

Summary of Evidence Hearing Stream 02 - Hamish McCrostie

Darby Planning LP (#608) et al

1. My name is Hamish McCrostie. I am a consultant to Darby Asset Management and hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Applied Management Degree with major in Strategic Management. I have been involved professionally in the ski industry for 37 years in New Zealand and internationally.
2. The ski industry in the Queenstown Lakes District makes a significant contribution to the financial and social wellbeing of the communities within the district. It contributes to the range of outdoor recreation activities available within the District, enhancing its reputation as a major national and international tourist destination.
3. The continued viability of the District's ski areas requires significant ongoing capital investment to continue to develop their offerings to remain attractive and competitive. The recognition of the expansion of ski area activities and ski areas as year round attractions is very important in supporting the ongoing financial sustainability of the District's ski areas and the District's commerce. Ski areas have significant potential to develop and improve year round, recreation, hospitality, and accommodation. A more integrated means of access/passenger transport from the valley will improve the package of services offered, attractiveness, and draw in greater numbers of visitors.
4. It would be advantageous if the PDP recognised the intrinsic relationship between the access and operation of ski areas' activities, and the advantages to be gained with improved efficiencies in access. The nature of the locations of access routes is important and the creation of access corridors through either the extension of the SASZs or through rule changes would be of great benefit. That way development of land based and passenger lift/other systems, and the provision for infrastructure and services can be done comprehensively and efficiently, helping optimise the management and development of the District's ski areas into the future. This also aligns with and supports the development plans for Treble Cone and Soho.
5. It is appropriate to specifically provide for access roads in the PDP as use of vehicle access is an accepted method of access and is the only method currently used in SASZs. Passenger lift systems also need to be provided for to facilitate development of other transport options such as gondola and funicular type systems which provide easier and safer high capacity access.

6. The submissions of Treble Cone and Soho Basin seek additions to the definition 'Ski Area Activities'. These are designed to expand the range of activities deemed appropriate within these areas, and to clarify the status for activities which already exist. Under each of the activities in my evidence I have added my explanation as to why it is appropriate that activity be classified as a "Ski Area Activity".
7. More and more of the visiting ski area guests have experienced overseas winter sports destinations where ski in/ski out accommodation is a large part of the overall experience. Demand is growing for on snow accommodation in NZ. The attraction for guests is a much improved winter alpine experience combining easy access to and from the snow, the character and ambience of the experience akin to a Northern Hemisphere winter mountain experience. The concept of staff and other workers staying on the mountain provides many benefits to the ski areas. Ski areas in winter are a 24 hour/7 days/week operation including snow grooming, snow making, snow storm management and logistics management. Provision of accommodation will provide efficiencies and operational safety via less fatigue and transport issues on roads. It also provides benefits to the staff by providing affordable accommodation.
8. The concept of visitor accommodation is a growing trend in NZ ski areas with DOC approving major accommodation development at Porter Heights Ski Area in Canterbury and Cardrona Alpine Resort operating its 15 units at or near capacity through most of winter and into summer operations. Cumulative benefits will be realised through guests staying on the mountain and using existing food and beverage outlets improving the financial sustainability of the ski areas.
9. It makes sense that any accommodation for staff, workers and visitors maximises the ski in/ski out capability. Use of the term 'above snowline' would be difficult to quantify as this depends on winter weather, freezing levels and importantly aspects; South-facing slopes usually get and keep snow to lower elevations. A suitable elevation above which ski area accommodation would be suitable should therefore be adopted.
10. In summary of my evidence the PDP should allow for or enable:
 - (a) Creation of access corridors to the local roading network;
 - (b) Include the listed activities in my evidence within Ski Area Activities;
 - (c) Staff and visitor accommodation should be provided for within the SASZ.