

## 3. Sustainable Management

### 3.1 The Concept of Sustainable Management

The concept of sustainable management recognises there are limits to the use of natural and physical resources and there is a need to balance the desire for growth and activity with the need to protect the resources and values the environment provides.

People will determine their aspirations and activities, but sustainability implies these are not unconditional. The planet's resources are not endless, and its ability to maintain life can be compromised. This sets a physical limit. Other physical limits relate to how resources can be used and the rates of renewal for harvestable resources. There are also moral limits that relate to the community's duty to develop the District in a way which maintains the environment for the future inhabitants of the District. Sustainability is about recognising and understanding these limits so the people of the District work with them and not against them.

The concept of sustainability contains a number of elements and in preparing the District Plan the Council has had regard to the following matters:

- **Life-giving qualities:** All life depends on the health of the natural environment, namely air, water and land. Sustainable management means ensuring these qualities are not lost.
- **Efficiency:** Renewable and non-renewable resources need to be used efficiently to avoid waste, pollution and environmental degradation. In addition, some resources are finite.
- **Heritage:** Elements of natural and physical resources can be destroyed, particularly elements which may be of intrinsic, cultural and heritage value, such as landscapes, landforms, heritage items or species.
- **Future Needs:** Sustainability is about meeting needs both now and in the future and issues of equity between groups and generations need to be recognised.

- **Minimising Adverse Effects:** Sustainable management requires on-going monitoring based on better and more accurate information to ensure adverse effects are avoided or mitigated.

### 3.2 Sustainable Management and the Resource Management Act 1991

The overriding purpose for resource management in the District is to promote the "sustainable management" of natural and physical resources, defined under Section 5 of the Act as:

*... managing the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well being and for their health and safety while -*

- (a) *Sustaining the potential of natural and physical resources (excluding minerals) to meet the reasonably foreseeable needs of future generations; and*
- (b) *Safeguarding the life-supporting capacity of air, water, soil, and ecosystems; and*
- (c) *Avoiding, remedying or mitigating any adverse effects of activities on the environment.*

The Act defines the environment to include: ecosystems, natural and physical resources, amenity values and the social, economic, aesthetic and cultural conditions affected by those matters.

### 3.3 Social and Economic Well being

The Act provides for the management of the use, development and protection of natural and physical resources in a way, or at a rate, which enables people and communities to provide for their social, economic and cultural well being and for their health and safety. As such the sustainable management of the

natural and physical resources for the continued well being of the District's population has clear social and economic considerations.

The Queenstown Lakes District is wealthy in terms of natural and physical resources and amenities, which are important to the economic and social well being of the community and the identity of the District. These include:

- water resources, lakes and rivers
- mountain topography
- good flat land for development and agriculture
- good transport links - road and air
- outstanding visual landscapes
- climate and air quality
- heritage buildings and environs.
- Hydro generation lakes and margins and facilities.

The definition of natural and physical resources within the Act includes structures. This definition therefore applies to activities such as hydro generation facilities.

The economic and social well being of the District has resulted from activities associated with, and development of, the natural and physical resources of the District. In promoting sustainable management, provision will be made for the enabling of social, economic and cultural well being.

The Council in preparing and administering the District Plan, and in carrying out its other functions under the Act can have regard to the effects on the economic and social well being of people and communities.

## 3.4 Towards Achieving a Sustainable District

The District is rich with a diverse range of natural and physical resources, which have evolved as a result of many factors. Its history, and the fact much of its natural character has not been extensively altered has shaped the way it is today. The District Plan must take heed of the District's:

- topography and extensive lakes and river network;

- geographic location;
- existing infrastructure;
- social, cultural and economic diversity;
- vulnerability to natural hazards; and
- heritage and landscape values and amenities.

As well as issues of natural resource use, other issues surrounding sustainable management for the District include:

### Managing Adverse Effects of Human Activities on the Environment

The District's use of natural and physical resources can result in damage to the environment. Controlling these effects is an important part of sustainable management. Their impacts can be managed by establishing environmental limits for the effects of development.

### Considering the Natural Environment

The natural environment has values that are extremely important to the District. Where significant values are identified, the Plan is used to manage and protect these sites, areas and systems.

### Enabling People to Meet their Needs

The Plan makes provision for activities that enable people to meet their needs and aspirations while at the same time it aims to ensure the environment can sustain the needs and aspirations of future generations. The Plan provides a level of certainty to the community about what can happen in their environment and gives people the ability to influence how things occur.

### Future Generations

Each generation has a continuing obligation to leave future inhabitants of the District a sustainably managed environment. Just as current residents benefit from the District's heritage, so must they ensure future citizens inherit a clean, conserved, functioning environment and a viable economy. This includes both the physical appearance of the towns, villages and rural areas and the retention and health of the natural environment.

## 3.5 Consultation

As a major part of formulating the new District Plan and establishing the principal issues, objectives and policies a major consultation process was undertaken to help identify the community's vision for the District.

The consultation process had a number of components including:

- (i) organised meetings with community, neighbourhood or township groups;
- (ii) meetings with specific interest groups and individuals;
- (iii) consultation with the takata whenua;
- (iv) the preparation of six background issues reports, setting out the main issues and options in respect of:
  - settlement development
  - reserves and recreation policy
  - the use of the lakes and rivers
  - heritage
  - visual amenity and the landscape issues in the Wanaka-Hawea-Makarora Basins
  - consideration of natural hazards and geological constraints.
- (v) preparation of an issues and options report;
- (vi) undertaking community workshops in respect of Arrowtown, Frankton and Arthurs Point;
- (vii) reviewing the provisions for the rural areas as a result of submissions on Plan Changes 92, 99, 25 and 1
- (viii) undertaking two community growth management surveys.

One of the major outcomes of the process was a strong perception that decisions in the Queenstown-Lakes area have often been the result of reacting to the effects of development rather than addressing the issues and

establishing the objectives, policies and environmental outcomes sought. This situation has resulted in a belief among a significant section of the community that Queenstown-Lakes District is losing its sense of identity or community balance. This sentiment has expressed itself in various ways and during the consultation process residents, communities and interest groups outlined concerns in respect of:

- development incompatible with or not sympathetic to the natural environment in terms of location, scale and appearance.
- fear the visual amenity of natural landscape was being damaged by unsympathetic development.
- concern about the impact of development on potable water supplies.
- concern about waste disposal.
- statements advocating limits to growth or the growth rate.
- concerns about the quality of development.
- the perceived loss of local identity or the need for the various communities to establish and maintain their own identity.
- the need to achieve a balance between serving the visitor industry and the local community.

These perceptions are held at different levels and with differing degrees of fervour depending on the community and the location. However, the general desire to see development managed in a way which acknowledges and protects the natural environment and its resources, and is sympathetic to the District's visual amenities (both natural and physical) prevailed throughout the District. Most often it is seen in terms of balancing economic growth and resource preservation (natural and built), and perhaps more fundamentally by the need to balance the opportunities of private individuals against the greater community good, both now and in the future. Consultation on the District Plan is ongoing. The statutory district plan process provides for submissions and further submissions on the Plan and on any variations or changes that may occur. Prior to preparing any variations or changes formal consultation is also required. All of these processes provide for continuing public involvement.

## 3.6 A Vision of Community Aspirations for a Sustainable District

A sustainable District is efficient in the way it uses resources. It is likely to have compact urban centres and strong town centres or retail centres. It has a quality environment where people feel safe, can access its various parts easily by means of efficient road, public transport and pedestrian links and can orientate themselves through public views, landscape features and feature buildings. It is a District where people can identify with the cohesive urban form and the protection of the character of different areas such as the street environment, use of open space, enhancement of the landscape and the external appearance of its buildings. Those elements of the District that contribute to its identity are supported and enhanced while others are added to increase the vibrancy and vitality of the District, such as support for the promotion of relevant and appropriate urban design principles.

The surrounding rural environment provides people with the opportunity to experience healthy, functioning natural resources such as protected ecosystems and habitats, lakes, rivers and mountains. It has the potential to provide for recreation, open space, walkways, and respects cultural, heritage and intrinsic values. Landforms, landscapes and outstanding natural features such as undeveloped ridgelines, hilltops, areas of open space and visually prominent landscape elements that contribute to the District's identity and well being, are protected from activities that damage them.

A sustainable District enables the social and economic well being of the District as well as the communities that make up the District. It is necessary to have some understanding of the elements and resources that create that well being and to recognise that within the District there are different communities each of which seeks to enhance its own social and economic well being. The issue of community well being has taken on increased importance to the residents of the District in terms of determining policies which ensure the sustainable management of both the natural and physical resources of the District, or particular localities, in a manner which will allow communities to provide for their economic, social and cultural well being.

The first matter which has a marked bearing on the well being of the community is the physical setting of the living environments and their

relationship to the mountains, valleys, lakes and rivers. As such all development including public utilities and facilities should not disrupt or destroy the natural setting or scenic vistas which are part of the community's living environments and which the community seeks to sustain.

The second element is the scale of buildings, extent of the urban areas, urban form and urban amenity values. Much of the community has retained low-rise buildings, a general regard for views and pedestrian accentuated streetscapes. The townships have also established a compact character with a distinction between the rural and urban areas. This provides an environment in which people feel secure and with which individuals identify. Individuals and communities in the District strongly associate with the outstanding natural features and the landscape.

Finally, there is the historic and cultural heritage, which exists within parts of both the urban and rural areas. This heritage strongly complements the present function of the District as a resort and is an integral part of its character and well being.

Community aspirations for the District involve four basic elements:

- (i) ensuring that activities can be supported by and do not deplete or damage the natural resources of air, water, ecosystems and the land and the intrinsic values these provide, especially the visual amenity.
- (ii) enable the social, economic and health concerns of the community to be met by appropriate services and facilities.
- (iii) identifying and enhancing those values or resources, both natural and physical, which provide the community character and image of the District and which in turn allows both individuals and communities to provide for their social and economic well being, both now and in the future.
- (iv) ensuring that growth and development does not compromise those resources and amenities which are the reasons why people choose to live in and visit the District.

The District is diverse in character and resources, and recognises and promotes specific character areas so that no group feels alienated and the needs of all groups are met through the means of urban environments, rural environments, recognition of the heritage, culture and people's links with land. People are able to meet their own needs both now and in the future. The District welcomes innovative design solutions whilst maintaining and enhancing the natural character of the area and connections with the past including heritage values and resources and the interests of the takata whenua.

Delivery of some services of the Council will be through the Annual Plan process under the Local Government Act, rather than through the District Plan. This is particularly in the area of social and economic policy.