Lithgow City Council
Heritage Strategy

For the Period 2011 –2014

prepared by

Lithgow City Council
Development Staff
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in association with

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Introduction

This Heritage Strategy has been prepared in accordance with the standard guidelines developed by the Heritage Branch.

This strategy is based on the Heritage Branch “Recommendations for Local Council Heritage Management” and has been prepared in consultation with Lithgow City Council’s Heritage Adviser, Mr Christo Aitken. All Councils now use the new Heritage Strategy format together with the accompanying Heritage Strategy Annual Report template. The Heritage Branch in reviewing its local government and heritage adviser annual reporting requirements require a report on the implementation of Council’s Heritage Strategy to be prepared by Council’s heritage adviser and Council’s heritage officer.

Lithgow City Council has operated a heritage advisory program for approximately 9 years and a heritage strategy was first prepared by Council in 2003. The current strategy will be reviewed at the conclusion of the 3 year cycle to assist and guide future directions for heritage management in the Lithgow LGA.

1. Establish a Heritage Committee to deal with heritage matters in the Lithgow City Council area.

Council does not have a formal Heritage Committee, however it does encourage and support local history and heritage related groups whenever the opportunity arises. The Council as a whole is working towards the development and adoption of heritage and cultural policies. This has included the preparation of the Draft Lithgow Conservation Area Study incorporating Development Control Plan requirements for locations identified as important. This study was funded by Council ($17,500) and the Department of Planning ($7,500) and has been adopted by Council as a Draft for public consultation. The document is to receive extensive community input when notified for public comment with the Draft Land Use Strategy. This will involve an extensive series of public meetings. Council has done a substantial amount of work towards preserving Lithgow’s heritage. The Draft Land Use Strategy has identified that the list of heritage items in the Lithgow LEP 1994 needs to be updated. This will occur through the new LEP resulting from the Land Use Strategy adoption. One of the issues that was identified in the Lithgow Community Heritage Study 2000 was that Council does not have a Heritage Committee. Council has determined that this will occur as a Section 355 Committee once the complete heritage list is finalised in the new LEP. This will allow Council to involves interested residents in a more formal way.

Actions:
- A heritage committee is to be established upon completion of the LEP process which is targeted for completion in June 2012.

2. Identify Heritage Items in the Lithgow area and list them in our Local Environmental Plan

Council carried out a comprehensive Heritage Study of the Lithgow area in 1998, however the study was not finalised or adopted at that time. Council initiated a number of attempts over the years to complete the study but lack of resources delayed the work.
In 2010 with funding assistance from the Department of Planning the Landuse Strategy and Lithgow Conservation Area Study was commenced. The documents have now been adopted by Council as a draft and will be the subject to extensive community consultation from May 2011.

**Actions:**
- Commence community consultation on the Land Use Strategy and Lithgow Conservation Areas Study.
- Have Council adopt the Lithgow Heritage Development Control Plan developed through the Lithgow Conservation Areas Study following appropriate community consultation.
- Include all places proposed for listing through this process in the new Lithgow LEP.
- Map all heritage items and historic sites identified through the LEP process onto Council’s GIS system to ensure that sensitive places can be brought to the attention of staff at an early point in any development process.

3. **Appoint a Heritage Adviser to assist Council, the Community and owners of listed items.**

Lithgow City Council has had a heritage adviser to assist Council and staff since the mid 1990s. Although there have been periods Council has been without a heritage adviser it has been and continues to be Council’s intention to continue the heritage advisory program.

**Actions:**
- Council to continue to advertise the advisory program in local newspapers or local web pages. Free heritage advice to continue to be provided to the community through Council’s Heritage Adviser.
- The Heritage Adviser to also continue to provide advice and support to Council in planning and development issues as necessary through staff referrals. This involves formal advice on development applications or other works likely to impact on heritage items or places of significance.
- Provide assistance with the preparation of related planning and development documents to assist Council staff in the preparation of heritage related documentation.
- Attend a monthly meeting with Council’s Development Officers at Council to discuss heritage issues and attend site inspections.
- Continue to assist Council in other planning issues as recommended by Heritage Branch such as urban design and streetscape issues.

4. **Manage heritage in the Lithgow area in a positive manner**

Council recognises the importance of history and heritage to the local community and its economy. The preparation of the Draft Land Use Strategy and the Lithgow Conservation Areas Study is evidence that Council is making substantial progress in this regard. Council has been proactive in initiating positive local programs related to heritage.

**Action 1: LEP, DCPs and Other Guideline Documents**
- The Lithgow Conservation Areas Study will be put out for public comment with the Draft Land Use Strategy. The intended outcome is a the Lithgow Heritage Development Control Plan that will protect older precincts and provide certainty for assessment and development. These will include industrial, commercial and residential precincts such as the Lithgow Valley.
Pottery Estate, the Lithgow Mainstreet precinct and other intact residential streetscapes such as Ordinance Avenue and Portland and Wallerawang CBDs.

**Action 2: Waive Council Fees and Charges**
- Consider reduced or waived DA fees on a case-by-case basis for applications involving heritage items that make a positive effort and where there is a positive outcome. Include reduced / waived DA fees for sensitive works either within the Conservation Areas or other buildings within the curtilage of a heritage item where the owners are making a positive effort and contribution.
- Special measures could be developed to encourage the re-use and sensitive adaptation of historic buildings rather than redevelopment.
- Assist the owners of heritage items to obtain reductions in other statutory taxes or charges related to buildings or land ie land tax etc

**Actions 3: Miscellaneous**
- Council to continue to inform the public through its website on progress on the Land Use Strategy and the Heritage Development Control Plan.
- Council to continue to support local heritage related groups such as Lithgow District Historical Society, Zig Zag Railway, City of Greater Lithgow Mining Museum, Eskroy House and Golf Club and Eskbank House.
- The City will continue to assist specialised groups such as the friends of St John’s Wallerawang in their pursuits to conserve St. Johns building in a community role, and The Crystal Theatre Committee in Portland, and the Union Theatre Committee in Lithgow.
- Encourage involvement of other interested members of the community and organizations such as the National Trust which has a local branch.

5. **Introduce a Local Heritage Fund to provide a small grants program to encourage local heritage projects**

Council has an established a Local Heritage Fund and although its expenditure has been small and sometimes irregular because of Council’s limited resources there have been a number of successes over the years. Work has included the Crystal Theatre, the Union Theatre, major churches at Bowenfels and Wallerawang, and Esk Roy House. It is proposed to continue the Lithgow Local Heritage Fund as part of the Heritage Advisory program for the Lithgow area.

**Actions:**
- Continue the Lithgow Local Heritage Fund within available resources. Advertise the LHF in an appropriate manner and in adequate time to enable the community to make good use of the available funding. Make sufficient annual funds available to maximise the grant opportunities.

6. **Run a Main Street Program**

Council introduced in 2011 the Lithgow Main Street Incentive Scheme to encourage owners to carry out minor repair to their buildings. This operates in conjunction with the Local Heritage Fund. There have been a number of inquiries and these projects are currently being assessed. The comprehensive Lithgow Main Street Study of 1997 is used to guide this process.

**Actions:**
- Council to continue to provide funds through its budget process for the ongoing operation of the Lithgow Main Street Incentive Scheme to operate in conjunction with the Local Heritage Fund.
• Encourage and support owners of significant buildings within the CBD area by assisting them in making applications under the Lithgow Main Street Incentive Scheme, the LHF fund and State grant applications for positive repair or restoration work.

7. **Present Educational and Promotional Programs**

Council already promotes heritage in the Lithgow area and supports available programs. Seminars were organised in Lithgow in 2004 and 2006 as part of the Central West Heritage Network. Other programs, such as those organised by the Lithgow Historical Society, the National Trust of Australia or the State Mine Museum, are supported and encouraged. In 2006 Lithgow won a highly commended award in the education / Corporate Government category for its restoration and interpretation work at the heritage trail Furnace Fire & Forge. This projects continues to build. The importance of heritage tourism is recognised by Council and the new Visitor Centre on the Great Western Highway reflects that acknowledgement.

Also, as part of the public consultation process Council Officers will be presenting the Lithgow Land Use Strategy and Lithgow Heritage Development Control Plan Study at a number of public meetings. This process will commence in May 2011.

**Actions:**

- Continue to promote the attractions of the Lithgow area to residents and visitors to the region. Work with the Lithgow Visitor Information Centre to make the most of opportunities to link these and other heritage sites. Confer with Council’s Economic Development Officer to assist in developing a major cultural heritage tourism industry.

- Continue to build and develop on the award winning work with the State Heritage Mine Museum at the Furnace Fire & Forge. Investigate, explore and encourage regional heritage programs or projects opportunities through the already established regional alliance of Councils.

- Develop Council’s existing internet web pages to include relevant heritage information and material either to assist in a greater appreciation of local history; in development matters or in guiding visitors to the Lithgow area.

8. **Lithgow City Council is to set a good example to the community by properly managing places owned or operated by Council**

Lithgow Council is a relatively small regional council with ownership of only a few buildings, historic or otherwise. Council has recently established a Heritage Assets Committee to assist in the setting up of appropriate policies and management of their assets. This Committee has become an excellent vehicle for the development of future strategies and is also generally reviewing all elements of performance of the existing heritage and cultural tourism facilities. New initiatives are emerging from this committee which involves Council, the heritage adviser and outside organizations such as National Trust.

Council has a range of responsibilities which could include Council-owned buildings and grounds, Council managed properties as a Trustee or perhaps Council leased premises.

**Actions:**

- Identify the range and type of properties where Council may have some responsibility or say in its management and care.
• Prepare a conservation management plans for significant Council owned or management heritage buildings. This could include working with and encouraging other State Government agencies also directly involved, such as State Rail Authority or Department of Lands etc.

• Prepare a simple plan of management for the historic cemeteries covering broad aspects of care and conservation. The National Trust has comprehensive guidelines for plans of management for cemeteries.

• Identify, record and catalogue any significant historic equipment, relics, documents, photographs, paintings etc that are owned by or are under the care of Council. Prepare a simple plan of management for the particularly significant items.

9. **Promote sustainable development as a tool for heritage conservation**

Lithgow City Council appreciates the significance of sustainable development to its future. The town has evolved and grown in the years since the 1870s with its history centred around the local coal, steel and railway industries that now define so much of its structure and character. Although those early industries have moved on much of their fabric remains as evidence to changed economic circumstances and the effects of industry on the built and natural environment.

**Actions:**

• Council to promote and encourage the adaptive re-use, or infill or sympathetic additions to historic buildings. Consider extending the waiving or reduction in DA charges and fees for positive projects that support those principles in the Lithgow area.

• Encourage sustainable heritage tourism commercial ventures or state projects associated with the adjacent National Parks.

Lithgow City Council
April 2011