

Fund: Neg

Objective 9: Support climate change adaptation

Note: all environmentally focused objectives within this Sustainability Action Plan are designed to address the impacts of climate change.

9.1 Implement the updated Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan to assist local producers to adapt to greater rainfall variability and to manage extreme weather incidents such as floods and bushfires.

SUCCESS CRITERIA: Updated Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan is implemented during 2018/19 to support improved water management practices and the management of extreme weather incidents such as floods and bushfires.

Priority: 2

Who: DECS

Fund: Existing
### Objective 10: Enhance biosecurity to protect our agricultural and equine industries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Success Criteria</th>
<th>Priority</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Fund</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Undertake biosecurity management planning for key venues such as Scone Regional Saleyards, White Park, Merriwa Showground, Cassilis Showground, Rosedale Complex Murrurundi, and St Andrews Reserve in conjunction with Hunter Local Land Services and the Department of Primary Industries. As part of this look at the relationship between the Council's Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan and the plans of other relevant agencies.</td>
<td>Biosecurity information is displayed and available at key venues such as Scone Saleyards, Merriwa Showground, Cassilis Showground, Rosedale Complex Murrurundi, White Park and St Andrews Reserve.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Distribute biosecurity information from key organisations such as LLS at key livestock venues to help improve the management of biosecurity in the Shire.</td>
<td>Biosecurity incidents form part of Council's emergency management planning and Council participates in a regional desktop biosecurity emergency management exercise in conjunction with key local stakeholders and agencies during 2018/19 to test biosecurity measures at key venues.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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### Objective 11: Resource appropriately to ensure sustainability priorities are met

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<th>Priority</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>Fund</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Recruit a Sustainability and Environment Manager for Upper Hunter Shire Council to take carriage of all sustainability objectives</td>
<td>A Sustainability and Environment Manager is recruited for Upper Hunter Shire Council in 2017/18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>Reinvest savings from energy, water, waste and materials initiatives into other sustainability activities</td>
<td>All activities outlined in this plan are funded.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM/ DO/ DECS</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>The Sustainability and Environment Manager will develop an appropriate budget for sustainability activities that identifies savings from sustainability initiatives to be reinvested in other sustainability initiatives and that considers sources of funding outside Council's existing income streams.</td>
<td>Savings from energy, water, waste and materials initiatives are reinvested into other sustainability activities from 2017 onwards. Objectives outlined in this plan are supported and implemented by Council staff. Staff model positive sustainability behaviours and act as advocates for sustainability.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>The Sustainability and Environment Manager will develop and implement an education and change management program within Council to build support and momentum for the objectives outlined in this plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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</table>
Objective 12: Protect and support local agricultural industries

12.1 Review mapping of strategic agricultural land (as mentioned in the Hunter Regional Plan) and provide feedback where that mapping does not reflect local understanding.

Council reviews mapping of strategic agriculture land produced by the NSW Government and provides commentary on any inconsistencies during 2018/19.

12.2 Identify any potential land use conflicts e.g. between agriculture, the equine sector, urban development and mining, advocating to the NSW Government for appropriate development controls.

Strategic land use planning is mapped across the Shire by 2018/19, identifying key zones for equine, grazing, broadacre farming, horticultural, light manufacturing (e.g. food processing), abattoirs (including any potential for specialist facilities), urban development, renewable energy industries and environmentally sensitive areas in need of protection.

12.3 Vigorously oppose the development of industries within the Shire that pose a high risk to the environment, wellbeing of residents or existing agricultural industries.

Encroachment by the resources sector and other high risk industries is identified and challenged.

12.4 Lobby NSW Government when resource exploration and planning applications come into conflict with local agricultural industries.

SEM meets quarterly with Local Land Services to coordinate initiatives of mutual interest.

12.5 Liaise with and support the work of Hunter Local Land Services and other relevant agricultural organisations where consistent with local objectives.

Updated UHSC Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan is updated and implemented during 2017/18.

12.6 Implement the updated UHSC Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan.

ID | ACTION | SUCCESS CRITERIA | PRIORITY | WHO | FUND
---|---|---|---|---|---
12.1 | Review mapping of strategic agricultural land (as mentioned in the Hunter Regional Plan) and provide feedback where that mapping does not reflect local understanding. | Council reviews mapping of strategic agriculture land produced by the NSW Government and provides commentary on any inconsistencies during 2018/19. | 2 | DECS/SEM | Nil
12.2 | Identify any potential land use conflicts e.g. between agriculture, the equine sector, urban development and mining, advocating to the NSW Government for appropriate development controls. | Strategic land use planning is mapped across the Shire by 2018/19, identifying key zones for equine, grazing, broadacre farming, horticultural, light manufacturing (e.g. food processing), abattoirs (including any potential for specialist facilities), urban development, renewable energy industries and environmentally sensitive areas in need of protection. | 2 | DECS/SEM | Nil
12.3 | Vigorously oppose the development of industries within the Shire that pose a high risk to the environment, wellbeing of residents or existing agricultural industries. | Encroachment by the resources sector and other high risk industries is identified and challenged. | 1 | GM / Coun | Existing
12.4 | Lobby NSW Government when resource exploration and planning applications come into conflict with local agricultural industries. | SEM meets quarterly with Local Land Services to coordinate initiatives of mutual interest. | 1 | GM / Coun | Existing
12.5 | Liaise with and support the work of Hunter Local Land Services and other relevant agricultural organisations where consistent with local objectives. | Updated UHSC Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan is updated and implemented during 2017/18. | 1 | SEM | Nil
12.6 | Implement the updated UHSC Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan | | 1 | DECS | Existing
### Objective 13: Encourage local food production and consumption - building economic sustainability and reducing food miles

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>Organise and host a free “Paddock to Plate Success Stories” workshop series showcasing successful food producers / processors from across the region and beyond to encourage the development and expansion of sustainable local food businesses within the Shire</td>
<td>Council hosts a free “Paddock to Plate Success Stories” workshop series showcasing successful food producers / processors during 2018. As a result, Council is able to identify potential new local food production or processing enterprises and businesses that wish to expand and to understand the needs of proponents commencing planning and development for new and expanded venture. Community groups, businesses and business groups involved in the production and marketing of local food and produce receive appropriate support from Council. Barriers to entry and expansion of local food production are understood as part of the strategic approach to economic diversification across the region. Avenues to address these barriers through the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Project and programs such as Royalties for Regions are explored.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>Use the workshop series and other activities to identify barriers to the further expansion and development of local food production, particularly in terms of support in managing planning and approvals, the need for enabling infrastructure and opportunities to showcase and market local food, including through community driven events and initiatives. Use this to inform work with the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Project and relevant grant applications.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM / BET</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>Investigate the interest in a community garden or allotment scheme in each major town, offering residents an opportunity to strengthen social ties while producing some of their own fresh produce</td>
<td>Council conducts an EOI process during 2019 to gauge interest in establishing community gardens in each key town and village, after undertaking appropriate due diligence regarding potential locations and management models.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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<tr>
<td>ID</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>Lobby NSW Government when resource exploration and planning applications come into conflict with equine industry</td>
<td>Land use conflicts between the equine sector and the mining sector are identified and challenged.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>DECS / GM / Council</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.2</td>
<td>Investigate the need for additional signage / promotion of equine tourism attractions including horse studs to help support a diverse and sustainable local economy. Approach TASAC about signage.</td>
<td>The stud tour app is launched during 2017/18 with appropriate supporting signage to support equine tourism and build the economic diversity of the Shire.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BET</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>Council’s Economic Development and Tourism Committee finalises and launches the stud tour app to support equine tourism.</td>
<td>Usage of the stud tour app achieves targets. There is a demonstrable increase in equine tourism for the Shire from 2018/19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>BET</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.4</td>
<td>Collaborate with local equine associations, agents, vendors and government agencies such as Hunter Local Land Services around encouraging sustainable land management practices</td>
<td>Materials regarding sustainable land use are distributed to all rural properties within the Shire.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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</table>
## Objective 15: Encourage sustainable transport

**15.1 Support the uptake of electric vehicles by investigating the potential for Upper Hunter Shire Council to host an electric car charge station within the Shire.**

**Success Criteria:** Electric car charging facilities are available in Scone for all leading models of electric vehicles by 2019/20 promoting the uptake of electric vehicles and supporting sustainable tourism throughout the Shire.

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>Support the uptake of electric vehicles by investigating the potential for Upper Hunter Shire Council to host an electric car charge station within the Shire.</td>
<td>Electric car charging facilities are available in Scone for all leading models of electric vehicles by 2019/20 promoting the uptake of electric vehicles and supporting sustainable tourism throughout the Shire</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Grant / Council</td>
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</table>

**15.2 Promote active transport through initiatives such as the Upper Hunter Rail Trail, a ‘Safe Pathways to School’ project that maps the safest walking and cycling routes for students throughout the Shire and the inclusion of recreational walking and cycling opportunities in the new Upper Hunter Country App.**

**Success Criteria:** Residents and visitors to the Shire making greater use of walking and cycling for recreation and day to day mobility.

Council works with New England and North West Councils to successfully lobby Transport for NSW for the continued provision and appropriate expansion of passenger rail services via Scone as part of the Regional Rail Fleet Upgrade Project.

Awareness of local rail services is raised through high visibility initiatives including a special Horse Festival Train.

Rail patronage reaches full capacity during 2019. New services are considered to meet increasing demand beyond 2019/20.

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<th>FUND</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>Promote active transport through initiatives such as the Upper Hunter Rail Trail, a ‘Safe Pathways to School’ project that maps the safest walking and cycling routes for students throughout the Shire and the inclusion of recreational walking and cycling opportunities in the new Upper Hunter Country App.</td>
<td>Residents and visitors to the Shire making greater use of walking and cycling for recreation and day to day mobility. Council works with New England and North West Councils to successfully lobby Transport for NSW for the continued provision and appropriate expansion of passenger rail services via Scone as part of the Regional Rail Fleet Upgrade Project. Awareness of local rail services is raised through high visibility initiatives including a special Horse Festival Train. Rail patronage reaches full capacity during 2019. New services are considered to meet increasing demand beyond 2019/20.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Council</td>
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</table>

**15.3 Support the ongoing provision, expansion and patronage of rail services via Scone.**

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<th>PRIORITY</th>
<th>WHO</th>
<th>FUND</th>
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<tr>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>Support the ongoing provision, expansion and patronage of rail services via Scone.</td>
<td>Rail patronage reaches full capacity during 2019. New services are considered to meet increasing demand beyond 2019/20.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>GM / DECS</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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### Objective 16: Sustainable land use and management

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<tr>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>Work with Hunter Local Land Services and other key land management organisations to support sustainable land management and on farm biodiversity programs for example, distributing materials on sustainable land management at Council Chambers and when rural properties change hands.</td>
<td>Materials on sustainable land management are available at Council Chambers and distributed to new owners when rural properties change hands from 2018. All rural ratepayers receive information during 2017/18 about key local contacts, funding, training and support available for land regeneration, biodiversity, creek and catchment restoration.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>Work with Hunter Local Land Services and other key land management organisations to support efficient irrigation – for example, discouraging the watering of roads by contacting farmers who do so and promoting the installation of irrigation sensors to monitor water use</td>
<td>Council works with Hunter LLS to distribute materials around efficient irrigation, including the use of sensors, from 2018/19 Council officers report fewer incidences of, or complaints about, irrigation across public roads. Current and planned regeneration projects are understood and barriers to delivery are addressed. If required, Council supports the formation of additional localised groups to address specific needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>Contribute to priority land regeneration work throughout the Shire. In 2017/18 this will involve working with existing local Landcare/sustainability groups to understand current and planned work throughout the Shire and to identify and address (potentially with in kind support) any gaps or barriers to delivery for these existing and planned priority regeneration projects. In 2018/19 this will involve working both with existing groups and more broadly to identify whether and where additional generalist or single focus localised groups may be required to address specific needs.</td>
<td>Areas of critical importance are mapped in 2018/19 and management plans updated as appropriate. Biodiversity values of critical areas show measurable improvement by the end of the 2020/21 financial year.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing and Grant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>Work with other key agencies and organisations across the region to identify areas most critically in need of protection. Activities in the 2017/18 year will include reviewing the Terrestrial Biodiversity Map from the Upper Hunter LEP 2013 against more recent datasets; planning with organisations such as Hunter LLS, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, Muswellbrook Shire Council, Hunter Great Eastern Ranges initiative and local Landcare / sustainability groups for the management of strategic biodiversity corridors, particularly the Upper Hunter Link.</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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</table>
Support rubbish free farms and beautiful villages. Activities for 2018 will include:

Produce materials to educate landowners about the pitfalls of illegal on farm dumping and to encourage rural residents to report illegal dumping and on-farm rubbish dumps.

Trial issuing certificates for rural ratepayers to bring rubbish to local landfills (capped at an acceptable volume of rubbish per ratepayer).

Investigate options for an annual user pays roadside collection for all rural localities to collect hazardous materials such as expired pesticides, insecticides and herbicides; unsightly rubbish from fallen down sheds, derelict caravans, disused fencing and machinery etc. Waive the Council component of tip fees for this annual collection and charge only transport and statutory State Government levies.

In 2018 Council identifies and maps areas of regular illegal dumping and properties with known on-farm dumps, significant on property rubbish, unsightly and derelict buildings etc. These localities are the first to receive information on new rubbish services for rural ratepayers.

In 2018 all rural ratepayers are issued with certificates to bring rubbish to local landfills. Certificates are capped at an acceptable volume and user pays for anything over.

Options for an annual roadside collection for rural localities are presented to Council for decision in 2017/18. The trial, if approved, occurs prior to the end of 2018 and is strongly subscribed.
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<tr>
<td>17.1</td>
<td>Facilitate Upper Hunter and Liverpool Wind Farms and any other potential new renewable energy ventures by developing a public position supporting renewable energy development, providing information to project proponents (including land use mapping) and making appropriate contributions through planning and approval processes at State level).</td>
<td>The Upper Hunter Energy Park and Liverpool Wind Farms receive all support necessary from UHSC to progress their development applications. If developed, Council sources up to 100% of its energy needs from local renewable projects as soon as it is available.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>GM / DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>Support the investigation of renewable energy opportunities throughout the region.</td>
<td>Council maps all areas potentially suitable for renewable energy development and makes this information available on its website during 2019/20.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>DECS</td>
<td>Existing</td>
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### Objective 18: Support sustainable tourism

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<tr>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>Work with groups such as Ecotourism Australia to help local tourism operators and those interested in starting new tourism ventures to adopt more sustainable practices and to create a competitive advantage around these practices. Offer a free workshop for tourism operators on this topic</td>
<td>In 2019 Council arranges guest speakers from appropriate organisations for a series of free information sessions aimed at helping local tourism operators and those interested in starting new tourism ventures to adopt more sustainable practices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>SEM / BET</td>
<td>Neg</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>Continue to promote the public and private sector natural attractions of the region via the Upper Hunter Country App and the activities of the Economic Development and Tourism Committee</td>
<td>Council launches the Upper Hunter Country App during 2017/18 to promote hiking, outdoor activities and nature based attractions.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>BET</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>Launch the Upper Hunter Country App to promote hiking and other outdoor activities across the area especially in the region’s national parks. Also promoting agricultural tourism such as farmstays and heritage tourism initiatives such as National Trust Open Homes and Gardens.</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>BET</td>
<td>Existing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal 1: The leading regional economy in Australia

Direction 5: Transform the productivity of the Upper Hunter

- Action 5.3 Identify the land and infrastructure requirements to develop the Hunter’s coal and alternative energy resources
- Action 5.4 Protect the availability and quality of resources to sustain agricultural industries in the region
- Action 5.6 Plan for water security to shape regional infrastructure investment and economic development
- Action 5.8 Review the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan

Direction 9: Grow tourism in the region

- Action 9.2 Encourage tourism development in natural areas that support conservation outcomes
- Action 9.4 Enable growth of tourism in the Upper Hunter through integration with the Equine Critical Industry Cluster

Direction 10: Protect and enhance agricultural productivity

- Action 10.1 Protect locations that can accommodate agricultural enterprises from incompatible development and facilitate the supply chain, including infrastructure, distribution areas, processing facilities and research and development in local plans
- Action 10.2 Address sector-specific considerations for agricultural industries through local plans
- Action 10.3 Protect the region’s wellbeing and prosperity through increased biosecurity measures
- Action 10.4 Encourage niche commercial, tourist and recreation activities that complement and promote a stronger agricultural sector and build the sector’s capacity to adapt to changing circumstances
- Action 10.6 Manage Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Land and other important agricultural land as locations for agricultural activities and complementary uses

Direction 12: Diversify and grow the energy sector

- Action 12.1 Diversify and grow the energy sector by working with stakeholders, including councils, communities and industry, to identify and support opportunities for smaller-scale renewable energy initiatives such as those using bioenergy or waste coalmine methane
- Action 12.2 Enable opportunities for renewable energy industries by reviewing local planning controls

Direction 13: Plan for greater land use compatibility

- Action 13.1 Identify and protect important agricultural land, including intensive agricultural clusters, in local plans to avoid land use conflicts, particularly associated with residential expansion
- Action 13.2 Limit urban and rural housing encroachment into identified agricultural and extractive resource areas, industrial areas and transport infrastructure when preparing local strategies.
- Action 13.3 Amend planning controls to deliver greater certainty of land use
• Action 13.4 Provide non-statutory guidance on types of land uses that would be considered most appropriate, suitable or sympathetic to existing land uses in the Upper Hunter and other areas where land use conflicts occur.

**Goal 2: A biodiversity-rich natural environment**

**Direction 14: Protect and connect natural areas**

• Action 14.1 Identify terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity values and protect areas of high environmental value to sustain the lifestyle, economic success and environmental health of the region

• Action 14.2 Identify and strengthen biodiversity corridors as places for priority biodiversity offsets

• Action 14.3 Improve the quality of, and access to, information relating to high environmental values

• Action 14.4 Protect biodiversity by maintaining and where possible enhancing the existing protection of high environmental value areas.

• Action 14.5 Secure the long term protection of regionally significant biodiversity corridors

The Hunter Regional Plan identifies the Liverpool Ranges Link and the Upper Hunter Link as proposed biodiversity corridors.

**Direction 15: Sustain water quality and security**

• Action 15.1 Protect water catchments to sustain high quality and dependable water supplies across the region

• Action 15.2 Effectively manage surface and groundwater use in agricultural areas to support ecosystem function and food production, and to cater for the increasing demand of urban communities and industry

• Action 15.3 Plan for the security of the region’s town water supply

• Action 15.4 Implement catchment-based plans for the ongoing sustainable management and health of estuaries

• Action 15.5 Apply the neutral or beneficial water quality objectives to land use planning in surface and groundwater drinking water catchment areas to minimize the effects of development on waterways.

• Action 15.6 Reduce the risk of introduction or spread of aquatic pests and diseases from new development that may affect fisheries and aquaculture industry practices

**Direction 16: Increase resilience to hazards and climate change**

• Action 16.1 Manage the risks of climate change and improve the region’s resilience to flooding... bushfire, mine subsidence and land contamination.

• Action 16.2 Review and constantly update floodplain risk... particularly where urban growth is being investigated

• Action 16.3 Incorporate new knowledge on regional climate projections and related cumulative impacts in local plans for new urban development

**Goal 3: Thriving communities**

**Direction 17: Create healthy built environments through good design**

• Action 17.1 Develop best-practice guidelines for planning, designing and developing healthy built environments
• Action 17.2 Enhance access to fresh food by promoting initiatives that increase urban food production and access to produce from local farmers

• Action 17.3 Enhance the quality of neighbourhoods by integrating recreational walking and cycling networks into the design of new communities to encourage physical activity.

Direction 18: Enhance access to recreational facilities and connect open spaces

• Action 18.1 Facilitate more recreational walking and cycling paths

• Action 18.2 Deliver connected biodiversity-rich corridors and open space areas for community enjoyment

• Action 18.3 Enhance public access to natural areas

• Action 18.4 Assist councils to develop open space and recreation strategies that identify a range of accessible open space and recreation opportunities, integrate open space, active transport and recreation networks and improve public foreshore access

Direction 20: Revitalise existing communities

• Action 20.1 Accelerate urban revitalization by directing social infrastructure where there is growth

• Action 20.2 Undertake planning and place-making for main streets and centres

• Action 20.3 Enhance the amenity and attractiveness of existing places

The NSW Government has also set a range of priorities for each council within the Hunter Regional Plan. These additional priorities for the Upper Hunter Council which have implications for the sustainability of the region are:

• Protect the Equine Critical Industry Cluster and allow for expansion of the industry

• Protect Biophysical Strategic Agricultural Lands and other important agricultural lands

• Support the tourism economy by investigating ways to leverage agriculture and equine industry strengths to attract food-based and equine-related visitors

• Support the diversification of the energy sector and ongoing extractive industries, noting the Upper Hunter Local Government Area is part of the Upper Hunter Green Energy Precinct

• Encourage the establishment of employment-generating rural industries, value-adding industries and intensive agriculture in appropriate locations

Specific priorities have also been set for the strategic centre of Scone. These are:

• Maintain its role as a commercial and administrative centre for the Upper Hunter with key facilities and services including a railway station, Scone Hospital, TAFE, Courthouse and local council administration building

• Support development of Scone as the nationally recognized ‘Horse Capital of Australia’

• Maintain support services for the agricultural and equine industries, including veterinary and meat processing facilities and livestock sales.

Finally, the plan sets priorities around future housing and urban renewal opportunities. These are to deliver the existing Urban Release Areas at Scone Heights, Kurrajong Estate, St Aubins Estate, Aberdeen Heights Estate, Oxley View Estate (Merriwa) and Rosedale Estate (Murrurundi).