



Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan 5 Year Review

April 2016

1.0 Introduction

The Whittlesea Green Wedge Management Plan (2011-2021) was adopted by Council in July 2011. It gives local effect to State planning policy for green wedge areas and provides a framework to sustain and protect the non-urban land within the City of Whittlesea.

As part of the Green Wedge Management Plan, a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework was adopted. A key component of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework is a 5 Year Review. It is also a mandatory requirement of the State Government for all Green Wedge Councils to undertake a 5 Year Review of their Green Wedge Management Plan. The purpose of the 5 Year Review is to 'check in' on the progress of the Green Wedge Management Plan against its vision and objectives.

This report forms the basis of the 5 Year Review. It provides an analysis on whether the Green Wedge Management Plan is 'on track' in achieving the vision and objectives set out. The findings of this report will inform recommended updates/changes to the adopted Actions and Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, as required.

The scope of this review includes an analysis of the following:

- A literature review of all Council policies and strategies relevant to the GWMP and adopted since 2011 to ensure relevance and consistency with the adopted Green Wedge Management Plan.
- A review of the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework,
- Internal consultation with relevant project managers/managers in relation to action items linked to their department. This consultation sought to address, delayed/outstanding actions, alignment of actions with relevant departments, action wording and any issues encountered in the implementation of actions.

The State Government is committed to the green wedge and its future protection. Therefore the 5 Year Review is timely and highlights Council's commitment and progress in implementing its Green Wedge Management Plan.

2.0 Project Background

The Green Wedge Management Plan (GWMP) was initially developed to meet the requirements of the then State Government metropolitan strategy, Melbourne 2030 (DOI, 2002). Melbourne 2030 identified 12 green wedge areas in 17 municipal Councils across Melbourne and put in place policy to protect these valued areas including the establishment of an Urban Growth Boundary (See Attachment 1- Map of Melbourne's Green Wedge Areas). In order to achieve sustainable management outcomes, each local government area was required to develop a management plan for its Green Wedge Areas.

In the City of Whittlesea, the green wedges area represents approximately 61% of the municipality (See Attachment 2-Whittlesea's Green Wedge Areas).

Whittlesea's GWMP was adopted by Council on the 19 July 2011. It outlines Council's vision, objectives, strategies and implementation actions required to enable sustainable management of the green wedge areas, in line with the community vision. The GWMP identifies the values and features that should be protected and maintained. It also identifies current issues and opportunities for action to protect and monitor the Green Wedge.

The GWMP included an Action Plan comprising 84 actions relating to the GWMP's themes of land, biodiversity, water and people. In summary the Action Plan included:

- 31 short-term actions to commence by Year 3 (2013/2014)
- 22 medium-term actions to commence by Year 7 (2017/2018)
- 1 long-term action to commence after Year 7; and
- 30 on-going actions to be monitored to 2021.

The Strategic Planning & Design Department (SP&D) is responsible for administering and co-ordinating the GWMP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. This is an operational plan to coordinate, monitor and evaluate the progress of responsible Council departments against the Action Plan. This Framework was adopted by Council with a requirement for regular reporting.

Reporting on the progress of the GWMP actions includes the following requirements:

- Collect quarterly progress updates from responsible departments;
- Prepare annual progress reports to Council;
- Prepare a 3 year report (completed) and a 7 year report (due in 2018); and
- Undertake a full (5 year) review of the GWMP in 2016.

The Year 3 Report was completed in October 2013, summarising the progress against the short term actions identified in the GWMP. The 2015 annual progress report was presented to Council in November 2015.

The GWMP is a 10 year plan and the purpose of a review at the 5 year mark (the plan's halfway point) is to "check in" on the progress of the implementation of GWMP and whether it is on track to achieve its objectives, or whether any changes are necessary to assist future implementation of the actions.

It is noted that given the GWMP is not an incorporated document in the Whittlesea Planning Scheme the process for implementing the outcomes of the 5 Year Review will not require an amendment to the Planning Scheme. The process for implementing the Review will be by adopting an updated GWMP Action Plan to replace the Action Plan adopted as part of the original GWMP in 2011.

3.0 Review Analysis

This section outlines the approach taken in conducting the 5 Year Review and provides an analysis of the information obtained.

3.1 Literature Review

As noted earlier, the State Government is committed to the green wedge and its future protection. This is reflected in Plan Melbourne Refresh Discussion Paper (October 2015) which states that “*Plan Melbourne 2016 will be updated to more clearly reflect the value and importance of these areas and reference current government initiatives*” that are underway that provide additional policy and guidance.

A literature review was undertaken of all existing Council strategies and policies that were adopted since 2011. Those most relevant to the GWMP themes were identified as follows:

- Community Plan 2013.
- Corporate Plan 2015-16.
- Council Plan 2013-2017.
- Environmental Sustainability Strategy 2012-2022.
- Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033.
- City of Whittlesea Heritage Strategy 2015-2018.
- Tourism Development Strategy 2014-2019.
- Recreation Strategy 2012-2017.

Attachment 3 provides a more detailed analysis of the relevant strategies shortlisted in the literature review. It provides an analysis of the scope of each document, its relevance to the GWMP and links to specific actions.

The following key links were identified as part of the literature review for each of these strategies:

Community Plan 2013

- *The Community Plan sets out the community’s vision for the municipality and identifies how its strategic directions will be achieved over a 20 year horizon.*
- *The community plan objectives are specifically linked to the GWMP through the following directives:*
 - *Growing our economy - Supporting and developing growing of food locally.*
 - *Living sustainably- through ensuring Rural land is managed appropriately.*

Council Plan 2013-2017

- The Council Plan ‘Shaping our Future’ outlines how Council will meet the strategic objectives of the Community Plan 2030. The plan outlines a number of key initiatives and programs to make the City of Whittlesea a better place to live.

- The Council Plan includes future actions pertaining to rural land use and specifically preserving Green Wedge land.
- In relation to the Green Wedge the Council Plan identifies the following Actions:
 - *Our rural land provides sustainable economic development*
 - *3.9 - Council will investigate options for using rural land for agricultural production. Identification of viable options for agricultural production. Continue delivery of rural incentive programs.*
 - *We have environmental education and conservation programs*
 - *6.1- Council will continue to develop and deliver community education and conservation programs and increase in participation rates at education and conservation events.*
 - *6.3- Council will implement the Green Wedge Management Plan Strategic land use planning factors in preservation of green wedge for flora and fauna.*

Corporate Plan 2015-16

- The Corporate Plan seeks to identify the Council's' key initiatives and priorities to be undertaken throughout 2015/16.
- Whilst no specific link is identified in the 2015/16 Corporate Plan the current "on-going" projects linked to the GWMP action items will continue as 'business as usual'.

The Environmental Sustainability Strategy (ESS) 2012-2022

- The ESS provides a framework to protect and support biodiversity, ecological practises and a healthy and sustainable population across the entire municipality including the established areas, growth areas and the rural (Green Wedge) areas.
- The ESS addresses the themes of Water, Land and Biodiversity, which is consistent with GWMP. It also covers the themes of climate change, urban development, built environment, waste management and behaviour change strategies.
- A detailed analysis of the ESS actions identifies numerous actions that set out the same objectives as the GWMP. However the ESS actions are applicable across the whole municipality, not just Green Wedge Areas.
- Actions within the 'Land' theme had strongest alignment with the GWMP, specifically in respect to establishing mechanisms for monitoring and progressing land management plans, and providing ongoing communication and information regarding rural land stewardship practices.

- Actions within the 'Water' and 'Biodiversity' theme are also aligned to the GWMP specifically:
 - promoting community involvement in water health and promotion;
 - developing a biodiversity data base;
 - strengthening planning tools through development of the local policies and mechanisms within the planning scheme;
 - support for environment protection groups; and;
 - encouraging best practice water sensitive urban design.

Housing Diversity Strategy 2013-2033

- The key objective of the Strategy is to ensure there is a greater range of housing available to residents across the municipality including that housing growth occurs in the right way and in appropriate locations. The strategy specifically recognises the Whittlesea Township which is aligned with GWMP Action PO7
"To provide diverse housing opportunities including aged care housing in areas of existing residential land in the Whittlesea Township, where services and facilities are located".

City of Whittlesea Cultural Heritage Strategy 2015-2018

- The Cultural Heritage Strategy is a framework that seeks to guide Council's actions on all aspects of cultural heritage which includes heritage places, landscapes and objects, documents and records of the City, and the traditions, stories, folklore and knowledge that comprise intangible culture, that encompasses both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal culture.
- The development of the strategy is directly linked/ initiated through Action P27 of the GWMP "Demonstrate Council leadership and best practice by investigating the feasibility of developing a management plan for all heritage places on Council-owned land."

Tourism Development Strategy 2014-2019

- The Tourism Development Strategy outlines the framework for the development of tourism for 2014-2019. The Strategy provides direction for tourism development and growth with the primary objective being to increase tourism visitation and length of stay.
- The Strategy covers a broad lens of tourism opportunities across the municipality. As a specific objective it seeks to increase awareness of, and demand for, tourism experiences from both local residents and visitors to the

area, while promoting the municipality as a desirable and accessible country-style destination within the Melbourne metropolitan area. This is aligned with the GWMP theme “People” which seeks to highlight and research opportunities for tourism within the green wedge areas.

- The Strategy was reviewed and updated in 2015 which was a specific action of the GWMP (Action P12) to “*Update Council’s Tourism Strategy to highlight tourism and recreation opportunities in the green wedge.*”
- Action P15 of the GWMP seeks to investigate opportunities for multi-use trails. This is directly linked to the Tourism Development Strategy Action 4.4.1 “*To Advocate for the Mernda-Whittlesea Rail Trail providing a shared path for walking/cycling/horse riding.*”

Recreation Strategy 2012-2017

- The aim of the Recreation Strategy 2012-2017 is to provide Council, in partnership with the community, with a clear direction on how to create and fulfil recreational services for leisure purposes. The Strategy’s recommendations relate to the whole municipality including the Green Wedge Areas.
- The GWMP has a specific link to the Recreation Strategy through Action P16 “*Continue to develop Council’s Whittlesea Recreation strategy in consultation with the community and implement the proposed changes.*”

In summary the literature review demonstrates that all of these strategies and policies support and compliment the objectives of the GWMP. The GWMP vision of “*living sustainably and managing and protecting Whittlesea’s non-urban areas*” is prevalent within the strategies and policies as outlined above. There was no conflict identified with the GWMP’s objective or vision.

3.2 Progress to date of the GWMP

The GWMP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework sets out requirements to monitor and report on the progress of implementation of the Action Plan which will in turn measure the success of the Plan over time.

The quarterly and annual reporting on the status of the actions involves consultation with the relevant Council departments responsible for specific actions.

The GWMP Action Plan comprises 84 actions relating to the GWMP’s themes of land, biodiversity, water and people. In summary the Action Plan included:

- 31 short-term actions to commence by Year 3 (2013/2014)
- 22 medium-term actions to commence by Year 7 (2017/2018)
- 1 long-term action to commence after Year 7; and
- 30 on-going actions to be monitored to 2021

As part of the 5 Year Review, the progress to date of actions was reviewed. Table 1 summarizes the progress to date in implementing the short, medium and on-going actions. It should be noted that the short term actions are due to commence within 1-3 years, while the medium term actions are due to commence within 4-7 years.

Table 1: GWMP Progress Against Short, Medium and On-going Actions

| | Completed 2016 | In progress 2016 | Delayed /Outstanding 2016 | Not Commenced 2016 |
|--|-------------------|---------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Short Term (commence by 2013/14) | 16% | 68% | 16% | 0% |
| Medium Term (commence by 2017/18) | 5% | 63% | - | 32% |
| Ongoing | - | 100% | - | - |

Table 1 shows that significant progress has been made in implementing the GWMP actions. To date 16% of short term (5 actions) and 5% of medium term actions (1 action) have been completed. All on-going actions are in progress, reflecting core business activities. A further 68% of short term actions (21 actions) are in progress which includes 10 new actions that were previously reported as delayed/outstanding or not commenced. These actions are progressing well and are on track for completion.

A further 63% of medium term actions (12 actions) are in progress, while 5% (1 action) has already been completed which is ahead of schedule as these actions were earmarked to commence between year 4-7 of the plan. The remaining 32% of medium term (9) actions are anticipated to be commenced in the next two years, as indicated in the Action Plan.

Given the GWMP is in year 5, essentially the plan's mid-way point, this is considered a positive result. The 16% short term actions that have been identified as delayed or outstanding will be explored further in Section 4 to consider the reasons for the delay, and potentially update these actions to ensure completion of actions within the required timeframe.

3.3 Internal Consultation

A fundamental component of the 5 Year Review is to ensure that the 84 actions items remain relevant to the objectives and vision of the GWMP and they achieve their objective within the timeframe identified in the GWMP Implementation Plan. Internal consultation was undertaken from December 2015 to February 2016, with project managers/managers in relation to any actions linked to relevant departments. Consultation was focused on:

- Actions that are currently tracked as outstanding/delayed;
- Clarity and wording of actions;
- Ensuring Actions are aligned to the appropriate department in terms of responsibility and priorities;
- A “check in” on the Actions identified as “commenced” to ensure status that they are on track to be completed; and
- Any barriers or challenges to implementation of specific actions.

The internal consultation findings are discussed in Section “4.0 Summary of Findings and Recommendations.” In summary, 29 out of the 84 actions have been recommended for amendment or updating to improve their focus and ability to be implemented. No actions have been recommended for removal and all still remain relevant. The nature of the recommended changes or updates are quite minor and primarily relate to updates to the Council departmental lead/support roles. The issues identified are expanded further in Section 4. A table detailing all recommended updates and reasons for the proposed changes is provided at *Attachment 4 Updates and Recommendation Table*.

3.4 Monitoring and Review Framework

The GWMP 5 Year Review also provides an opportunity to streamline to the reporting requirements put in place by the GWMP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, in order to reduce the administrative impact of the reporting process.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework monitors implementation of the GWMP to ensure it achieves the vision and objectives over the 10 year life of the plan.

The Strategic Planning and Design (SP&D) department is responsible for administrating, monitoring and evaluating the progress of responsible departments against the 84 actions. The adopted GWMP includes the following monitoring and reporting requirements:

- Collect quarterly (three monthly) progress updates from responsible departments on the progress of Actions, which are reported to the Executive Leadership Team (ELT);
- Prepare annual progress reports to Council ;
- Prepare a 3 year report (completed 2013) and a 7 year report (due in 2018) on the progress of implementation and highlighting key milestones and
- A full GWMP 5 Year Review to monitor the relevancy, vision and objectives of the GWMP.

Annual reporting and the 5 Year Review of the GWMP are mandatory reporting requirements by the State Government in Practice Note 31 Preparing a Green Wedge Management Plan (Department of Transport Planning Local Infrastructure – revised July 2014). There is no scope to change these.

The preparation of a three and seven year report and quarterly progress updates are monitoring mechanisms established by SP&D to monitor and measure the GWMP

implementation. There is latitude, through this Review to amend the current monitoring requirements. In particular there is a need to reassess the internal quarterly reporting obligation to ELT. Amending these requirements will not be at odds with the overarching GWMP State government requirements.

Following feedback received from internal consultation, it is recommended that the requirement for quarterly progress updates be removed. The quarterly reporting has significant administrative impact on SP&D in its administrative role, and project managers to frequently report on and track actions.

The frequency of reporting often means that little or no progress is reported between reporting updates given the scale and nature of the action/project. While monitoring the GWMP is important the current frequency of reporting is not providing meaningful data.

Annual reporting of all 84 GWMP actions (short, medium and long term) will continue for the life of the GWMP. This together with the 7 year Report, due in 2018, provides adequate opportunity to monitor implementation.

This proposed update to the GWMP monitoring process aligns with recent changes to the reporting requirements of the ESS, reported to ELT in March 2016. The adopted ESS implementation plan included requirements for both quarterly and annual updates to track the progress of the Action Plan. Similar to the GWMP, consultation with departments linked to actions identified issues with the reporting frequency and the administrative burden it results in. Thus reporting for the ESS has been changed, to remove quarterly reporting, which is consistent with GWMP reporting amendments proposed above.

4.0 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

Following the internal consultation and review of the GWMP implementation to date, a number of changes are recommended to the GWMP Implementation Plan. In all, there are changes recommended to 29 of 84 Actions of varying degrees. The summary outcomes of the Review are provided below. *Attachment 4 Recommendations and Updates Table* provides a full list of the changes recommended.

4.1 Literature review

The literature review identified all Council documents that have relevance to the GWMP and adopted following the GWMP in 2011. All of these are adequately aligned with the GWMP and these documents support and complement the GWMP vision and objectives.

4.2 GWMP Monitoring and Evaluation framework findings

Update the Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to remove the quarterly progress reporting. This will reduce the administrative burden on SP&D in administrating the GWMP, as well as other project managers across Council. It will also address a

continual reporting issue, where the short reporting cycle (three months) means that in many instances minimal or no changes have occurred within the intervening period. Annual reporting and the 7 year report requirements remain unchanged. These mechanisms are adequate to ensure the GWMP remains on track and that all actions are implemented in a timely manner.

4.3 Delayed/Outstanding Actions

The 2015 Annual progress report (November 2015) identified 5 short term actions (to be commenced within 1-3 years) as delayed/outstanding status. Through the departmental consultation process (detailed in Section 3.3), an analysis on the reasons for the (delayed /outstanding) status of these Actions was undertaken.

The following reasons for delayed/outstanding actions have been identified:

- **Action W05** – *Strengthen planning provisions targeted at the protection and improvement of the environmental health of waterways as follows: Add new schedules to the Environmental Significance Overlay to protect all major waterbodies; Revise the extent of the mapping associated with the existing Environmental Significance Overlay schedule 3 to include unprotected waterways; and Investigate the rezoning of the municipality's two water storage catchments from Public Use Zone to Public Conservation and Resource Zone.*

This action is currently “delayed” status and the lead role is SP&D. This action relates to strengthening planning provisions targeted at the protection and improvement of the environmental health of waterways. This action requires specific specialist background ecologic research to inform amendments to planning provisions. SP&D currently does not have the resources or expertise to undertake this background work. The recent appointment of a Biodiversity Planner in Sustainability Planning will enable some of this background work to be undertaken via the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP). On this basis it is anticipated that this action will be able to be progressed by SP&D once the BAP is completed. Sustainability Planning has also been identified as having a support role in delivering this action. This will be reflected as a recommendation.

- **Action B02** – *Investigate the relationship between significant ecosystems and type of land ownership (e.g. parkland, reserve or private landholding). Assess best methods of protection for areas of high conservation significance.*

SP&D is the lead and this action is identified as “delayed” status. This action requires the investigation of the relationship between significant ecosystems and type of land ownership as well as assessment of the best methods of protection for areas of high conservation significance. Similarly to Action W05, in order for this action to progress background information and research is required on significant flora, fauna and habitat areas across the municipality. SP&D is currently not resourced and does not have the expertise to undertake this research. It is envisaged that this background research will be undertaken through the Sustainability Planning department BAP project. Once the BAP has been

completed the background research will inform development of a planning scheme amendment by SP&D to achieve a planning outcome for this action.

- **Action L11** – *Review local planning provisions to identify and evaluate controls relating to agribusiness and the ‘right to farm’ in rural areas.*

SP&D is the lead for this action, which is currently identified as “outstanding” status. This action requires a review of local planning provisions to identify and evaluate controls relating to agribusiness and the right to farm in rural areas. The planning controls relating to agribusiness and farm “use” rights are covered by the Green Wedge and Green Wedge A Zone provisions. Council has limited ability to progress this action as zoning provisions can only be altered by the State Government. Given the State Government’s commitment to the green wedges and its future protection, DELWP have indicated that further initiatives may provide additional policy support to farming. One recent initiative is the establishment of the Animal Industries Advisory Committee. Subject to the outcomes of these processes SP&D can explore scope for any changes implemented by the Minister for planning to support farming and achieve this action objective. It is therefore proposed that the Action wording be amended to reflect that planning controls relating to Green Wedge areas are directed by State government policy provisions. It is noted that Development Assessment and Jobs and Investment department (Agribusiness officer) will also support farming through their ongoing promotion of agribusiness interests.

- **Action P05** – *Develop ‘Rural Information Packs’ that can be distributed to potential property purchasers that includes pre-purchase information such as planning checklists, siting and design guidelines, environmental values and land management tips.*

SP&D is the lead for this action which is currently “outstanding”. This action relates to the development of Rural Information Packs providing pre-purchase planning information for the community. SP&D have 14 actions that are “in progress” or have been “completed” and resources have not been available to commence action P05 to date. However, as some other actions have substantially progressed, some staff resources are anticipated to be available in 2016/2017 and this action is likely to be progressed then.

- **Action P15** – *In partnership with land owners/managers, (P15.1) investigate partnership opportunities that extend our network of multiuse trails, (P15.2) including opportunities for heritage interpretation. Linking People and Places – Government Strategy for Trail Networks in the Metropolitan Area and The Victorian Trail Strategy will inform the potential location of multi-use trails. Attention should be paid to the disused Mernda-Whittlesea rail track as it provides linkages between rural and urban areas.*

This short term action was amended to a medium term action. A Change Management Form was submitted on 11/03/13 to update the start date to 2018. This action relates to investigating partnership opportunities to extend our network

of multiuse trails, which is to be informed by the Government strategy for Trail Networks in the metropolitan area and the Victorian Trail Strategy.

In summary, of the 31 short term actions only 5 are delayed/outstanding. Having reviewed all the delayed/outstanding actions it has been determined that they are currently delayed due to lack of specific, specialist resources or in the case of Action L19 it is to a great extent influenced by the State Government policy. Following internal consultation it is likely that the actions that are within Council's control are likely to be progressed over the next few years.

4.4 Introducing Dual Lead/Support role.

Through this review it was identified that some actions required considerable specialist input work to be generated by another department but they were not identified as the lead. To reflect this more appropriately and to ensure actions can be progressed, it is recommended that a "dual lead" and a "support role" be introduced in the GWMP Action Plan.

This will provide greater recognition of the work required by various departments to progress actions and ensure inclusion in departmental work plans.

The "dual role" recognises the responsibility that two departments share in undertaking the requirements to complete an action.

Four actions have been recommended for a dual lead role between SP&D and the Sustainability Planning department (SUS). This recognises the strong links between the Departments on those actions. Specifically it recognises the role of SUS in providing the background information and strategic justification that will inform SP&D in implementing planning scheme outcomes in accordance with the GWMP actions.

The addition of a "support role" acknowledges the role other departments may have in assisting to implement an action. This may be through providing technical expertise or monitoring and advocating for an action objective, whilst the responsibility of undertaking the action will still lay with the lead department identified.

Fifteen actions have been identified for inclusion of a "support role", reflecting the contributory input across Council's departments in implementing strategies/policies and providing ongoing support on GWMP matters. The SUS department is identified to provide this support role to 7 of the 15 Actions. This is a reflection of the SUS work program, the recent appointment of a Biodiversity Planner and the work to be undertaken on the BAP that will provide the strategic justification for number of actions. While the action implementation will be led by another department, SUS's input will be vital. The Governance & Economic Development (Agribusiness officer role) is identified as a support role for 4 Actions acknowledging the ongoing support, education and promotion of agribusiness provided through this role that contribute to implementing actions.

4.5 Identify a Lead Department for Advocacy Actions.

The GWMP Implementation Plan set out 84 action items and defined Council's role as a provider, facilitator and advocate for each action. In general, a lead department was nominated with the responsibility for the implementation of the specific action. There are 7 Actions where Council's role was to "Advocate" for their action. No lead department was identified for the actions as it was generally considered that advocacy will occur as opportunities arise to achieve the action objective.

This has caused some difficulty in reporting the progress of the actions as no department is accountable for ensuring the action is implemented. In order to assist in monitoring and ensure these actions are ongoing through negotiation/advocacy in department work plans, a lead department is nominated for each of the 7 Advocacy Actions.

4.6 Re- word Actions

The Review recommends the minor re-wording of 6 Actions. Re-wording does not change the intent or the objective of these actions. The re-wording seeks to improve the readability, clarify the objective or reflect strategy/policy updates. The proposed re-wording for specific actions is contained in *Attachment 4 - Recommendations and Updates Table*. Action B10 is provided by way of example to highlight the nature and purpose of the re-wording changes proposed. Action B10 is proposed for re-wording to reflect the new state government native vegetation retention regulations that were released in 2013. "The Permitted Clearing of Native Vegetation – Biodiversity Assessment Guidelines" now replaces "Victoria's Native Vegetation Management – A Framework for Action" (DNRE 2002). The emphasis of the new regulations is on "no net loss" compared to the "net gain" objective of the previous regulations. Minor rewording of the action will ensure it remains relevant.

4.7 Change of Department Lead

Since the GWMP was adopted, there have been some organisational changes (both in department title and structure) or shifts in departmental work priorities. Five actions are recommended to change the department lead role. Three actions (L24, L28, and L27) are proposed to move to Governance & Economic Development. This is due to the appointment of the Agribusiness officer in 2011, as the initiatives required by these actions have been incorporated into the ongoing support, research and events programme provided through this role.

Two actions (P15 and P17) are proposed to move under the Infrastructure and Technology directorate by virtue of the current project undertaken by Development Engineering department on the Northern Regional Trails Strategy. This Strategy seeks to extend the current multiuse trails network for Whittlesea's Green Wedge in accordance with the action objectives.

Further, Council is currently undergoing an organisational restructure (2016). This Review will endeavour to align actions with their 'new' responsible department.

5.0 Conclusion

The purpose of the GWMP 5 Year Review is to assess, at the half way mark of the strategy, whether the adopted GWMP is on-track to achieve its vision and objectives, though identifying whether the actions or aspects of the Implementation Plan are still relevant.

Fundamentally this review provides an opportunity to recommend and implement appropriate changes to ensure the GWMP stays on track. The review has found the GWMP is tracking considerably well, as evident in Section 3.2, and that no major changes are required to the plan and its actions. Notwithstanding some minor changes are proposed to improve implementation of actions into the future.

The review identified the following findings and recommended updates :

- All relevant Council strategies and policies adopted following the GWMP adequately aligned with the GWMP and these documents support and complement the GWMP vision and objectives.
- The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework be updated to remove the quarterly progress reporting to reduce the administrative burden on SP&D, as well as other project managers across Council.
- An analysis of the four actions identified as delay/outstanding status indicates that three actions have been delayed due to a lack of specific, specialist resources. However, following this Review, it is now anticipated that these actions are likely to be commenced in the next few years. The remaining action cannot be implemented by Council, as it relates to a responsibility of the State Government. It is recommended that this action be amended to reflect the State Government lead and Council's role in monitoring the outcome.

The 5 Year Review recommends updates and changes to 29 of the 84 GWMP Action Plan items which:

- Introduce a dual lead role for 4 actions and support role for 15 actions.
- Identify a lead department for 7 actions where no lead was previously allocated as Council's role was to 'Advocate' the action implementation.
- Recommend the minor rewording of 6 actions to improve the readability, clarify the objective or reflect strategy/policy updates.
- Changes the lead department for 3 actions to reflect organisational shifts and departmental work priorities.

It is recommended that the updates identified in Attachment 4 of this report (summarised above) be implemented. This will ensure a streamlined GWMP Action monitoring process as well as ensuring the actions continue to be implemented across Council departments. In turn the GWMP will continue to promote the sustainability and protection of Whittlesea's Green Wedge areas for the life of the strategy and into the future.