

Visitor Infrastructure Investment Strategic Plan



APRIL 2018



Acknowledgement

The City of the Blue Mountains is located within the Country of the Darug and Gundungurra peoples. The Blue Mountains City Council recognises that Darug and Gundungurra Traditional Owners have a continuous and deep connection to their Country and that this is of great cultural significance to Aboriginal people, both locally and in the region.

For Darug and Gundungurra People, Ngurra (Country) takes in everything within the physical, cultural and spiritual landscape - landforms, waters, air, trees, rocks, plants, animals, foods, medicines, minerals, stories and special places. It includes cultural practice, kinship, knowledge, songs, stories and art, as well as spiritual beings, and people: past, present and future.

Blue Mountains City Council pays respect to Elders past and present while recognising the strength, capacity and resilience of past and present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Blue Mountains region.



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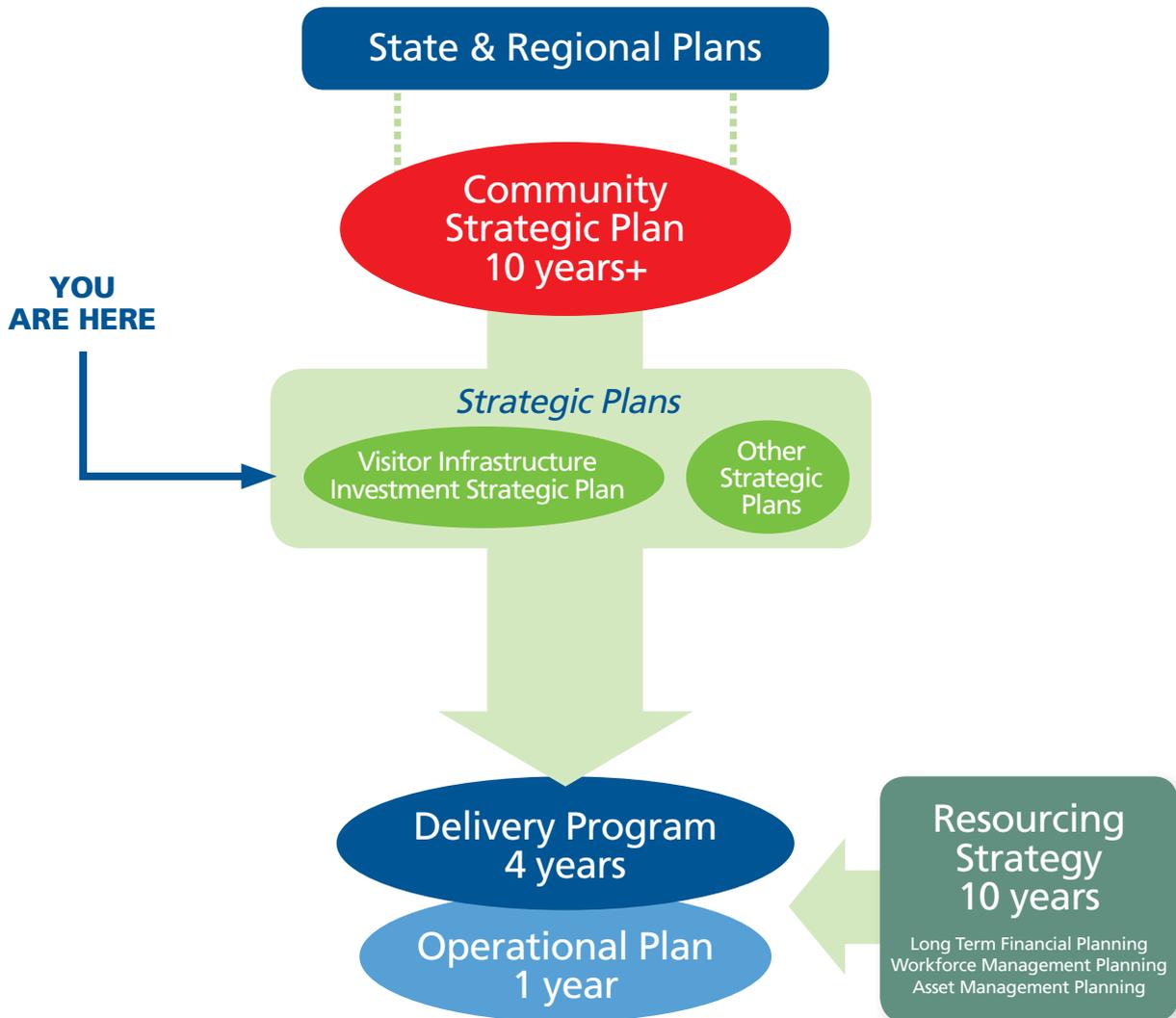
1. Introduction

1.1 Prologue

Blue Mountains City Council (Council) is currently undertaking a large-scale review of plans and strategies to inform future service planning. These plans outline **how Council will address the Community's priorities and aspirations** as identified in the Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035.

Ongoing review of policies, programs and priorities allows Council to ensure that it is prepared and resourced to meet the challenges and opportunities of a changing and contemporary City and community. It will inform Council's Delivery Program and resource allocation, now and into the future.

INTEGRATED PLANNING & REPORTING FRAMEWORK



1.2 About This Strategic Plan

The Visitor Infrastructure Investment Strategic Plan has been directly informed by the Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035, developed in consultation with the community. It has also been informed by relevant national and international best practice policy and research.

The Strategic Plan falls under Council's Key Direction of "Thrive: an economically sustainable City". It supports the objectives of sustainable tourism management as follows:

- **CSP Objective 6.4:** The Blue Mountains is a leader of sustainable tourism and destination management within a World Heritage Area
- **Strategy 6.4.a :** Ensure local infrastructure, facilities and services that support tourism visitation have required capacity to meet projected increases in tourist numbers
- **Council's Delivery Program 2017–2021 :** Implement the Blue Mountains City Council Visitor User Pays Strategy (renamed Visitor Infrastructure Investment Strategic Plan) and manage increasing visitor numbers at major tourism destinations

This Strategic Plan also supports Council's four year strategic priority outcomes. In response to the Council's *Six Strategies for Financial Sustainability* and the Fit for the Future Action Plan, the Council has identified a number of key Council Commitments for the next four years. One of these is to develop a strategic approach to tourism and the visitor economy that addresses increased visitation, local community and funding options.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to identify the investment required to support visitor infrastructure, visitor services, city presentation, and to identify additional revenue streams to fund this investment.



1.4 Scope

The Strategic Plan is a high-level document that explores a range of funding options for investment in visitor infrastructure, visitor services and city presentation and proposes priority actions. It does not include detailed scoping of actions, as this would be conducted in the first phase of the Strategic Plan's implementation, for example, the development of Parking Precinct Plans to determine the number and location of parking meters.

1.5 Method

The Strategic Plan was developed as follows:

Step 1 Issue analysis

- Identification of visitor trends and impacts.
- Identification of funding gaps.
- Identification of the visitor infrastructure and city presentation projects that require investment.

Step 2 Initial research

- Identification of funding options, including visitor user pays approaches.
- Desktop research - examples of approaches from Australia and overseas.
- Development of critical success factors for revenue generation models in the Blue Mountains.
- Review of relevant state and national legislation.

Step 3 Development of models

- Detailed case study analysis of the application of models (including visitor user pays) in Australia and overseas.
- Feasibility review of the various models including legislative viability, and review by internal and external stakeholders.
- Identification and development of detailed options for each model for the Blue Mountains.
- Cost/benefit analysis of each model to illustrate expected revenue and costs (including resourcing and asset development).

Step 4 Implementation Plan

- Prioritisation of model implementation.
- Development of a detailed 1-4 year plan.
- Development of a high-level 5-10 year plan.

Step 5 Stakeholder feedback

- Public exhibition (23 October to December 2017).
- Information sessions.
- Updates to the Strategic Plan to incorporate feedback.

Council acknowledges SGS Economics and Planning and The Stafford Group for their contribution to the development of this Strategic Plan.

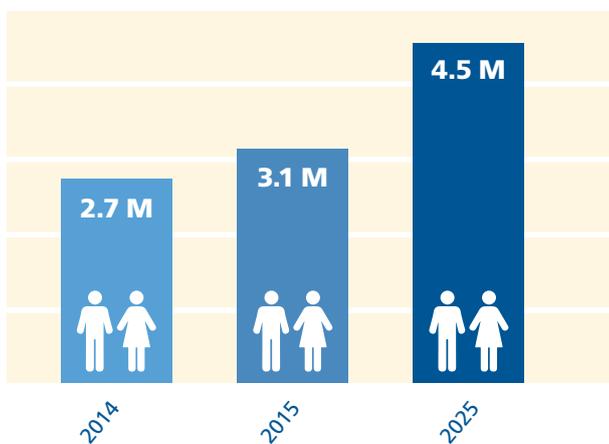
1.6 Context

Blue Mountains City Council faces the challenge of providing improved infrastructure and services for an increasing volume of visitors, while satisfying the expectations of the community and the local tourism industry.

1.6.1 Increasing Visitation

The Blue Mountains is one of NSW and Australia's premier tourist destinations. The area has seen rapid visitor growth over the last few years, as well as a diversification of the tourist market, with an increasing proportion of visitors from Asia. Currently, the city attracts over 3 million visitors a year; this is predicted to increase to 4.5 million by 2025 (Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
TOTAL VISITATION



Source: BMCC DMP, 2017

Domestic and international tourism is a major contributor to the Blue Mountains economy and employment, with flow on economic benefits to Sydney and the surrounding regions. It is the third largest sector in terms of output in the Blue Mountains and is worth \$342M per annum. This equates to 7.8% of total economic output in the Blue Mountains compared with a NSW average of 3.2%¹. **The development of the tourism sector, and capturing the employment and economic benefits arising from the visitor economy in the Blue Mountains, is of critical importance.**

Tourism is a significant cost to the Blue Mountains community – residents are effectively subsidising visitor infrastructure. The costs to manage the impact of the rapid growth in visitor numbers on amenity is projected to increase. The means of leveraging tourism expenditure to benefit the Blue Mountains, and to reinvest in Blue Mountains' visitor infrastructure, city presentation and service delivery, needs to be considered at a wider level.

Results from community engagement (conducted in 2016 to inform the Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035) indicate growing concerns from residents about the impacts of tourism, including:

- Parking stress and traffic congestion, especially on Cliff Drive Katoomba (overflow from Scenic World), Wentworth Falls in the vicinity of the Conservation Hut/Falls Road, and in Leura and Blackheath villages.
- Tourist buses generating congestion and parking stress, particularly in Leura Mall.
- Toilet and waste facilities stretched by increased visitation at Echo Point, Leura Mall and Blackheath.
- Littering on the Great Western Highway and adjacent towns and villages, particularly at Blaxland.
- Increased and illegal camping – in areas such as Gordon Falls, Megalong Valley, Bulls Camp and Blackheath parks.

Council is a principal player in tourism. Many of the region's major attractions, managed by Council, are on the escarpment top and are readily accessible to visitors. This includes Echo Point, estimated to attract 2 million of the City's 3 million visitors each year. The range of other visitor infrastructure provided and/or maintained by Council includes:

- **2 Visitor Information Centres**
- **Approximately 120km of walking tracks**
- **Approximately 85 lookouts**
- **5 Campgrounds²**
- **678km of sealed roads and 74km of unsealed roads**
- **175km of footpaths**
- **31 bridges**
- **105 parks**
- **88 public toilets**

Council has led major visitor infrastructure renewal and development over the past 10 years. These projects have been funded through revenue from rates and State/Federal government grants.

Key challenges to address:

- **Growing impact of visitors on residents e.g. congestion, littering, parking, noise**
- **High maintenance and operational costs for Council**
- **Limited budget for improvements and upgrades to visitor infrastructure**
- **Lack of equity – financial burden rests on rate payers**

1. <http://economicprofile.com.au/bluemountains/tourism/output> – BME (based on 2013/14 data).

2. This excludes Bulls Camp, which is a Roads and Maritime Services rest stop, rather than a designated camp ground.

1.6.2 Required Investment

Unless action is taken, the growth in tourism will result in increasing negative impacts on the environment and residential amenity. Increasing costs of services and facilities will put further pressure on rate payers, and there will be insufficient funding available for required maintenance and renewal of visitor infrastructure such as carparks and toilets.

Additional investment is required to support visitor infrastructure, visitor services and city presentation. An indicative list of priority projects is shown in Table 1 below. Council is developing a prioritisation framework that will be used for project selection.

The Blue Mountains also needs to diversify tourist offerings to encourage repeat and overnight visitation. The majority of visitors are domestic day trippers.

Converting a proportion of these day trippers into overnight visitors will grow yield. Council has prepared a Destination Management Plan (DMP) outlining priority initiatives to support diversification.

The DMP also identifies the need to fund upgrades to visitor experiences and infrastructure, including:

- Upgrade visitor and cultural facilities, walking tracks, and town centres.
- Improve coach/car parking facilities and public amenities such as toilets.
- Improve tourist and visitor facilities on rail and bus links to Blue Mountains, and local shuttle buses to tourist sites.
- Investment in the Eastern and Southern Scenic Escarpments and Echo Point tourism precincts.

TABLE 1 – INDICATIVE LIST OF PRIORITY PROJECTS

Project	Indicative Funding	Examples
Natural area visitor infrastructure		
Echo Point facilities	\$1,000,000	Platform upgrade and security
Grand cliff top track	\$900,000	Major walk in Southern Scenic Escarpment
Walking trails and lookouts	\$1,000,000	Improvements to walking trails and lookouts used by visitors
Parks & recreation		
District & regional parks	\$2,000,000	Including Wentworth Falls Lake regional parkland & Eastern Escarpment regional open space infrastructure
Town & village centres		
Town centre improvements	\$3,000,000	Include improvements to public domain to support visitation in towns and villages
Transport & access		
Visitor area and town parking	\$2,200,000	Visitor areas including Wentworth Falls
Coach/Bus parking facilities	\$1,300,000	Includes delivery of Leura village bus parking infrastructure plan
Major visitor roads	\$800,000	Examples include upgrade to Cliff Drive in the Southern Scenic Escarpment
Shared and cycling trails	\$800,000	Includes links in the Blue Mountains Bike Plan
Footpath and streetscape	\$1,000,000	Examples include upgrade to Katoomba Street and Pedestrian Access and Mobility Plan walkability projects
Visitor facilities		
Toilets	\$2,000,000	Including toilet upgrade at Lillianfells park, Leura Cascades and Glenbrook park
Visitor information	\$900,000	Including smart tourism app and additional visitor information and infrastructure
Renewal & maintenance		
Renewal & maintenance reserve for upgraded assets	\$1,000,000	
TOTAL INDICATIVE EXPENDITURE	\$17.9 M	
PROJECTED INCOME FROM VISITOR INFRASTRUCTURE FUND	\$13–19 M	

1.6.3 Policy and Legislative Context

The powers and functions of local government are determined by legislation in each State or Territory. Key legislation pertaining to how Councils can fund and manage visitor infrastructure includes:

- **Local Government Act 1993 (NSW)**

The principal legislation in NSW governing the establishment and operation of councils. Defines the purposes and functions of local government as well as providing the legal framework for establishing and administering Councils.

- **Blue Mountains City Council Local Environment Plan 2015**

Controls the form and location of new development, along with protecting open space and environmentally sensitive areas.

- **Crown Lands Act 2016 (NSW)**

Some of Council's visitor infrastructure facilities are on Crown Land. Under this Act, a portion of income generated on Crown Land may need to be returned to the Crown.

- **Roads Act 1993 (NSW)**

Specifies rules and regulations for parking schemes.

- **Roads and Maritime Services Pay Parking Guidelines**

Pay parking guidelines provide the policy and operational framework within which parking authorities (such as Councils) may establish pay parking schemes on roads and related areas.

- **Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement**

Requires Council to participate in the established consultation regime with the Gundungurra Corporation and Gundungurra Association members for activities occurring on particular parcels of land, south of the Great Western Highway.



1.7 Funding Options

A number of funding mechanisms have been employed by various levels of government and agencies to fund visitor infrastructure and services. However, not all are permissible under current NSW regulations or applicable to the Blue Mountains context.

An assessment of the range of funding options is detailed below, and summarised in Table 2 – which also highlights those flagged for further investigation.

a) Local government rates

Local government rates are collected from owners of rateable properties including residential, business and primary producers.

Rates are currently funding a large portion of the visitor services and infrastructure managed by Council. This is not an equitable source of funding, as the rate payers are not the primary users of these facilities.

There is growing community concern that the burden of maintaining visitor sites rests too heavily on ratepayers, and that costs should be more equitably attributed to those who create the maintenance needs, namely the visitors.

b) Differential local government rates

Councils may charge land owners different rates on the basis of the land category. In NSW, as prescribed in the *Local Government Act 1993*, the land category is based on a location rather than a business type. In some other states, rates may be differentiated based on business types.

As such, differential local government for tourism businesses – which are spread across the LGA – may be difficult to implement under the current rating framework in the Blue Mountains.

c) Bed taxes and other levies

Bed taxes target visitors staying overnight in commercial accommodation. Internationally, bed taxes are a common form of special tourist tax. Other special taxes and levies include hotel occupancy tax, short term rental occupancy tax, and destination management funds.

Under the *Local Government Act 1993* a bed tax cannot be applied in NSW. A bed tax would also exempt the significant proportion of total visitors who are day visitors, or stay in unregistered accommodation or with friends and family.

d) Grants

Federal and/or state government grants are commonly used to fund infrastructure projects.

Along with rates, grants are a key source of funding for the Council's visitor infrastructure. In the past 10 years, Council has received Federal and State Government grants for a number of key initiatives. Current projects include grants under the National Stronger Regions Fund for the Scenic Southern Escarpment (\$7.5 million) and the upgrade to the Glenbrook Visitor Information Centre to a Regional Tourism Centre Project (\$1,400,000). Grant funding will continue to be sought for these types of projects.

However, grants are not a reliable form of funding. There is no guarantee of funding in the long-term. Grants are primarily for new and upgraded infrastructure; they exclude maintenance and renewal costs, which are often considerable. Ultimately, the costs to service visitor infrastructure that are constructed with grant funding are passed on to ratepayers.



e) Commercial activities

Councils may lease land and/or infrastructure to commercial operators to raise revenue. Examples of commercial operations explored in the development of this Strategic Plan include tourist parks, cafes, and bike hire stations.

Council's Destination Management Plan highlights a number of opportunities for new commercial facilities on council/crown land. As the financial returns to Council from the leasing of sites for various forms of commercial tourism actually are attractive, the introduction of more leasable spaces for appropriate commercial recreation and tourism should be considered.

f) Voluntary contributions

Voluntary contributions or donations may be made by individuals or businesses to contribute to visitor infrastructure funding. For example, in Byron Shire Council, a \$2 donation requested at time of booking accommodation in Council owned caravan parks.

Such donations do not represent a sustainable funding stream that Council can rely upon to fund ongoing or periodic infrastructure costs such as maintenance.

g) Sponsorship

Sponsorship is the contribution of financial and/or "in kind" support provide to a Council for partnering in the provision of community infrastructure, services, or events.

Sponsorship is a potential source of income for Council, given the wide range of public works, programs and events it delivers each year. Experiences in other local government areas indicate significant revenue-raising potential from this source.

h) User charges

The practice of raising revenue through charging the users of government infrastructure has emerged as a strong trend in public sector management over the last 20 years in Australia. User pays systems have been adopted, to varying degrees, by conservation agencies and Councils in all Australian states and territories. Fees may be charged for entry to protected areas, camp grounds, recreational facilities, and commercial activities.

The principle of a user pays approach is based on equity – that those who use a service are the ones who pay for it.

Case study analysis shows that if correctly planned, visitor user pays approaches can successfully generate additional income to support and enhance the visitor experience without adversely impacting visitor numbers and residents. This is evidenced by the existing pay and display parking at Echo Point. As at February 2018, there are 29 parking meters (for private vehicles) at Echo Point, generating \$1,000,000 in revenue per annum for Council. The meters are patrolled by rangers employed by Council. Revenue from the meters is used to fund meter replacements, sensor parking, and visitor area maintenance.

TABLE 2 – FUNDING MECHANISMS AND THEIR APPLICABILITY

Mechanism	Applicable	Investigated further
Local government rates	✓	✗
Differential local government rates	✗	✓
Bed tax	✗	✗
Grants	✓	✗
Commercial activities	✓	✓
Donations and voluntary contributions	✓	✗
Sponsorship	✓	✓
User charges	✓	✓

2. Strategic Direction

2.1 Desired Strategic Outcome

The Blue Mountains Community Strategic Plan 2035 identifies the Blue Mountains as a leader of sustainable tourism and destination management within a World Heritage Area. This Strategic Plan aims to support this objective by:

- Improving the long term sustainability of the Blue Mountain's visitor economy
- Encouraging and supporting sustainable tourism that delivers local benefits
- Balancing an enhanced tourist experience while reducing the burden on rate payers.

2.2 Objectives





2.3 Challenges

While visitor use pays schemes can offer significant financial benefits (see Figure 1), there are a number of general challenges associated with their implementation. These are summarised as follows:

- Consumer resistance/ability to pay; cumulative impact of multiple fees
- High cost of compliance and monitoring, particularly in more remote locations
- Limited desire by agencies to increase fees for fear of market resistance, complaints to politicians and media, and visitor loss
- Multi tenure (public and private ownership) requires joint agreement on any charging or use requirements
- Rate payer requests for exemption from fees; finding a cost-effective mechanism to avoid charging local ratepayers
- Displacement of problems to other locations
- Concern from industry over precedent it may create across other local government areas and state agencies who don't charge

Potential benefits associated with the implementation of visitor user pays approaches:

- **Reduced maintenance and operational costs for Council**
- **Increased budget for improvements and upgrades to visitor infrastructure, city presentation and provision of visitor services**
- **Increased equity – financial burden transferred to visitors rather than residents**
- **Improved compliance - reduced impact on residents for visitor related issues e.g. congestion, littering, parking, noise**

2.4 Principles

A careful balance is required to avoid negatively impacting the tourism industry with its growth potential, while introducing an equitable way for visitors to help contribute to the maintenance and upkeep of areas they visit.

Distinguishing between use by visitors and use by local residents is another important issue to gaining community acceptance, and needs to be considered for mechanisms such as paid parking. Any user charges applied will require some level of administration by Council, and this needs to be considered in assessing the cost effectiveness of different options.

The case studies identify the need for charges to be seen as reasonable by both visitors and residents of the Blue Mountains to be effective.

Based on the research undertaken, the following have been identified as the critical success factors when implementing visitor user pays schemes:

- **Potential to generate revenue**
- **Public acceptance by visitors and residents**
- **Limited adverse impact on visitation**
- **Ease of administration, revenue collection and monitoring**

Research indicates that user pays initiatives enjoy higher levels of support when they are connected to corresponding improvements in visitor infrastructure and services.

As such, the additional revenue generated by the user pays actions will be reinvested in visitor infrastructure and services to further develop capacity.

3. Proposed Actions

3.1 Differential Local Government Rates

The comparative analysis conducted in the development of this Strategic Plan indicated that a differential rate for tourism businesses could be a potentially equitable source of funding (see Shire of Broome case study). Such charges do not directly impact on the visitor experience, and it may be possible for commercial businesses to more seamlessly pass on the extra commercial rate charge to guests/customers.

However, the ability to implement a differential rate for tourism businesses requires a change to the current rating framework.

Feedback received during the public exhibition period for this Strategic Plan (October–December 2017) included requests to consider funding mechanisms that apply to tourism businesses, rather than individual visitors.

It is proposed that the Council investigate mechanisms for tourism businesses to contribute to funding of visitor infrastructure and services. This is included as an action for 2018/19 in the Implementation Plan (page 26).

Case Study: Shire of Broome, Western Australian

- Separate rating category for properties with a tourism use within town
- These businesses are considered to use more resources and generate more revenue than others
- Tourism businesses pass on levy to tourists

3.2 Commercial Activities

Council's Destination Management Plan identifies a number of commercial activities that could diversify the region's tourism offering, whilst at the same time generating revenue. These include destination holiday parks, glamping and bike rental stations. Council is also reviewing the management model for its two existing tourist parks, and regularly receives enquiries in relation to 'pop-up' cafes on Council-owned or controlled land.

At the time of writing this Strategic Plan, there is insufficient detail to conduct comparative and financial analysis of various Commercial activity options. It is likely these options will require private sector investment, as well as a review of recreational land zoning.

However, it is envisaged that a portion of the revenue raised from these activities would be allocated to fund visitor infrastructure and city presentation. Furthermore, the return to Council should reflect the impact of the commercial activity on the infrastructure and supporting services provided by Council.

The scope of these opportunities will be further defined in the coming years as part of the implementation of the DMP. This is included as an action item 2018/19 in the Implementation Plan (page 26).

3.3 Sponsorship

The prospectus value of Council's Delivery Program is yet to be tested in terms of potential sponsors seeking product placement/promotion, or simply community enhanced profile, through association with a Council-delivered activity. At the time of writing this Strategic Plan, there is insufficient detail to conduct comparative and financial analysis of this option.

The processes by which any Council attracts, promotes and accepts sponsorship must have an appropriate governance framework. This is specifically recognised by the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC), which provides guidelines relating to sponsorship in the public sector and recommends that organisations develop appropriate governance structures that address incoming sponsorship.

It is proposed that the Council investigate the feasibility of sponsorship opportunities, and develop a sponsorship policy to provide an organisation-wide governance framework. This is included as an action for 2018/19 in the Implementation Plan (page 26).

3.4 User Charges

There are a number of visitor user pays approaches that could offer the potential to generate funding for visitor infrastructure. These include including paid parking, campground fees, entry fees for walking tracks and lookouts, park and ride schemes and amenities charges.

However, not all of these approaches are applicable to the Blue Mountains context. Entry fees for walking tracks and lookouts are difficult to implement because there are multiple entry points to natural areas as well as an overlap with land owned by the National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Following an initial assessment of a range of user pays models, five models most relevant to the Blue Mountains are explored in more detail in the proceeding section.



MODEL 1—Paid Car Parking



The comparative analysis conducted in the development of this Strategic Plan revealed that paid parking is the most commonly used form of visitor user pays mechanism. Of the 22 Australian councils analysed, 16 have implemented paid parking, typically in the form of pay and display. In the Blue Mountains, paid parking meters are already in place at Echo Point.

One of the key challenges with paid parking schemes is resistance from residents and/or rate payers. Typically, this is dealt with through resident exemptions. However, these can be costly to administer and enforce.

Under the current paid parking scheme at Echo Point, all Blue Mountains LGA residents may request a permit in the form of an exemption sticker. A permit enables a resident to park in one of the long stay spaces without the need to pay and obtain a ticket; short stay spaces are excluded to ensure a higher turnover. This can be collected in person from Council's Customer Service desk.

Another challenge specific to the Blue Mountains is the number of areas that include land with multiple owners/managers. For example, much of the area adjacent to the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls is managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). To avoid confusion and visitors using substitute locations for parking (to avoid paid parking sites), sites that are co-managed with NPWS will require a consistent approach by both Council and NPWS.

Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) provide pay parking guidelines that specify the policy and operational framework within which parking authorities may establish pay parking schemes on roads and related areas. Any proposed new parking meter, ticket machine, pay-by-phone or coupon parking scheme must be approved by RMS prior to their introduction. Meter or ticket parking machines which are to use payment methods other than cash (i.e. notes or coins) must also be approved for use by RMS. The State Debt Recovery Office also provides guidelines for fines / penalty notices.

Councils are increasingly moving towards cashless payment options such as online, apps, or by phone for paid parking.

For example, Brisbane City Council has partnered with mobile payments provider CellOPark to offer a range of payment methods that allow visitors to pay for parking sessions from their mobile devices.

The cost of the online payment system may be less than a traditional pay and display model; though the revenue generated is often shared between the providers of these schemes and the local council.

In parallel to this Strategic Plan, Council is also developing a number of initiatives to manage traffic and parking.

These include a City-wide Parking Strategic Plan, an Integrated Transport Strategic Plan and a number of Parking Precinct Plans. These will include consideration of electronic sensor parking, as well as the possible cumulative impact of multiple charges.

Table 3 provides a summary of the user pays options investigated under this model, ranging from a minor expansion (increasing metered parking areas around Echo Point only) through to major expansion (introducing parking meters at all villages throughout the LGA). Only the first two options modelled provided significant financial benefits and are explored in more detail.

TABLE 3

Paid Car Parking Options	Able to cover Operating Costs	Economically viable
Expansion of parking meters at Echo Point	✓	✓
Install parking meters at key visitor areas and towns ³	✓	✓
Install parking meters at all villages and town centres throughout the LGA	✗	✗

3. For the purposes of the Strategic Plan, tourism areas (based on current demand) include Katoomba Falls, Leura Cascades, Wentworth Falls Lake, Wentworth Falls Lookout, and the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls; as well as tourist towns including Blackheath Town Centre, Glenbrook Town Centre, Katoomba Town Centre, Leura Village and Wentworth Falls Village.

Expand metered parking at Echo Point

This involves designating additional paid parking spaces in the vicinity of Echo Point. A Parking precinct plan will be developed in 2017/18 to determine the number and location of meters. Implementation will occur in 2018/19.

Compliance will be supported with an additional ranger, signage, and communication with residents and visitors. Blue Mountains resident exemptions will be available as per the existing scheme (see page 15).

It is assumed that the existing pay and display parking meters will be used, possibly in combination with sensors. Other technology solutions may be investigated, such as digital payment options.

This initiative is expected to cost \$750 thousand over 10 years, and return revenue of \$2 million over this period. Revenue will supplement existing funds to cover operating costs and maintenance of the Echo Point precinct. A portion will also be set aside in a Visitor Infrastructure Fund (see section 4.2).

Financial impact – over 10 years

- \$2m revenue
- \$50k capital expenditure
- \$700k operating expenditure

Resident benefits

- Improved control of visitor parking in residential streets
- Visitor infrastructure maintenance and upgrades paid by meter fees and fines, not rates
- Permits available for Blue Mountains residents

Visitor benefits

- Additional designated spaces
- Funding to pay for improved visitor infrastructure and services, e.g. toilet cleaning

Install parking meters at visitor areas

This involves introducing metered parking spaces at visitor areas across the LGA. The locations will be identified in Parking Precinct Plans to be developed in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The Parking Precinct Plans will also include consideration of electronic sensor parking, more efficient land use to manage turnover and increasing demand, and appropriate road sealing and/or kerb and gutter.

For the purposes of the Strategic Plan, tourism areas (based on current demand) include Katoomba Falls, Leura Cascades, Wentworth Falls Lake, Wentworth Falls Lookout, and the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls; as well as tourist towns including Blackheath Town Centre, Glenbrook Town Centre, Katoomba Town Centre, Leura Village and Wentworth Falls Village. Implementation will be phased over 10 years, starting with higher demand areas in 2018/19. Locations will be chosen where parking occupancy is anticipated to grow over the 10 year period due to the Blue Mountains continuing to be a strong tourism destination as well as experiencing modest population growth.

Blue Mountains residents will be exempt from paying for use of metered spaces and will be able to apply for an exemption sticker. Residents may also be given the opportunity to purchase an additional sticker that can be used for visiting family or friends (feasibility review pending).

This initiative is expected to cost \$6.1 million over 10 years, and return revenue of \$23 million over this period. This will be used to fund visitor area maintenance costs and infrastructure upgrades.

Financial impact – over 10 years

- \$23m revenue
- \$770k capital expenditure
- \$5.3m operating expenditure

Resident benefits

- Improved control of visitor parking in residential streets
- Visitor infrastructure maintenance and upgrades paid by meter fees and fines, not rates
- Permits available for Blue Mountains residents

Visitor benefits

- Additional designated spaces
- Funding to pay for improved visitor infrastructure and services, e.g. toilet cleaning

MODEL 2—Paid Bus/Coach Parking



Unlike paid parking for private vehicles, paid bus/coach schemes are not common for local governments in Australia. Of the 24 councils and precincts reviewed, only two implemented any kind of fee specific to bus or coach parking – the City of Darwin and Sydney Olympic Park.

They are however much more common in the UK, where a number of Councils have employed bus schemes to manage visitor impacts and generate income.

Currently, there is no general charge for tour coaches visiting the Blue Mountains. From 2000 -2017, there was a location specific arrangement in place at Echo Point. Under an agreement with Council, the owners of the Three Sisters Plaza paid Council a fee for the bus parking outside their premises, in lieu of Council charging for bus/coach parking at Echo Point. This agreement has now expired.

A growing number of buses are visiting the Blue Mountains, with a current estimate of 500,000 people visiting Echo Point by bus each year. Given this, there is an opportunity to consider options for increasing revenue from bus visitors. This revenue can then be applied to maintaining the infrastructure (e.g. toilets and rubbish removal) which is being used by these visitors, as well as renewing ageing visitor infrastructure and providing support facilities for bus/coach operators.

This model investigates the potential to introduce a user fee for coach/bus parking only.

Sydney Olympic Park Case Study

- Charges \$55 for any size bus or coach during major events
- Maximum stay of three hours
- Bus-coach layover area is provided within 250m of the main stadiums
- Any buses/coaches caught not complying are fined
- Key to success is designated layover area

Table 4 provides a summary of the options investigated under this model, ranging from a minor expansion (installing parking meetings at Echo Point only) through to major expansion (introducing a coupon scheme throughout the entire LGA). Of these, only the options that provided significant financial benefits are explored in more detail.

TABLE 4

Paid Bus/Coach Parking Options	Able to cover Operating Costs	Economically viable
Pay and display for buses at Echo Point	✓	✓
Bus/coach parking coupon scheme across the LGA	✓	✓

Given the limited precedent set in other LGAs, there are a number of challenges that must be addressed when considering implementing charges specific to buses. These include:

- Cost of installing facilities, such as meters and/or parking sensors
- Cost of education and compliance
- Timeframe for implementation – lead time required for the industry
- Consistency in approach with other landowners, e.g. NPWS
- Potential adverse impact on visitation
- Dispersion to other areas to avoid payment / fines

In addition, the introduction of a bus/coach user pay scheme either in select areas (e.g. visitor areas) or across the entire LGA requires a procedural process which has the support of Roads and Maritime Services.

It should be noted that Council implemented bus parking meters at Echo Point in 1998. Following feedback from industry groups, use of the meters was suspended in 2004, and was replaced with the agreement put in place with the Plaza as noted above.

It is vital that Council develop a communication strategy to inform tour/coach operators and the tourism industry about why the coach parking fees are being introduced and how the revenue generated will be used to improve visitor infrastructure, including better support facilities for bus/coach operators. Scheme design must also consider the potential impact of the proposed charges on local bus and coach operators.



Pay and display for buses/coaches at Echo Point

This involves introducing 12 pay and display bus/coach bays at Echo Point. Compliance will be supported by additional signage; it is assumed existing ranger resources will be sufficient to monitor this area. The parking bays will be identified in the Parking Precinct Plans developed under the paid parking actions.

This will require consultation with industry and affected landholders and businesses. As a significant lead time is required (at least 18 months), consultation will start from 2017/18 and implementation will begin in 2018/19. This payment mechanism will be subsumed by the coupon scheme for the whole LGA as outlined in Action 4.

This initiative is expected to cost \$480,000 over 10 years, and return revenue of \$2.8 million over this period.

Revenue will supplement existing funds to operating costs and maintenance of the Echo Point precinct. A portion will also be set aside in a Visitor Infrastructure Fund (see section 4.2).

Financial impact – over ten years

- \$2.8m revenue
- \$45k capital expenditure
- \$431k operating expenditure

Resident benefits

- Improved compliance, including control of bus parking on residential streets
- Visitor infrastructure maintenance and upgrades paid by meter fees and fines, not rates

Visitor/industry benefits

- Designated coach spaces
- Funding to pay for improved infrastructure and services
- Range of payment options available

Bus/coach parking coupon scheme across the LGA

This involves introducing a coupon scheme for tourist coaches and buses parking in the LGA. The coupon will allow buses/coaches to park in designated spaces in visitor areas across the LGA.

While the details of a coupon scheme are yet to be determined, it is envisaged that operators will be able to purchase a coupon on the spot (for an hour or half-hour visit). Day coupons could also be available to allow operators to park at multiple locations. Council will also investigate the feasibility of allowing operators to purchase an annual or half-yearly coupon online in advance.

This action will be supported by the development of a Citywide approach to managing tourist bus and coach visitation. This will include detailed scheme design for the bus/coach parking coupon scheme, including bus movement research, demand analysis, legal review, and a pricing assessment.

It will also include a feasibility review of a proposed bus layover area, including review of site options and business case for partnership funding. The purpose of this layover area is to encourage buses to drop-off passengers in busy areas and provide an alternative to bus parking in residential streets.

A detailed communications plan will be developed to support extensive engagement with the bus and coach industry, tour operators, and relevant land owners.

It is expected scheme planning will take two years, allowing implementation to begin in 2019/20.

Implementation will then be phased over time, starting with higher demand tourist areas.

Financial impact – over ten years

- \$11m revenue
- \$240k capital expenditure
- \$5.9m operating expenditure

Resident benefits

- Improved compliance, including control of bus parking on residential streets
- Visitor infrastructure maintenance and upgrades paid by meter fees and fines, not rates

Visitor/industry benefits

- Designated coach spaces
- Funding to pay for improved infrastructure and services
- Range of payment options available
- Planned layover area for drivers

This initiative is expected to cost \$6.1 million over 10 years, and return revenue of \$11 million over this period.

Revenue will be used to cover infrastructure maintenance, renewal and upgrade costs, and for a new planned bus layover area between Leura and Katoomba.

MODEL 3—Camping Charges



Campground fees are commonplace for conservation agencies (e.g. NPWS) and councils with significant natural areas. Comparative councils with camping fees in place include Byron Shire Council, Wollongong City Council and the Shire of Augusta- Margaret River.

The Blue Mountains is a popular camping destination. Council currently manages five campgrounds⁴ which are currently free for visitors. Bulls Camp – although a popular freedom camping spot – is a designated Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) rest stop, rather than an official campground.

Costs incurred (ultimately borne by rate payers) to maintain these sites are for services such as litter collection, toilet cleaning and waste removal. Unlike Council, NPWS currently charges for some campgrounds in the Blue Mountains.

Model 3 investigates the potential to introduce paid camping in the Blue Mountains at Council owned campgrounds.

There are a number of challenges associated with implementing paid camping:

- Cost of monitoring compliance, particularly in remote areas
- Freedom campers may disperse to other locations, possibly increasing the impact on residents
- Fees must be consistent with those charged by other operators, especially NPWS

NPWS Euroka Campground

- Located in Blue Mountains Park, south of Glenbrook
- Similar infrastructure to Council's campsites
- Charges - \$24 per adult, \$12 per child and a 2.5% booking fee
- Online booking form

Council is currently developing a Camping Strategic Plan that will look at how these issues may be addressed.

Table 5 provides a summary of the options investigated under this model, ranging from a minor expansion (charge for existing campgrounds with no upgrades, improvement or expansion) to major expansion (upgrade/expand all campgrounds and upgrade facilities).

TABLE 5

Camping Charges Options	Able to cover Operating Costs	Economically viable
Charge for existing campgrounds⁵ x5 with no upgrades, improvement or expansion	✓	✓
Charge for camping at Bulls Camp	✓	✓
Upgrade/Expand existing campgrounds x5 and upgrade infrastructure (toilets, fencing, boom gates, backlog renewal)	✓	✓

4. Blackheath Glen Reserve, Old Ford Reserve, Cathedral Reserve Camping Grounds, Mount York Reserve, Lockyers Camp Ground.

5. This includes: Blackheath Glen Reserve, Old Ford Reserve, Cathedral Reserve Camping Grounds, Mount York Reserve, Lockyers Camp Ground.

Charge for existing campgrounds with no upgrades, improvement or expansion

This involves redesignating Council's five free campgrounds (excluding Bulls Camp) as paid campgrounds with unpowered sites. Fees will be charged in line with NPWS campground charges. This would be supported by additional signage, plus dedicated campground maintenance / compliance resources.

This will be supported by the implementation of an online booking system, giving visitors the ability to book campsites online in advance. Charges will be introduced in 2019/20.

This initiative is expected to cost \$2.1 million over 10 years, and return revenue of \$3.1 million over this period. This will be used to cover campground maintenance costs and infrastructure renewal and upgrade.

Financial impact – over ten years

- \$3.1m revenue
- \$140k capital expenditure
- \$2m operating expenditure

Resident benefits

- Reduced costs to ratepayers to service campgrounds

Visitor benefits

- Ability to book a campsite in advance
- Campgrounds serviced more frequently



Charge for camping at Bulls Camp

Bulls Camp is a designated RMS rest stop. The site includes two toilet blocks and an unheated shower. It was redeveloped in 2006 to include additional parking spaces at the rear of the site, which are popular with freedom campers.

Since then, Bulls Camp has experienced a significant increase in usage, resulting in a corresponding increase in maintenance costs. Anecdotal evidence suggests the popularity of the site with international and domestic freedom campers can be attributed to the free shower facility.

Paid camping has been investigated as a solution to cover these increased site costs. To offer the same experience at Bulls Camp as the other Council campgrounds requires significant site redevelopment, including the installation of fencing and a gate to partition the camping area from the rest stop. Due to size constraints, the revenue from designated camping spots is likely to be minimal. The costs are likely to exceed revenue, and this option has been excluded from the proposed implementation plan.

However, charging for the existing amenities block at Bulls Camp could generate revenue to cover servicing costs, or decrease demand at this site. Investigation of this option is included in the Proposed Implementation Plan.

Another option is to offer a different type of camping experience at Bulls Camp, in the form of higher density, unmarked camping / parking spaces at the existing camping area. As with other campgrounds, visitors could book a space online in advance or on site.

This approach requires formalising the rest area (including improved parking infrastructure for larger vehicles), installation of signage to indicate that camping is only allowed in the designated area, and additional compliance monitoring.

Financial impact

- To be identified as part of the feasibility review

Resident benefits

- Reduced costs to ratepayers to service Bulls Camp

Visitor benefits

- Ability to book a campsite in advance or on the spot
- Infrastructure at Bulls Camp serviced more frequently

It should be noted that approval under the *Local Government Act 1993* will be required to formalise Bulls Camp as a camp ground.

A review of the feasibility of this action will be conducted in 2019/20. If this initiative is viable, revenue generated will be used to cover campground maintenance costs and infrastructure renewal and upgrade.

Upgrade/expand campgrounds and upgrade infrastructure

This involves redeveloping Council's five campgrounds. Due to the remote locations of the campgrounds there is limited ability to create powered sites or develop shower blocks; therefore the camp grounds will remain primitive campsites. The redevelopment includes new pit toilets.

A review of the feasibility of this action will be conducted in 2020/21, after charges for the existing campgrounds have been in place for at least one year. If this initiative is viable, revenue generated will be used to cover campground maintenance costs and infrastructure upgrades.

Financial impact – over ten years

- To be identified as part of the feasibility review

Resident benefits

- Reduced costs to ratepayers to service campgrounds

Visitor benefits

- Ability to book a campsite in advance
- Improved campground capacity and infrastructure

MODEL 4—Toilet/Shower Charges



The comparative research indicates that toilet and shower use fees are not universally applied by conservation agencies or councils. Instead of standalone charges for amenities, often these charges are embedded into other facility charges (e.g. campgrounds, recreational infrastructure).

When charges are applied to the use of toilets, consumers expect a higher level of cleanliness, leading to increased maintenance and operating costs. Although the revenue generated from the fees can be used to offset these costs it is unlikely that the revenue generated will cover the cost of maintaining the infrastructure at the level required.

One of the key challenges with toilet charges is market resistance, particularly when alternate free public toilets can be accessed at cafes and restaurants, hotels and other sites which tour operators are likely to find for their passengers. Other challenges identified with paid toilets include risk of vandalism and high costs of monitoring compliance.

The modelling for this Strategic Plan revealed that paid toilet options are unable to produce positive financial outcomes. This was supported by the comparative analysis from other councils, national park agencies and other visitor areas which identified that the cost of installing, operating and maintaining these amenities outweighed the financial benefits.

In terms of paid showers, this requires identifying demand and a suitable location. As noted in the preceding section, charging for the existing showers at Bulls Camp may be feasible. Investigation of this option is included in the Proposed Implementation Plan.

Table 6 provides a summary of the options investigated under this model. The options explored through the model all result in negative economic and financial outcomes for Council, and have been excluded from the Proposed Implementation Plan.

However, it should be noted that a portion of the revenue raised from user pays initiatives will be spent on improved toilet facility maintenance and cleaning (see page 27).

TABLE 6

Toilet/Shower Charges Options	Able to cover Operating Costs	Economically viable
Paid Toilets at Echo Point and Leura	✗	✗
Paid Toilets at all key visitor areas and towns	✗	✗



MODEL 5—Nature-Based Licensing



Conservation agencies and councils typically charge licence fees for commercial operators who conduct guided nature based recreation activities, such as abseiling, rock climbing, bush walking and horse riding. For example, NPWS runs the Eco Pass licensing.

Comparative research suggests that the cost of administering these schemes is typically high, and licence fees may not generate sufficient revenue to offset these costs. However, there are significant non-financial benefits associated with regulating nature-based activities - including risk management and ensuring minimum impact techniques are used by operators.

Council has operated a licensing system for Nature Based Recreation and Tourism (NBRT) since 2004. This system requires all commercial operators providing activities to have a NBRT Licence while operating on Crown and Council lands managed by Council. The NBRT Licensing scheme allows Council to assess the commercial activities being conducted on particular parcels of land and check that operators hold the appropriate insurances and qualifications.

As at February 2018, there are 27 NBRT Annual Licence holders, generating approximately \$32,000 in revenue per year. License holders pay an annual fees as well as a site visit fee that is reported retrospectively.

The administration of the scheme is resource-intensive; when averaged out over the licensing year it is estimated to require 25% of a full time employee equivalent.

Revenue generated by the licence fee system supplements existing funds to enable the ongoing management of nature based recreation sites used by the operators, rather than offsetting the costs of delivering the program.

There are ongoing challenges associated with compliance of this scheme. There is no opportunity to limit the number of entry points at nature based recreation sites within the Blue Mountains, therefore making it difficult to regulate or monitor activities in specific locations.

Currently there is limited active compliance monitoring, with Council responding reactively to reported compliance matters on a case-by-case basis. To determine the extent of non-compliance, a compliance audit will be conducted in 2018/19, this may include desktop and/or field audits.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that some existing licence holders may not be reporting visits, and that a number of operators are not licensed. Coach and small bus tour companies are potentially the most significant unregulated commercial users of Council bushland reserves in terms of levels of usage and risk.

NPWS Eco Pass

- \$350 for an annual NPWS Eco Pass
- It is a state-wide licence required for all guided tours operated on NPWS managed lands
- It involves an annual licence fee and a separate per/head fee which is charged to the guiding operator
- These charges are relatively low and may not cover the full cost of site management, maintenance and compliance.

These types of operators park and disembark their passengers to view lookouts, undertake short walks, to use toilets and to have picnic lunches.

Another key challenge for Council is to ensure a consistent approach with NPWS. The NBRT Licensing scheme fees must remain roughly in line with those charged by NPWS to avoid loss of revenue. NPWS fees are already slightly lower than those charged by Council, and are not currently pegged to inflation.

In addition, there is some potential for overlap between this scheme and the bus coupon system as outlined in the preceding section. The scheme design must consider how to address this.

Table 7 provides a summary of the options investigated under this model. Both indicate that the scheme could be redesigned to generate sufficient income to cover operating costs. Implementation of an online booking system will reduce the existing administrative burden, allowing existing Council resources to be redeployed to focus on compliance and engagement with operators. This is expected to result in a modest boost of revenue.

To confirm the extent of non-compliance and the feasibility of expanding the NBRT Scheme, desktop and field audits will be conducted in 2018/19, alongside a review of scheme design. Implementation of an online booking system is planned for 2019/20.

TABLE 7

Nature-based Licensing Options	Able to cover Operating Costs	Economically viable
Online booking system for existing users	✓	✓
Improve compliance with licence requirements by nature based recreation and tourism operators	✓	✓



3.5 Supporting Actions

Online booking system

The use of an online system to book and pay for visitor services is commonplace. This can streamline administrative processes and support improved compliance.

An online booking system is required to support the following actions identified in this Strategic Plan:

- The introduction of a bus/coach parking pass (coupon scheme)
- The introduction of paid Council campgrounds
- The redevelopment of the NBRT licensing scheme

Procurement of an online booking system is planned for 2018/19.

Additional supporting actions are detailed in the following section.

4. Implementing the Strategic Plan

4.1 Proposed Implementation Plan

	Item No.	Action	Years 1–4				Years 5–10
			2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23–2027/28
Other Funding Options	1	Differential rates	Investigate feasibility and develop Council position				
	2	Commercial activities					
	3	Sponsorship					
Supporting Actions	4	Online booking system	Procure online booking system	Operate	Operate	Operate	Operate
	5	Stakeholder engagement and communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and implement Work in partnership with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people to identify economic opportunities on Ngurra (Country) 	Implement			
	6	Guidelines for Visitor Infrastructure Fund	Develop	Operate	Operate	Operate	Operate
	7	Monitoring and feedback processes	Develop	Operate	Operate	Operate	Operate
Paid Car Parking 	8	Expand metered parking at Echo Point	Additional paid parking spaces and meters	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees
	9	Install parking meters at tourism areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop Parking Precinct Plans Negotiation with NPWS and other land owners Introduction of parking meters at tourism areas (high priority sites) 	Phased introduction of parking meters at tourism areas (medium priority sites)	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees
Buses/Coaches 	10	Pay and display for buses at Echo Point	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Negotiation with industry & other stakeholders Introduce paid parking for buses, including meters 	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees and need for additional spaces
	11	Coupon (annual parking pass) for all buses	Develop a Citywide approach to managing tourist bus and coach visitation, including detailed scheme design for bus/coach parking coupon scheme, feasibility review of layover area, legal review, and stakeholder engagement	Phased introduction of coupon scheme at tourism areas (high demand)	Phased introduction of coupon scheme at tourism areas (lower demand)	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees and need for additional spaces
Camping 	12	Charge for existing camp grounds with no upgrades, improvements or expansion	Develop Camping Strategic Plan	Introduce paid camping, including online booking system	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees (negotiate with NPWS)
	13	Upgrade/Expand camp grounds and upgrade facilities		Investigate feasibility, develop business case			
	14	Paid showers at Bulls Camp	Investigate feasibility				
Nature-based Licensing 	15	Implementation of on-line booking system capturing existing users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct audit to review compliance Review scheme design 	Introduce online booking system	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts	Monitor impacts. Review fees (negotiate with NPWS)
	16	Target additional nature based operators		Introduce (pending audit outcomes)			

4.2 Funding

a) Required investment

Based on the proposed action plan, the capital funding required to support the delivery of the Strategic Plan is estimated to be \$1.1 million over a 10 year period (2018/19 to 2027/28).

To fund the initial capital investment, funds will be drawn down from Council's reserves. Grant funding may also be sought to bolster this.

b) Use of revenue generated

The revenue generated is expected to be sufficient to cover operating costs each year, and fund capital costs from 2019/20 onwards.

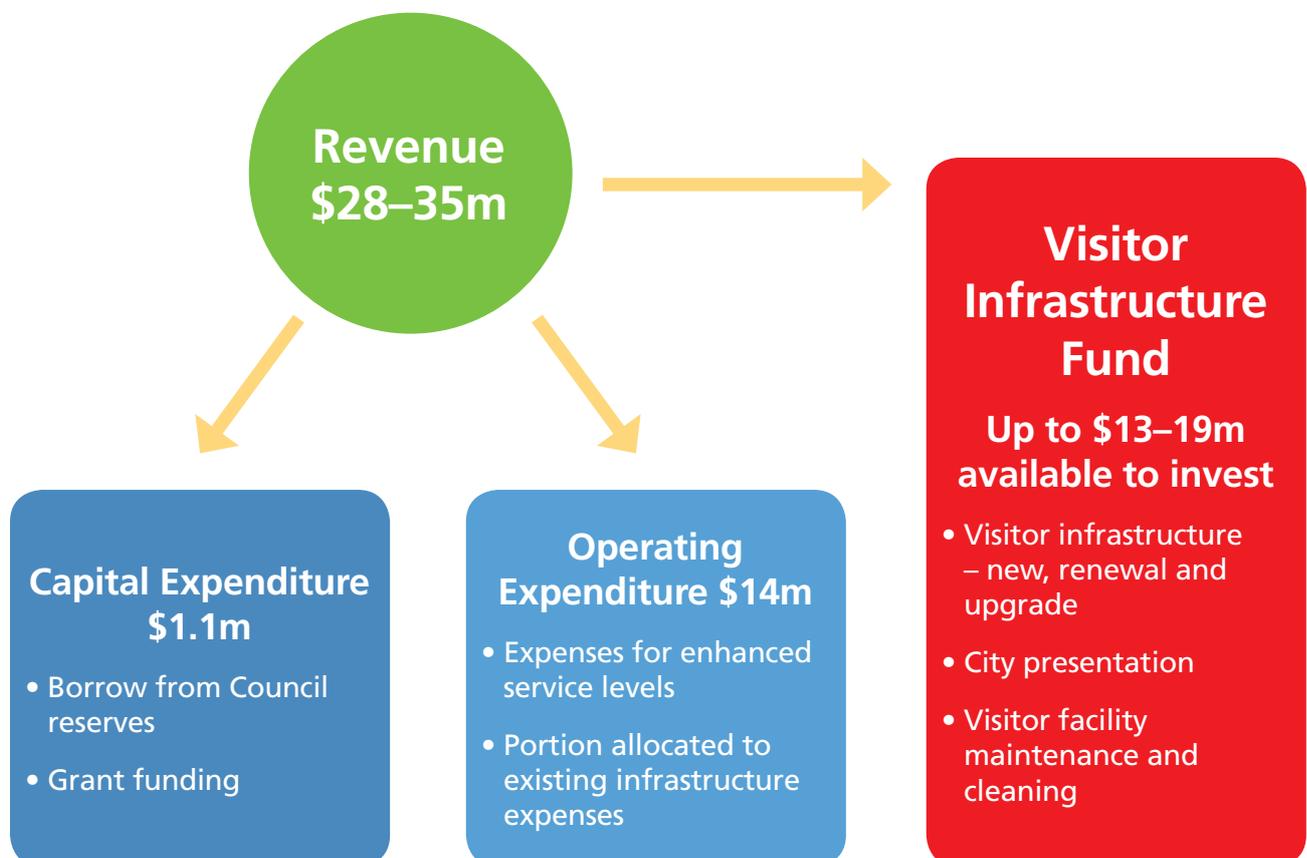
The balance will be set aside in a **Visitor Infrastructure Fund**. This fund will cover new, renewal, and upgrade of visitor infrastructure across the City, as well as city presentation and facility maintenance and cleaning.

This fund will also subsume the existing Echo Point Pay and Display Fund, to ensure a consistent and streamlined approach.

Guidelines for the use of the Visitor Infrastructure Fund:

1. Funds will be expended in tourism areas. These include Katoomba Falls, Leura Cascades, Wentworth Falls Lake, Wentworth Falls Lookout, and the Conservation Hut at Wentworth Falls; as well as tourist towns including Blackheath Town Centre, Glenbrook Town Centre, Katoomba Town Centre, Leura Village and Wentworth Falls Village.
2. Funds will be expended on new, renewal and upgrade of visitor infrastructure, as well as city presentation and visitor facility maintenance and cleaning. Funds should not be spent on strategic plans or investigative works.
3. Any new works should have high visual impact and demonstrate a high level of amenity and design aesthetics in recognition of the high visitation experienced by the tourism areas.
4. A decision for how funds will be spent will be made through the annual budgeting process, using Council's best value prioritisation framework for project selection.

FIGURE 2
FINANCIAL IMPACT OF IMPLEMENTATION PLAN
(Indicative amounts, over 10 years)



4.3 Partnerships

Establishing and maintaining partnerships with other agencies and stakeholders is critical to the success of the Strategic Plan. These partnerships will facilitate shared goals, more effective and efficient use of limited resources and in some cases provide a means of distributing the costs associated with implementation.

Council will need to establish partnerships with other agencies that regulate and/or manage land within the Blue Mountains LGA. Some key agencies include NPWS, Crown Lands and RMS. Council will need to work with these agencies to:

- Form land use agreements,
- Establish comparable fee structures for similar services,
- Determine parking schemes,
- Ensure the appropriate level of consultation between the land managers, and
- Apply consistent approaches in policy and compliance across the LGA.

Partnerships should also be established with the stakeholders, such as the local community, the local tourism industry bodies and operators and the bus and coach industry bodies and operators. This will assist in establishing and promoting the need for the Strategic Plan.

Working with Aboriginal Communities

Council recognises and acknowledges the particularly rights and interests of Aboriginal Traditional Owners of the Blue Mountains, and as well as enjoying a close partnership with these communities, is party to a number of formal agreements which embody and give effect to this relationship, such as the Gundungurra Indigenous Land Use Agreement and The Gully Co-Management Agreement. This strategy offers a clear platform to drive some of the key directions in these agreements, and more broadly in the Aboriginal Advisory Committee Strategic Plan, "Pathways", which are:

- **Living on *Ngurra* (Country)** – Realisation of the social, cultural and economic opportunities on *Ngurra* (Country) for Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people, with a strong focus on younger people.
- **Honouring the Past & Responding to the Future** – Locally recognising and redressing the ongoing process of Colonisation while working with Traditional Owners to develop a shared direction for the future, which embraces the interests of all Aboriginal community members.
- **Addressing Disadvantage** – Addressing ongoing disadvantage in the Aboriginal community in Civic Leadership, employment, education and economic outcomes, affordability and importantly the health and wellbeing of the community.



4.4 Engagement Plan

The implementation of the Strategic Plan needs to be supported by a major stakeholder engagement and communications strategy to inform all stakeholders of the changes to Council policy.

Implementing user pays systems over a gradual period will allow for all communication channels to be well covered and to continually test market acceptance and in turn, revise both revenue and operating costs.

A summary of key stakeholders is shown in Table 8 (next page).

4.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

As part of the proposed Implementation Plan, monitoring processes and feedback mechanisms will be developed to track revenue and costs, as well as market resistance and compliance. This will also consider how to measure the residential and visitor benefits that the investment strategy will deliver. A phased implementation will reduce risk.

Items that may be monitored may include:

- Income generated, broken down by type and location
- Expenditure broken down by type and location
- Compliance levels and fines, including metered and free areas
- Visitation volumes and trends (reported by Destination NSW)
- Coach visitation trends (annual surveys)
- Parking meter usages per site
- Campground and Nature Based Licensing bookings
- Feedback from visitors, businesses and residents

Results will be reported each year via the Council's existing annual reporting process. This includes a review of revenue generated and funding requirements.

A formal pricing review will be conducted after year 4. This will support an overall review and update of this Strategic Plan in 2022/23.

Consistency with NPWS is critical to success

Approximately 70% of the area of the Blue Mountains is designated as national park and managed by NPWS.

This highlights the need for a consistent approach on how visitor user pay charges are applied across the Blue Mountains LGA. For example, visitors to Wentworth Falls would generally not recognise that part of the car parking is on Council land and part is on NPWS land. Having a consistent charging arrangement across all car parking (regardless of whose land it is on), is noted as important to avoid market confusion, potential complaints and the risk of disbursement of visitors to other locations where fees do not apply.

TABLE 8

Stakeholder	Key areas of interest
Ratepayers and residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident exemptions Improved compliance for illegal camping and parking Visitor infrastructure improvements
Local business and Chambers of Commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor infrastructure improvements Implementation plan
National Parks and Wildlife (NPWS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint land-ownership Consistency of charges Booking engine Bus coupon scheme
Roads and Maritime Services (RMS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus coupon scheme including implementation, cost and compliance Flexibility of penalties
Destination NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visitor infrastructure improvements
Blue Mountains Accommodation and Tourism Association (BMATA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation plan Visitor infrastructure improvements
Key tourism operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation plan Visitor infrastructure improvements
Traditional Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategies that deliver economic outcomes for Traditional Owners from Country
Bus NSW (Bus and Coach Association)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus coupon scheme including implementation, cost and compliance Implementation plan Visitor infrastructure improvements Benefits for operators
Blue Mountains tourist bus operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bus coupon scheme including implementation, cost and compliance Implementation plan Visitor infrastructure improvements Benefits for operators
Nature based recreation and tourism operators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scheme design
Crown Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint land-ownership Share of revenue

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