

North-East

Rail Trail

C/-1983 Lilydale Road,
Lilydale, TASMANIA, 7267

November 14, 2014

NORTH EAST RAIL TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND SELF-FUNDING STRATEGY

Dear Madam/Sir

For almost a decade, many people in the North East Tasmanian community have been inquiring about the State Government's future intentions for the rail corridor, stretching 100km from Launceston through Scottsdale to Legerwood through pristine rain forest, award-winning vineyards, spectacular farmland, quaint villages, and boutique tourism and accommodation businesses.

While many people would love to see a concentration of industry in our region that underwrites the viability of freight trains, we are realists and agree with Tasrail's summation that it is very unlikely that commodities and freight will ever be transported via rail out of the North East again.

As a result, we have an incredibly lucrative opportunity to utilise this spectacular corridor for a world-class cycling and walking track to open our region to the world to explore, invest and enjoy.

To achieve this vision, we have established an Incorporated Association with a dedicated volunteer board of community and business representatives located along the trail from Launceston to Scottsdale. We have members of Rotary Clubs, a lawyer, a General Manager of a local Council, experienced business people, tourism operators, farmers, former journalists and those with prior expertise in establishing rail trails.

We have met with managers of rail trails in New Zealand and around Australia to determine the best possible construction methods, marketing opportunities, maintenance costs, self-funding models for volunteers associations, business partner programs and other opportunities to raise funds.

Our focus is to ensure once the North East Rail Trail is constructed under the auspices and professionalism of Dorset Council, our Association will manage and fund the maintenance and marketing costs of the trail. Our number one priority is to build a world-class track perfectly crowned with the best possible base and capping, and highly effective drainage to ensure our ongoing maintenance costs are kept to a minimum.

Our interstate and overseas research indicates we will need approximately \$25,000 per year to fund maintenance, including two weed-control sprays per year, correct any drainage issues that may arise, fix any potential storm damage, remove trees from the track etc. While we expect that volunteers will complete much of this work, we want to budget to cover the full \$25,000 as a worst case scenario.

We have pinpointed a number of options to generate funds to cover the expected maintenance costs to ensure we are self-reliant. Many of these have proven extremely successful on other rail trails around the world:

-Board expertise: We have formed a Board that comprises a wide degree of expertise and professionalism and all members have kindly donated their time and skills free of charge. Harry Rigney has completed all the legal work regarding incorporation. Sarah Hirst has developed the facebook site and marketing material. Tim Watson has negotiated arrangements with the State Government and Tasrail. Robin Thompson and Glenn Moore bring high levels of expertise in track construction from managing the first 28km from Scottsdale to Billycock.

-Business Partner Program: A maximum of 40 businesses can join the North East Rail Trail Business Partner program that allows each business to erect a sign designed to our specifications on the trail to direct cyclists and walkers to their business. The cost of membership is \$650 per year (plus the cost of the sign). Business Partners are also promoted with a logo on the website, on facebook, in our newsletter and at the heads of the trail. The South Australian Riesling Trail has a waiting list to join its Business Partner Program.

-Business Friend: Each Business Friend has a logo listed on a large sign at the head of the trail, as well as a name listing on our website, facebook and our newsletter. There is no limit on the number of business friends. The cost of joining as a business friend is \$150 per year.

-Individual Friend: An individual friend can join the North East Rail Trail network for a donation of \$50 per year. The Riesling Trail currently has more than 100 individual friends.

-Volunteers: A large number of community groups have already pledged their support to assist with track and corridor maintenance, such as Rotary, Lions, NRM North, Landcare, Pony Clubs, local businesses, families and individuals. Interest has also been expressed from the Green Army to assist with construction and maintenance, as well as local organisations with long-term unemployed, disadvantage or disabled students/workers.

-Donation Boxes: We will erect donation boxes at the trailheads as many trails we've visited have been overwhelmed by the level of donations from cyclists and walkers

-Sponsorship: We will be approaching key local businesses to sponsor key components of the track, giving them naming rights of particular features, such as the Jackson Motor Company Bridge at Underwood, the Trigg Boutique Accommodation Crossing at Lilydale or the Lebrina Shop Water Station, as well as key service providers to fund free of charge key

-Events: We propose to stage a number of annual events that have proven most successful in other States, such as triathlons, marathons, family days, a Ride to Rock n Roll day

with live music at a particular venue and much more. Cycling and running clubs traditionally make a donation to utilise the track for their events.

-Merchandise: We have investigated a number of merchandise options that have proven successful on other rail trails, such as passports that can be stamped at various locations along the trail, head torches for the trek through the tunnel, North East Rail Trail branded ponchos, hats, sunscreen etc, history books on the trail and tunnel, and much more

While much of the above will be implemented early in 2015, we already have a number of runs on the board. Dorset Council has agreed to pay the set up costs of our Association, including incorporation, and the establishment of a website.

We have already had a commitment from a local insurance broker who has offered to broker all our insurance policies free of charge, is actively pursuing public liability and director insurance from national firms as part of a sponsorship, provide up to \$1000 per year in cash and offer staff members' time to assist with trail maintenance.

At least five businesses have already expressed their interest in the Business Partner Program – prior to its launch.

Our professional, passionate and focused Board is 100% confident that we can generate more than sufficient funds each year to fund ongoing maintenance. We are committed to building a track on time and on budget, as well as ensuring our rail trail is regarded as one of the best in the world through the quality of the track and the add-on experiences through tourism, arts, agriculture and interactive experiences with local businesses and individuals.

I am more than happy to provide further information if required to demonstrate the proactive, connected and innovative nature of our Board Members who will take over responsibility of the North East Rail Trail from Dorset Council once the trail is constructed and manage it in a financially independent and viable manner.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'S Hirst', written in a cursive style.

Sarah Hirst

Chair, North East Rail Trail Association