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Catch this: the annual 'Naturally Loddon' festival is back this month, with a list of events designed to entice residents and visitors into the Great Outdoors (Story, page 4)

Building for the future

Council will spend more than \$11.4 million on capital works this financial year, including heavy commitments to roads, community facilities and town streetscape improvements.

It will also fully fund its promised \$250,000 for community planning projects, keep up its investment in information technology and continue its support for Aged Services and Early Years programs.

In return, property owners in the Shire will see a 5.5% increase in rates and the municipal charge – the same as last year.

Waste charges will rise 7% as part of Council's three-year program to bring its waste management activities to a cost-neutral position.

The Shire's budget for 2014/2015 was formally adopted at a special Council meeting on 12 August, after a four-week period during which residents and ratepayers were invited to offer their comments.

The figures show Loddon's finances are in good health, with a projected total income of \$28.8 million and an expected operating surplus of \$1.48 million.

The budget forecasts that rates and charges will bring in \$9.1 million, grants \$16 million, user charges and statutory fees \$1.7 million and received interest \$325,000.

Road works will take up \$3.5 million this year, including local road reseals of \$578,000, local road construction \$1.5 million, local road resheets \$746,000, shoulder sheets \$236,000 and bridge and culvert works \$258,000.

New plant and equipment will take up \$2 million and new urban and road drainage \$330,000.

Spending on recreation, leisure and community facilities will come to \$2.2 million, including \$1.5 million for the Bridgewater foreshore project, swimming pool works of \$390,000 and development costs for the Captain Melville walking trail of \$200,000.

Capital works being carried forward into 2014/2015 include the Boort streetscape project (\$120,000), Inglewood Town Hall redevelopment (\$800,000) and Wedderburn streetscape (\$523,000).



Camper's who filled an allocated area of Loddon Shire's brand-new caravan park at Bridgewater last Easter had a sneak preview of what the rebuilt site has to offer. The official opening of the park is set down for next month, after final works have been wound up.

Young musicians hit high note

Council's youth arts program has upped the tempo again this year, with its established music and art projects to be joined next month, for the first time, by an excursion into film-making.

In July, 39 students from the Boort, Pyramid Hill and Wedderburn secondary schools, accompanied by seven teachers plus Council Recreation Officer Tony Bellenger, spent two days in Melbourne producing their own CD.

Using a professional recording studio in Collingwood, the young musicians laid down original songs and covers for the album, which also features their own photography, graphics and written material.

The CD, entitled *Next Wave*, will have its official launch at Wedderburn College on 10 October, to link in with the school's annual fete.

That day will also feature a display of work brought home from Council's latest city camp for a group of 20 local art students from four schools, planned for 3-5 September.

Last year saw the running of the inaugural event, where 25 students immersed themselves in a program offered by Melbourne Street Art Tours, the only business of its kind in Australia run by street artists.

The students, all aged from 13 to 17 years, spent three days in town accompanied by Tony and a number of teachers.

They tackled stencil artwork, junk sculpture, spray painting and a collaborative paste-up scene on a city wall, as well as seeing professional examples of these art forms on both the streets of Melbourne and at the National Gallery of Victoria.



The team from Boort District School takes a break from work in Melbourne on the Kool Skools CD.

The film-making project is planned for 15-17 October, with selected students from all four secondary schools undertaking a program at Blender Studios in Melbourne.

Council's FreeZa activities throughout the year are funded by the state government's FreeZa program, which allocated \$73,500 to Loddon for the three years to the end of 2015.

Art competition has health in mind

The Loddon Healthy Minds Network is presenting an art exhibition in Loddon Shire to be held around Mental Health Week next month.

This year, the Network is focusing on what are called the "Five Ways to Wellbeing" – connect, be active, take notice, keep learning and give.

The competition is open to all Loddon Shire residents, but there are two categories – students aged 14-18 years and open.

Any medium can be used, but all work must have been completed within the last 12 months and solely by the artist and artwork size

should be somewhere between A4 and one metre square.

Entry forms for students will be collected from the school at the same time as the artwork on Monday 8 September.

For entrants in the open section, forms can be collected from the Shire offices at Wedderburn or Serpentine, arranged by calling Kara on 5437 7999 or by going to one of two websites – www.loddon.vic.gov.au or www.loddonhealthyminds.com.au

Prizes will be presented at functions in the schools or towns represented by the artwork and the pieces will then be displayed locally.

Clubs tee up some extra help

Forty-four community groups in Loddon Shire received some welcome news recently when Council announced the list of successful applicants under its 2014/2015 Community Grants Scheme.

Councillors agreed to allocate \$195,326 in grants for the year, out of a possible \$200,000.

In operation since 2000/2001, the scheme exists to help recreational, sporting and service organisations deliver projects that improve quality of life for residents.

Since it began, Council has invested about \$1.5 million toward 609 community-based projects worth a total of around \$5 million.

Five projects received the maximum allocation of \$10,000 – the Boort Sculpture Park and wetlands, Pyramid Hill Netball Club's new shelter, overhead lighting at Dingee Bowls Club, a kitchen upgrade at Wedderburn Football Club and Korong Historical Society's new book on the history of the town.

Other grants ranged from \$300 for the Wedderburn

Patchwork Group to \$8,000 towards a new equipment and machinery shed at Boort Golf Club.

One of last year's recipients, the Wedderburn Golf Club, applied for \$10,000 to help finance an 8kW solar panel system to combat rising electricity costs.

President Graham Nesbit said the successful project had proven a huge help to the club.



Mayor Cr Gavan Holt, golf club president Graham Nesbit and men's captain Geoff Weston are delighted with the difference the club's new solar panel system has made.

"We were able to pay for the system with the \$10,000 we received under the scheme, plus an extra \$5,000 which came as an interest-free loan from Council," Mr Nesbit said.

"We needed something to keep our overheads down so that the cost of membership wouldn't deter new people from joining.

"The system went up last December and it has just about eliminated our power costs."

Community projects win cash boost

Loddon Shire has set its Community Planning priorities for 2014/2015, with \$266,000 committed to 14 projects across the municipality's five wards.

Manager Community Planning Tim Jenkyn said annual Community Planning funding was based on a \$50,000 allocation per ward, plus a \$500,000 Strategic Fund allocation.

"Unlike Council's Community Grants program, which provides funding support for projects up to \$15,000 at a ratio of 2:1, Community Planning is a direct allocation to projects identified in the local Community Plan, facility master plans or partnerships across communities," Mr Jenkyn said.

"Community Planning committees submit specific projects and an assessment committee looks at each one."

This year sees Loddon's wards receiving funding support for projects large and small, with total allocations to each ranging from \$50,000 to \$60,000.

In Boort Ward, \$57,500 has been allocated to the Nolens Park redevelopment project and \$2,500 to landscaping in Vernon St, Korong Vale, while Wedderburn Ward receives \$50,000 towards the town's streetscape works.

In Inglewood Ward, there's \$25,000 for the Bridgewater Memorial Hall, \$15,000 towards the Inglewood adventure playground project and \$10,000 for Inglewood's streetscape.



Work on Calivil's new playground and lights was assisted by Council's Community Planning budget during last financial year.

In Terrick Ward, the allocations are to the Pyramid Hill Caravan Park amenities project (\$20,000), the Future Planning for Serpentine project (\$10,000), dam fencing at Calivil recreation reserve (\$5,000), a new barbecue shelter in Progress Park, Dingee (\$13,000) and restumping work at the Mitiamo hall (\$8,000).

Funding for restumping of the Pyramid Hill Memorial Hall is being undertaken through Council's Building Asset Management Plan.

In Tarnagulla Ward, Newbridge Progress Park receives \$45,000, while \$5,000 will assist with painting and seating improvements at Soldiers Park in Tarnagulla.

Explore your own back yard

Get out and explore what's around you!

That's the invitation from organisers of events included in this year's Naturally Loddon festival, which opened for the fifth successive year at the start of this month.

The festival launch is planned for Sunday 7 September, from 11am to 3pm at John and Sonia Piccoli's Star Spanner Sculpture Gardens at Barraport, near Boort.

The day opens the door to seven weeks of crafted events designed to showcase the best of Loddon's natural attractions, beginning with a wetlands tour around Boort on 14 September and ending on 26 October with Wedderburn's second Naturally New Age Festival.

Along the way, there will be the traditional Kooyoora Wildflower Show, a family weekend at Terrick Terrick National Park. Out 'n' About in Tarnagulla, the Bridgewater Wool, Wheat and Wine Festival, a carp fishing competition, photographic shows and field trips and, in Boort, Sculpture by the Lake and Luncheon by the Lake.

The program, which is organised by Council's Tourism Department in league with its festival partners, is aimed at all age groups, with a variety of fun, interactive and educational events.



To obtain a 2014/2015 Major Events Calendar, please check the usual tourist information outlets around the Shire, phone the Loddon Visitor Information Centre on 5494 1257 or email your request to loddonvisitorinformation@loddon.vic.gov.au

Seniors to have a laugh

Older people around the state step into the spotlight next month when the 32nd Victorian Seniors Festival springs into life.

The festival program runs all month, but the key week is 5-12 October, with free or discounted events in Melbourne and regional centres.

Last year, around 1,600 events and activities were staged for the festival, with more than 140,000 older Victorians and their friends and families taking part.

Here in Loddon Shire, Council's Seniors Festival will provide activities between Monday 29 September and Friday 17 October.

The feature event will be Gala Day, planned for Wednesday October 15 at the Boort Memorial Hall, with entertainment provided by a show called *Ada & Elsie: Wacko-the-diddle-oh!*

The characters Ada and Elsie were stars of Australian live radio in the 1940s, who played to two audiences – those listening on the wireless and those gathered together at a live venue.

In the show, the audience gets to experience what it was like to help create the atmosphere for the radio listeners.

Gala Day runs from 1pm to 3pm and entry is free.

Afternoon tea will be served after the show and transport is available at \$5 per person.

Other activities during the festival will include two mystery trips and two outings, though details are yet to be finalised.

To find out more, watch for the printed guide, keep an eye on Council's website or phone the Serpentine office on 5437 7999.

Don't miss out on these!

The Bridgewater Wool, Wheat and Wine Festival showcases the primary industries that are the backbone of our region, with highlights including a Fastest Farmer competition, speed shearing, sheep races, wine tasting, novelty events, free kids activities, market stalls, arts and craft.

The day will run from 11am to 3pm on Sunday 19 October at the Bridgewater recreation reserve. Entry is by gold coin donation.

Boort's Luncheon by the Lake is planned for Saturday 25 October at 12.30pm at a new location on the shores of Little Lake Boort.

The event will offer a five-course meal featuring local produce and local wines, with a district farmer providing the beef and "a local celebrity caterer" as coordinator.

The price is \$85 per person, but bookings prior to 25 September qualify for the Early Bird price of \$75.

To reserve your place or find out more, phone 5455 2005, email tourism.boort@gmail.com, pay in person at the Boort Emporium or visit www.trybooking.com/87001

The Inglewood Alive Festival is held annually on the first Saturday in December, with community garage sales, market stalls, CFA and VicParks displays, local wood choppers, a school photo competition, history walks and an open door at the Eucy distillery museum.



*Boort's Luncheon by the Lake is on again next month.
Picture: DREW CHISLETT*

Event planners win some extra support

Five events coming up in the spring and early summer have received a helping hand from Council under the latest round of its revamped Events Sponsorship Scheme.

They are this month's Wedderburn Historical Engine Society rally, next month's Dunolly Field and Game open day, Bridgewater's Wool Wheat and Wine Festival and Wedderburn's Naturally New Age Festival and Loddon Darts Association's "White Twenty" tournament in December.

Other events already supported this round have been the Loddon Darts Association's Gold Fossicker's Cup and tournaments at Boort Golf Club and Boort Indoor Bowls Club.

All received grants of either \$1,000 or \$400 under the scheme, which is designed to assist community and sporting groups around the municipality with their promotional and marketing expenses.

The scheme has traditionally operated on a six-month allocation cycle, in some cases requiring applications to be submitted four to five months in advance of proposed events.

A change was approved last February whereby eligible event co-ordinators can now apply at any time during the financial year, providing applications are received no later than 30 days out from the event taking place.



Wedderburn's inaugural New Age Festival of last year is back next month with an expanded program.

Operating since 1999, the scheme has now allocated more than \$182,000 to community groups to promote happenings held within the municipality.

This first round of allocations, covering applications received from 1 March to 1 June, saw a total distribution of \$4,800.

Volunteers back learner-driver scheme

A government-sponsored scheme to help disadvantaged young people improve their driving skills – and work towards gaining their probationary licences – is busily at work in Loddon Shire.

Still, it could do more with a bit of extra help.

The L2P learner-driver/mentor program – funded by the Victorian Transport Accident Commission and managed by VicRoads, but free for eligible 16 to 20-year-olds – operates in 55 locations across the state.

The local program is shared between the Loddon and Buloke Shires, with the TAC funding channelled through the two councils.

Loddon Shire also contributes funds to the program, is involved with the steering committee, encourages mentors to get involved, assists with reporting and acts as an advocate with VicRoads.

Coordinator Greg Carmody, who is based at Charlton, has been at the wheel since last September.

"Some young people face significant barriers to clocking up their 120 hours of practice," Mr Carmody said.

"They may not have a car or access to a supervising driver, or they may face personal, geographic or economic challenges.

"When I started with the program, there were 14-18 learners and 22 mentors involved, with not all matched, but we now have 41 learners and 28 mentors and need more.

"We put those volunteers through about eight hours of training



Mentor Cathy Ballis with learner-driver Madeline Worth at Pyramid Hill.



Travis Pleydell with mentor Neville White at Wedderburn.

and encourage them to go driving with their mentee at least one hour a week.

"We're fortunate to have access to Charlton College 'pre-driver ed' cars and can occasionally leave one in adjoining towns for a day or two for students to use.

"Pyramid Hill participation is very active and the need for an L2P car is pretty constant, with six mentors and nine learners.

"At present, Loddon Shire appears to have a higher application rate for the program than Buloke Shire."

Mr Carmody, a qualified driving instructor himself, said his current mentors ranged in age from their forties to late sixties.

"We've recently taken three new volunteers in their late twenties," he said. "I believe having a range of ages in that mentoring role is a wonderful thing.

"We see some young people come into the program with few means and low self-esteem, but often, after two or three sessions with a mentor, they develop a passion to drive and do well.

"We see a complete change in kids and that's got to be a positive.

"We'd also love to have another car based in Loddon Shire to service the demand here."

For more information, contact Mr Carmody on 0467 787 328 or enquire at either the Boort, Pyramid Hill or Wedderburn community resource centres or East Loddon P-12 College.

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Tell us all what's happening

It's easy to list your event on Council's website, but remember we need the information at least six weeks prior.

Simply go to www.loddon.vic.gov.au, click on Visit /Events Calendar, then on Event submission form.

Fill in all details as required, giving as much information as possible – better too much than not enough. Once that's done, click Submit.

If any further help is needed, please phone the Loddon Visitor Information Centre on 5494 1257.

