

MINUTES

BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

13 OCTOBER 2026

SHIRE OF WAGIN

Agenda of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee meeting to be held at the Eric Farrow Pavillion on Tuesday, 13 October 2026 commencing at 7:00pm

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1. OFFICIAL OPENING

Presiding Member President Blight opened the meeting at 7:08pm

2. RECORD OF ATTENDANCE / APOLOGIES

Attendance	
Cr Phillip Blight	BFAC Chair
Dr Kenneth Parker	Shire CEO
Donna George	Community Liason Officer
Zoe Enright	Executive Assistant
Xavier White	Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
Wade Brockway	Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer
Bryan Kilpatrick	Wedgecarrup
Alexander Dawson	Wedgecarrup Bush Fire Volunteer
Lyn Lucas	Badjarning
Ross Goldsmith	Piesseville
Carol Goldsmith	Piesseville
Adriaan Liebenberg	Wedgecarrup Bush Fire Volunteer
Cam Clifton	Badjarning
Phil Ward	Lime Lake
Chris Piesse	Piesseville
Glen Thompson	Ballaying
Travis Hammersley	Town and VFRS Volunteer
Jack Stallard	Town and VFRS Lieutenant
Steve Angwin	Cancanning Fire Control Officer
Shaun Robinson	Wedgecarrup
Bryn Becker	Wedgecarrup
Peter Thomas	DFES Superintendent
Gavin Stevens	DFES District Officers
Apologies	
Ian McDougall	Wedgecarrup

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES

3.1. MINUTES FROM THE BUSH FIRE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 31 March 2026

RECOMMENDATION

Moved Chris Piesse **Seconded Jack Stallard**

That the minutes of the Bush Fire Advisory Committee Meeting held on 31 March 2026 be confirmed

Carried

4. REPORTS

4.1 CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER 2027-28 AND 2028-29

RESOLUTION

Moved Carol Goldsmith **Seconded Phil Ward**

That the BFAC NOMINATES Alexander Dawson for Council's consideration to be Chief Bush Fire Control Officer for the 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial years.

Carried

RESOLUTION

Moved Travis Hammersley **Seconded Lyn Lucas**

That the BFAC NOMINATES Phil Ward for Council's consideration to be Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer for the 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial years.

Carried

BACKGROUND/COMMENT

Council considered the matter of future Chief Bush Fire Control Officer appointments at its Ordinary Meeting held on 22 September 2026 and resolved that the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer should remain a volunteer appointment and requested that the Bush Fire Advisory Committee provide Council with a nominee for the 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial years.

Subsequent to Council's decision, the current Chief Bush Fire Control Officer has confirmed their intention to remain in their respective positions until April 2027.

While this provides certainty for the upcoming fire season, it does not resolve the longer-term succession challenge previously identified by Council and the Bush Fire Advisory Committee. The district currently benefits from experienced and capable volunteer leadership. However, finding people willing to assume senior leadership responsibilities within the bushfire service remains challenging.

Officers and elected member have continued discussions with volunteers and potential nominees regarding future leadership arrangements. These discussions suggest there is some willingness amongst individuals to become more involved in district-level bushfire leadership and coordination. At this stage, however, no person has formally nominated for appointment as Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

A recurring theme arising from previous discussions is that the position of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer can appear daunting to prospective nominees. While the operational aspects of firefighting are generally well understood, the broader responsibilities associated with brigade leadership, coordination, administration, liaison with government agencies, strategic planning and emergency management are less visible to potential successors.

Accordingly, officers consider that the period between now and April 2027 should be used to develop and mentor future leaders rather than simply defer the issue until a vacancy arises.

Council has previously noted that section 38 of the *Bush Fires Act 1954* requires the Shire to appoint a Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

Where the Shire fails to make an appointment, the legislation provides a mechanism by which the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services may ultimately appoint a person to the office.

If the district is unable to identify a volunteer willing to undertake the role, any alternative arrangement through DFES would necessarily come at a financial cost to the district. In other words, where a volunteer CBFCO cannot be appointed, a professional CBFCO funded by the community is a real possibility.

Members should recognise that a professional Chief Bush Fire Control Officer arrangement would involve substantially more than appointing a person to a title. It would likely require a salaried employee, provision of a Shire vehicle, on-call and after-hours employment arrangements, work health and safety, fatigue and workers compensation management, and the establishment of managerial and operational reporting structures between the officer, brigades, DFES and the local government.

Such an arrangement would represent a further step in the professionalisation of the district's bushfire service and would likely require a greater time commitment from brigade officers and volunteers through increased training, reporting, compliance and administrative requirements. Put simply, a paid Chief Bush Fire Control Officer would be expected to add value commensurate with the cost of the position, and that expectation would inevitably change the relationship between brigades, the Shire and the management of bushfire services within the district.

In terms of succession planning, at its Ordinary Meeting held on 22 September 2026 Council resolved to:

> *"REQUEST the Bush Fire Advisory Committee provide Council with a nominee for the 2027-28 and 2028-29 financial years."*

The purpose of this agenda item is to give effect to Council's resolution.

The Bush Fire Advisory Committee is invited to identify and nominate a suitable person for the role of Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and a suitable person for the role of Deputy Chief Bush Fire Control Officer.

The Committee is also invited to discuss the mechanisms that the Shire, brigades, Fire Control Officers, current Chief Bush Fire Control Officer and current Deputy Chief Bush Fire

Control Officer can put in place during the intervening period to support those persons and facilitate a successful transition into the positions.

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple Majority

4.2 PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2026-27 FIRE SEASON

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

FOR DISCUSSION

COMMENT

With the 2026-27 fire season on the horizon it is timely to consider and discuss the preparations.

A non-exclusive set of topics is below:

- **Water availability** **Scarce resources water is BYO**

Weather conditions mean that water supply in farm dams is anticipated to be lower in this current season. Where water might have routinely been available in past years it may not be the case this year.

Monitors have been set up on the Shire's firefighting water tanks. Re-filling these tanks comes at a cost and increases risk in the event of a fire.

- **Prime mover to accompany water tanker**

With limited water availability the suggestion has been made that a prime mover be stationed through the season with the water tanker.

Officers see merit in this idea but are unsure about its feasibility.

- **PPE Equipment** **Stocked – new ppe ordered**

The Shire is well-stocked with PPE equipment. Brigade members are encouraged to re-stock as needed. Farm workers who are likely to assist in fire event are encouraged to formally sign-up as a brigade member. This provides clearer protections and enables training as well as the provision of PPE.

- **Radio maintenance** **scheduled this week**

The issue with radio maintenance remains unresolved at this time.

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple Majority

4.3 FIRE BREAK REQUIREMENTS IN PLANTATIONS / CARBON FARMS

RESOLUTION

Moved Ross Goldsmith **Seconded Jack Stallard**

That the Bush Fire Advisory Committee

1. **recommends that the Shire of Wagin Firebreak Notice include the following provisions regarding plantation developments including carbon farms:**

Location	Firebreak Requirement
Plantation boundary adjoining a public road	15 metres
Plantation boundary adjoining neighbouring ownership	15 metres
Plantation boundary adjoining reserves or land external to the plantation development	15 metres
Internal plantation compartments up to 30 hectares	6 metres
Internal plantation compartments greater than 30 hectares	10 metres
Creekline plantings, revegetation corridors, saline land plantings forming part of the internal configuration of the same plantation development	6 metres (or 10 metres where the compartment exceeds 30 hectares)

2. **Write to the Office of Bushfire Risk management siting the challenges of fire breaks around carbon farming requesting for review of recommendations**

Carried 19/1

BACKGROUND/COMMENT

Under the current Fire Management Requirements, plantations are generally required to provide:

- 15 metre firebreaks along plantation boundaries;
- 15 metre firebreaks adjoining public roads;
- 6 metre compartment breaks for compartments up to 30 hectares;
- 10 metre compartment breaks for compartments exceeding 30 hectares; and
- 4 metre vertical clearance for emergency vehicle access.

The purpose of these requirements is to provide access for firefighting appliances, create opportunities for fire suppression and reduce the risk of fire spread from plantation areas.

Once upon a time, plantation proposals within Western Australia generally involved relatively large and contiguous plantation developments comprising blue gums, pine or sandalwood.

More recently, the Shire has experienced increasing interest in carbon farming projects.

These projects differ from traditional plantations in several important respects.

Rather than being developed as a single continuous plantation, many carbon projects seek to combine:

- saline land;
- creeklines;
- drainage lines;
- remnant vegetation corridors; and
- fragmented portions of multiple properties into a single carbon project.

In some instances, proponents are seeking to aggregate numerous relatively small and disconnected planting areas into one large registered carbon farming development.

The result is often not a plantation in the traditional sense, but a patchwork of small planting areas distributed throughout a broader farming landscape.

This has raised questions regarding whether plantation firebreak standards originally developed for traditional plantations remain appropriate when applied to these newer project models.

What do the DFES Guidelines say?

The *Guidelines for Plantation Fire Protection (2011)* do not prescribe a single plantation firebreak standard.

Instead, the Guidelines provide different indicative firebreak widths depending upon plantation type, ranging from 3 metres to 15 metres.

Plantation Type	External Firebreak
Pine	15 m
Blue Gum	15 m
Sandalwood	10 m
Oil Mallee	10 m
Some Kyoto-compliant Mallee systems	3 m

However, the Guidelines place equal or greater emphasis on:

- compartment size;
- access roads;
- water supplies;
- fire management planning;
- suppression capability;
- fuel management; and
- strategic access for firefighting appliances.

The Guidelines continue to recommend compartments generally not exceeding 30 hectares and emphasise the importance of access and suppression opportunities throughout plantation developments.

A review of plantation policies adopted by a number of Western Australian local governments reveals no consistent movement toward reduced plantation firebreak widths.

Shire of Harvey

Harvey applies:

- 15 metre boundary firebreaks;
- 15 metre road frontage firebreaks; and
- 6 metre internal compartment breaks.

Shire of Chapman Valley

Chapman Valley has adopted a more conservative position.

Its policy states an expectation that:

- perimeter firebreaks or barriers be 30 metres wide; and
- planting cells greater than 200 hectares be separated by 30 metre fire barriers.

Shire of Northampton

Northampton defines a fire barrier as a 26 metre cleared strip with a 2 metre firebreak on either side, resulting in an effective 30 metre fire barrier.

Cranbrook, Beverley, Koorda and Perenjori

These local governments generally rely upon:

- planning approval processes;
- plantation management plans;
- fire management plans;
- compliance with plantation fire guidelines; and
- annual firebreak notices.

None of these policies establish a reduced plantation firebreak standard for carbon farming developments.

Recent experience indicates that the principal issue may not be the width of the firebreak itself.

The current Fire Management Requirements already recognise two separate standards:

- External plantation boundary 15 m
- Internal compartment break 6 m (up to 30ha)

The distinction between the two was straightforward because plantations were generally established as large contiguous blocks.

Carbon farming developments are now challenging that distinction.

For example, a creekline planting may form part of a broader carbon farming project but may not function as the external edge of a plantation in the traditional sense. Under the current interpretation, however, the edge of that planting may still be regarded as a plantation

boundary, resulting in long sections of 15 metre firebreaks being required through drainage systems and environmental corridors.

The Committee may consider that, in many cases, these areas more closely resemble internal plantation compartments than external plantation boundaries.

The proposed amendment proceeds on the basis that these situations are not necessarily a firebreak width issue. Rather, they are a land configuration issue. Where a planting area forms part of a larger plantation development and does not create an external interface with neighbouring land, public roads or reserves, it may be more appropriately managed as an internal plantation compartment.

In such circumstances the existing 6 metre compartment firebreak requirement already provides a recognised fire management standard within both the Shire's Fire Management Requirements and the Plantation Fire Protection Guidelines.

The effect of the proposed amendment is therefore not to reduce the Shire's existing plantation fire protection standards. External plantation boundaries would continue to require 15 metre firebreaks. The amendment simply clarifies that creekline plantings, revegetation corridors, saline land plantings and other internal elements of a fragmented carbon farming development may utilise the existing compartment firebreak standards where they form part of the internal configuration of the plantation rather than its external boundary.

Under the proposed approach, the firebreak standards would be applied as follows:

Location	**Firebreak Requirement**
Plantation boundary adjoining a public road	15 metres
Plantation boundary adjoining neighbouring ownership	15 metres
Plantation boundary adjoining reserves or land external to the plantation development	15 metres
Internal plantation compartments up to 30 hectares	6 metres
Internal plantation compartments greater than 30 hectares	10 metres
Creekline plantings, revegetation corridors, saline land plantings forming part of the internal configuration of the same plantation development	6 metres (or 10 metres where the compartment exceeds 30 hectares)

This approach retains the Shire's existing 15 metre boundary firebreak requirement while recognising that modern carbon farming developments frequently comprise multiple internal planting areas which, for fire management purposes, may be more appropriately treated as plantation compartments rather than external plantation boundaries.

The proposal therefore represents a clarification of how the existing standards are applied, rather than a reduction in the level of fire protection required.

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple Majority

4.4 FIRE CONTROL WITHIN THE WIND TURBINE ZONE – TOPIC REQUESTED BY MR CAM CLIFTON

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

FOR DISCUSSION

OFFICER COMMENT

In December 2025 the State Government published the DRAFT Renewable Energy Planning Code and Guidelines for public comment. The Shire of Wagin made comment on the guidelines and instigated a submission by the 15 members of the Central Country Zone.

The State Government's draft guidelines address fire by proposing that wind farms must:

> *include vehicular access enabling efficient, safe and reliable emergency response and evacuation, consistent with the Planning for Bushfire Guidelines (WAPC, 2024).*
>
> *This includes:*
> *a. at least two ingress/egress points, preferably from two different public roads, and for each part of the development site where the site is divided by a public road(s).*
> *b. internal access tracks that:*
> *a. have suitable gradients, vertical clearances and all-weather surfaces;*
> *b. provide a minimum four-metre trafficable width to each turbine and key infrastructure components such as substations and control offices;*
> *c. include passing bays at least every 600 metres, with a minimum size of 20 metres long and six metres wide; and*
> *d. provide adequate turn-around areas for emergency vehicle manoeuvring.*
> *WF-PO7.5 Wind farms provide sufficient, accessible water supply and firefighting infrastructure. The number, size and locations of water tanks is to be determined in consultation with the Department of Fire and Emergency Services and local brigade, and include at a minimum:*
>
> *a. one 45,000-litre static water tank at each property entrance from a public road;*
>
> *b. one additional 45,000-litre static water tank within the development site;*
>
> *c. water tank fittings compliant with relevant Planning for Bushfire Guidelines (WAPC, 2024) standards; and*
>
> *d. a hardstand at each tank for emergency vehicles.*
>
> *Wind farm operations support emergency response by:*
>
> *a. maintaining firebreaks, asset protection zones, access tracks, water supply, hardstands and fire equipment; and*

b. enacting emergency procedures, such as turbine shutdown, blade repositioning, power disconnection, activation of obstacle lighting to support aerial firefighting, and facilitating emergency vehicle and water access.

Comment on the draft State Government planning guideline closed in April 2026. The timetable for the finalisation of the guideline is unknown.

It is important for BFAC to note that following changes to the State Government planning laws, local governments will not be the decision-maker in relation to wind farm applications and will not have the capacity to set conditions.

Development applications are assessed instead by the State Government Development Assessment Panel.

Developments have been approved in our neighbouring Shires being Narrogin, Williams and West Arthur. Those local governments have advised that the conditions of approval include a Bushfire Management Plan and meeting with their respective BFAC.

Officers have been advised by our neighbouring local governments that the narrative remains that wind farms can be shut down their turbines to give aircraft safer access for firefighting. Officers have not been able to verify this.

Officers have attended various forums and public information sessions with PoweringWA (the State Agency responsible for coordinating the renewable energy transition). Officers have continually made the point that wind turbine developments change the dynamics of firefighting even if they do not significantly contribute to additional fires.

The Victorian CFA draft fire and emergency management framework for renewable energy facilities

In Victoria, the Country Fire Authority (CFA) has produced a comprehensive draft fire and emergency management framework for renewable energy facilities. The guideline extends beyond planning and development assessment matters and addresses the ongoing operation of wind farms, solar farms, battery energy storage systems (BESS), substations and transmission infrastructure.

The draft guideline covers topics including bushfire risk assessment, emergency vehicle access, firefighting water supplies, vegetation management, fire breaks, emergency management plans, responder safety, emergency exercises, brigade familiarisation, emergency information systems and operational bushfire preparedness. The CFA framework also establishes expectations regarding consultation with local brigades, annual site familiarisation activities and site-specific emergency planning.

In Western Australia such a guideline does not exist.

VOTING REQUIREMENTS

Simple Majority

5. BRIGADE REPORTS

5.1. CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER REPORT

nil

5.2. DEPUTY CHIEF BUSH FIRE CONTROL OFFICER REPORT

nil

5.3. BRIGADE REPORTS

nil

5.3.1. BADJARNING

nil

5.3.2. BALLAYING

nil

5.3.3. CANCANNING

nil

5.3.4. LIME LAKE

nil

5.3.5. PIESSEVILLE

Discussion regarding the Piesseville fire truck currently at Cam's awaiting repairs- once completed DFES will supply us with a new truck

5.3.6. WEDGECARRUP

nil

5.3.7. WAGIN TOWN

nil

6. GENERAL BUSINESS

Matters discussed:

- condition of Wedgecarrup truck – advised is in good condition.
- daily call ups.
- radios and access to enough radios
- application that the CBFCO has created for fire season

7. CLOSURE

With no further business, Presiding Member Cr Blight closed the meeting at 9:07pm