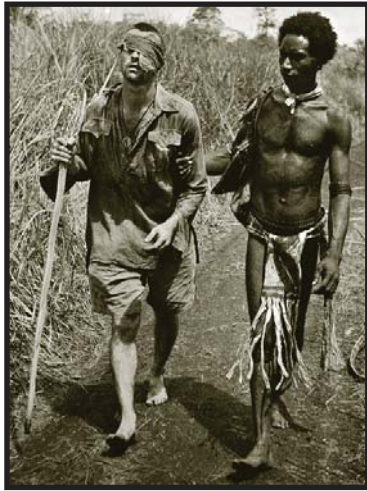


Interim Report on the Kokoda Track Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan



The Kokoda Track Foundation



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The Kokoda Track Foundation

INTERIM REPORT

Background

The need for a co-ordinated plan for the development of the Kokoda Track as a National Memorial Park was first addressed in a paper in August 1994¹. A paper on the need for a proper strategy was researched and prepared by Kelvin Templeton for the Kokoda Track Foundation².

The Kokoda Track Foundation was established in recognition of the assistance given to the Australian Diggers during the Pacific War from 1942 -1945 by the people of Papua New Guinea including the fuzzy wuzzy angels and local indigenous people living along the Kokoda Track. The Foundation plans to provide this assistance by:

- Helping establish the Kokoda Track as a National Memorial Park with a view to developing a self-sustaining eco-adventure trekking industry for the Kioari and Orokaiva people who live along it.
- Providing educational assistance to villagers living along the Track.
- Providing health support for villages along the Track.
- Establishing a self-sustaining eco-tourism model for adoption in other areas of PNG.

¹ A Proposal for a Master Plan to develop the Kokoda Track as a National Memorial Park by Charlie Lynn

² A Proposal for a Strategic Plan by Kelvin Templeton.

Research conducted by The Kododa Track Foundation revealed there was no co-ordinated plan for the development of the Track or a single organisation with responsibility for it. This has led to a number of well intentioned but misguided developments in the area.

The Foundation has successfully lobbied the PNG Government to establish a Kokoda Track Special Purpose Authority with representation from clan leaders, landowners, provincial and local level government authorities, the Tourism Promotion Authority, the National Cultural Commission, community organisations and tour operators.

In developing a strategic plan for the Kokoda Track the Foundation is mindful of the need to ensure we:

- Honour the military history of the Track; and
- protect the cultural and environmental integrity of the area.

Facilitators

The Foundation enlisted the support of two academics with extensive experience in the development of self-sustaining economic development in third world countries – Dr Stephen Wearing of the University of Technology in Sydney and Mr Paul Chatterton from the World Wide Fund for Nature in Madang. Both Dr Wearing and Mr Chatterton have donated their fees back to the Foundation and are providing their services on a voluntary basis. We are deeply indebted to them.

Process

The strategic plan will be developed in three stages:

Stage One has been completed and involved the conduct of three workshops – one in Sydney for Foundation members to explore the needs of eco-trekkers; one in Efogi to explore the needs of clan leaders and landowners; and one in Port Moresby for donor agencies, community organisations and tour operators.

Stage Two is the formation of a Foundation steering committee to establish a planning process for the development of eco-tourism on the Kokoda Track. The steering committee will seek to ensure the empowerment of the host communities along the Track through the application of community-based tourism.

Stage Three is the preparation of a strategic plan based on the outcomes of the workshops conducted in Stage One. We envisage the strategic plan will be a living document – an ongoing flexible process to plan community based eco-tourism initiatives. It will be aimed at developing, monitoring and evaluating tourism development and design along the Track.

The Sydney Workshop

The Sydney Workshop was conducted at the University of Technology in Sydney on 8 December 2003. A summary of the key outcomes of the workshop follows:

- trekkers wanted as much natural experience as possible of the Track;
- trekkers wanted to experience local culture;
- trekkers wanted local and traditional style accommodation and food - they didn't want to stay in a brick hut with a tin roof;
- the local physical environment must be maintained;
- trekkers wanted those sites important in the campaign to be better identified;
- people will come for different reasons, for example for war history, flora and fauna, young Australians interested in personal development. Different groups looking for different things;
- the most important outcome was that the plan to be developed must be beneficial to those people who live along the Kokoda Track. Benefits flowing into the local community must be a priority.

Natural tensions have been accepted. This further exhibits the goodwill of the people along the Track.

Thus the first workshop started to capture what customers are looking for along the Kokoda Track.

A detailed record of the workshop and its outcomes is attached as Appendix 3.

The Efogi Workshop – PNG

The Efogi Workshop was conducted in Efogi Village during the period 28 – 30 April 2003. This was a historic event as it was the first time clan leaders and landowners from across the Track had met.

This was a most interesting and rewarding workshop. The clan leaders, landowners and members of the Kokoda Track Authority worked together in a spirited, positive manner. They examined what had happened over the past 10 years with the increasing recognition of the Track and then worked on a projected five year vision for their particular areas and villages. They then had to prepare an action plan for the next 12 months in line with the vision they had prepared.

A detailed record of the workshop and its outcomes is attached as Appendix 4.

The Port Moresby Workshop

This workshop was conducted in Port Moresby on 15 June 2004 and was attended by representatives from the Kokoda Track Authority, the Tourism Authority, the National Cultural Commission, Oro and Central Provincial Governments, the Australian High Commission, community organisations and tour operators.

Once again participants displayed a willingness to work together in a positive way.

The results of the Kokoda Track Authority Awareness Patrol were presented to the meeting and a detailed report is attached to the workshop notes as Appendix 7.

A detailed record of the workshop is attached as Appendix 5 with the attendance record at the workshop at Appendix 6.

Issues

The Kokoda Track Special Purpose Authority

The Kokoda Track Special Purpose Authority was proclaimed by the Governor General of PNG on 11 June 2003 but it was not until 5 May 2004 that an interim committee was sworn in.

The Kokoda Track Authority comprises representatives from PNG National Government Agencies, Oro and Central Provincial Government, Kioari and Kokoda Local Level Government Authorities, stakeholder community representatives and tour operators.

The main income stream for the Kokoda Track Authority is the K100 trek fee which was proposed by Charlie Lynn in his negotiations with The Hon Sylvanus Siembo, former Governor of Oro Province, to reopen the Track in 2000.

At the Efogi Workshop Charlie Lynn proposed that the trek fee be doubled to K200 for the next three years to allow the Kokoda Track Authority to employ a Chief Executive Officer to ensure the constitution is adhered to and standard procedures are developed and adopted in regard to conditions and rates of pay for guides and porters, village fees, village entertainment and to establish a process for dispute resolution and monitor the implementation of village action plans.

The Kokoda Track Authority should be the single body responsible for all issues surrounding the Track and should work towards developing procedures for operating the Track as a national memorial park and lobbying the PNG National Government for it to be proclaimed as such.

The development and implementation of the park could well become an eco-tourism model for PNG.

The spirit of cooperation and goodwill displayed by members of the Interim Committee in the initial stages of their charter is a most encouraging sign.

Council of Clan Leaders

A number of concerns were raised by individuals in regard to the adequacy of landowner and clan leader representation on the Kokoda Track Authority. The constitution allows for a process to address these areas of concern and to make any necessary changes.

A suggested solution is to establish a 'Council of Clan Leaders' which would comprise every clan leader and landowner along the Track and which would act as an advisory body to the Authority. They would be kept apprised of the work of the Authority through regular awareness patrols and would meet at least once a year to review procedures and make ongoing recommendations for the future.

Logging

The Kokoda Track Foundation was disturbed to learn that logging concessions have been approved over most of the Kokoda Track area. This poses the greatest threat to an effective self-sustaining eco-trekking industry and to the objective of having the Track proclaimed as a National Memorial Park.

There is no room for compromise on this issue. If loggers come then eco-trekkers will not come.

This disturbing news adds a high degree of urgency to the need to develop and implement an alternative source of income for the people living in the affected areas.

Community Based Development

One of the strong themes of the Efogi workshop was the desire for local villages to have input into any planned developments in their area and to have ownership of any initiatives.

This was a very encouraging outcome. Small village projects which involved training selected men and women in sewing, baking bread and establishing crops such as potatoes, beans, peas, sweetcorn, etc would allow them to earn additional income from the increasing number of trekkers using the Track.

The Track

Some concern has been expressed in regard to the proliferation of guesthouses along the Track. In the past 12 months these have been built at Ua Ule Creek, Brigade Hill, near Alola and Templeton's Crossing – and another is planned for the base at Imita Ridge.

This detracts from the experience for eco-trekkers as most want to experience the track as it was in 1942. – indeed this is a strong motivation for many of them.

The Kokoda Track Authority should consider a plan to have suitable campsites established along the way with adequate enviro-toilets at each site.

Feedback

We welcome any feedback from the process thus far. Any comments on the conduct of the workshops, the outcomes of one or more of them and the subjects in this interim report. Please send your comments to Natalie Shymko, Hon Sec of the Kokoda Track Foundation at GPO 3809, Sydney, 2001 or Natalie.shymko@kokodatrackfoundation.org

Acknowledgements

The progress we have made thus far in the development of a strategic plan would not have been possible without the long-term commitment and support of Patrick Lindsay, Paul Croll and Yahoo Serious; the support of Kelvin Templeton for his initial research and guidance; the World Wide Fund for Nature; the University of Technology Sydney; Oil Search PNG for their corporate support; our facilitators Dr Stephen Wearing, Paul Chatterton, Gary Imri and Alfred Amuli; Warren Bartlett and the interim committee of the Kokoda Track Special Purpose Authority in PNG; Efogi Village for their hospitality; the secretarial support provided by Genevieve Nelson at the Sydney workshop and Natalie Shymko at the Efogi and Port Moresby workshops; the ongoing secretarial support provided by Natalie Shymko; the Board Members of the Kokoda Track Foundation and Kalinda Ross of Malcolm Wallace Advertising. We are deeply indebted to them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Lynn', with a stylized flourish at the end.

CHARLIE LYNN MLC
CHAIRMAN