

UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL

SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN 2018 to 2021

A Quality Rural Lifestyle -

in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community



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INTRODUCTION

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.

I also wish to thank the members of the community who provided comments on the draft Sustainability Action Plan. This feedback, was also invaluable, and affirmed the direction provided by the Sustainability Advisory Committee when developing the Sustainability Action Plan.

We look forward to starting what I believe is a critically important journey.

Mayor Wayne Bedgood.

OUR SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

**CLEAN AIR, SOIL AND
WATER, HAPPY, HEALTHY
COMMUNITY, STRONG
LOCAL ECONOMY.**

1.2 OUR SUSTAINABILITY VISION

Barrington Tops National Park



Upper Hunter Shire Council’s vision is of “a quality rural lifestyle – in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community.” We know that the community values 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 Regional Leadership Executive (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 2036 (NSW Department of Planning and Environment), United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 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:

1. The need for effective telecommunications and broadband internet access for all regional users, which in turn will reduce unnecessary travel
2. 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
3. The need for more frequent train services via Scone between Sydney, Newcastle and the New England / North West

OUR SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

1. Understand our sustainability footprint
2. Resource appropriately to ensure sustainability priorities are met
3. Report publicly on Council's performance against the Sustainability Action Plan and targets
4. Support sustainable planning and decision making
5. Cultivate a sustainable supply chain
6. Buy efficient vehicles and plant and use them efficiently
7. Encourage sustainable transport
8. Reduce water and energy use and increase the proportion of energy sourced from renewables and water sourced through on-site water capture and reuse.
9. Reduce waste and pollution
10. Sustainable land use and management
11. Support climate change adaptation
12. Enhance biosecurity to protect our agricultural and equine industries
13. Protect and support local agricultural industries
14. Support the equine critical industry cluster
15. Encourage local food production and consumption - building economic sustainability, social ties and reducing food miles
16. Support sustainable tourism
17. Support economic diversity and local employment
18. Support the development of renewable energy projects

DEVELOPING THE PLAN

3.1 HOW WE HAVE 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.

RESEARCH: Take guidance from leading global sustainability and sustainability reporting standards (Global Reporting Initiative and AA1000). Review Sustainability Action Plans of peer councils

DRAFT: Seek input from Council staff and officers via the internal Sustainability Working Group. Work together to identify the most important issues and appropriate actions for each of these issues.

REFINE: Seek community and local agency input via the Sustainability Advisory Committee. Review and refine draft plan based on feedback from the committee

CONSULT: Release Draft Sustainability Action Plan for wider community comment. Review and refine based on community feedback.

ACT: Finalise the Sustainability Action Plan. Release to community via Council website and begin implementation and ongoing feedback throughout the implementation of the plan.

WE ARE HERE >

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 Plan 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

When in developing the Sustainability Action Plan (SAP), UHSC sought 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 also sets objectives that:

- Support, and are consistent with, the objectives of the Hunter Regional Plan
- Lead the way on sustainability among other Councils in the region
- Support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

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 for example

childcare facilities, libraries, street lighting, recreation centres, sporting grounds, and council offices.

2. Encourage sustainable transport use (public transport, walking and cycling) through Council transport planning and design.
3. Ensure Council fleet purchases meet greenhouse gas emissions requirements and support the uptake of electric vehicles
4. Provide fast-charging infrastructure throughout the city at key locations for electric vehicles.
5. Implement an education and behaviour change program to influence the behaviour of council officers, local residents and businesses within the municipality to drive the shift to renewable energy, energy efficiency and sustainable transport.
6. To help strengthen networking and knowledge sharing within regions and across state and territory lines, participating councils are provided with 'buddies'. UHSC has been buddies with Muswellbrook Shire Council and Strathbogie Council in Victoria

3.4 OBJECTIVES OF OTHER RELEVANT PLANS

3.4.1 HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN 2036

The Hunter Regional Plan 2036 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.

3.4.2 UNITED NATIONS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - adopted by world leaders in September 2015 at an historic UN summit - officially came into force on 1 January 2016. Over the next fifteen years, with these new Goals that universally apply to all, countries will combine efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that no one is left behind. The 17 SDGs are illustrated below.



THE SDGS THAT HAVE BEEN ADDRESSED BY THE PLAN ARE:

Goal 2: Zero Hunger - “End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture”.

Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy - “Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.”

Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth - “Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

Goal 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure - “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation”.

Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities - “Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.”

Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and

Production - “Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.”

Goal 13: Climate Action - “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.”

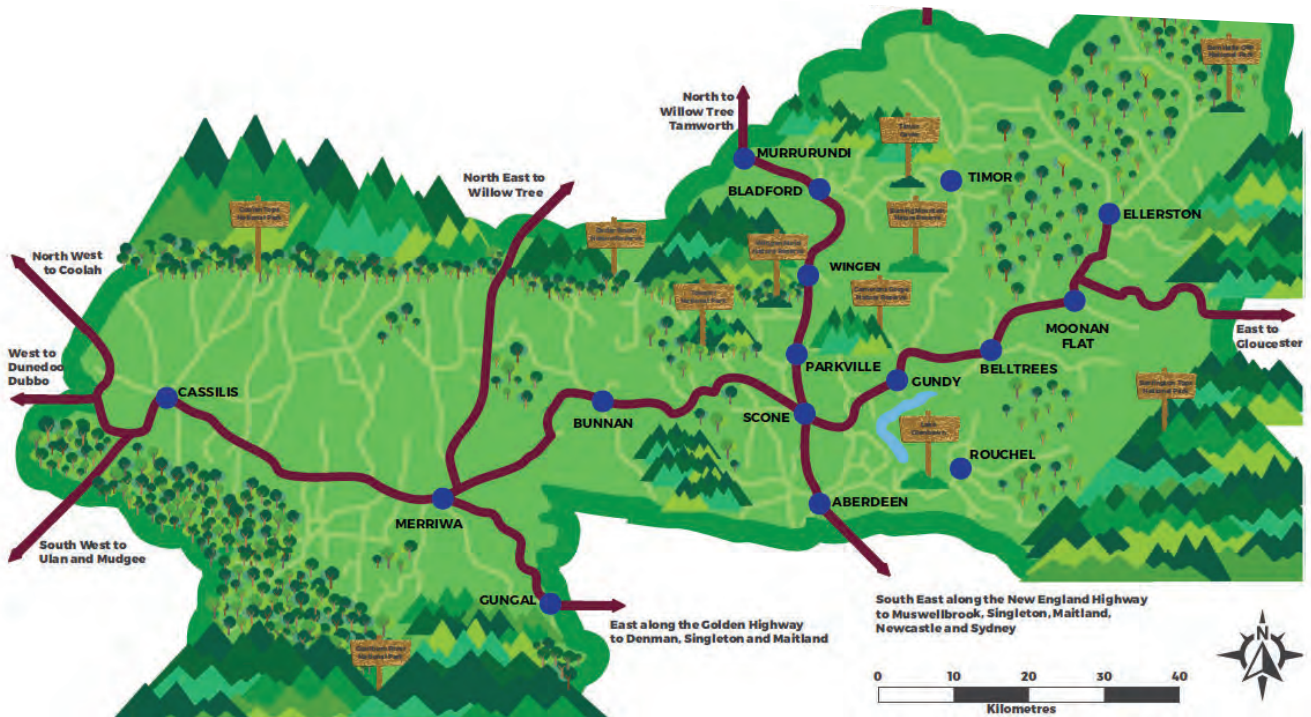
Goal 15: Life on Land - “Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.”

Other goals are addressed in part but are better aligned with state or federal government strategies.

By aligning the Sustainability Action Plan with the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development a line of sight is created from action at the local level to global goals otherwise known as ‘think globally, act locally’

3.5 THE UPPER HUNTER SHIRE AT A GLANCE

In addition to understanding the aspirations of neighbouring regions and the State Government, to develop the SAP it is important to consider the physical features, industries and activities that occur across the Shire as well as the nature of Council's activities as an organisation.



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, Cassilis 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 livestock selling centre 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 a result the Shire has been given Critical Equine Cluster Status which helps to protect it 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 Livestock selling 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.

Council provides a diverse and extensive range of services including:

ROADS AND TRANSPORT

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

SALEYARDS

We operate the Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre – a leading regional cattle selling complex which is proposed to receive a \$7 million upgrade in 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 including inspection of food premises, on-site sewage management systems, hairdressers, tattooists and other body grooming services.

WASTE MANAGEMENT

We manage the shire's 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. 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 Local Government Area (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 Goulburn 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, on-site water capture infrastructure will be installed as part of the upgrade to the Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre complex which is scheduled to commence in 2017/18.



TABLE 3: Annual Water Consumption - Scone and Aberdeen

TYPE	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Residential (ML)	809	748	3396	910	898	954	837	766
Commercial (ML)	95	163	139	159	146	164	190	197
Parks (ML)	52	54	47	75	77	1009	95	112
Industrial (ML)	212	276	253	99	421	549	505	426
Total Production	956	1241	3835	1243	1542	2676	1626	1501

TABLE 4: Annual Water Consumption - Murrurundi

TYPE	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Residential (ML)	66	67	56	72	66	63	63	57
Commercial (ML)	9	10	7	9	8	12	145	15
Parks (ML)	5	4	2	2	3	3	7	5
Total Production	77	81	65	83	77	78	85	77

TABLE 5: Annual Water Consumption - Merriwa and Cassilis

TYPE	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
Residential (ML)	124	112	89	141	145	235	135	139
Commercial (ML)	23	25	20	25	23	35	24	33
Parks (ML)	37	26	20	40	45	35	29	24
Total Production	184	130	129	206	213	305	188	196

WASTE MANAGEMENT

The amount of waste that the Council collects from various sources is indicative of the amount of material throughput in the LGA 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.

WASTE TYPE	TONNES OF WASTE			
	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016
Municipal waste kerbside collection	2,900	2,661	2,091	3,555 +250 bulk waste
Municipal recycling kerbside collection	960	1,049	1,026	1,008
Landfills	5,796	7,197	6,493	6,239
Total waste collected	9,565	10,907	10,269	10,802

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.**

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 Livestock Selling Centre 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.

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 active transport and benefits from 5km 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.



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 level of detail 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 on-site 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, 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.



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.

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 has done 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.



SUSTAINABLE PLANNING AND LAND USE



Council has four main instruments to support sustainable planning and land use; the Upper Hunter Local Environmental Plan (LEP) 2013, the Upper Hunter Development Control Plan 2015 (DCP), the Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy (LUS) and the Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan.

The LEP includes a number of local provisions that specifically aim to improve the environment performance of developments in relation to terrestrial biodiversity, groundwater vulnerability, riparian land and watercourses and drinking water catchments.

The Upper Hunter Development Control Plan 2015 provides greater detail on the implementation of the LEP and responds to a range of environmental issues that can potentially arise from developments. Part 11 of the DCP specifically relates to protecting the natural environment. It covers areas such as

tree preservation, biodiversity, riparian land and watercourses, groundwater protection, drinking water catchments, soil and water management, on-site waste water management, waste minimization and management, and buffer areas.

The Upper Hunter Land Use Strategy outlines Council's key land use policies and principles for the Upper Hunter LGA. It identifies demands for key infrastructure and indicates land potentially suitable for rezoning. The Strategy is referenced by Council when processing requests to amend the Upper Hunter LEP.

A revised Land Use Strategy was adopted by Council and endorsed by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment in 2017. The revised Strategy contains a range of strategic directions, policies and actions relating to sustainable land use.

The Upper Hunter Strategic Regional Land Use Plan was developed by the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in 2012 to provide a framework to support growth, protect the environment and respond to competing land uses, whilst preserving key regional values over the next 20 years.

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.

TOP SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FOR UPPER HUNTER SHIRE COUNCIL:

- Sustainable land use and development
- Water
- Energy
- Transport
- Waste
- Sustainable procurement / supply chain management
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Biodiversity
- Local economic diversity
- Community health and wellbeing
- Social sustainability
- Biosecurity
- Natural disaster preparedness and management
- Culture and Heritage Management

Additionally, Council has a responsibility to show leadership on these material issues more widely across the Shire.

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

Public consultation on the Draft Sustainability Action Plan.

- Sustainability Advisory Plan placed on public exhibition for 28 days.
- Submissions viewed by Sustainability Advisory Committee and appropriately addressed

INTERNALLY:

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



ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

4.1 READING THIS SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLAN

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.

Council, in consultation with an internal working group and the Councillors and citizens on its Sustainability Advisory Committee, has developed a set of internal and external actions which support its vision of a quality rural lifestyle in a vibrant, caring and sustainable community.

Each action has been given an identifying number so that it can be easily tracked. We have described what success looks like and identified the level of priority for each item with 1 being the highest. This is based on undertaking the most logical actions first and making use of initiatives already underway.

EXAMPLE:

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUND
1.1	Establish a baseline on our use of energy, water, fuel, consumables, plant and equipment, office equipment and major capital works materials	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 by 2018/19.	1	SEM	Existing



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



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 1: Understand our sustainability footprint						
1.1	Establish a baseline on our use of energy, water, fuel, consumables, plant and equipment, office equipment and major capital works materials	Baseline data and years are established for: - energy - fuel - consumables - plant and equipment - office equipment - major capital works materials	1	SEM	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2019
1.2	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	Performance against baseline data is reported in four-yearly State of the Environment Report.	1	SEM	Existing	Ongoing
1.3	Benchmark this baseline against other comparable organisations and set appropriate targets to reduce consumption across all areas	Targets set for reduced consumption for: - energy - fuel - consumables - plant and equipment - office equipment - major capital works materials	1	SEM	Existing	Targets set as part of Sustainability Advantage Program
Objective 2: Resource appropriately to ensure sustainability priorities are met						
2.1	Recruit a Sustainability and Environment Manager for Upper Hunter Shire Council to take carriage of all sustainability objectives	A Sustainability and Environment Manager is recruited for Upper Hunter Shire Council in 2017/18	1	DECS	Existing	Completed by 31/01/2018

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
2.2	Reinvest savings from energy, water, waste and materials initiatives into other sustainability activities	Financial savings from energy, water, waste and materials initiatives are reinvested into implementing the actions in this SAP from July 2018.	1	SEM / DO / DECS	Nil	100% of savings reinvested from 01/07/2018.
2.3	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 (revolving fund) and - considers sources of funding outside Council's existing income streams.	Budget developed for the implementation of the SAP.	1	SEM	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2018
2.4	The Sustainability and Environment Manager will develop and implement an education and change management program within Council to build staff capacity and support for change and accelerate momentum to achieve the objectives outlined in this plan.	Education and change management program developed and implemented in 2018/19.	1	SEM	Neg	By 30/06/2019
Objective 3: Report publicly on Council's performance against the Sustainability Action Plan and targets						
3.1	Develop an appropriate Sustainability Community Communication and Education Plan to raise awareness of initiatives and objectives under the SAP to be applied across the community including, pre-school and school aged students, young and older adults and people with special needs.	Sustainability Community Communication and Education Plan developed and endorsed by Council	1	SEM / Comms	Neg	Completed by 31/12/2018
3.2	Add to and customise information on Council's website about sustainable living and business	Web page content reviewed biannually	1	SEM / Comms	Existing	No less than ten changes made annually.
3.3	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.	Annual SAP performance report developed.	1	SEM / Comms	Neg	First report for 2018/19 completed by 31/8/2019.

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 4: Support sustainable planning and decision making						
4.1	Incorporate consideration of sustainability implications into all Council reports	All Council reports and decision papers include commentary on sustainability implications	2	GM	Nil	100% of Council reports from 01/07/2019
4.2	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.	Sustainability rating of at least Level 2 obtained for all State and Federal Government built infrastructure	2	DECS / GM	Nil	Level 2 IS rating obtained on 100% of new state and federal government infrastructure.
Objective 5: Cultivate a sustainable supply chain						
5.1	<p>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).</p> <p>Materials purchases should include the evaluation of more sustainable substitutes for existing products.</p> <p>Plant and equipment purchases must include an evaluation of fuel, energy and water efficiency across the equipment's life cycle</p>	Sustainability becomes part of the evaluation process for all Council tenders from 2019/20.	1	DO	Nil	Implemented from 30/06/2019
5.2	In updating Council's panel of preferred suppliers (new panel will come into effect 1 July, 2019) seek a statement from each applicant outlining their sustainability credentials. 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.	All of Council's Panel of Preferred Suppliers has supplied a statement of sustainability credentials.	2	DO	Nil	100% of Council's Panel of Preferred Suppliers by 30/06/2020
5.3	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.	Council's suppliers are aware of Council's sustainability expectations.	2	SEM / DO	Neg	100% of Council's Panel of Preferred Suppliers by 30/06/2020

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 6: Buy efficient vehicles and plant and use them efficiently						
6.1	Review the Vehicle Policy to ensure vehicle efficiency is part of the evaluation in vehicle asset management and retirement / replacement	Vehicle efficiency added as part of evaluation criteria for vehicle purchases in Vehicle Policy from 2018/19	1	DO	Nil	New evaluation criteria added to policy during by 30/06/2019.
6.2	Implement a GPS locating program to promote the efficient use of the UHSC vehicle fleet and to increase the utilisation of each vehicle within the fleet	<p>GPS locating program implemented during 2018/19. 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</p> <p>In improving vehicle utilisation, Council identifies opportunities to minimize the size of the fleet post 2019/20</p>	2	DO	Self	GPS installed by 30/06/2020.
6.3	Promote the use of Skype / Teleconferencing facilities internally to discourage unnecessary vehicle use.	Proportion of meetings conducted by Skype / Teleconference increases without compromising service delivery.	2	SEM	Self	>30% of inter - office meetings are conducted via Skype / tele-conferencing by 30/06/2020



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 7: Encourage sustainable transport						
7.1	Support the uptake of electric cars by investigating the potential for Upper Hunter Shire Council to host electric car charge stations at key locations within the Shire	Suitable electric car charging technology and locations are identified. Business cases developed and endorsed by Council.	1	SEM	Grant / Council	By 31/12/2018
7.2	Electric car charging facilities are installed in key locations for all leading models of electric vehicles by 2019/20 promoting the uptake of electric vehicles and supporting sustainable tourism throughout the Shire.	Electric car charging stations installed where feasible.	2	SEM	Grant / Council	By 30/07/2020
7.3	Promote active transport through initiatives such as 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.	One initiative identified and implemented in 2018/19	1	SEM	Council	By 30/06/2019
7.4	Council supports the ongoing provision, expansion and patronage of rail services (or other public transport options) via Scone by: - working 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. - Working with local event organisers and Transport NSW to provide to provide high visibility public transport initiatives such as a special Horse Festival / Warbirds train or bus services.	Increased service provision and patronage of rail services (or other public transport options).	2	GM / DECS	Nil	Increased from 2016/17 baseline

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 8: Reduce water and energy use and increase the proportion of energy sourced from renewables and water sourced through on-site water capture and reuse.						
8.1	Set and achieve an appropriate target for overall energy consumption and the proportion of renewable energy consumed as part of overall energy consumption.	Target set for energy consumption across Council facilities and wider shire. Target set for proportion of renewable energy to be purchased.	1	SEM	Self	Targets set as part of Sustainability Advantage Program
8.2	Assess storage options for renewable energy when installed at Council facilities. Implement where economically viable.	Options for the storage of renewable energy are assessed as part of renewable energy installation.	1	SEM	Neg	100% of renewable energy projects consider feasibility of battery storage.
8.3	Implement the LED Lighting Upgrade Proposal to progressively upgrade lighting in the 8 most significant Council Buildings and reduce energy consumption.	LED Lighting Upgrade is completed by 2020	3	SEM	Self	\$750,000 saved from January 2018 to December 2027 due to energy savings from LED installation.
8.4	Progress Scone Admin Centre Solar Parking initiative	Solar Parking initiative is completed by 2018	1	SEM	Existing	Completion by 30/06/2018
8.5	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 on-site water capture and reuse. As part of this, assess and install recycled water storage options. Review Council's Drought and Emergency Management Plan in the context of this target	Targets set for per capita potable water consumption across Council facilities and wider shire. Target set for proportion of water sourced from on-site water capture and reuse Council's Drought and Emergency Management Plan is reviewed based on these targets.	2	SEM	Self	Targets set as part of Sustainability Advantage Program by 30/06/2020

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
8.6	Amend the upper Hunter DCP to include development controls requiring new commercial and industrial proposals to include energy and water efficiency measures.	All new development proposals address energy and water efficiency	1	SEM & DECS	Existing	All new commercial and industrial proposals include energy and water efficiency measures from 30/06/2019
Objective 9: Reduce waste and pollution						
9.1	Council reviews and updates the UHSC Waste Management Strategy.	UHSC Waste Management Strategy reviewed and endorsed by Council.	1	SEM / DECS	Existing	By 30/06/2019
9.2	Implement the UHSC Waste Management Strategy.	The Waste Management Strategy is implemented in accordance with agreed timeframes.	2	SEM / DECS	Existing	Meet deadlines in WMS.
9.3	Identify opportunities for Council to partner with commercial producers of waste to obtain funding from the Office of Environment and Heritage to run programs and/or obtain equipment to reduce waste being disposed to landfill.	Commercial operators participate in one trial program undertaken in 2018/19.	2	SEM / DECS	Existing	One trial program is undertaken by 30/06/2019.
9.4	Develop a Waste Management Communication and Education Plan for the management of domestic waste.	The Waste Management Communication and Education Plan is developed and endorsed by Council.	1	SEM / DECS	Grant / Council	By 30/06/2019
9.5	Implement the Waste Management Communication and Education Plan for the management of domestic waste.	Waste Management Communication and Education Plan is implemented in accordance with agreed timeframes.	2	SEM	Council	100% of deadlines met
9.6	Develop Concept Plan for Merriwa Recycled Water Scheme.	Concept Plan completed in 2018/19	1	SEM / DECS / DO	Self	Completed by 30/06/2019
9.7	Implement Murrurundi Recycled Water Scheme	Scheme implemented in 2018/19	1	SEM / DECS / DO	Self	Implemented by 30/06/2019
9.8	Develop the Recycled Water Management Plan for Scone	Plan completed in 2018/19	1	SEM / DECS / DO	Self	Completed by 30/06/2019

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
9.9	Apply for Woodsmoke Reduction Program grant funding and implement program.	Implementation of program during winter 2018/19	1	SEM	Grant / Council	Completed by 31/01/2019
9.10	Update the On-site Sewage Management Strategy	Strategy reviewed and endorsed by Council.	1	DECS	Existing	Completed by 31/12/2019
9.11	Council continues to be an associate member of the Hunter and Central Coast RID Squad to assist with the identification and regulation of areas of regular illegal dumping and properties with known on farm dumps, significant on property rubbish, unsightly and derelict buildings etc.	Five major investigations undertaken annually	2	DECS	Existing	5 Major investigations per annum
9.12	Obtain baseline data on illegal dumping in UHSC including tonnages, costs to Council and locations.	Baseline data for 2017/18 obtained.	1	DECS	Existing	Completed by 31/12/2018
Objective 10. Sustainable land use and management						
10.1	Links to materials regarding sustainable land use are made available to rural property owners on Council's website.	Council's website contains links to information regarding sustainable land management.	1	SEM	Neg	Completed by 31/12/2018
10.2	Work with Hunter Local Land Services, Upper Hunter Sustainable Farming Group 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	No. of complaint regarding over-irrigation is reduced in 2018/19 from 2017/18.	2	SEM / DECS	Existing and grant	Complaints reduced



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
10.3	<p>Contribute to priority land regeneration work throughout the shire by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - working with existing local Landcare / sustainability groups, the upper Hunter Landcare Coordinator, Upper Hunter Local Weeds Authority and Local Land Services to understand current and planned work throughout the shire. - Assisting to identify and address any gaps or barriers to delivery of these existing and planned priority regeneration projects. - Assisting to identify where additional generalist or single focus localised groups may be needed to address specific needs egg weed management 	<p>Increase in planned land regeneration work from 2018/19.</p>	2	SEM / DECS	Existing and grant	Increase in planned land regeneration work from 01/07/2019.
10.4	<p>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.</p>	<p>Areas of critical importance are mapped in 2018/19 and management plans updated as appropriate.</p> <p>Biodiversity values of critical areas show measurable improvement by the end of the 2020/21 financial year.</p>	3	SEM / DECS	Existing	<p>Mapping completed 2018/19</p> <p>Improved biodiversity values by end 2020/21.</p>



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
10.5	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. - Investigate options for providing services to rural landowners that encourage recycling practices and the correct disposal of waste materials including problem wastes, including additional state government run programs and grants such as Chemical Clean Out and Bin Trim.	Materials on illegal dumping are available on Council's website. Options for provision of services to rural landowners are included in the revised version of the UHS Waste Management Strategy.	1	SEM / DECS	User	Completed by 31/12/2018
10.6	Provide information on availability of heritage grants and technical advice and support to assist with the restoration and preservation of local heritage items.	Information is developed and provided on Council's website	1	SEM	Existing	Completed by 31/10/2018
10.7	Develop a Heritage Management Strategy for the Upper Hunter Shire	A Heritage Management Strategy is developed.	2	DECS	Grant / Council	Completed by 30/06/2020
10.8	Develop a Tree Management Policy to: - provide integrated guidelines for tree removal, planting and preservation, and - encourage planting of indigenous species	Tree Management Policy developed and endorsed by Council	2	DECS	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2020
Objective 11: Support climate change adaptation						
11.1	Review and update the Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan. Consider demand management in review to support improved water management practices, assist local producers to adapt to greater rainfall variability and to manage extreme weather incidents such as floods and bushfires.	The Drought Management and Emergency Plan is updated and endorsed by Council in 2018/19.	2	DECS	Existing	Endorsed by 31/07/2019.
11.2	Commence implementation of the Drought Management and Emergency Response Plan including any identified changes required to infrastructure	The Drought Management and Emergency Plan implementation is commenced in 2019/2020.	2	DECS	Existing	Implementation commences from 01/07/2019

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
11.3	Develop a program of community activities/events focussing on the impact and adaptation to climate change in the local area, rural areas in particular.	Community activities / events held.	1	SEM	Grant / Council	4 activities held by 30/06/2019
11.4	Distribute Beat the Heat information prepared by Hunter Councils across the LGA to increase awareness of heatwave preparedness	Information distributed to schools, aged care centres and medical facilities	1	SEM	Neg	In November annually
Objective 12: Enhance biosecurity to protect our agricultural and equine industries						
12.1	Undertake biosecurity management planning for key venues such as Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre, 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.	Biosecurity Management Plans have been completed for key venues such as Scone Regional Livestock Selling Centre, White Park, Merriwa Showground, Cassilis Showground, Rosedale Complex Murrurundi, and St Andrews Reserve	1	SEM	Existing	In place and tested by 30/06/2019
12.2	Integrate the Biosecurity Management Plans into Council's Emergency Response Plan when reviewed.	The Biosecurity Management Plans are integrated into Council's Emergency Response Plan.	1	SEM	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2019



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
12.3	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.	Regional desktop biosecurity emergency management exercise held.	2	SEM	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2020
12.4	Distribute biosecurity information from key organisations such as LLS at key livestock venues to help improve the management of biosecurity in the Shire.	Biosecurity information is displayed and/ or available at key venues such as Scone Livestock Selling Centre, Merriwa Showground, Cassilis Showground, Rosedale Complex Murrurundi, White Park and St Andrews Reserve.	1	SEM	Neg	Completed by 30/06/2019
Objective 13. Protect and support local agricultural industries						
13.1	Review mapping of strategic agricultural land (as mentioned in the Hunter Regional Plan) and provide feedback where that mapping does not reflect local understanding	Feedback provided to the NSW Government in 2018/19.	2	DECS / SEM	Nil	By 30/06/2020



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
13.2	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.	Potential land use conflicts are identified.	2	DECS / SEM	Nil	By 30/06/2020
13.3	Strategic land use planning is mapped across the Shire 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.	Mapping completed in 2019/19	2	DECS	Council	By 30/06/2020
13.4	Oppose the development of industries within the Shire that present as a high risk to the environment, wellbeing of residents or existing agricultural industries	100% of high risk industrial developments opposed.	1	GM / Coun	Existing	100%
13.5	Lobby NSW Government when resource exploration and planning applications come into conflict with local agricultural industries	Encroachment by the resources sector and other high risk industries is identified and challenged	1	GM / Coun	Existing	As required
13.6	Liaise with and support the work of Hunter Local Land Services and other relevant agricultural organisations where consistent with the objectives of this SAP.	One mutually beneficial project is completed	1	SEM	Nil	One project is undertaken by 30/06/2019
Objective 14: Support the equine critical industry cluster						
14.1	Lobby NSW Government when resource exploration and planning applications come into conflict with equine industry.	Land use conflicts between the equine sector and the mining sector are identified and challenged.	1	DECS / GM / Council	Existing	As required
14.2	Following launch of the Stud Tour App, identify additional signage and/or promotion of equine tourism attractions including horse studs to complement the Stud Tour App and help support a diverse and sustainable local economy. Gain permission from TASAC to install signage.	Additional signage identified and installed as required. Additional promotion identified and implemented by 1 July 2019.	1	BET	Existing	30-06-19

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
14.3	Council's Economic Development and Tourism Committee collaborates with the Hunter Thoroughbred Breeders Association to finalise and launch the Stud Tour app to support equine tourism	Stud Tour app is launched by December 2018. Demonstrable increase in equine tourism for the Shire from 2018/19	1	BET	Existing	31-12-18
14.4	Collaborate with local equine associations, agents, vendors and government agencies such as Hunter Local Land Services around encouraging sustainable land management practices	One project is collaborated on in 2019/20	2	SEM	Existing	one project by 30/06/2020
14.5	Links to materials regarding sustainable land use are made available to rural property owners on Council's website.	Links to materials on sustainable land management are available on Council's website.	1	SEM	Nil	By 30/06/2018
Objective 15: Encourage local food production and consumption - building economic sustainability, social ties and reducing food miles						
15.1	Facilitate 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	Four workshops are held in 2018/19.	1	SEM	Neg	4 workshops held by 30/06/2019



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
15.2	<p>Barriers to the further expansion and development of local food production are identified through the workshop series and incorporated into the revised Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan. In particular, planning and approval support, enabling infrastructure and provision of opportunities to showcase and market local food including via community driven events and initiatives.</p> <p>Use this work and action 13.1 to inform work with the Upper Hunter Economic Diversification Project and relevant grant applications.</p>	Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan revised and adopted by Council	2	SEM / BET	Nil	Completed by 31/12/2019
15.3	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.	<p>Preferred locations and management models identified.</p> <p>EOI process completed</p>	2	SEM	Existing	By 30/06/2020
15.4	Expand the existing food safety education program to include temporary events, prospective businesses and market producers.	One food safety education event held for temporary events, prospective businesses and/or market producers.	2	DECS	Council	31/12/19



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
Objective 16: Support sustainable tourism						
16.1	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	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	2	SEM / BET	Neg	Completed by 01/01/2020
16.2	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	Council launches the Upper Hunter Country App during 2018/19 to promote hiking, outdoor activities and nature based attractions.	1	BET	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2019
16.3	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	Council launches the Upper Hunter Country App during 2018/19 to promote hiking, outdoor activities and nature based attractions.	1	BET	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2019



ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
16.4	Implement the UHSC Cultural Plan 2017 - 2027, as adopted by Council in October 2017, in respect to indigenous and European Cultural Heritage.	The UHSC Cultural Plan is implemented	3	DECS	Council	Completed in accordance to timeframes detailed in the Cultural Plan
Objective 17: Support economic diversity and local employment						
17.1	Economic Development team continues to provide support for local economic diversity as outlined in the Economic Development and Tourism Strategic Plan 2010. Consider engaging consultancy resources as needed to support that activity.	The Economic Development and Tourism Plan is implemented in accordance with agreed timelines.	1	BET	Existing	100% of deadlines met
17.2	The Economic Development and Tourism Plan 2010 is reviewed and provides actions to support economic diversity around local agriculture, equine and renewable energy industries.	The Economic Development and Tourism Plan is revised and adopted by Council.	2	BET	Grant / Council	30-06-20
17.3	Develop information and factsheets to support the development of local agricultural and food enterprises and assist proponents in their decision making around launching new, sustainable ventures	Existing and new local businesses can access information that clearly explains the planning, environmental and sustainability considerations for new ventures on Council's website from 2018/19.	2	BET / SEM	Grant / Council	30-06-20
17.4	Encourage a pre-DA meeting with all relevant Council staff to assist proponents clearly understand the planning, environmental and food safety considerations for such businesses. (Easy to do business program)	90% of DAs received for development of existing and new businesses have had a pre-DA meeting with relevant Council Staff.	2	BET / DECS	Neg	30-06-20
Objective 18: Support the development of renewable energy projects						
18.1	Facilitate Upper Hunter and Liverpool Wind Farms and any other potential new renewable energy ventures by developing a public position supporting renewable energy development.	Policy statement regarding the support of renewable energy ventures is developed and endorsed by Council.	1	GM / DECS	Existing	Completed by 31/12/2018
18.2	Support the renewable energy sector by providing information to project proponents (including land use mapping links on website) and making appropriate submissions through planning and approval processes at State level	Links on Councils website established.	1	GM / DECS	Existing	Completed by 31/12/2018

ID	ACTION	SUCCESS CRITERIA	PRIORITY	WHO	FUNDING	TARGET
18.3	Support the investigation of renewable energy opportunities throughout the region	Maps identifying potentially suitable for renewable energy development are available on Council's website by 2019/20.	2	DECS	Existing	30-06-20
18.4	Support the renewable energy sector through the purchase of renewable energy for Council facilities.	<p>Council source the equivalent amount of renewable as that generated from local renewal energy projects.</p> <p>When technology permits, Council sources up to 100% of its energy needs from local renewable projects.</p>	2	SEM	Existing	Completed by 30/06/2020

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – RELEVANT EXCERPTS FROM THE HUNTER REGIONAL PLAN

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 coal mine 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 minimise 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 revitalisation 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 Shire 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 recognised '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 (Scone), St Aubins Estate (Scone), Aberdeen Heights Estate, Oxley View Estate (Merriwa) and Rosedale Estate (Murrurundi).

APPENDIX 2

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE COUNCIL

DRAFT SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVES

In identifying UHSC's sustainability objectives it is useful to understand those of neighbouring Councils, particularly Muswellbrook Council, which shares a catchment and the proposed Upper Hunter Link biodiversity corridor with UHSC.

Muswellbrook Council's draft sustainability objectives and targets are:

Objective One: Sustainable Decision Making

Consider sustainability in all relevant decision making

Targets: To be established

Objective Two: Greenhouse Gas Reduction

Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on fossil fuels

Target: Carbon neutral by 2020

Objective Three: Efficient Use of Energy and Water

Become more efficient in the use of energy and water, and reduce wider environmental impacts associated with water and energy use. This includes meeting the challenge of rising prices expected for energy, fuel, water and waste management as well as increasing use of renewable energy sources.

Targets:

- 40% Renewable Energy Target achieved by 2020
- To reduce Council's corporate potable water consumption by 20% on 2015/2016 base year levels by 2020.

Objective Four: Efficient Vehicle and Fuel Use

Be efficient in use of vehicles

Target:

- (To be confirmed) Lt/vehicle/pa (fuel)
- Reduce Council areas mown 5% per year

Objective Five: Efficient Waste Management

Produce less waste and increase recycling during day to day activities

Targets:

- Reduce waste generation per capita consistently to achieve a 5% reduction by 2021-22 from the 2011-12 baseline (KPI: kg/capita/year)
- Work towards a recycling rate for MSW of 70% by 2021-22

- Achieve increased recycling rates for C&I and C&D waste on an annual basis
- Achieve meaningful and reliable performance comparison with other Hunter Councils by 2016
- Work towards a recycling rate for MSW of 70% by 2021-22
- Achieve a landfill diversion rate of 40% by 2021-22
- Provide facilities for core problem waste by 2021-22
- Regional litter reduction programme benchmark and performance measure(s) established by 30 June 2016
- Collect baseline information (quantity, location, waste type) on illegal dumping incidents in 2015-16
- Increase by 50 percent the number of prosecutions/clean up notices/warnings issued for illegal dumping in 2015-16 by 2021-22

Objective Six: Green Procurement

Use purchasing choice to drive efficiency and environmental sustainability

Target: To be established

Objective Seven: Sustainable Staff

Support staff in sustainable choices

- Number of days/hours in leave untaken /FTE/pa
- 10 Staff suggestions received /pa

Objective Eight: Sustainable Land Conservation Management

Target: To be established

Objective Nine: Reduce Pollution

Target: To be established

Objective Ten: Sustainable Community

Targets:

- 10 positive media articles /pa
- 50% participation rates over planned numbers for community engagement activities.



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