



# ELTHAM LOWER PARK DESKTOP REVIEW

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## Background

Eltham Lower Park (ELP) is located fourteen kilometres north-east of the Melbourne CBD and is considered a key local and regional recreation and tourist attraction for the residents of Nillumbik Shire and for visitors to the area. The park is approximately 25 hectares in size and with the exception of the Lenister Farm area, the site is Crown Land and is managed by Nillumbik Shire Council under delegation via a Committee of Management arrangement.

The current 2008 Master Plan for Eltham Lower Park has two key objectives:

- To provide Council with a strategic direction for the future development of the park by establishing a priority works plan that is achievable and meets the needs of Council, permanent tenants and casual visitors
- To provide Council with a guiding document that outlines whether the reserve is suitable for development, the objectives that will guide that development and the development priorities.

At OCM February 2018 Council resolved that Council *“Undertakes further investigation into the future management and tenancy arrangements with the Diamond Valley Railway Inc., for the area depicted as ‘Council Managed Land’ in Attachment 1, as part of the planned review of the Eltham Lower Park Masterplan.”*

Furthermore, the *Council Plan 2019/20, section 2.2.8 states Council will “Assess and review Eltham Lower Park Masterplan including the Diamond Valley Miniature Railway”*

The ELP Masterplan guides future development and associated capital expenditure to manage the increasing demand of the current user groups, increased passive use of the park due to the newly constructed pedestrian bridge over the Yarra River (linking the Main Yarra Trail to the Diamond Creek Trail) and the significant natural environment and conservation values that exist within the park.

A number of the recommendations in the plan are yet to be actioned but the key issue of the Miniature Railway proposed extension remains a contentious issue for the majority of stakeholders. As the current masterplan doesn't support the extension a separate piece of work has been undertaken to review the extension of the railway.

The aim in this review into the Masterplan is to understand the outstanding actions, address the priorities and provide a recommendation on what the next steps should be.

The review does not seek to replace the Masterplan, rather simply provide a state of play into the Masterplan, and provide recommendations on issues that are outstanding or in progress.

Officers established a desktop review to understand status of actions, to achieve this the following was undertaken;

- Engagement with internal departments who held responsibilities for delivering actions;
  - Identify works that have been completed
  - Identify works that haven't been completed
- Hold meeting with key stakeholders of the ELP, including: Diamond Valley Miniature Railway, Eltham Lower Park Cricket Club, Lacrosse Club, Eltham Horse and Pony Club, Eltham Community Action Group, Friends of Eltham Lower Park, Friends of Diamond Creek. The meeting included the following conversations;
  - What outstanding actions should be a priority, which including stepping through all actions?
  - What does your group what included or removed from the current Masterplan?
  - What are your group's thoughts on extended the Miniature Railway?
  - If the Eltham Horse and Pony Club was relocated, what are options for the space?
- All groups were given the opportunity to provide a submission to be included in the considerations for the review

All groups participated in the engagement, with groups providing both written and oral submissions.

## Status of ELP Masterplan Actions

The follow is a summary of all the information collected through the desktop review. Community feedback was from; Diamond Valley Miniature Railway (DVMR), Eltham Lower Park Cricket Club (ELPCC), Eltham Lacrosse Club (ELC), Eltham Horse and Pony Club (EHPC), Eltham Community Action Group (ECAG), Friends of Eltham Lower Park FELP, Friends of Diamond Creek FDC.

## 1. General Improvements

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action & Date
1.1	Toilets are in urgent need of upgrade and the suitability of current locations has been questioned	Remove toilet block on the eastern side of the front oval and install new modern toilet facilities adjacent to the Diamond Valley Miniature Railway	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
		Remove toilet block on the western side of the front oval and install public toilet facilities and clubs storage facilities at the end of the sporting pavilion	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b> Further consultation should be undertaken to ascertain whether or not these toilets should be removed or replaced. Retaining these toilets in their current form is not desirable.	N/A	Decision to be made as a part of public amenity audit.  <b>FY 2022/23</b>
1.2	There is a lack of seating throughout the park	Install seven fully accessible seats - possible locations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed dog friendly area x 1</li> <li>▪ Former Lenister Farm area x 2 (one along trail and another on the viewing platform)</li> <li>▪ Sporting reserves x 4</li> </ul>	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Still not completed. Some infrastructure has been installed. Lenister farm site – bush kinder now on site. There are ‘bush’ style assets, e.g. Logs as seating	All groups commented that there is still a lack of seating	Continue to install seating within current allocated budgets  <b>FY 2021/22</b>
1.3	There is a lack of drinking fountains throughout the park	Install three fully accessible drinking fountains - possible locations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal family/social area between newly relocated playground and DVMR</li> </ul>	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Drinking fountains (installed in the new accessible playspace x 2)	All groups commented that there is still a lack of drinking fountains	Continue to install drinking fountains within current allocated budgets

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action & Date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Proposed dog friendly area (with dog bowl attached)</li> <li>▪ Lenister Farm</li> </ul>			<b>FY 2020/21</b>
1.4	There is a lack of shelters in the park	<p>Install three shelters – possible locations include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Informal family/social area to accommodate people having picnics</li> <li>▪ Lenister Farm area</li> <li>▪ Proposed dog friendly area</li> </ul>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p>Shelters provided by Eltham Rotary x 5 in the new accessible playspace</p>	FDC, ECAG and FELP mentioned they would like additional shelters	Work with Eltham Rotary and Eltham Men's Shed to continue to build shelters
1.5	Signage around the park needs to be updated in a manner consistent with the historic and natural theme of the park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Install new general park sign</li> <li>▪ Remove redundant signage</li> <li>▪ Install trail directional signage</li> <li>▪ Install trail conflict signage</li> <li>▪ Install map of park at front of the park</li> </ul>	<p><b>UNDERWAY</b></p> <p>Work has begun on planning new signage, in line with new branding.</p> <p>Use of historical gates and blue stone will form new park entry and signage</p>	All groups commented that this needs to be improved	<p>This will form part of the landscaping plan</p> <p><b>FY 2021/22</b></p>
1.6	Lack of landscaping	<p>Develop a high-level landscape plan for the overall park which identifies canopy tree renewal areas. Prepare detailed landscape plans for the key precincts/nodes including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pines Picnic area</li> <li>▪ Family area adjacent to the miniature railway</li> <li>▪ Lenister Farm</li> </ul>	<p><b>UNDERWAY</b></p>	All groups mentioned the landscaping, a large focus was on the lack of re-planting	<p>This will form part of the landscaping plan</p>

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action & Date
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Dog Friendly Area</li> </ul>			<p><b>FY 2020/21</b></p>
1.8	The need to clarify dog off leash areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Clarify the dog off leash areas in the park, clearly sign and alter the Domestic Animal Strategy to reflect the areas identified in the Masterplan</li> </ul>	<p><b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b></p> <p>This is addressed in the Domestic Animal Management Plan</p>	Sporting groups supported finding an alternate location for dog off leash areas	<p>A review and stocktake of current dog off leash areas to establish what is required and where</p> <p><b>FY 2020/21</b></p>
1.9	Cluttered and untidy entrance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Car parking at the front of the park to be consistent with the Eltham Gateway Policy – include screen planting and limit car parking</li> <li>▪ Melbourne Water land adjacent to ELP to be consistent with the Eltham Gateway Policy</li> </ul>	<p><b>UNDERWAY</b></p> <p>Strategic Planning – The Eltham Gateway provisions were revamped in 2013 by C77 and the DDO1 now carries the most detail about buildings and works, particularly car parking (the policy is more about land use) supported by a set of design guidelines referenced by the DDO1 - <a href="https://planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/nillumbik/ordinance/43_02s01_nill.pdf">https://planning-schemes.delwp.vic.gov.au/schemes/nillumbik/ordinance/43_02s01_nill.pdf</a>. The Eltham Gateway controls (SLO7, DDO1 and Eltham Gateway Local Planning Policy) do not actually apply to the Eltham Lower Park and so the current reference to these controls in guiding the car parking is misleading. Consistent with point 2, the DDO1 really sets guidelines for car parking in a mixed used context and doesn't refer to public venues such as the Eltham Lower Park. For example, it talks about keeping car parking to the rear and side of sites, which is not really relevant to the context of the car parking being referred to here and will just add confusion. We suggest that the ELP provides guidelines specific to the car park, which where appropriate, mirror requirements of the DDO and policy.</p>	Feedback documented in traffic management and car parking area	<p>Remove old signage</p> <p><b>FY 2020/21</b></p>

## 2. Sporting Precincts

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
2.1	Front oval – lack of landscaping shade and seating areas for spectators	Consider moving the boundary in at the northern end of the front oval and develop landscape and seating plan for spectators	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED.</b> Not completed. Some trees planted	N/A	Undertake works  <b>FY 2022/23</b>
2.2	Cricket nets are in poor condition	Review existing maintenance program. Investigate the development of a multi-purpose all weather facility that would be used by both the cricket and lacrosse clubs for training activities. It is proposed that this would replace the existing practice cricket nets.	<b>COMPLETE</b> New net structure constructed with dual purpose use for lacrosse	Excellent outcome welcomed by both sporting clubs	N/A
2.3	Untidy appearance around the pavilion	Develop landscape plan that identifies improvements to the front of the pavilion and includes seating and sealed surface	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b> Still not completed	N/A	Undertake works  <b>FY 2022/23</b>
2.4	Limited irrigation available due to water restrictions	Investigate the option to harvest stormwater for irrigation. Implement a warm season grass program on both ovals and investigate subsurface drip irrigation.	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Drainage issues in the south west of the park and positive treatments – more vegetation, modifications of drainage etc.	N/A	The Oval facilitates use by the cricket club, lacrosse club and football clubs in the area, largely for training. Lacrosse would benefit greatly from the creation of 2 lacrosse pitches, which would still provide ample space for football training during the winter.  <b>FY 2022/23</b>
2.5	Safety issues due to lack of protective fencing around the playing surfaces	Replace fencing around playing surfaces with black PVC mesh fence	<b>UNDERWAY</b>	N/A	Continue to install fencing within current allocated budgets

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
			Western Oval only 40% fenced. Back oval fenced. Front oval fenced		<b>FY 2021/22</b>
2.6	Cricket and lacrosse balls are entering the roadway area	Install protective black PVC mesh fencing at the northern end of the oval.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
2.7	Current reserve floodlighting insufficient to illuminate sporting reserves for training activities	Upgrade the flood lighting on both sporting reserves	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Lighting upgrade to be completed 19/20 FY for back oval Strategic Planning - Has the stronger lighting been tested for impacts on view-sheds in the evening (e.g. to or from the Yarra River) and potential impacts on fauna? The area is environmentally sensitive and DELWP, as primary landowner, may have requirements in relation to this latter matter.		Front oval to be completed as a part of the lighting strategy  <b>FY 2023/24</b>
2.8	Pavilion Upgrades	Aesthetic improvements of the pavilion area, including but not limited to: carpets, paint, roof and external façade and amenity improvements, such as kitchen equipment.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b> The building is clearly aging and in need of some improvements.		Develop a short and long term plan to upgrade facilities <b>FY 2020/21</b>

### 3. Equestrian Area

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
3.1	Lack of adequate car and float parking	Prohibit cars/floats from parking in cross-country course area.  Cars/floats to park in Lenister Farm overflow parking area on weekends and event days	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
3.2	Lack of Safety	Install fencing around the agreed cross-country area (with gates) to manage risk.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
3.3	Environmental degradation around cross country course area	Develop an Environmental Management Plan in conjunction with the horse and pony club and Friends of Diamond Creek including re-vegetation works, removal of weeds, and protection around trees.	<b>UNDERWAY</b>  Management Plan completed 2010	N/A	Increase monitoring of the implementation  <b>On-going</b>
3.4	The lease for the ménage area is in over holding and there is no occupancy agreement for the cross country course area	Renew lease for the ménage area.  Develop a licence agreement for the cross country course area based on the negotiated boundary.	<b>UNDERWAY</b>	N/A	Work with Pony and Horse Riding Clubs on 3 year lease and during this period work on relocation  <b>On-going</b>
3.5	Ageing Clubhouse facility / lack of outside shelter	Upgrade existing club house and provide shade in summer and shelter in winter	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>  Strategic Planning –  Council should check Melbourne Water is in agreement (or still in agreement) with this. In reference to DVR's proposed extension MW has stated that it wants no habitable buildings being constructed in the 1 to 100 year flood level and this flood level extends well into the current horse riding area		Work with Pony and Horse Riding Clubs on relocation and then implement action plan  <b>On-going</b>



#### 4. Informal Activity Areas

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
4.1	Pedestrian and vehicle conflict through the park.	Create a family and children's area near the miniature railway to minimise the need for families to cross vehicle access roads. Including an informal family picnic area. This would include the provision of bbq, shelter, tables and seating to support this use.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	All groups raised concerns with this issue.	Information captured in Traffic Management and Car-parking below
4.2	No multi-access playground.	Commence plans to incorporate multi-access playground into the family area referred to in 4.1.	<b>COMPLETE</b> A fully accessible playspace was completed in December 2012 themed on the Eltham Copper Butterfly.	N/A	N/A
4.3	Proposed playground is close to the creek environment – potential safety issue.	Provide protective fencing within the new family area to restrict access for young children to the creek area.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
4.4	Existing playground and picnic areas are in a poor condition.	Rationalise the existing playground area and provide junior equipment only to support activities of the Hohnes Road Play House. Retain and upgrade where necessary the barbeques, pergolas, tables and chairs.	<b>UNDERWAY</b>	N/A	Work with Rotary on opportunities to upgrade playground and picnic areas  <b>FY 2020/21</b>
4.5	Eltham Park Drain is subject to erosion through Eltham Lower Park and is highly incised	Melbourne Water is currently developing a concept design for waterway improvement works to address erosion issues on Eltham Park Drain and intends to undertake essential works to halt erosion of the waterway and protect adjacent public and private	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
		assets in the coming 08/09 financial year. Melbourne			
4.6	Pines trees at the front of the park ageing – potential safety issues relating to dropping limbs.	Work with Department of Sustainability and Environment to investigate the health of the trees and develop strategies to ensure provision of shade, control of erosion and a safe picnic space	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Nine removed and more identified to be removed	Concerns around removal of trees was raised by ECAG, FDC and FELP.	Replanting in area not commenced, waiting for the landscape and all trees to be removed which are required <b>FY 2020/21</b>
4.7	Picnic facilities in the Pines area are in poor condition	Upgrade and install additional picnic facilities	<b>UNDERWAY</b>	All groups raise the requirement for additional picnic facilities	Identify options in the landscape plan <b>FY 2022/23</b>
4.8	Unsafe pedestrian crossing point over the drain	Install new pedestrian bridge	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
4.9	Play equipment at the southern end of the park is in poor condition. Playground and dog friendly zones are not compatible.	Remove playground and consolidate play facilities into new family/social area.  Develop this area as a dog friendly zone and provide the appropriate support infrastructure including shelter, seating and drinking facilities for dogs.	<b>UNDERWAY</b> Relocation of the current dog park is urgent due to the damage to the oval and impact on sports users	Sporting clubs want dog friendly zone relocated off the ovals	Relocate dog park  <b>FY 2020/21</b>

## 5. Lenister Farm

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
5.1	Area is valued due to its tranquillity and indigenous heritage	Demolish the existing buildings and fences. Return the area to informal open space /conservation area.  Provide appropriate support infrastructure such as shelter and seating.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>  Demolished homestead and storage shed. No shelters have been built	N/A	N/A
5.2	Opportunity for additional parking has been identified on the old nursery site	Formalise old nursery site for overflow car parking particularly for horse and pony club floats on weekend and event days.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>	Concerns around the installation was raised by ECAG, FDC and FELP	Information captured in Traffic Management and Car-parking below  Move gate to hard stand (asphalt)  Install no standing at the end of Homestead Rd  <b>FY 2021/22</b>
5.3	Access to the viewing platform does not meet contemporary standards	Upgrade viewing platform to provide improved access  List on asset register and identify responsibility for maintenance	<b>UNDERWAY</b>  Not complete. Still accessible but needs repair	ECAG, FDC and FELP mentioned works still being required here	Urgent upgrade required and allocated budget  Bring up to DDA standards  <b>FY 2021/22</b>
5.4	Lack of indigenous heritage signage.	Install interpretive signage to highlight the indigenous significance of the area	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>  Not completed but required	Mentioned in signage	As per the signage recommendations  <b>FY 2021/22</b>

Strong feedback was to see this area remain peaceful and quiet area. However, all expressed interest in the bringing the viewing platform up to DDA standards.

## 6. Miniature Railway Area

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
6.1	The club has expressed an interest in expansion of the railway.	<p>The consultation process confirmed that any further expansion of the rail track should be undertaken within the existing lease area.</p> <p>The proposed expansion of the miniature railway to Lenister Farm has not received support due to the significant impact that this development would have on the park.</p>	<b>UNDER REVIEW</b>	<p>DVMR proposed expansion and have submitted a report.</p> <p>All other groups raised concerns about expansion.</p> <p>Major issue of 2008 masterplan and is the key issue of this desktop review</p>	<p>Undertake feasibility study and commence pre-planning approval process to establish what is and is not possible</p> <p><b>On-going</b></p>
6.2	Tree management – some trees have died near the miniature railway and there is a concern of tree limbs falling on visitors.	<p>Remove fallen vegetation and trim potentially hazardous limbs in high use areas</p> <p>Continue with arborist assessments of the trees in the park and remove limbs/trees as required</p>	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <p>Some trees have been pruned and removed and ongoing works required.</p>	<p>ECAG, FDC and FELP mentioned concerns about removal and lack of replanting</p>	<p>Included in landscaping planning</p> <p><b>On-going</b></p>
6.3	The Eltham Model Railway Club expressed an interest in having a permanent exhibition and additional club rooms to be accommodated in this precinct	The planning for the park indicates that the park is at capacity and cannot accommodate another club at this stage	<b>NO ACTION CURRENTLY REQUIRED.</b>	N/A	N/A

**NOTE:** See Miniature Railway Expansion Review and Feasibility study

## 7. Conservation Areas

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
7.1	Weed and rabbit problems	Environmental Unit to develop a Management Plan in conjunction with Melbourne Water	<b>COMPLETE</b> Ongoing issues addressed. Incorporated as part of rabbit control program and reserve management	N/A	N/A
7.2	Need for renewal planting	Continue current planting strategies and techniques using local indigenous species	<b>ONGOING</b>	N/A	Continue to plant within current allocated budgets <b>On-going</b>
7.3	Lack of landscape plans	Prepare landscape plans for the following areas: Pines picnic area Melbourne Water Open Drain Lenister Farm Equestrian Cross Country Area	<b>ONGOING</b>	All groups mentioned the development of landscape plans as critically important	Landscape master plan is being prepared <b>On-going</b>

**FEEDBACK:** Strong feedback was provided on how the Shire could continue to enhance ELP with on-going commitment to managing vegetation, suggestions include:

- Importance of maintaining conservation corridors along Diamond Creek and Yarra River, including continuing issues e.g. Rabbit control, erosion, weeds etc. Associated with these conservation corridors is the need to maintain buffer zones and any land uses in these zones must maintain this buffer purpose.
- Much of the park needs replanting of trees for future generations; if it does not occur soon over a 10-year period we will be handing on a denuded landscape
- Revegetation of the landing area
- Revegetation of the entrance area
- Increased indigenous planting
- Install steps to the water

## 8. Traffic Management and Car Parking

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
<b>ENTRY</b>					
8.1	Bottle neck at entrance to park and poor visibility for vehicles exiting the park through the bluestone gates – conflict with trail users at the front of the park	Relocate bluestone pillars further into the park, widen the entrance and provide two way entry and exit.	<b>ONGOING</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	Further work to be undertaken  <b>FY 2020/21</b>
8.2	Small width of roads and limited space in the car parks, making it difficult for cars and buses to manoeuvre within these tight confines	Implement Option three of the traffic management report with the inclusion of limited access for car parking and unloading requirement for DVR members in the area adjacent to the DVR. Vehicle access to the conservation area will also need to be maintained.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
8.3	Safety issues with vehicle and pedestrian conflict	Install speed calming measures at the front entrance and throughout the park.  Install additional footpaths linking car parking areas with the miniature railway.  Bus drop off zones should be close to the miniature railway and bus parking should be provided in the Lenister Farm Car Park area.	<b>ONGOING</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	Further work to be undertaken  <b>FY 2020/21</b>
8.4	Informal car park outside the front entrance to the park is used extensively on weekends, is extremely dusty and is not consistent with the Eltham Gateway Policy	Rationalise and formalise the car park outside the front entrance to the park to comply with the Eltham Gateway Policy. Include disabled parking and short term parking to optimise use of this area and restrict parking on the verge.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>  Strategic Planning –  See advice at proposed Action 1.9 above in regard to application of the DDO1 and suggestion that the ELP should provide carparking design guidelines specific to	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	It is the Council's intentions to seal and formalise the car park in this location. This month, surveyors were tasked with a land survey and work has commenced on drawings. Further consultation will take place with DVR and other groups.

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
			the car park (where appropriate) would mirror the requirements of the DDO and policy.		<b>FY 2020/21</b>
8.5	On busy Sundays, cars are parked all around the entrance to the park and in/under trees on the western side of the entrance.	Develop a landscape and car park design for the area.  Restrict vehicles parking on unprepared surfaces.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	
8.6	Create car parking in the current Lenister Farm Council stockpile yard, which would be accessed from Homestead Road.	Rehabilitation and activation of the space as car parking.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>  The area, which has fallen into disrepair and is currently being used to stockpile excess Council mulch and logs could be used as overflow car parking.	N/A	Formalise carpark with bollards  <b>FY 2021/22</b>
<b>FRONT CAR PARK</b>					
8.7	Car parking is formalised in this precinct, however no parking spaces have been allocated for people with disabilities and buses.	Provide car parking spaces for people with disabilities and buses.	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	After reviewing aerials, this appears to be have been completed. <b>FY 2020/21</b>
8.8	Additional car parking spaces are required, particularly on Sundays.	Formalise additional overflow parking on the old nursery site in Lenister Farm	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	Work with Miniature Railway on booking system <b>FY 2022/23</b>
8.9	Lack of traffic calming measures.	Install speed calming measures	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
8.10	No lighting in the car park.	Investigate the need to provide lighting in the car parking areas	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>	N/A	Not raised as an issue, no action required

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
<b>INTERNAL ROADWAY</b>					
8.11	The road is in poor condition and requires resurfacing.	Develop detailed design for the roadway system based on the option 3 traffic management concept.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	Road is considered fit for purpose and adequate. If ongoing maintenance is required, service requests should be lodged.
8.12	Lack of formalised parking and limited parking provision for people with disabilities	Expand and formalise car parking areas and provide parking spaces for disabled	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
8.13	No formal and approved vendors area/parking	Investigate opportunities for vendors to operate in the family social area	<b>COMPLETE</b> 3 Vendor pads provided and leased	N/A	N/A
8.14	Entry access	Re-investigate the implications of the proposed upgrade to Fitzsimons Lane	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b>	All groups raised this as an opportunity to enhance ELP	Additional infrastructure required to make access and exiting easier. <b>FY 2021/22</b>



## 9. Trails and Footpaths

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
9.1	Concerns over bicycles using the walking paths and hence the safety of the paths	Retain trail as walkers only along creek through conservation area	<b>No action required</b>	N/A	N/A
9.2	Narrowness of the paths	<p>Clearly define and widen the trail adjacent to Hohnes Rd for 'cycle use only'.</p> <p>Develop an additional 'pedestrian only' (1.5m) trail adjacent to the existing trail on the inside boundary of the park.</p> <p>Develop an additional 'cyclist only' (2.5m) trail between the Hohnes Rd Playhouse and Hohnes Road having regard for safety at the entrance of the Hohnes Rd Playhouse.</p> <p>Widen the shared trail around Lenister Farm to provide a fully accessible sensory trail.</p> <p>Widen the existing trail adjacent to Homestead Rd to 3m</p>	<p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p><b>COMPLETE</b></p> <p><b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b></p> <p><b>COMPLETE</b></p>	N/A	N/A
9.3	Pedestrian and vehicle conflicts	Develop a pedestrian only trail link from the family social area to the front of the park and around the sporting reserves.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
9.4	Condition of paths can become muddy and are sometimes flooded.	Develop a maintenance schedule for the trails and install drainage adjacent to equestrian area.	<p><b>ONGOING</b></p> <p>Still occurs</p>	N/A	<p>Continue to maintain path within current allocated budgets</p> <p><b>On-going</b></p>
9.5	Cyclists riding too fast at the end of the bridge near Lenister Farm	Install traffic calming measures at the end of the bridge	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Internal Feedback	Community Feedback	Recommended Action
		Create a separate cycle path and pedestrian path at the entry point from the bridge to the park to reduce the conflict			
9.6	There is a need to provide better trail links throughout the park	Develop an additional multi-purpose trail adjacent to Homestead Rd from car park to existing Lenister Farm Trail	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
9.7	There is a lack of seating along the trails.	Install seating along trail and at viewing platform that is fully accessible	<b>STILL TO BE COMPLETED</b> Not completed	All groups commented that there is still a lack of seating	Continue to install seating within current allocated budgets. Upcoming trail audit will identify gaps and basic service standards for trails. ELP is likely to be considered a significant node, and as such will attract more infrastructure. <b>On-going</b>
9.8	Trail link – an appropriate pedestrian only trail link is needed through this precinct of the park	Develop pedestrian only trail link from railway area to family social area and to the front of the park	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	Footbridge across the Diamond Creek to formalise a trail to Griffith Park and then to Sweeney's Lane <b>FY 2022/23</b>

## 10. Hohnes Road Playhouse

No.	Issue	Proposed Action	Status & Feedback	Recommendation	Recommended Action
10.1	The facility does not meet contemporary standards	In the longer term investigate options for locating this service in a more contemporary facility with other family and children services.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	
10.2	The playground, picnic and bbq area adjacent to the play house require upgrading.	Develop a plan to upgrade these facilities.  The playground area should be designed to cater for preschool aged children.	<b>COMPLETE</b>	N/A	N/A
10.3	Long term potential use of the space	Investigate the feasibility of developing a café in this area. This proposal being subject to an appropriate alternative facility for the play house being secured.	<b>ONGOING</b>  Strategic Planning –  This does not align with the <a href="#">Eltham Gateway Local Planning Policy</a> at Clause 22.10 of the planning scheme, which supports predominantly residential south of Mount Pleasant Road and any commercial uses to occur north of that road.	N/A	Intentions to relocate the programs operating out of the facility have not been discussed in the last 4+ years and in the past, the management committee have not been supportive of any relocation discussions. Investigate options prior to the expiry of the current lease.  <b>FY 2022/23</b>

### Proposed Actions

It is clear that the Masterplan has achieved a large number of outcomes for the Park, which have benefited all user groups. However, there are also a number of outstanding actions still to be complete, which remain relevant and required.

The completion of the Landscape Plan is critical in achieving not only a large number of outstanding items, but achieving an overall aesthetic upgrade to the park, better links around the park and achieving the long outstanding action regarding the pine trees slated for removal.

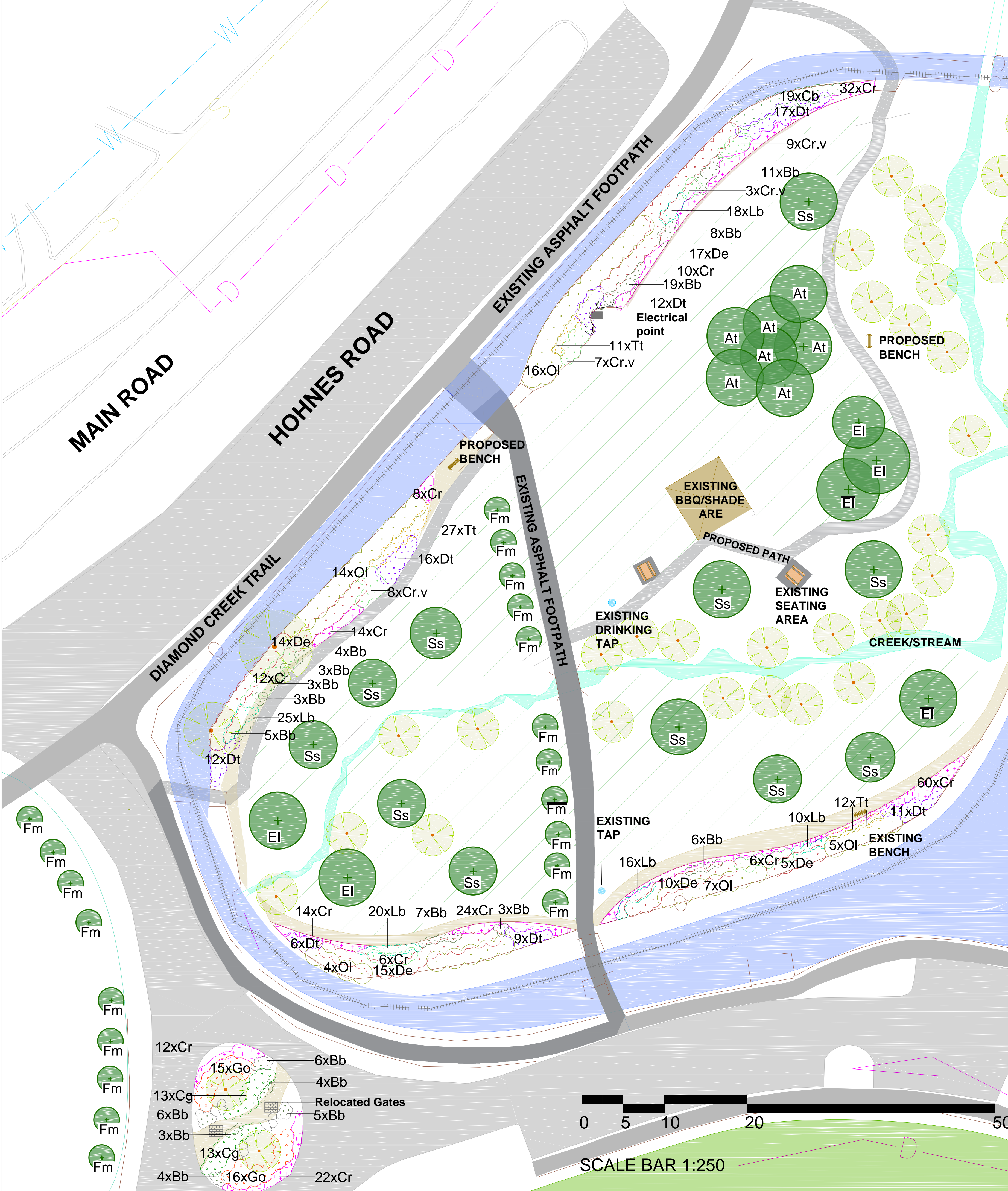
Two key points still to be resolved include the expansion of the railway, which is the subject to their own discussion papers, and the status of the horse and pony club.

Therefore, the following actions are proposed:

- Finalise the Entry Area Vegetation Management Plan before the end of 2020, including community consultation
- Develop a Landscape Plan for the entire Eltham Lower Park to consider the addition options raised through this review, including Skills Lookout improvements
- All other outstanding items should continue to be advocated for through future budgets and/or grants







**LANDSCAPE INSTALLATION AND MANAGEMENT NOTES:**

**SITE PREPARATION**  
Contractors must identify and locate any services existing onsite and protect services from harm or interference. All large existing trees in good condition shall be retained. Trees to be retained must be protected during the landscape works with minimal soil and root disturbance beneath the drip line of the trees. All debris and rubbish on the site shall be removed included stones in the soil that are greater than 25mm in diameter.

**BREAKOUT AND CLEARING**  
Contractors to break up compaction on site. Remove any tree stumps with minimal disruption to surrounding trees. The material from the removal should be disposed of properly and safely offsite. After clearing the soil will need amendment with Veolia mulch. Manufacturing instructions must be followed for application, including public health and safety and protective guidelines.

**WEED ERADICATION**  
All weeds and invasive grasses shall be eradicated. Manual weed removal is recommended

**INSTALLATION OF IRRIGATION**  
TBC

**CONCRETE CONSTRUCTION**  
Construct of 25MPa strength concrete shared footpath, 125mm depth, reinforced with SL82 steel mesh 50mm from base of concrete, on 75mm compacted FCR bedding (as per NS3090) as per plan

**SOIL**  
Excavate all individual plant holes by at least twice pot volume. Spread imported topsoil to all garden beds to a depth of 150mm layer over cultivated site soil.

**PLANTING**  
Plant material shall be of good quality, not root bound, of local provenance, and size-specific. Immediately after planting water in all plants and maintain regular follow up watering during the establishment period. Plants should not be planted in adverse weather conditions. The contractor shall rectify and defects in the plant material as they occur. The plants shall be staked as required. Planting has been designed to provide screening, shade, and to enhance site amenity. Planting has been designed to integrate with the surrounding landscape.

**FERTILIZER**  
All plants shall be given a dressing of controlled-release fertilizer, low in phosphorus for Natives at planting time as per the manufacturing direction. Before spreading topsoil to garden bed, cultivate the soil to outside existing

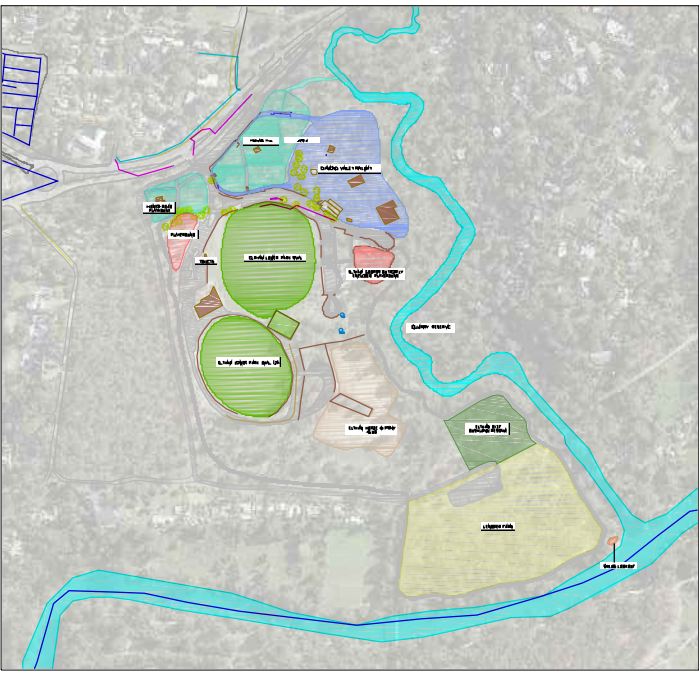
**PLACING**  
Remove the plant from the container with minimum disturbance to the root ball, insurance that the root ball is moist and place it in its fine position, in the center of the hole and plumb with the topsoil level with the finished surface of the surrounding soil.

**TURF INSTALLATION**  
Remove all weeds as specified two weeks prior to turf installation. Remove 100mm of topsoil and install turf immediately upon delivery. Immediately after turf installation contractors must water the turfs. Installation of turf to the front section of the park as specified

**HISTORIC GATE INSTALLATION / RELOCATION**  
Deconstruct blue stone gates and reconstruct gates at the roundabout with .4 meter concrete base.

**BENCH INSTALLATION**  
Contractors are to supply and install two standard Australian park benches with concrete base installation

**MAINTENANCE**  
Immediate watering after planting and turf installation.

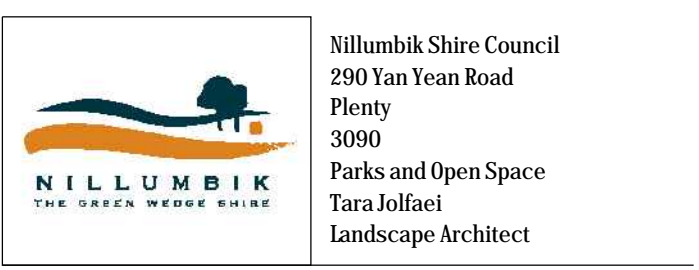


**LOCALITY PLAN : ELTHAM LOWER PARK**

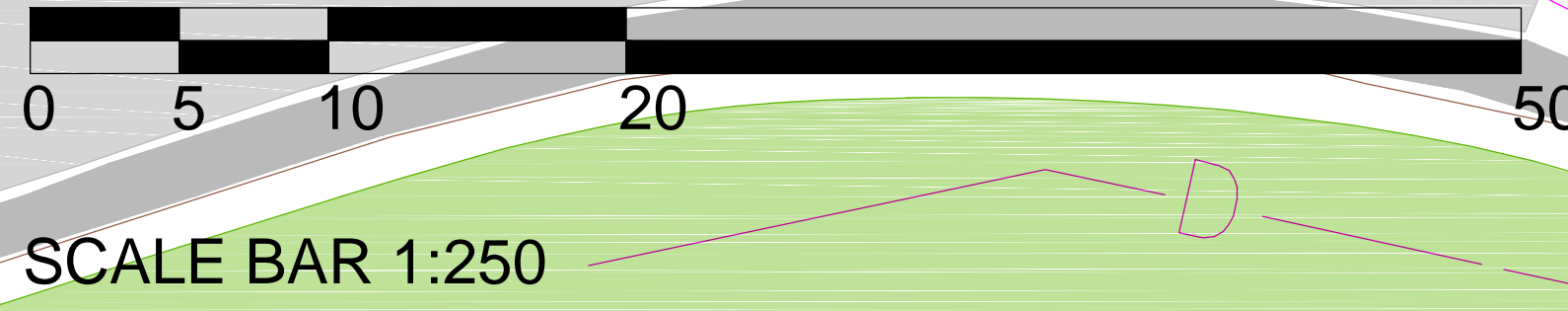
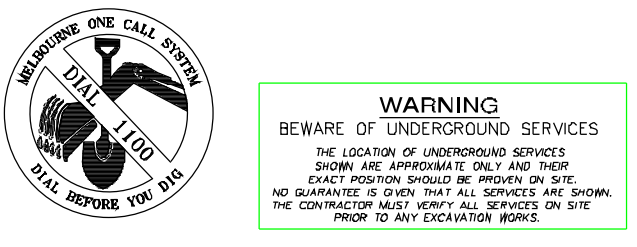
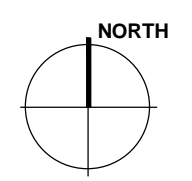
**LEGEND**

- EXISTING TREE
- PROPOSED TREE
- PROPOSED PLANTS
- PROPOSED IRRIGATION
- EXISTING WATER TAP
- EXISTING SHADE/BBQ
- EXISTING SEATING
- PROPOSED BENCH SEATING
- PROPOSED CONCRETE
- EXISTING ASPHALT
- PROPOSED MULCH

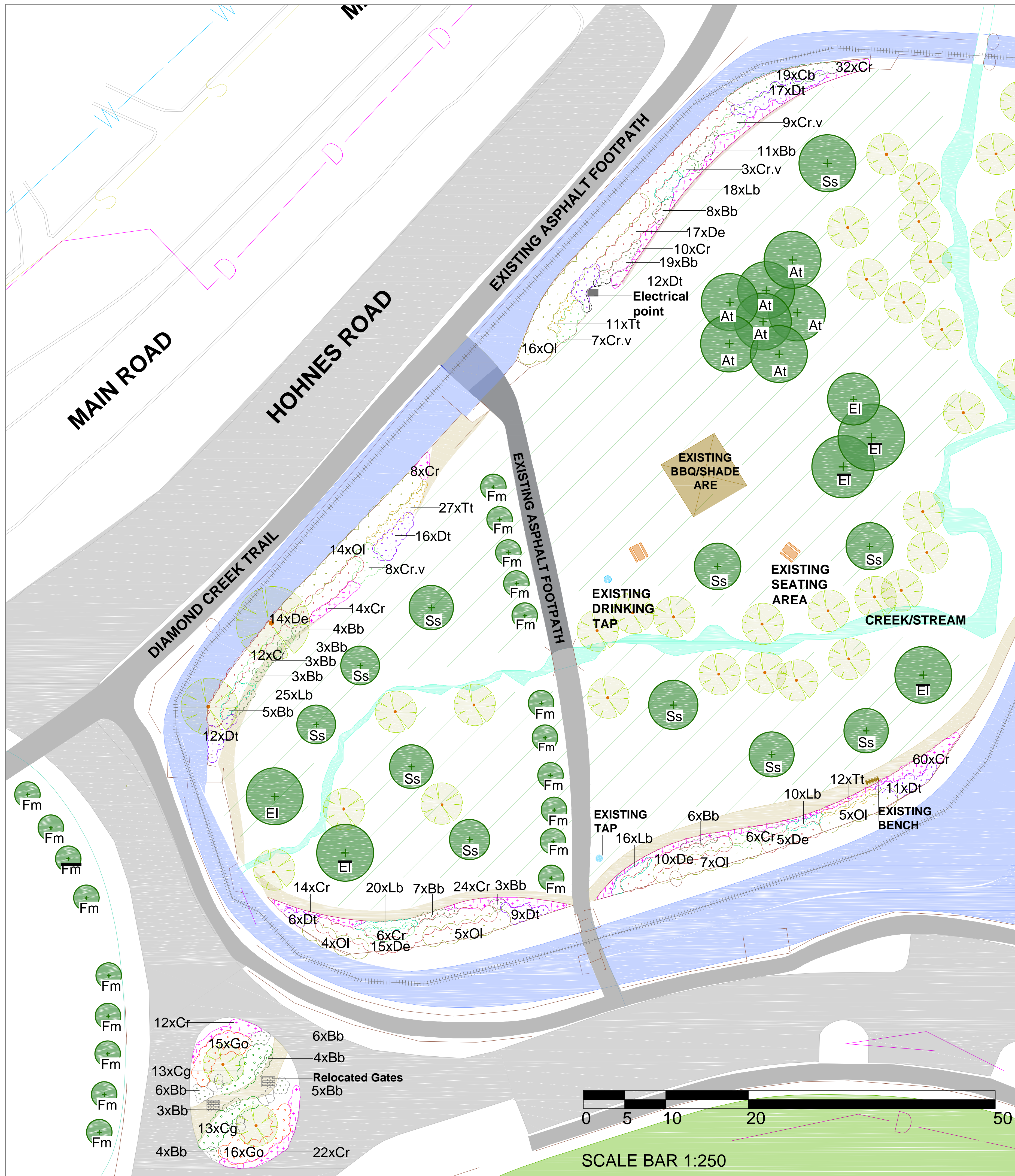
PLANTING SCHEDULE						
Eltham Lower Park						
Hohnes Area	Key	Botanical Name	Common Name	H (m)	W (m)	QTY
Ground Cover	Cr	<i>Carpobrotus glaucescens</i>	Pig Face	0.10	1.5	162
Flowering Perennial	De	<i>Doryanthes excelsa</i>	Gynea Lily	3 - 4	2 - 3	61
Shrub	Bb	<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i>	Southern Blechnum Banksia	0.5	1	69
	Cr	<i>Correa reflexa var. nummulariifolia</i>	Roundleaf Correa	0.15	1-1.5	51
	OI	<i>Olearia lirata</i>	Snow Daisy - Bush	3	2	51
Grasses	Dt	<i>Dianella tasmanica</i>	Tasman Flax lily	1	1.5	82
	Tt	<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Kangaroo Grass	1.5	1	50
	At	<i>Allocasuarina torulosa</i>	Forest She-oak	10	7	7
Trees	EI	<i>Eucalyptus leucoxylon 'Rosea'</i>	(Red flowering) Yellow Gum	12-15	7	6
	Fm	<i>Ficus microcarpa var. hillii</i>	Hill's Weeping Fig	15	3	20
	Ss	<i>Stenocarpus sinuatus</i>	Firwheel Tree	18-20	5	11
<b>Roundabout</b>						
Ground Cover	Cr	<i>Carpobrotus glaucescens</i>	Pig Face	0.10	1.5	24
Shrub		<i>Banksia blechnifolia</i>	Southern Blechnum Banksia	0.5	1	28
	Cg	<i>Casuarina glauca "Cousin It"</i>	Casuarina She-oak	0.4	1	26
	Go	<i>Grevillea obtusifolia</i>	Gin Gin Gem	0.5	1 - 3	31



Project: ELTHAM LOWER PARK  
Location: ELTHAM  
Plan: CONCEPT PLAN  
Date: JUNE 2020  
Sheet: 10F 1  
Scale: 1:250 @ A1







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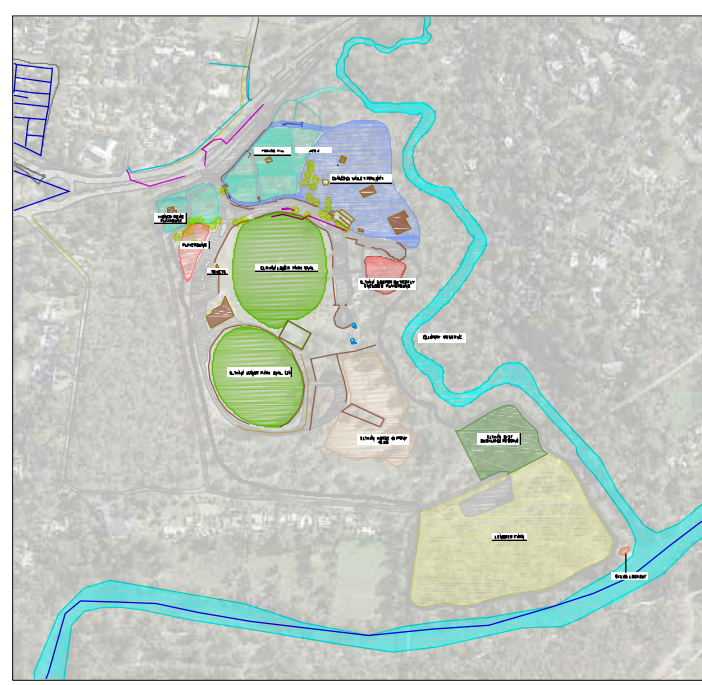
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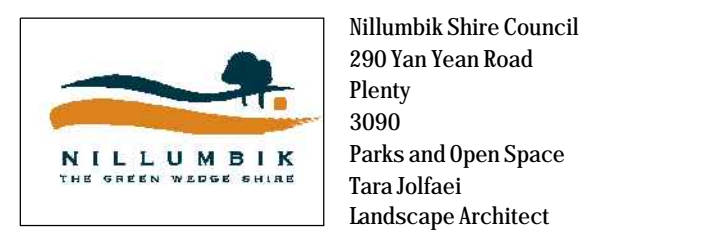


**LOCALITY PLAN :  
ELTHAM LOWER PARK**

**LEGEND**

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- PROPOSED TREE
- PROPOSED PLANTS
- PROPOSED IRRIGATION
- EXISTING WATER TAP
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Project: ELTHAM LOWER PARK

Location: ELTHAM

Plan: CONCEPT PLAN

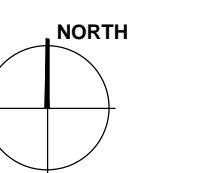
Date: JUNE 2020

Drawn: Designed: T.JOLFAEI T.JOLFAEI

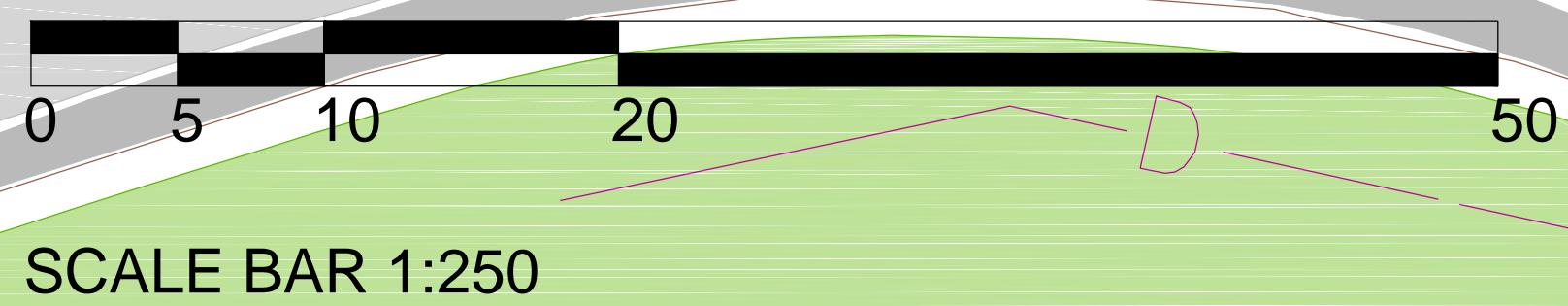
Sheet: 1 OF 1

Job No: Revisions:

Scale: 1:250 @ A1



**WARNING**  
BEWARE OF UNDERGROUND SERVICES  
THE LOCATION OF UNDERGROUND SERVICES  
SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY A REGISTERED  
UTILITY LOCATOR PRIOR TO ANY WORK.  
NO CONTRACTOR SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR  
PROVIDING A COPY OF THIS PLAN TO ANY  
EXCAVATION WORKER.



SCALE BAR 1:250



# Feasibility Study of Diamond Valley Railway

## Eltham Lower Park

### Acknowledgements

This Feasibility Study of Miniature Railway – Eltham Lower Park was prepared for Nillumbik Shire Council by:

*Alysia Brandenburg*  
Tourism and the Experience Economy  
Partnerships | Planning | Connections  
[Abranden20@gmail.com](mailto:Abranden20@gmail.com)  
0419 552 781



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Any representation, statement, opinion or advice, expressed or implied in this document is made in good faith but on that basis that Alysia Brandenburg is not liable to any person for any damage or loss whatsoever which has occurred or may occur in relation to that person taking or not taking action in respect of any representation or advice referred to in this document.

## Background

In March 2008 Nillumbik Shire Council adopted the Eltham Lower Park (ELP) Master Plan. The Master Plan identified the specific issues, needs, and the key directions for the future development of the Park and made recommendations for each area within the park.

In 2018 Council adopted a resolution to review ELP Master Plan. An internal review was undertaken and key stakeholders were engaged to gain community feedback, which included;

- Identify what has and has not been delivered
- Opportunities and issues with the current plan

The critical issue for all stakeholders in developing the Master Plan was increasing the footprint of the miniature railway and again it was the main opportunity / issue raised.

The current Master Plan clearly states that there is to be no increase in the footprint.

This has been a long-term point of angst but with limited independent analysis or details on the potential track, consultation and decision making has been difficult and resulted in mixed messages.

The Diamond Valley Railway has requested of the Shire to review, amend and/or abandon the current Master Plan to reflect and allow the desire of the Railway to extend their footprint and build another railway circuit into the southern section of the Park.

To enable officers to provide Councillors with a considered review of the masterplan, a feasibility study on the miniature railway was required.

The overall objective of the study is to understand current miniature railway operations and what is and is not possible moving forward.

The key outcomes of the study were as follows:

1. Analysis of the current miniature railway operations to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.
2. Analysis of proposed miniature railway operations to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.

## Situational Analysis

### Eltham Lower Park

The Park is situated on Crown Land and Nillumbik Council are the delegated committee of management in 1970. The Park has been a public reserve for recreational purposes for over 100 years. The Park occupies about 25 hectares. The farm occupies about 2 hectares.

The Park includes two sporting ovals with clubroom facilities, a childcare centre, the miniature railway, a horse and pony club and dressage area, a cross country riding track, a commercial pony rides area, two children's playgrounds, toilet facilities, bike ways and walking tracks.



## **The Diamond Valley Railway Inc.**

Diamond Valley Railway Inc. (the Railway) is a not for profit organisation and is staffed by volunteers only. The Railway holds a Lease with Nillumbik Shire for 21 years.

“The purposes for which the incorporated association is established are:-

- I. To establish and operate a passenger carrying miniature railway to promote and advance the knowledge, history and experiences gained on the transport of yesteryear.
- II. To provide an affordable activity for all members of the community – young and old, abled and disabled, so that memories may be built, and social and family cohesion stimulated.
- III. To acquire maintain repair alter restore preserve exhibit operate extend and improve the miniature railway established at Eltham Lower Park, Eltham in the State of Victoria together with any machinery or equipment ancillary to or associated with that railway;
- IV. To purchase take under trust or otherwise acquire steam or internal combustion driven vehicles machinery and equipment of all kinds and any locomotives rolling stock machinery equipment and accessories or parts to be used in connection therewith;
- V. To establish and operate or participate in the establishment and operation of a museum of tourist educational and historical interest comprising such vehicles engines boilers models rolling stock machinery and equipment whatsoever as may interest or concern the Association and for that purpose to purchase take under trust or lease or otherwise acquire any land and any such items which it may consider of historical significance or otherwise of value or deserving of preservation exhibition or operation and to maintain repair restore preserve exhibit and operate all or any of such items.
- VI. To encourage and promote the study of railway operations and the compilation of authentic railway records.
- VII. To fulfil its aims and objectives, as a Hobby Not For Profit Miniature Railway staffed and run by volunteers, the Railway shall foster, encourage and develop the following objectives:
  - a. **Membership:**  
Encourage and expand active membership of Australia's premier miniature passenger carrying railway and in so doing ensure that DVR is a Child Safe Organisation by implementing the Victorian Government's Child Safe Standards,
  - b. **Construct and Operate Miniature Railway Equipment to an Appropriate Standard:**  
Support members aspirations to construct and or operate scale locomotives and rolling stock safely at the Railway as may be consistent with its overall aims and objectives,
  - c. **Develop and Maintain a Railway System in Miniature:**  
Develop, operate and maintain where-ever possible, a scale miniature railway environment,
  - d. **Provide a Safe Tourist Destination for the Community:**  
Build the quality of community experiences by the promotion and improvement of the operation of the miniature railway within a bush land setting and the provision of an appropriate standard of facilities.”

Rules of the Diamond Valley Railway Inc. Revised September 2019

## **Experience Description**

Diamond Valley Railway (the Railway) is located within the natural bushland settings of Eltham Lower Park, Main Road, Eltham.

The Railway consists of approximately 3.5km of 7 ¼ inch (184mm) gauge track which is mainly laid with 6kg JIS rail.

The club owns a fleet of sixteen steam, diesel, electric (battery) and petrol-powered locomotives and more than twelve carriage sets, together with a large fleet of privately-owned rolling stock and locomotives.

The Railway consists of 1,950 metres of mainline and 1,840 metres of sidings, of which 460 metres is within secure lockup.

There are 104 points and diamond crossings (including spares), 3 stations, 6 level crossings, 2 tunnels, 3 bridges, 9 signal gantries and an 18-foot turntable.

The operations of the Railway were closed due to the COVID 19 Level 3 restrictions and the State of Emergency as declared by the Victorian Government on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020. This resulted in the inability to view and study the Railway in full operation. The restrictions have also constrained the ability to visit the site and gain a visual understanding of the landscape and proposed extension alignments.

## **Operations**

The Railway operates a public passenger service every Sunday between 11am – 5pm and most public holidays and school holiday Wednesdays between 1pm – 4pm.

This equates to approximately 70 days per year. The Railway can run up to 12 trains on a busy public run day.

The journey covers a distance of 1.3 to 2 km depending on the route designated on the day of travel and takes between 12 – 15 minutes through the park. The maximum running speed is 15 km/h with some sections of track reduced to 8 km/h. One section through Barling Tunnel has a restriction of 5 km/h.

Wednesdays are nominated as maintenance days and there are also working bees and behind the scenes tasks which are allocated to individuals or teams.

Special trains for exclusive use of groups may be hired on Sundays from 11am. They operate from Meadmore Junction Station for a minimum period of one hour and Pine Creek Station for a minimum period of half an hour. Trains may also be hired from the main Diamond Valley Station for a minimum of half an hour.

Trains will carry approx. 30 – 35 people per trip and each hour of train time will provide four trips. Also offered are VIP train transport (Santa or other special guest) to bookings at the Jack Tatum reserve/Pine Creek at no extra cost if required.

## **Event Days**

The Railway holds three main event run days throughout the year for both Members, Miniature Railway Enthusiasts and the General Public to experience the operation of the Railway in a variety of ways.

**The March Labour Day Community 12 Hour Run** sees the Railway operate between 11am and 11pm with all proceeds going to selected charitable and local service groups. The Wattle Glen CFA also use this day as a fund raising effort for the fire brigade as well. It also provides the various brass bands an opportunity to display their skills. The evening running is a chance to see the operation at night over the 2km track controlled by a kaleidoscope of coloured signal lights.

**The June Queens Birthday Weekend Teddy Bear Picnic and Steam Gala** allows children up to the age of 17 years ride the trains, accompanied by an adult, free of charge if they bring a Teddy Bear.

**The Annual Birthday Corroboree** is celebrated on the fourth weekend of October, when the Railway has its annual birthday celebration. Saturday is targeted at miniature railway enthusiasts. On Sunday, the Railway operates its normal six hours of public running.

#### **Demand and fee structure** (All quoted prices include GST)

There is a set \$3 per person per ride fee. Children under the age of two ride free. Payment methods accepted are cash and all major cards.

100% of the ticket fare goes back into maintaining the railway and upgrading facilities as well as a contribution to local charities.

There are no pre or online bookings for single tickets. All tickets must be purchased from the Ticket Office on the day of visitation. However, if a visitor does not use all purchased tickets on the day of purchase, they can used on any other running day.

Special trains can be hired from the Jack Tatum Memorial Picnic Site, Pine Creek Station and Diamond Valley Station.

The Jack Tatum Memorial Picnic site is located within the area controlled by the Railway and is available for public bookings on Sundays only at a cost of \$150 (includes a refundable bond of \$50) with the train cost of \$300 per hour with a minimum of one hour.

At the two other sites there is a minimum of one-half hour required at a cost of \$150. Extra half hour blocks may be booked at a cost of \$150 for each extra half hour.

In the financial year 18/19 revenue from tickets sales, merchandise, events, donations and membership totalled \$401,190 exclusive of GST.

Expenses (\$167,352, Donations (\$20,000)) and Depreciation (\$143,709) totalled \$331,358 leaving a surplus of \$69,832.

#### **Visitation**

Passenger numbers derived from tickets sold and bookings for exclusive hire for financial year ending 2019 totalled 151,779. This included 27,111 for exclusive hire experiences. Children under 2 travel free and are not included in the tickets sold element of the total.

Passenger numbers for the previous five years and top three operational months in descending order are as follows:

2015 141,320 (March, January, June)

2016	150,573	(January, March, April)
2017	141,416	(January, April, June)
2018	155,393	(April, October, June)
2019	151,779	(January, June, October)

Up to the end of January 2020 the ticket sales equalled 64,316 which is a 14% reduction from same time last year.

## Membership

Membership of the Club is available to anyone 15 years or older.

People over the age of 18 years are required to complete an application for **Associate Membership**. People under the age of 18 years are required to complete an application for **Junior Associate** membership.

On completion of the Application form and payment of the fee, individuals become a **Provisional Member** and following a maximum period of three months the application is reviewed in order to be accepted into the Club as an **Associate Member**.

After a period of six months membership, an Associate Member may apply for **Full Membership**.

Full membership requires attending and assisting the railway one day per month and Associate membership requires less.

Membership costs are \$20 per annum, except where a full member is active at the railway for at least 5 hours two days per month, their annual membership fee is discounted to \$10 per annum.

Members are situated all around Australia, and obviously attend all that often. Two live in the UK.

As at 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 there are 180 Members. The following is a breakdown of membership type.

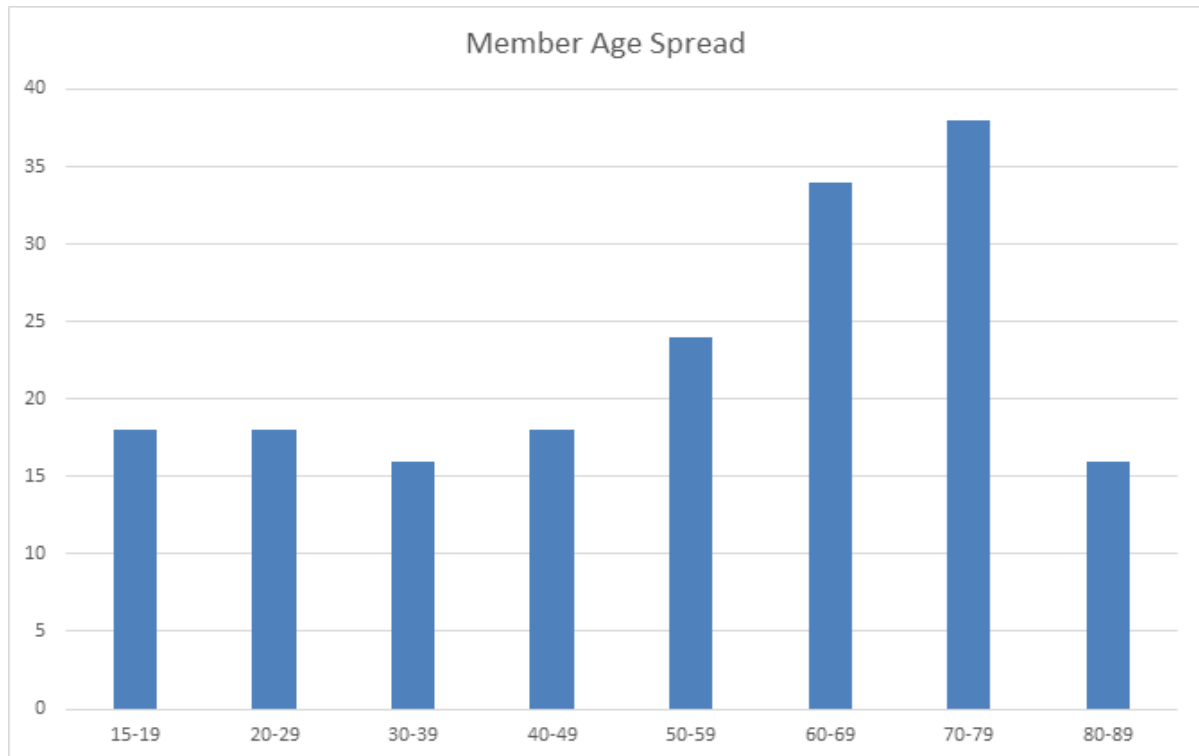
- 92 x Full
- 7 x Honorary Life
- 55 x Associate
- 8 x Junior Associate
- 2 x Honorary
- 5 x Supporter
- 12 Provisional

There are a variety of roles that volunteers undertake including:

- Customer Service - Station Assistants, Ticket Sellers, Booking Officer, Special Train Operations
- Railway Operations - Guard, Driver and Signaller
- Administration - including legal and project planning
- Mechanical - Fitter & Turner, General Locomotive & Carriage Maintenance
- Electrical and Plumbing
- Public Relations

- History and Archives
- Gardening and Landscaping

The age of members ranges from 15 – 89 years old with the majority sitting in the 50 plus bracket.



Analysis of the **current miniature railway operations** to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.

<b>STRENGTHS</b>	
<b>Visitation</b>	<p>The railway carries approx. 150,00 passengers per year and has achieved year-on-year 4% growth rate over the last 20 year with a total of over 4,230,000 passengers since inception. This is a strong visitation number for an attraction that only operates approximately 70 days a year and would be the envy of many other experiences chasing similar numbers if extrapolated. Given its historical operation and popularity there is high awareness and support from the community. Operating primarily on a Sunday, school and public holidays ensures the attraction does not have to compete with local sporting commitments. The February 2020 newsletter noted that the progressive monthly tally, to the end of January, had been tracking 14% lower than same time last year. This may be the result of lost operating days due to an increase in adverse weather conditions.</p>
<b>Unique Selling Proposition</b>	<p>The Railway is the top ranked 7 ¼” miniature railway in the southern hemisphere and is now identified as one of the World’s top five miniature railways. There is no significant competition as an attraction in the Shire. The Railway was recognised as the most popular paid attraction, by visitation, in the draft Nillumbik Destination Management Plan (p61). The report states that 55% of visitors to the area attended the railway. Montsalvat was next with 31% and the St Andrews Market 22%.</p> <p>The Railway is very popular with families and the price point makes it a cost-effective excursion. The location of the railway, next to the accessible playground, reinforces the attractiveness of the precinct to family groups, as does the availability of parking and toilet facilities. Whilst there are other similar experiences in Melbourne and other Victoria locations, there are none within this growth corridor nor with this level of infrastructure, reputation or networked members.</p>
<b>Knowledge, skills and devotion of the volunteers</b>	<p>The members of the Railway are a professional and skilled volunteer workforce who bring a variety of existing qualifications and/or previous workplace experience into the organisation. This allows for a high standard of planning, maintenance and operations. The commitment to the Railway operations is enshrined in the membership conditions and allocation of responsibilities and duties. As well as official office bearers there is a strong workforce structure and ethos of subcommittees, management departments, working and project groups with Individuals holding titles and qualifications. The members, as well as running and maintaining the operations of the Railway, conduct an active social calendar and have strong relationships with other like clubs and organisations. A Member survey undertaken in 2019 received nearly 100 responses from the then 160 members. The majority response indicated support for the Railways direction, policies and practices.</p>

<b>Reputation</b>	<p>The attraction has been operating in the Elham Lower Park since 1961 and has not experienced any major incident or accident in that time. The Railway has not suffered from the institutional issues that other and/or similar volunteer organisations have and enjoys a special place in the hearts and memories of many current and previous community members.</p> <p>The Railway won the Nillumbik Shire Councils Community Group of the Year Australia Day Award in 2017. The Railway enjoys excellent collegial relationships with similar organisations in the historical and miniature railway sector, assisting external fund-raising days, representing the organisation at exhibitions and special days and conducting member excursions.</p>
<b>Strong governance, operations and training regime</b>	<p>The Railway have a strong tradition of members undertaking volunteering activities and tasks. It is a requirement of membership to contribute manually to the operations and maintenance of the Railway. The association enjoys strong and stable leadership. There is a broad range of duties that members can nominate as their area of participation. Training manuals, testing, instructions and mentoring are a feature of the Railway engaging with their members to undertake their duties.</p> <p>There is a high level of focus on safety, regulations and meeting operation standards following strict rules and guidelines. There is ongoing work and commitment relating to ensuring the Railway complies with the Child Safety Standards.</p>
<b>Significant capital infrastructure and rolling stock</b>	<p>The Railway hard infrastructure which includes buildings, tracks, platforms, signals, fencing and signage, is extensive within the leased footprint and is a dominant feature of the Park. The rolling stock, including the privately-owned sets, is significant, well maintained and historically relevant. The maintenance workshop contains a large amount of equipment and tools owned by the Railway. The fixed assets including buildings, structures, rolling stock, workshop and office equipment and capital works are valued at over \$3.5m (Balance sheet ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2019). It would be a major disruptive activity at considerable expense to relocate the infrastructure and operations to another location outside the park.</p>
<b>Respected community member</b>	<p>The Railway has been a consistent presence in the Park and is due to celebrate its 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday in 2021. It enjoys strong relationships with local service clubs, schools, charities, sporting teams and business groups. They contribute to the community by conducting special fund-raising operational days as well as providing a location for supplementary fund-raising activities by charities and service groups to take advantage of. The Railway gives direct financial donations to local organisations and charitable causes in reflection of the direction outlined in the current lease: “The Railway will endeavour to contribute at least 5% of passenger ticket gross value to local community organisations nominated by the Railway. The Railway will also provide additional support to local community groups where appropriate.” The Railway had identified \$20,000 for targeted donations in 2020.</p>
<b>Political support</b>	<p>The Railway has relationships with elected officials at both local, state and federal level and due to the structure, community significance and profile is a popular community organisation. Whilst the Railway has never sought grant or project funding from government programs it may be an attractive organisation to receive funding or similar contributions.</p>
<b>Young Members Network</b>	<p>The Railway has established an under 25’s member group in 2019 which is the first of its kind in the sector and seeks to address an aging volunteer demographic.</p>

<b>WEAKNESSES</b>	
<b>Capacity limitations</b>	The Railway is now so popular that large crowds attend during the Sunday running as well as on key event days including the night running. The increase in visitation is starting to detract from the visitor experience and this situation has the ability to continue to deteriorate. Not only are passenger numbers causing crowding, queue congestion and long wait times, the parking is at capacity and increased traffic movement causes safety concerns. There is evidence of visitors leaving because of the visual waiting time. Waiting times of 30 minutes are not uncommon and queues can be more than 200 metres in length. The configuration of track the type of stock and availability volunteers place a constraining cap on available seating capacity and through put.
<b>Volunteer workforce sustainability</b>	Eventually, the volunteer workforce will not be sufficient in itself to handle the numbers, operations and maintenance regime. As the volunteer profile continues to age, the Railway will face the challenge of how to attract and hold younger generations. The formal structured volunteer commitment obligation does not reflect a contemporary model of volunteer needs. The regular requirement to commit set time may be seen as onerous to a younger volunteer workforce. Given that there is a significant labour resource required to operate, even minimal running days, a reduction and/or uncommitted workforce would present a challenge. The Railway can only run with the volunteer workforce onsite and with the minimal amount of required safety and operational positions filled. There are roles and duties that are mandatory to have onsite for the Railway to operate. This creates a tension point regarding retaining and attracting new members willing to be trained and available on a regular roster.
<b>Limited running days</b>	The train runs approximately 70 days a year which includes Sundays, public holidays, event days and private bookings. It has been indicated that any extension of operating days would be untenable to the volunteer workforce which is already under some pressure. It would also cause issues around the carrying capacity of the site with other tenants being active, especially Saturday.
<b>A Shared Vision and Future Directions</b>	The Diamond Valley Railway Inc is a professionally run volunteer not-for-profit association, but it would benefit from documenting a shared vision with its key stakeholders and the community to solidify and quantify the support the Railway enjoys in a tangible document. This Vision would capture the sound work that is evident in the governance, training and structures of operation. The lack of forward strategic 10-year Plan means that it is unclear what the future holds for the Railway, regardless of any extension or further investment. There is no infrastructure asset condition and renewal plan to inform forward budgeting requirements.
<b>Commercial Structure</b>	The pricing model and commercial structure for events and private bookings is not based on a return on investment, budgeted target or cost neutral formula. The fee has not increased for a significant period of time and there has been no testing of any price elasticity with the market. Most fees are paid in cash which adds to the handling, reconciliation and security risks. Recently the Railway has installed infrastructure which allow fares and fees to be paid electronically. Around 50% of transactions are now paid for by Card.
<b>Accessibility</b>	Whilst the current on-track experience may be able to cater for visitors that are disabled or have limited mobility some of the supporting infrastructure and facilities are not of a contemporary design to enable an access-for-all experience.



<b>THREATS</b>	
<b>Community Support</b>	Whilst the Railway enjoys good community support there is feedback that there are also external groups and individuals who are not fully supportive of the Railway, its location and its operations. This is seemingly based on either a historical factor or an adverse position regarding the Railway being located in a public park and perceived environmental impacts. The 2008 Master Plan for Lower Eltham Park was developed with community consultation and approved by Council. The Master Plan does not support any further development for recreation other than passive activity and raised the conservation emphasis for the park.
<b>Government policies, legislation and regulation</b>	It is excessively difficult to move through the changing landscape regarding what is regarded as appropriate use of public land, especially under Council Committee of Management delegations from DELPW. The increased legislative, regulatory and legal requirements of running the Railway and the Association place a significant burden on a volunteer organisation. The area is part of the “green wedge” restrictions and is often regarded as a ‘green’ council. It is often hard to position for advocacy of the Railway in a changing political environment where competing and often contradictory community and stakeholder demands exist. The Railway is working through its obligations from the Commission for Children regarding the Child Safety Standards and Young People Act 2012 and this has required considerable work in amending the Rules and By-Laws and it is noted that following a visit by Investigators there is still work to be undertaken and a strong commitment by the Railway to become compliant.
<b>Competition for market</b>	The growth corridor and changing demographic of the catchment area will ensure that a low costs family-based activity will remain popular, but there is increasing competition for any discretionary income expenditure. Increasing streaming and gaming entertainment options, an emphasis on sports and recreational activities and shopping centre arcades and contemporary child play attractions are all competing for the young family and school excursion markets. Outdoor attractions that rely on good weather conditions and volunteers to operate will increasingly struggle.
<b>Competitive public land use</b>	The Eltham Lower Park is home to tenants other than the Railway, including the Eltham Panthers Lacrosse Club, the Lower Eltham Cricket Club, Natalie’s Pony Rides and the Eltham Horse and Pony Club. The park is popular with dog walkers and cyclists. The Park is also supported by Friends of the Eltham Lower Park and Friends of Diamond Creek. All park user groups are fully active in the space and when multiple user groups are in operation the park is at capacity levels regarding visitor space, parking and facilities. Cars are often parked on the main road, on the roundabout and other dangerous areas. The main parking area in Main Road may also significantly impacted when the intersection works at Fitzsimmons Lane are implemented
<b>Environmental concerns</b>	Climate change impacts will see increasing temperatures over a longer period of time which could result in less viable running days for the Railway. More significant weather events are also on the increase and the natural setting of the Railway means that it is exposed to storm and wind conditions that will impact on the experience, the visitation numbers and the ability to operate.

<b>OPPORTUNITIES</b>	
<b>Demand pressure</b>	The Railway demand creates an opportunity for increasing the profile and significance of the park itself. The visitation numbers can create a need to upgrade facilities and this in turn can make the park an attractive proposition for more commercial and community activities. Increasing the length of stay and dispersal of visitors into other areas of the park can be seen as a positive direction especially for activating low use areas of the park. This can ensure the park remains a valuable asset to the community.
<b>Partnerships</b>	The Railway has several established partnerships with service groups, TAFEs, school groups, charities and community organisations. It is to be commended on the commitment and relationships that currently exist. These create strong advocacy and relevance into the community. Further opportunities to collaborate with more commercially focussed partners and NGO's might be advantageous. Partnering and sharing facilities could be investigated. Demonstrating maximum use of public and shared facilities provides a strong platform for the Railway to garner support for further investment.
<b>Refresh and Expansion</b>	Refreshing and contemporizing is a natural cycle that tourist attractions or assets go through to ensure they remain a viable top-of-mind choice for visitors. Whilst the expansion aspirations the Railway holds are addressed in the following SWOT, it should be noted that there is also an opportunity for the Railway to plan to improve and refresh its current offering. This planning would provide an opportunity to seek Government grant funding thru a variety of programs and streams. The funding could be targeted at works that would improve the visitor experience, broaden and attract new markets and increase workplace safety. This could include areas outside of the lease footprint with council and co-tenant approvals.
<b>Increase the throughput of passengers</b>	Seeking to Improve the visitor flow, including access and egress to the experience, can ensure the maximum visitor numbers enjoy the attraction. Reduction in waiting times, dispersal of crowds and complimentary facilities and activities can improve the experience during peak times.
<b>Create future investment portfolio</b>	Creating a detailed plan and business case that identifies future investment opportunities for current and any expanded offering becomes a 'script' that can be used with confidence by the Railway and other advocacy groups into all level of Government. Grant opportunities don't have to be solely for hard infrastructure but may include soft assets and social and educational programs. The ability for the Railway to become a credible and reliable grant recipient would be advantageous for its future aspirations.
<b>Operating Models</b>	A review and analysis of the current operating model could explore how the Railway may be open to increase and/or strengthen its operating days. The analysis could investigate the viability of paid staff, contracting and/or subcontracting activities, commercializing operations and increased hiring for exclusive use. These would need to be investigated in line with the current lease conditions. The lease conditions state that the land and facilities are available for casual hire where this does not interfere with the primary purpose of the facility or adversely affects the amenity of nearby neighbours. Fees from casual hire can be retained by the Railway. But currently the Railway cannot, without the prior written consent of the Landlord and the Minister,

	<p>assign, transfer, sub-let, grant any licence, charge or part with or share the possession of or otherwise deal with or dispose of the estate or interest in the Land or any part of the Land or the Premises. This may be a barrier to more flexible, innovative and commercial opportunities and would require extensive discussions with Council and possible amendment of the current lease.</p>
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Analysis of the **proposed Diamond Valley Railway operations** to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.

### **Current situation**

The Railway ceased operations on the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 due to the restrictions regarding COVID 19 and the declaration of the State of Emergency by the Victorian Government. Viewing of the experience in full operation on a fun run day has not been possible.

These restrictions have also limited the ability to visit the Park and proposed extension areas with representatives to gain a full understanding of what the Railway is proposing within the landscape and in absence of a full detailed plan and/or map.

The idea of an additional railway circuit was made public in 2014 and since then the Railway has discussed the concept widely with council staff, councillors and the community.

The project does not have a comprehensively scoped proposal outlining the full alignment and experience, benefits and return on investment and there has been no business case development or formal engagement undertaken to date with fellow park tenants and user groups.

The features and contour map provided is the key display tool (Attachment) and shows an indicative route including placement of tunnels and bridges and a proposed location of the significant new Main Station. It was prepared by Nacha Moore Land Surveys.

There is limited information and detail outlining what is actually being proposed by the Railway and the description below has been garnered from numerous sources including correspondence, submissions and conversations.

### **Experience Description**

The current capacity situation has seen waiting times of 30 minutes and queues can be more than 200 metres in length.

There are no further options available to increase the amount of trains onto the current circuit, and there are no modifications that can be made that will alleviate the problem.

The proposal is to extend the Railway lease footprint and build an additional railway circuit of approximately 2kms, *The Yarra Landing*, in the southern part of Eltham Lower Park.

The total easement width required for the track is four metres and some areas would be required to be fenced. Fences would also be required at crossings points and be in a variety of styles.

The current circuit is two concentric circles, one within the other. The new track would create a more linear journey shape, possibly a figure 8 depending on final design and alignment. There is a map available that demonstrates the full current track journey. There is a map that sets out the rough position of the track in the southern reaches of the Park for the proposed track journey.

The Railway believes that by expanding into the southern half of the park, more visitors will be able to be serviced by the Railway and the experience will be improved by accessing an area of park that could include the existing wetlands, new park sculptures and improved park vegetation.

The proposed route would encroach on the current lease held by the Eltham and District Horse and Pony Club. The new Main Station would be located on their eastern boundary.

The route would run alongside the wetland area and the Railway does not believe it would require removal of significant trees and foliage and would continue to work to improve the park with vegetation renewal and plantings.

The Railway also believes that the new section would not create an increase in noise to neighbouring houses.

The proposed new Main Station would be a major piece of infrastructure, significantly larger than the current station.

It is proposed that the new Main Station would provide a more efficient passenger entry to and exit from the trains.

Whilst no details or plans have been provided, it is proposed that the new station could include:

- Improved all-weather protection for sizeable crowds whilst they are waiting to embark and disembark.
- Accessible toilets within, or adjacent to, the station, secured at night.
- Refreshment provision, either on the platform or nearby aimed at being affordable and family friendly. Provision of fresh water. Possibly a coffee shop serving light meals.
- Well-lit platforms and surrounds.
- A Museum area for the display of various Railway artefacts.
- Full disability access to and from the platforms and toilets.

It is proposed that the clubrooms, storage and maintenance workshops remain in their current location and the new circuit is linked to the current circuit.

Other infrastructure proposed include a bridge spanning a gully on the south east corner of the current Horse and Pony Club lease and two tunnels.

The Bridge would be modelled on the Eltham Trestle Bridge and be a significant element.

One tunnel will go under the extension to Homestead Road and the other will provide a steady ascent and descent on the side of a bank close to the old Lenister Farm Homestead.

An approximation of costing of the construction elements including Main Station, 2km main track with ancillary sidings, bridges and tunnels, earthworks, materials, signals and rolling stock has an estimated cost of \$2,440,000.00.

The Railway believes it is well capable of organising and managing the extension project and they indicate they have been promised government support for such a project. Future work is required.

The Railway is proposing that the labour and expertise of the volunteer membership, together with resources provided by local training institutions and community groups, could contribute to labour savings.

Once built the Railway takes on the responsibility of maintaining the asset and a new lease would be required to be drawn up.

The Railway conducted a 'pen and paper' petition and collected nearly 1,500 signatures supporting the statement:

*"We, the undersigned petition Council to support the sensitive building of a second miniature railway circuit in the southern half of the Eltham Lower Park by the Diamond Valley Railway Inc. The proposed new railway is consistent with the Public Recreation use of the park as decreed by Parliament in the 1960's.*

*The Railway has a national and international reputation and is much loved in the local community. It carries around 150,000 passengers per year and is the Shire's most popular tourist destination. Its popularity has seen a 7% growth of passengers this past year and action is needed to increase capacity. Please support the development of the additional railway circuit in the Eltham Lower Park so that it may better cater for the recreational needs of the Nillumbik families and the people of Victoria."*

<b>Issues</b>	
<b>Environmental and planning regulations</b>	<p>There are considerable mandatory planning and regulatory processes that would be required to be undertaken for the development of private infrastructure on Crown Land. Considerations around parking and visitor flow, flood mitigation, cultural heritage and biodiversity values impacts, vegetation removal and offsets, impacts on fauna including protected species, pollution increases including noise and rubbish, the impacts on Yarra River environs, fire risk and emergency risks. The Shire, in their initial request for advice to DELPW and Melbourne Water outlined the information they believed would be required to accompany a Planning Permit application that would assist to determine the appropriateness of the project. The DELWP response (31/3/2020) provides clarity on their concerns and position regarding what would be required for support. This area provides the most significant challenge to the progression of any extension. Regulatory approvals are mandatory for the required Planning Permit and refusal would be a significant and expensive barrier to overcome.</p> <p>See Attachment A Summarisation of Planning Advice</p>
<b>Lack of formed proposal document</b>	<p>The lack of a more fully developed proposal, including mapping and draft designs, impinges on the clarity around alignments, footprints, mitigation works and impact measures. If the proposal is to progress further for consideration a more detailed version of a plan may be required. This would assist in formalising the project details and provide a clearer view of what the vision the Railway aspires to. The plan should go somewhat to responding to the on-ground issues that have already been identified and recognise those elements that will halt the extension, be non-negotiable and/or able to be resolved.</p>
<b>Eltham Lower Park Master Plan</b>	<p>The Eltham Lower Park Master Plan 2008 has been adopted by Council and clearly states under Principle 2:  <i>There should be no further development within the park apart from renewal of existing developed areas. Any such renewal should be tightly controlled and should have regard to the high conversation values of the park.</i></p> <p>The Railway has provided a written submission to the Master Plan review proposing several experiences as well as the miniature railway extension. DELWP states in their letter of advice (31/3/2020) that they consider this principle in line with the intent of the planning overlay under Clause 42.01 and would not support any changes to the Master Plan that allows development that conflicts with the overlays.</p> <p>DELWP also state that they would not support any development that would have significant adverse effects on values. Amending the Master Plan is a significant challenge and may require a broad consultation process and should be considered in relation to other elements of the Master Plan that are being reviewed.</p>
<b>Project costing and Return on Investment</b>	<p>The indicative budget costing proposed by the Railway of \$2.4m in their submission does not take into account the pre-planning monies that will be required to undertake the various audit and investigative requirements to support a Planning Permit application. These pieces of work can be at a significant cost and often underestimated.</p> <p>There is no indication of whether there would be any change to the pricing structures, the volunteer operational management or any potential commercial partnerships other than a potential café outlet.</p>

	<p>The increased visitation target of 4% per annum is not tested and it would be a fair assumption that any increase in admission fees linked to increase in capacity would be offset by increased maintenance of a larger footprint and more infrastructure assets. The costs of the extension may have to be regarded as <i>sunken costs</i>, balanced against the perceived benefits to the region's visitor economy and the community. This is untested. There is no data regarding passenger behaviour and spend in the local business community linked to a visit to the attraction.</p>
<b>Community support</b>	<p>During the public consultation phase of the Draft Nillumbik Destination Plan the initial wording of Action 21.1 proposed a review of the ELMP <i>"to accommodate an expansion of the (Diamond Valley) railway and improve the reserve...."</i></p> <p>There were significant objections received to that draft Action including a 180-signature petition. The final Draft version of the Destination Plan contained amended wording to read: <i>"Work with the Committee of the Diamond Valley Railway and other stakeholders to investigate opportunities to ensure it remains a premium tourism attraction in line with the principles of the adopted 2008 Eltham Lower Park Master Plan."</i></p> <p>Objections were raised in the areas of increased parking and visitor safety issues, impacts on the amenity of the park, environmental, flora and fauna impacts, scale of extension and infrastructure proposed, conflicting user groups, appropriateness of activity, lack of evidence on value and direct conflict with the 2008 ELPMP.</p>
<b>Future Vision</b>	<p>The Diamond Valley Railway Inc does not currently have a Future Vision and/or a 5-10-year plan that would create confidence in the sustainability of the organisation.</p> <p>A comprehensive and independent plan, one that is not reliant on the extension, but demonstrates how the Railway is working towards ensuring the future of the organisation and the attraction would be an asset.</p> <p>This Vision would showcase the historical and community relevance, solidify support and create advocacy.</p> <p>The lack of a comprehensive document that can be used to tell the past, current and future story of the Railway is a gap. This type of document is regarded as a foundational piece required for similar organisations and to support future funding projects.</p>
<b>Reliance on Volunteers</b>	<p>The complete workforce is made up of volunteers. The aging demographic challenge is one that is being faced by many such similar organisations and committees.</p> <p>The nature of volunteering is changing and the ability to attract and hold new volunteers is complex and requires flexibility, innovation and a dedicated strategy.</p> <p>Complete reliance on a volunteer workforce to run such an attraction, especially if the extension vision is fulfilled, may be unrealistic and presents a significant risk. The Railway has subcontracted out specialist work in the past and continues to do so today. The ability of the Railway to continue to operate as it does today into the future will need careful consideration if the extension plans move forward.</p>



**Existing tenants and user groups**

The ideal extension alignment being proposed would require the removal of an existing long-term tenant – the Eltham and District Horse and Pony Club. There is no solution provided by the Railway nor any indication of relocation aspirations that might be held by the existing tenant.

Several objections to the Draft Destination Plan raised the user conflict of co-habitation of the railway operations and horses. Other tenants and user groups may hold concerns regarding the impact on their activities by the extension, increased footprint, restricted access, visitors and traffic.

<b>Opportunities</b>	
<b>Contemporizing of experience</b>	<p>The proposed extension, if progressed to finalisation, provides the Railway, its structure and the experience, the opportunity to go on a journey to become a more sustainable and contemporary attraction.</p> <p>If implemented sympathetically and with careful consideration, it would create a showpiece for a sustainable park-based heritage attraction that contributes in a transparent fashion to the community, as well as the visitor economy.</p> <p>It would allow technology to become integrated in the visitor services and improved accessibility will reflect the values of today's visitor's needs.</p> <p>The project would also drive changes to the operations that will seek to ensure the future of both the organisation and the attraction.</p> <p>A more contemporary offering will attract more support, more volunteers and professionals and lift the perceived value to local and wider community.</p>
<b>Commercial supporting activities and facilities</b>	<p>The ability for some or all of the operations, maintenance and supporting services to be outsourced and/or subcontracted would be an opportunity to lessen the reliance and burden on the volunteers and create commercial opportunities that would grow the local visitor economy. Subcontracting or leasing is currently not permitted under the current Lease.</p>
<b>Re-purpose under-utilized areas of the park</b>	<p>The information regarding the extension talks about accessing and activating an under-utilised area of the park.</p> <p>It is proposed that the new corridor of the track would be able to be used for interpretation of park values and the wetlands, sculpture displays and picnic/visitor facilities.</p> <p>The toilet and parking facilities surrounding the new Main Station and Yarra Landing might also be seen to create new visitation patterns and user groups outside of the current pool.</p>
<b>Solve current and future capacity issues</b>	<p>The Railway is extrapolating that an increase of 4.16% per annum will see the visitation grow from approximately 152,000 to 228,000 in 2030.</p> <p>This is not sustainable with the current offering.</p> <p>The proposal that is being put forward proports to plan for the future capacity requirements and not just as a solution to the current issues being experienced.</p>
<b>Increase revenue and fundraising opportunities</b>	<p>Increased patronage provides an opportunity for increasing the fundraising targets that the Railway sets.</p> <p>Whilst not evident there could be increased allocation of group exclusive areas to increase that revenue stream.</p> <p>A more flexible operations model might also provide more opportunities for increased operational days and times.</p> <p>An extended ride and modern facilities provide sound justification for increasing ticket prices to a more sustainable level.</p>
<b>Provide employment and training opportunities</b>	<p>The extension provides an opportunity for employment and training, both during the construction phase and in its future operations.</p>

	<p>It provides a real-life opportunity for gaining valuable skills and workplace practices in engineering, planning, customer service, horticulture and marketing.</p> <p>There are many employment and social programs that could become part of the delivery and maintenance of the attractions.</p> <p>Some of those relationships already exist.</p>
<p><b>Drive more visitation to the shire – create a destination experience</b></p>	<p>The significance of the extension and the implementation process could result in the creation a flagship attraction for the region.</p> <p>This could create an opportunity to drive increased new and repeat visitation to the shire and potentially local businesses.</p> <p>The opportunity for the new attraction to be seen as a must do family experience will be a drawcard for new consumers and new markets.</p> <p>A more flexible operational model that might seek to increase available times and dates will also open up new markets.</p>
<p><b>Alternative routes and relocation to new premises</b></p>	<p>The current challenges and the proposed extension proposal provide a window of opportunity to discuss alternative alignments, as well as considering the option of full relocation.</p> <p>Both of these options were raised in submissions to the Draft Nillumbik Destination Plan.</p> <p>Extension of the track outside the park boundaries along an alternative route was proposed as was relocation to another site within the shire.</p> <p>Relocation was also raised in the Railway’s submission to the ELPMP Review but not considered a desired course of action.</p> <p>Whilst relocation would be an expensive exercise and complex option there may be some advantages in securing new site and purpose-built facilities with less constraints that exist on Crown Land.</p>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Following a review of current operations, organisational structure, documentation, and noting the absence of a detailed concept plan for the proposed miniature railway extension, it is recommended that the Diamond Valley Railway Inc. consider the proposed Pathways flowchart in determining next steps.

The Pathways flowchart identifies actions for the Diamond Valley Railway Inc to consider that are independent of actions required to test the extension concept.

This Pathway is identified **blue** in the flowchart.

It is recommended that this Pathway be progressed in an effort to architect a sustainable future for both the Diamond Valley Railway Inc and the miniature railway operations.

This **Future Vision and five-year Action Plan** would seek to identify future investment opportunities within the current lease footprint that enhance the experience, improve visitor safety, secure a workforce solution and champion the volunteer efforts.

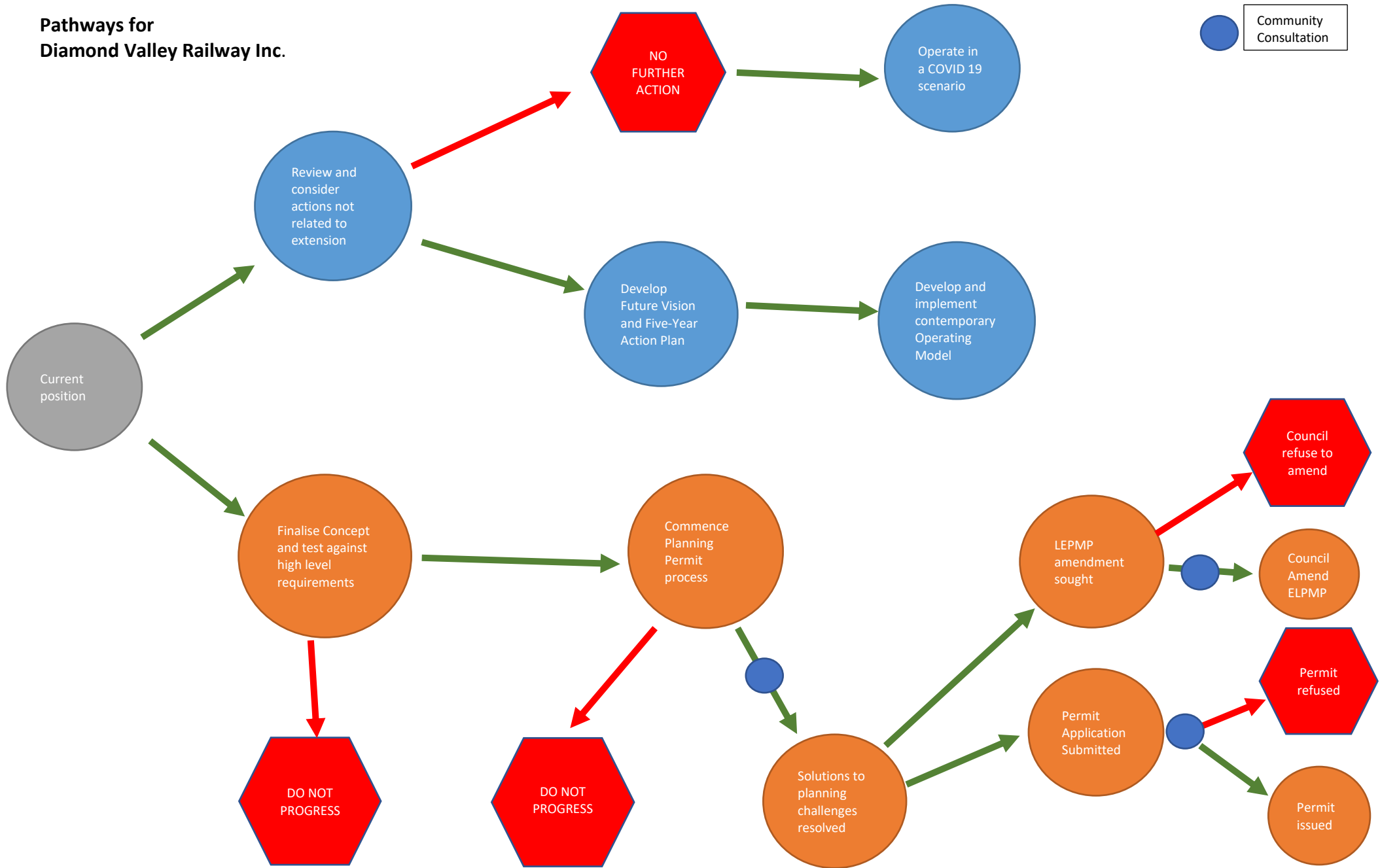
The Pathway identified in **orange** sets out a process for confirming and testing the concept of the extension within the Planning Permit requirements as identified in Appendix A.

It should be acknowledged that both pathways require investment by Diamond Valley Railway Inc and should be considered within the budgetary process.

Opportunities for Grant funding to progress may be an opportunity.

**Pathways for  
Diamond Valley Railway Inc.**

Community Consultation



## **Appendix A**

### **Summarisation of initial Planning Advice**

Preliminary advice has been sought from Nillumbik Shire Council Planning Department, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Melbourne Water.

The following is a summary of the considerations and plans required to support a Pre-Planning Permit application and a Land Owner Consent (LOC), together with any amendment to the 2008 Eltham Lower Park Masterplan.

This is an initial high-level requirement list based on preliminary advice received and is not to be considered the final or only requirements.

#### **Considerations against:**

Nillumbik Planning Scheme Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 1 (ESO1) and Overlay Schedule (ESO4)  
Land Subject to Inundation Overlay (LSIO)  
Special Building Overlay (SBO)  
Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)  
Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation  
Clause 42.01s1 of the Victorian Planning Provisions  
Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO)  
Bushfire Attack Level (BAL) vegetation management standards  
Yarra Strategic Plan (Draft)  
Healthy Waterways Strategy  
Neroc Report

#### **Documents required**

Integrated management plan that would include:

- Feature site and survey plan showing levels of Australian Height Datum
- Cultural Heritage Management Plan
- Existing site conditions plan
- Proposed site conditions plan showing all proposed works including earthworks, tracks and fencing
- Earthworks plan showing the location and extent of any required cut and fill
- Details of design, height and location of any proposed fencing
- Arborist report assessing all trees located within proximity of works
- Tree removal and retention plan
- A response to Clause 52.17 Native Vegetation including BIOR report
- Response to Bushfire Risk against Clause 44.06 BMO and Clause 31.02 Bushfire
- Biodiversity Assessment – considering Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedules 1 and 4)
- Details of any proposed amenities
- Details of any proposed car parking and/or Car Parking Assessment prepared in accordance with Clause 52.6 to justify the level of car parking
- Community and stakeholder engagement plan
- A planning report



# MINATURE RAILWAY EXPANSION REVIEW

June  
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## Background

The Diamond Valley Railway (DVR) has advised Council of a number of new uses and development within Eltham Lower Park. Of these, one is a significant expansion of the existing miniature railway facility. Principally, the proposed expansion of the railway extends the facility much further into the park and proposes the construction of a substantial new station facility. The proposed expansion is in proximity of the park's frontage with the Diamond Creek and Yarra River.

There are obvious constraints and values within the park and Council officers are seeking to make a preliminary assessment as to proposed extension's compatibility with these key matters and if possible, to arrive at a preliminary indication as to the feasibility of such a proposal. As part of this work, Council is sought preliminary advice on the proposed expansion from relevant public authorities, including, but not necessarily limited to, Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Melbourne Water, Cultural Heritage Consultancy and the Shire's Planning team. The intention of conducting this initial assessment is to provide our Council and the DVR with early, realistic expectations regarding the proposal's plausibility and the scope of requirements of a formal statutory planning permit assessment process.

The purpose of this review is to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the expansion of the DVR and establish the next steps required.

## Advice Sought

Council requested preliminary, high level, DELWP, Melbourne Water, Cultural Heritage Consultancy and the Shire's Planning team on the following:

### DELWP

- 1) What are the initial views of DELWP, as the Crown land owner, in terms of entertaining or allowing the proposed expansion on Crown land at Eltham Lower Park?
- 2) What are the initial views of DELWP on whether the proposal is appropriate in relation to its potential impacts on biodiversity, including in relation to impacts on the environs of the Diamond Creek and Yarra River?
- 3) Does DELWP have anything to add in relation to the potential issues and planning permit application requirements, as listed below, for such a proposal?

### Melbourne Water

- 1) What are the initial views of Melbourne Water about the suitability of the proposal in relation to the potential for flooding at the park?
- 2) What are the initial views of Melbourne Water on whether the proposal is appropriate in relation to its potential impacts on the environs of the Diamond Creek and Yarra River?
- 3) Does Melbourne Water have anything to add in relation to the potential issues and planning permit application requirements, as listed below, for such a proposal?

### Traditional Land Owners – Advice from Cultural Heritage Consultancy

- 1) An indication, if appropriate and possible, as to the anticipated cultural sensitivity of the site and proposal?
- 2) The extent of cultural heritage study required to properly assess the study in accordance with statutory obligations and the cost, time etc. in undertaking such a study?
- 3) Details (e.g. cost, structure and breadth) of any preliminary assessment that heritage insight could undertake i.e. a much reduced study to that of a CHMP which gives preliminary advice. I note we discussed such an option on the phone.

### Shires Planning Department

What information needs to be undertaken in relation to a planning application for an extension of the Diamond Valley Railway to help determine if it was appropriate to issue a favourable planning decision?

### Consultant's Report on Feasibility

To understand current miniature railway operations and what is and is not possible moving forward. This includes:

- 1) Analysis of the current miniature railway operations to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.
- 2) Analysis of proposed miniature railway operations to identify opportunities and issues to improve and maximise outcomes.

The analysis is a desktop review to understand the operations will include financials, visitor experience, visitation research, audience segments, competition, catchment, demographics, using data, reports, plans and policies relevant to project.



## Advice Received

The feedback to the proposed expansion of the Miniature Railway revealed significant requirements to be undertaken and information to be collected. The below is a summary of key points raised and the official responses are in the appendix.

### DELWP

The proposal will potentially impact on Crown land managed by DELWP, Parks Victoria and Melbourne Water. It may also have implications for the regionally significant Yarra Valley habitat corridor and the flora and fauna that depend upon it.

#### Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017)

Development specifications, biodiversity, cultural and heritage assessments and all information required in accordance with the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DELWP 2017) (the Guidelines) have not been provided.

#### Potential biodiversity impacts - Native vegetation

The native vegetation within and adjacent to the Eltham Lower Park (ELP) forms part of a regional strategic habitat corridor

The importance of the ELP in protecting and enhancing the functionality of this strategic corridor is reflected in Nillumbik Planning Scheme Environmental Significance Overlay Schedule 1 (ESO1). Any development that results in the direct or consequential loss of native vegetation will undermine the ecological functioning of this corridor.

Any direct or consequential loss of native vegetation along watercourses, including drains, creeks, rivers and wetlands within the ELP will affect upon the effectiveness of these functions.

#### Significant fauna

The ELP is considered a site of zoological significance due to the presence of significant fauna, including:

- Eltham Copper Butterfly;
- Swift Parrot;
- Powerful Owl;
- Eastern Broad-nosed bat; and
- Fresh-water Blackfish.

#### Noise, movement and lighting

Research shows that many animals of temperate environments will avoid the vicinity of human induced noise, movement and lighting when selecting feeding, roosting and nesting sites.

#### Environmental water flows

While the level of impact of this proposal is unclear, it does indicate expansion into riparian areas and closer proximity to the wetlands. Associated infrastructure (e.g. rail tracks, pathways, buildings and drainage) is likely to cause diversions of environmental flows unless suitable mitigation measures are applied.

#### Feasibility considerations / further information required

Based on the information provided to date the proposal will require discarding the following principle of the ELPM:

Principle 2: There should be no further development within the park apart from renewal of existing developed areas. Any such renewal should be tightly controlled and should have regard to the high conservation values of the park.

DELWP considers this principle to be in accordance with the intent of the planning overlays under Clause 42.01. While some development beyond what is allowed by this principle may be feasible, DELWP would not support any changes to the Eltham Lower Park Masterplan that would allow development that conflicts with the objectives of these overlays.

### Melbourne Water

The site (and beyond) is covered by an LSIO and ESO. Schedule 4 to the Environmental Significance Overlay covers the site (in part) and aims to protect waterways and associated values from the impacts of inappropriate development. Which specify that certain buildings /uses (such as railway platforms) will not be allowed.

Schedule 1 to the Environmental Significance Overlay covers the site (in part) and aims to protect and enhance sites of faunal and habitat significance, as well as regional and strategic habitat links. Some of the relevant objectives the applicant must consider:

- “The need to protect native vegetation that contributes to soil stability and water quality”
- “The effect the proposal may have on identified fauna and habitat values of the land.”
- “How the design and materials used for a building or works may affect the movement of fauna”

In summary, any proposed expansion of the Diamond Valley Railway must consider and address the risks to these objectives:

- That there is not a direct impact to the waterways, this includes having appropriate setbacks of no new permanent structures within 30m of the Diamond Creek, and no permanent structure within 50m of the Yarra River
- That development does not constrain current or future activities outlined in the Healthy Waterways Strategy such as maintaining and increasing vegetated buffers of waterways
- A Flood Response Plan is developed for the site
- That there is no increase risk to biodiversity or wildlife corridors. This includes important aquatic fauna such as Platypus and Fish. Potential impacts to nationally and state threatened species must be considered and addressed
- Shared trails are maintained and enhanced, with no major change to the amenity of the parklands
- Cut and fill calculations of any works must be undertaken to demonstrate floodplain storage is maintained
- That vegetated riparian corridors of all waterways are maintained and improved, with all development sensitive to the landscape and protecting the vistas of the waterways
- Any sites of cultural heritage are protected and that traditional owners are considered, consulted and included in the proposal
- Any stormwater generated is treated onsite
- That opportunities for community engagement and education on waterway values and management are considered and initiated

#### **Traditional Land Owners – Advice from Cultural Heritage Consultancy**

This proposal requires a mandatory CHMP as the proposed activity is considered a high impact activity and is located within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, that is near both Diamond Creek and the Yarra River.

A CHMP will require consultation with the Wurundjeri RAP group and could be a quite costly project depending on the archaeological potential of the activity area.

At this early stage of this project a consultant could produce a small cultural heritage assessment in the form of a due diligence, that can be utilised to development a site prediction model for the activity area and more fully determine what level of work and assessment would be required for a CHMP.

This assessment would include a review of environmental, geological and historical information, a review of previous archaeological research within the region and a site inspection which would more fully identify both areas of archaeological potential and areas of ground disturbance. This would also identify if there are any potential historical heritage issues. The background research conducted as part of the due diligence could then be utilised within a CHMP.

#### **Council Planning Department**

Information required for assessment:

- A feature site and survey plan showing: levels to Australian Height Datum, location of trees (with trees numbers in accordance with any arborist report) and improvements, fencing and site boundaries
- An existing site conditions plan
- A proposed site plan showing all proposed works including location of earthworks, track, fencing
- An arborist report assessing all trees located within proximity to any works (earthworks, track works, fencing etc) including a development impact statement
- Details of any proposed amenities
- Details of any proposed car parking, and/or a Car Parking Assessment prepared in accordance with Clause 52.06 to justify the proposed level of car parking

Issues to think about and address in any future planning application:

- What amenities would be required for any intensification of the use – i.e a lot more visitors to the site – Toilets, bins etc. where will these be located. DDA compliance.
- How will the proposed tunnels be affected by any flooding?
- With the visitor numbers increasing how will the fire risk be managed?
- Will the proposal require offsetting for any vegetation impacts? Can this offset be easily secured? Who will fund the offset?

## **Consultant's Report on Feasibility**

The review of current operations, organisational structure, documentation, and noting the absence of a detailed concept plan for the proposed miniature railway extension.

Future Vision and five-year Action Plan would seek to identify future investment opportunities within the current lease footprint that enhance the experience, improve visitor safety, secure a workforce solution and champion the volunteer efforts. It also includes the process for confirming and testing the concept of the extension within the Pre-Planning Permit requirements.

## **Summary**

The idea of an additional railway circuit was made public in 2014 and since then the Railway has discussed the concept widely with council staff, councillors and the community. The project does not have a comprehensively scoped proposal outlining the full alignment and experience, benefits and return on investment.

The features and contour map provided limited information and detail outlining what is actually being proposed by the DVMR. This review, feedback and consultation has provided the DVMR with a roadmap of all the requirements and actions to both maximise and enhance of its current operations and progress the consideration of expansion.

The development of a detailed business plan is required alongside the work to address the pre-planning approval requirements.

## **Recommendation**

1. Support DVR through the pre-planning approval process
2. Support DVR to develop five year business plan