

**Report No. 1.**                    **Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy - status of actions and plans for review**

**Executive Manager:**    Environment and Planning

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**File No:**                    #E2013/64342

**Theme:**                    Land and Natural Environment

**Summary:**                This report provides the status of actions from the Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy to date and a discussion on plans for a review of the strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

**That the Biodiversity and Sustainability Advisory Committee note this report.**

This report is for submission to **Biodiversity & Sustainability Advisory Committee Meeting** Date of Meeting: **25 October 2013**

Signed: .....  
(EXECUTIVE MANAGER)

Signed: .....  
(GENERAL MANAGER)

## Report

Council adopted the Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) in 2004. The BSC provides a framework for Council to manage biodiversity in the Shire and is the result of considerable investigations and consultation with the community, industry and relevant government agencies.

Following adoption of the Byron Biodiversity Conservation Strategy in 2004, Council approved a four year works program for implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy (BCS) for the period 2004 – 2008. The works program has been progressively implemented since adoption in November 2004 and has been used to direct the operations of Council's Natural Environment team since establishment in 2007.

In 2008 Council endorsed a permanent Environmental Levy which was to fund not only actions from the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2004 (BCS) but also Council's Sustainability and Coastal Programs. As part of this process, an internal review of the BCS actions was undertaken to identify existing and new actions for inclusion in a works program which was subsequently endorsed by Council in July 2008 (Res 08-420). The Environmental Levy and external funding from various environmental grants has enabled the continued implementation of actions from the BCS.

Implementation of the actions from the BCS to date has been significant. Table 1 presents a summary of total actions implemented through the funded works program, as well as operational implementation through Council divisions and current investment through the environmental levy works program.

**Table 1 – Summary of total actions**

Total No. of BCS actions by priority level		Total No. of BCS actions implemented or commenced	% of actions implemented or commenced
Very High	18	16	89%
High	35	32	91%
Medium	25	17	68%
Low	4	1	25%
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>80%</b>

The actions from the BCS are presented below in Table 2 with a brief comment regarding the implementation and outcomes. This information has been updated from a previous report to Council in 2010 and compiled through consultation with relevant Divisions of Council.

Actions not commenced are highlighted in yellow.

**Table 2: Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2004 actions**  
**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT & EDUCATION**

No	Action	Priority	Status October 2013
1.	Market research into current community knowledge, needs, beliefs and attitudes toward biodiversity.	Medium	Not actioned to date however some information available as a result of Council community satisfaction survey in 2007 and development of the Community Strategic Plan.

No	Action	Priority	Status October 2013
2.	Establish an Internet site for biodiversity related GIS products (in PDF format) – eg. vegetation mapping, threatened species mapping, ecological ranking, wildlife corridors, etc.	Medium	Complete - <a href="http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/byron-shire-environmental-mapping">http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/byron-shire-environmental-mapping</a>
3.	Establish a biodiversity extension service to offer (but not limited to): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Property based biodiversity assessments;</li> <li>• Advice on threatened species management and provision of background information;</li> <li>• Advice on weed management, bush regeneration, revegetation and animal pest control;</li> <li>• Property planning advice;</li> <li>• Advice on all forms of assistance available to landowners to manage biodiversity values;</li> <li>• Vegetation and other constraint mapping; and</li> <li>• Provision of available data and assistance in the preparation of Property Management Plans.</li> </ul>	Very High	Complete – Initially establishment with Biodiversity levy funding and subsequent Environmental Levy funding.  <b>Currently unfunded</b>
4.	Employ a 'biodiversity dedicated' education officer to deliver an education program including, but not limited, to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information to the community on the benefits of conserving biodiversity and how groups and individuals can conserve, survey, monitor</li> </ul>	High	Complete – included to environmental levy works program as environmental communications officer-part time for 12 months. Development of communications resources and draft strategy.

### **ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION**

No	Action	Priority	Status
5.	Monitor the effectiveness of the No Net Loss Policy by assessing the extent of vegetation cover when undertaking comprehensive State Of the Environment reports.	Medium	Not actioned to date
6.	Apply for reliable funding for the implementation of on-ground ecological restoration actions at identified priority sites.	High	Underway - ongoing. Approx. \$3m in grants funding accessed during period of biodiversity and environmental levy works programs to date.
7.	Employ a Biodiversity Conservation Officer (to co-ordinate overall project management and implementation).	Very High	Complete – establishment of Team Leader, Natural Resources position
8.	Employ a skilled bush regeneration team/s for undertaking restoration works at targeted sites.	Very High	Complete – ongoing

9.	Establish links with job creation and labour market schemes (eg Greencorps) to assist in undertaking ecological restoration initiatives.	Medium	Complete – ongoing as opportunities arise.
10.	Encourage the revegetation of secondary wildlife corridors and the rehabilitation of vegetated wildlife corridors.	Medium	Underway – ongoing. Delivered through Land for Wildlife, koala Connections, Local Environmental Plan provisions for wildlife corridor overlay.
11.	Conduct site assessments for all Council owned and managed lands.	High	Complete for majority of Council managed lands. Delivered through operations of Bush Regeneration Team. Also comprehensive condition assessment undertaken as part of Bush Futures audit.
12.	Identify high priority sites for environmental repair and enhancement across the Shire according to the Relative Ecological Values Matrix and prioritise target sites for undertaking ecological restoration actions.	Very High	Complete – High Conservation Value vegetation mapping completed. Ongoing prioritisation occurs through development of programs/ grants.
13.	Prepare template pro-forma's for assessing ecological attributes of a site (and assist in preparing BMP's).	High	Complete
14.	Prepare a template Bush Regeneration Work Schedule.	High	Complete
15.	Prepare Bush Regeneration Work Schedules for sites identified for restoration works.	High	Complete - ongoing
16.	Produce or adapt information (ie designs etc) on the construction of nest/roost boxes for dissemination to the public and to schools.	Low	Complete – produced through Bush Futures project.
17.	Prepare a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan with input from Asset Management Services (AMS) staff and the community.	High	Complete – currently being implemented
18.	Investigate options for providing planting stock for identified restoration sites.	Low	Not actioned to date – plants currently accessed from local nurseries.
19.	Notify property holders with identified HCV vegetation and habitats. <i>When new mapping completed</i>	High	Not actioned to date. However completed indirectly through LEP 2012 exhibition.

20.	Encourage and promote NPWS Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCAs), DIPNR Property Agreements and various non-government organisations that promote biodiversity conservation on private lands.	High	Undertaken through Biodiversity Extension officer and Land for Wildlife program
21.	Develop an application process for distribution of Council funding.	High (if & when Council has funding available for landholders)	Not actioned to date as no suitable funding available.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL WEEDS & INTRODUCED PESTS**

<b>No</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Status</b>
22.	Develop best practice weed control and management guidelines for serious weeds.	Very High	Complete – Byron Shire Bush Regeneration Guidelines published February 2010.
23.	Prepare or adapt educational materials on the most serious weeds and introduced pests in the region, covering their identification, effective control and management, and ways to reduce their spread.	High	Complete/underway for weeds - included in Bush Regeneration Guidelines and Weed Profiles. Complete or underway for some pest animals through previous projects such as <i>Getting a grip on cane toads</i>
24.	Adopt weed management guidelines from Figure 2 of this Action Plan into weed management guidelines, restoration prioritisation schedule and planning controls.	Medium	Complete/ underway (see 8, 22,23)
25.	Council will review its current ornamental planting policy to exclude those species that have the potential to become environmental weeds or negatively impact on native ecosystems.	High	Currently implemented through assessment of landscape plans for major developments by Parks Superintendent and Ecologist. Planting lists and weed lists reviewed. Information published in Bush regeneration guidelines and to be included to Development Control Plan.
26.	Council will commence replacing weed species from its parks and gardens with non-invasive and locally native species.	High	Underway. Non-native species are replaced with native species as required and/or funds become available.
27.	Prohibit the planting of weed species as part of any development application that requires approval for a landscape plan through the DCP.	High	Complete/ underway Landscaping chapter in DCP reviewed .Currently implemented through assessment of landscape plans for major developments by Parks Superintendent and Ecologist.

No	Action	Priority	Status
28.	Examine options for improving organic waste recycling in the Shire (through Councils Integrated Waste Management Strategy).	Medium	Ongoing/underway
29.	Facilitate community surveys to assess and map the extent of serious environmental weeds.	Low	Not actioned to date
30.	Develop a pro-forma for the collection of details relating to the location and severity of weed infestations.	Medium	Not actioned to date
31.	Develop training for staff and the public that covers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>weed identification;</li> <li>weed control and management;</li> <li>bush regeneration;</li> <li>weed mapping; and</li> <li>Geographic Information Systems (Council staff).</li> </ul>	High	Underway – Natural Resources team facilitate provision of and access to existing opportunities through Land for Wildlife, Biodiversity seminar series and displays/workshops for events including World Environment Day and Weedbusters Week.
32.	Screen, control and monitor weeds in soil prior to and following dumping of soil.	High	Community Infrastructure monitor weeds at soil stockpiles and manage weeds by turning piles periodically.
33.	Support community based weed identification and control initiatives such as the Bushland Friendly Nursery Scheme.	Medium	Underway. Production and distribution of educational materials and public engagement (see 31)
34.	Investigate the feasibility for developing weed wash down procedures and facilities for Council (or contractors) machinery after working in weed affected areas.	Medium	Not actioned to date – included as action in Roadside Vegetation Management Plan
35.	Compile and regularly update a comprehensive weed list for the Council website.	High	Partially complete – list prepared but not posted to website.

## **POLLUTION**

No	Action	Priority	Status
36.	Initiate catchment based nutrient-reduction programs.	High	Ongoing – point source reductions via Sewerage Treatment Plant (STP) upgrades and some diffuse source reductions via riparian rehabilitation at STP's
37.	Deliver targeted education programs that promote control and reduction of pollution.	High	Ongoing – underway through Waste and Water dept.
38.	Monitor pollution activities and events, and assess and reduce impacts for indicator species and/or ecosystems.	High	Ongoing – for STP discharges

No	Action	Priority	Status
39.	Investigate the establishment of buffers to reduce the potential for pollutants to impact on biodiversity.	High	Ongoing – riparian buffer works undertaken at STP's, riparian revegetation undertaken through other project/ Landcare work. Buffer provisions included draft LEP 2012.
40.	Support compliance to respond to (and prevent) pollution events.	High	Ongoing
41.	Identify and map areas where sediment enters waterways from gravel roads and drains and quantify amount of sealing required to ameliorate the problem.	Very High	Not complete although <i>Byron Shire Rural Roads and Roadside Land Management Plan</i> prepared with funding from NRCMA has gone some way to addressing this issue.
42.	Investigate options for reducing dust pollution associated with gravel roads (eg reducing road speeds on gravel roads).	High	Not actioned to date

### THREATENED SPECIES

No	Action	Priority	Status
43.	Identify all high quality threatened species habitat outside of identified HCV habitats.	High	Complete/ ongoing – threatened fauna habitat modelling included to High Conservation Value vegetation method. Ongoing refinements required as resources allow.
44.	Implement recovery actions (e.g. Actions 12.8 & 12.9 for Mitchell's Rainforest Snail) and Little Tern Management Plan for Belongil Spit.	Medium	Commenced for various species (eg for Mitchell's Rainforest Snail through DECCW funded project. Underway for Little Tern through Council support/participation in implementation group for Belongil Estuary Shorebirds Management Plan, and for koalas through Koala Connections)
45.	Maintain and update threatened species database and related GIS layers every two years.	Medium	Complete. Database updated bi monthly or as required to facilitate enhanced data management, quality and automatic updating of GIS layers.
46.	Amend dog exercise area between Brunswick Heads north and New Brighton to stop it 50 metres north of the northern boundary of the Nature Reserve (down to low water mark).	Very High	Complete

No	Action	Priority	Status
47.	Undertake threatened species habitat assessments of all Council lands and for properties where Council prepares Biodiversity Management Plans.	High	Underway/ ongoing – habitat assessments completed as part of development of site actions plans and considered in Bush Futures audit methodology
48.	Purchase survey equipment (including Anabat bat detector, harp nets, hair tubes, call playback equipment, spotlight & battery, binoculars, telescope, Elliott traps, books) to be used for habitat assessments, training and LEP review purposes (that could also be hired out to private consultants to help recover costs).	High	Complete.
49.	Prepare biodiversity assessment and reporting guidelines for development applications (including minimum standards for Threatened Species Survey and Assessment).	Very High	Underway – integrated to new Development Control Plan Natural Environment chapter. Interim measures implemented including publication of guidelines for identification of when ecological assessment is required, template biodiversity conservation management plan and use and promotion of existing minimum standards as published by State Agencies.
50.	Establish a threatened plant arboretum on Council land.	Low	Not actioned to date
51.	Provide the community with information on lodging threatened species records for inclusion in the NPWS Wildlife Atlas to improve the Shire's threatened species database.	Medium	Not actioned to date
52.	Employ ecologists to carry out duties in Local Approvals, Waste and Water, Asset Management and Environmental Planning.	Very High	Complete – ongoing
53.	Create and update a comprehensive species list of threatened and/or regionally significant species within the Shire.	Medium	Partially complete for some species. Published to Council's website. <a href="http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/threatened-species-and-communities">http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/threatened-species-and-communities</a>
54.	Prepare threatened species profiles and management guidelines for all threatened species that are known or considered likely to occur in the Shire.	Very High	Partially complete - 10 high priority species/ecosystems. <a href="http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/threatened-species-and-communities">http://www.byron.nsw.gov.au/threatened-species-and-communities</a>



## NEW PLANNING CONTROLS INITIATIVES & MECHANISMS

No	Action	Priority	Status
55.	To draft new Shire-wide planning control provisions for HCV vegetation and habitats, and 'secondary wildlife corridors' in accordance with decision making criteria outlined in section 4.1.3	Very High	Underway through draft LEP 2012 and Biodiversity chapter of DCP in preparation.
56.	To review Councils DCP (or similar planning controls) for exempt and complying development to ensure the appropriateness of any forms of development in 'secondary wildlife corridors' and HCV vegetation and habitats	Very High	Underway through draft LEP 2012 and Biodiversity chapter of DCP in preparation.
57.	To introduce new Shire-wide planning controls for buffers	Very High	Underway through draft LEP 2012 and Biodiversity chapter of DCP in preparation.
58.	Adopt <i>No Net Vegetation Loss Policy</i> and tree replacement fee through local planning controls.	High	Policy not developed to date. No net loss principle as defined in the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy implemented through ecological referrals for development applications and Council development proposals.
59.	To draft new definitions for new Shire-wide planning controls	High	Superseded by Standard Instrument LEP
60.	To amalgamate Zone No. 7(a)- (Wetlands Zone), Zone No. 7(b)- (Coastal Habitat Zone), and Zone No. 7(k)- (Habitat Zone) into a single 'Habitat' zone	Very High	Underway through draft LEP 2012. Implemented as Environmental zones (E2,E3, E4) consistent with Standard Instrument template.
61.	Develop biodiversity assessment and reporting guidelines (minimum standard requirements) for development applications	Very High	Underway Biodiversity chapter of Development Control Plan in preparation.
62.	Amend TPO application fee and introduce a replacement schedule for tree removals	Medium	Not actioned to date DCP to be prepared to go with new Shirewide LEP for tree preservation. Planning staff often require compensatory planting as a condition of approval for tree removal
63.	Review the types of developments permissible in environmentally sensitive areas	High	Underway through draft LEP 2012 and Biodiversity chapter of DCP in preparation.

64.	Ensure that the development of community land plans and other Council plans and strategies must have regard to HCV vegetation and habitats mapping	Medium	Ongoing – through Natural Environment team referrals and review of plans and strategies.
65.	Develop an environmental repair and enhancement schedule.	Medium	Not actioned to date

### **IMPROVING OUR KNOWLEDGE**

No	Action	Priority	Status
66.	Establish monitoring and evaluation programs for all biodiversity projects undertaken as part of this strategy (ie establish feedback loops).	Medium	Ongoing - Undertaken as part of monitoring activities for all on ground restoration works and grant funded projects.
67.	Encourage and provide training on survey and monitoring techniques to staff, community groups and schools	Medium	Underway for Natural Environment team. Also assist in facilitating access to relevant opportunities through various programs and support for the CMA Community Support Officer
68.	Establish and maintain a Council database of biodiversity information (including the existing GIS database).	Medium	Complete – available to all staff via internal GIS system
69.	Establish a Council Flora and Fauna Reference Library (for access by public and staff)	Medium	Complete – for staff access
70.	Update vegetation and HCV mapping (and rectify to cadastre).	Very High	Complete 2007 – but ongoing reviews required

### **DELIVERY OF INCENTIVES, EDUCATION MATERIALS AND ON-GROUND EXTENSION**

No	Action	Priority	Status
71.	<p>Investigate all options for delivering a range of incentives (as listed in section 5.2) within the budgetary constraints of Council. This will include, but not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessing the feasibility of introducing a reduced differential rate for lands managed for conservation purposes (including seeking external funding to cover costs where reduced rates are offered);</li> <li>Investigating the options for offering grants to private landholders;</li> <li>Investigating Councils ability to set up a voluntary land acquisition trust fund; and</li> <li>Investigate the introduction of various non-financial motivational incentives.</li> </ul>	High	<p>Partially complete/ ongoing – currently facilitated through Land for Wildlife, cooperative involvement in projects including the Priority Action Statement implementation scheme with Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority.</p> <p>Other relevant actions include consideration of opportunities through consideration of relevant opportunities to access grant funding to support an incentive program.</p>

No	Action	Priority	Status
72.	Develop and nurture partnerships with other agencies that offer various incentive schemes - such as NPWS/DEC Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCA), DIPNR Property Agreements and Land for Wildlife. This will include application to DEC to implement VCA's on identified Council lands, funding for a Land for Wildlife Officer and seeking advice from DIPNR regarding Property Agreements on Council managed lands.	Medium	Underway/ ongoing – Land for Wildlife program involvement. Also relevant actions underway through partnership projects with, NRCMA, Nature Conservation Trust - Border Ranges Alliance.
73.	Use Council allocated funding and existing biodiversity related project resources as 'in kind' contributions to apply for additional external funds.	Medium	Complete – ongoing. Approx \$3m in grants funding accessed during period of biodiversity and environmental levy works programs to date.

### **FUNDING THE STRATEGY**

No	Action	Priority	Status
74.	Investigate all aspects of Councils operations to determine which aspects are considered as having biodiversity-related benefits. These should then be used as 'in kind contributions' to apply for external funding.	High	Ongoing - Implemented for joint projects between Environment & Planning, Water & Waste and Community Infrastructure divisions
75.	Investigate whether any monies or resources allocated to biodiversity related projects (including developer contributions, existing positions etc) can be used as 'in kind contributions' to apply for external funding.	High	Ongoing – for environmental levy funded program. Staff time used as in kind contribution for various projects.
76.	Investigate options for biodiversity projects to be funded through Section 94 developer contributions. This will include habitat restoration projects (ie. bush regeneration, weed control, remnant fencing, reforestation, etc.).	High	Complete - Section 94 not available to be used for environmental works.
77.	Establish a fee structure for the sale of Council's biodiversity related GIS/mapping products to consultants.	Medium	Not actioned to date – often provided free of charge
78.	Investigate options for imposing a replacement fee for tree removals.	High	Proposed as part of Comprehensive koala plan of management
79.	Seek annual biodiversity budget in Council's Management Plan.	High	Not actioned however - Environmental levy provides funding

No	Action	Priority	Status
80.	Use all in kind contributions to apply to the NRCMA for funding assistance.	High	Ongoing - Approximately \$202,000 in grants funding accessed from NRCMA during period of biodiversity and environmental levy works programs to date
81.	Seek funding to resource a Council grants officer.	Very High	Not actioned to date
82.	Prepare a work schedule for implementing works identified in the special variation to the general rate (biodiversity levy).	Very High	Complete

### Reviewing the Strategy

Councils Delivery Program 2013-2017 includes an action to implement a review of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy. This is planned to commence in early 2014 following the completion of a number of significant projects currently underway including the *Local Environment Plan (LEP)*, and exhibition of the *Draft Byron Coast Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management*, the outcomes of which will have a significant influence on biodiversity conservation in the Shire.

To initiate the review process a discussion paper will be prepared and presented to the Biodiversity and Sustainability Advisory Committee. This discussion paper will propose the methodology for review and committee members will have an opportunity to provide input into how the process will occur and the scope of the review.

### Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with the contents of this report.

### Statutory and Policy Compliance Implications

Implementation of the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy is a Key Activity under the Principal Activity - Land and Natural Environment from Councils Delivery Program 2012-2017.