

BEFORE THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL HEARINGS PANEL

UNDER

the Resource Management Act 1991

IN THE MATTER

of the review of parts of the Queenstown Lakes District Council's District Plan under the First Schedule of the Act

AND

IN THE MATTER

of submissions and further submissions by
REMARKABLES PARK LIMITED AND
QUEENSTOWN PARK LIMITED

**STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF ROBERT JAMES GREENAWAY ON BEHALF OF
REMARKABLES PARK LIMITED AND QUEENSTOWN PARK LIMITED**

(RECREATION AND TOURISM)

STREAM 13 REZONING HEARINGS

9 June 2017

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1. QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

- 1.1. My name is Robert James Greenaway.
- 1.2. I am an independent consultant recreation and tourism researcher and planner.
- 1.3. I graduated from Lincoln University in 1987 with a three-year Diploma in Parks and Recreation Management with Distinction, and completed 18 months of postgraduate study in conservation management.
- 1.4. I hold the status of an Accredited Recreation Professional with the NZ Recreation Association (**NZRA**), and am a member and past Chair of the NZRA Board of Accreditation for member accreditation to professional status.
- 1.5. I am also a 'core group' member of the New Zealand Association for Impact Assessment.
- 1.6. In 2011 I was appointed as an inaugural Board member of the Sir Edmund Hillary Outdoor Recreation Council, to assist Sport New Zealand with the implementation of the National Outdoor Recreation Strategy, amongst other things.
- 1.7. I was awarded the Ian Galloway Memorial Cup in 2004 by the NZRA (of which I am a past Executive member) to recognise 'excellence and outstanding personal contribution to the wider parks industry'. In 2013 I was awarded the status of Fellow with the NZRA.
- 1.8. I was employed in the fields of recreation and tourism at Tourism Resource Consultants (1990-1995) and at Boffa Miskell Limited (1995-1997) before beginning to work independently in 1997.
- 1.9. I have completed more than 350 consultancy projects nationally since 1997 and have presented evidence at more than 80 resource management hearings; more than half for the Environment Court or EPA. In the Queenstown Lakes area, I have provided evidence for land developments at Peninsula Bay (in 2006 and 2016), Parkins Bay, Riverrun (Albert Town) and Hill End. I have worked on numerous other projects in the District, including the Queenstown Airport runway extension safety area, NZOne runway reconsenting, Wilkin River jet boating consents, and Clutha River hydro reconsenting and other hydro investigations; and am also presenting evidence on the Queenstown Lakes District Council's (**QLDC**) Proposed District Plan (**PDP**) for the beneficial owners of Sticky Forest in Wanaka. I have been assisting with the

Remarkables Gondola proposal since 2015. I presented evidence for Queenstown Park Ltd (**QPL**) to the QLDC Hearings Panel in April 2016 on Chapter 21 – Rural, Chapter 22 – Rural Residential and Chapter 33 Indigenous Vegetation.

2. CODE OF CONDUCT

- 2.1. I have read and am familiar with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the current Environment Court Practice Note (2014), have complied with it, and will follow the Code when presenting evidence to the Council. I also confirm that the matters addressed in this statement of evidence are within my area of expertise, except when relying on the opinion or evidence of other witnesses. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.

3. SUMMARY

- 3.1. My evidence considers:

- (a) the submission made by **QPL** on the Queenstown Lakes District Council's PDP; and more generally
- (b) the potential effects of the land uses proposed within the Queenstown Park Special Zone (**QPSZ**) on existing recreation and tourism values; and
- (c) the fit of the proposed tourism development within the QPSZ with tourism in Queenstown.

- 3.2. My main conclusions are as follows:

- (a) Tourism is fundamental to the Queenstown economy and community and is experiencing substantial growth beyond national averages. Mr Philip Osborne has presented evidence to the Hearings Panel on this issue on behalf of Council (6 April 2016) and I need not review this issue much further. However, this growth is a cause of local traffic, accommodation and activity congestion, which can lead to visitor dissatisfaction and a negative commercial and community spiral. Congestion and access limits can either be used as a deliberate mechanism for controlling growth, and/or innovative methods can be used to accommodate growth while limiting its adverse effects. I consider the QPSZ proposal to be of the latter ilk.

- (b) The QPSZ proposal has very limited potential for adverse effects on existing local recreation values, while offering benefits by, for example, extending the regional trails network.
- (c) The proposal responds well to local tourism congestion issues by creating a significant attraction with very little dependence on the local road network, while increasing the capacity of existing tourism infrastructure near Queenstown airport as a summer and winter destination.
- (d) The QPSZ rules could be strengthened by the addition of assessment criteria for controlled and restricted discretionary activities to include:
 - (i) Whether proposed public access opportunities complement regional walk, river and cycle networks for both construction standard and connectivity;
 - (ii) Whether public access on proposed public walk and cycleways are secured in perpetuity via an appropriate legal mechanism;
 - (ii) The degree to which the applicant guarantees that public access areas and tracks will be maintained to an agreed standard and one which matches that of the regional walk and cycle network; and
 - (iv) The ability of gondola construction activities and bridge and wharf design to avoid or minimise effects on existing recreation and tourism activities on and beside the Kawarau River.

4. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1. QPL is proposing a tourism development and gondola on the Remarkables Station land, linking Remarkables Park with the Remarkables Ski Area via a visitor activity and accommodation area on terraces above right bank of the Kawarau River. Activity areas for two 'Rural Visitor' pods are sought, along with six Rural Residential settings.
- 4.2. My evidence largely concerns only the gondola and Rural Visitor pods. Effects on tourism and recreation of the Rural Residential pods almost entirely reflect the findings of Mr Stephen Brown in relation to maintaining landscape, natural character and visual amenity values. To aid his analysis I have supplied Mr Brown with my assessment data (particularly that in my Attachment 1) to describe the potential viewers of the pods and other proposed development areas.

- 4.3. I understand that the Rural Visitor pods are expected to feature visitor accommodation, retail, visitor attractions of the artisan (including food and beverage) variety, and gondola infrastructure. Additional visitor and biking trails may be developed as activity options by themselves or as an addition to the gondola experience, with descent by mountain bike.
- 4.4. The proposal includes public walk and cycle bridges at one or more of three indicated points across the Kawarau River, and one or more of five ferry and jet-boat landings on its true right bank. These three access options – gondola, ferry / jet boat and walk and cycle – limit the requirement for visitor access by road, which is a significant advantage of the proposal and a key reason why I support the concept as a means of supporting growth while limiting – and potentially reducing – transport congestion issues in Queenstown.
- 4.5. I consider in my evidence:
- (a) Existing recreation and tourism activities which could be affected by the development proposal;
 - (b) How the proposal will fit with existing and future tourism patterns in Queenstown; and
 - (c) How the submission by QPL, in particular the QPSZ, can ensure positive outcomes for public recreation near the Kawarau River and avoid or minimise adverse effects.

5. EXISTING RECREATION AND TOURISM VALUES AND EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSAL

- 5.1. Attachment 1 to my evidence provides a summary of central and local government agency expectations for management of the recreation and tourism values of the upper Kawarau River valley and the tourism and recreation activities occurring there.
- 5.2. In summary, management agencies are seeking:
- (a) Provision for a wide range of recreation and tourism activities while maintaining the area's natural qualities;
 - (b) Ability of the Remarkables Ski Area to support increased visitor numbers;
 - (c) The provision of quality visitor facilities;

- (d) Maintenance and improvement to public access opportunities where appropriate;
- (e) Maintenance of locally significant fishery values (specific to the Otago Fish & Game Council); and
- (f) Public access on the true right of the Kawarau River linking with existing Queenstown Trails (specific to the Queenstown Trails Trust).

5.3. Existing recreation and tourism activities in the upper Kawarau River valley are:

- (a) Grade 1 rafting and kayaking, including commercial family activities from the Shotover confluence;
- (b) Commercial and private jet boating (but by far the former) above the Arrow confluence, but mostly above the Shotover confluence (KJet and Thunder Jet);
- (c) Walking and cycling on the true left – probably the biggest use of the area counted in the tens of thousands;
- (d) Fishing on the River, mostly in summer with around 3000 angler days on the entire Kawarau but mostly in the clear water upstream of the Shotover confluence, with one commercial guide operating;
- (e) Rock climbing on the Rastus Burn Rocks beside the Remarkables Ski Area access road and beyond the proposed gondola corridor; and
- (f) Tramping and other climbing areas are to the south and west of the Remarkables Ski Area.

5.4. The scenic values of the setting underpin all these activities and the potential effects of the proposal are largely limited to changes in landscape values (the other effect is the more frequent use of the Kawarau River). Landscape effects are reviewed in the evidence of Mr Stephen Brown. Of importance is the location of many existing visitor activities in the bottom of the river valley beside or on the water, from where views of the river terraces are limited. Above the Shotover confluence, the gondola cable and cabins will be obvious, as will any bridges and jetties above or beside the River.

5.5. Mr Brown has contributed to the proposed QPSZ provisions with the aim of avoiding or minimising potential adverse effects on landscape values and to provide QLDC with an appropriate assessment and control framework.

- 5.6. The proposal otherwise supports tourism and recreation activities by increasing the use of the Remarkables Ski Area, which is already developed for commercial activities, and providing public recreation access to the right bank of the Kawarau and linking those new trails with existing routes on the left bank.
- 5.7. Other effects will include increased jet boat activity on the Kawarau River and additional landing sites, and potentially increased fishing pressure caused by the close location of visitor activities and accommodation. The latter will require the issuing of fishing licences and will be based almost all below the Shotover confluence. The former will be controlled via the Queenstown Lakes District Navigation Safety Bylaw and, as defined by the proposed QPSZ, discretion over the location of wharves and their impact on public access. I am advised that construction of the gondola cable is likely to require only a very short halt to jet boat activity and use of trails beneath it. Other construction activities are on private land or public land with no recreation use (most of the Rastus Burn Recreation Reserve outside the Remarkables Ski Area).
- 5.8. The gondola corridor includes part of the QLDC-administered recreation reserve to the south of Lake Hayes Estate, allowing consideration of locating a gondola station on the reserve. The QLDC as property owner would retain full discretion over the potential for this development.
- 5.9. In summary, adverse effects of the proposal on recreation and tourism are likely to be minor, and have controls available via, for example, the Navigation Safety Bylaw and issuing of fishing licences, as well as the proposed QPSZ. The River currently features regular jet boat activity and cannot be considered a remote or undeveloped recreation setting, although it retains high landscape values.

6. FIT WITH QUEENSTOWN TOURISM

- 6.1. The QLDC *Economic Development Strategy* (February 2015) notes that the region is highly dependent on tourism for its economic and social welfare, and is an all-season destination. While noting that economic risk in the region will be reduced if there is a diversification in economic activity (by growing the 'knowledge-based sector' for example), the Strategy retains gaining more cash per head from the visitor industry as a core priority. Destination Queenstown in its 2016-17 Business Plan seeks also to achieve sustained growth in visitor numbers (a 6% increase in annual visitor expenditure and 4% growth in the number of visitor guest nights for 2016-17).

- 6.2. The Economic Development Strategy also notes that the region – and especially Queenstown – has a growing tourism infrastructure problem (pp12-13):

The growing resident and, in particular, the visitor population is placing pressure on infrastructure and the District's ability to adequately fund maintenance and improvements. The Economic Futures Taskforce report concluded that although current infrastructure is generally adequate for the existing population, the infrastructure network struggles at peak tourism periods....

Although the local population is forecast to grow relatively strongly, visitor numbers are forecast to grow strongly too and the proportion of residents to visitors may decline over time. Hence parts of the rating base will continue to get stretched to cover infrastructure costs for the combined resident and visitor population....

In addition, there are perceptions that some parts of Queenstown do not offer the upmarket ambience often experienced in other resort towns. There have been concerns from landlords and retailers that there is insufficient building maintenance, an increasing number of low-end-of-spectrum retail shops and restaurants, and non-optimal traffic routes in the town centre.

- 6.3. The Strategy recommends two development priorities relevant to tourism and the Queenstown Station proposal (p17):

Encourage higher contribution visitor activity: This priority is about growing the proportion of higher value visitors, encouraging visitors to spend more in the District, diversifying our visitor offerings and ways they can contribute to our community, and further reducing seasonality in visitor expenditure. Note that Wanaka has capacity and needs longer stay visitors. The priority builds on the District's existing strengths in the visitor economy and leverages its natural amenities. Increasing the value derived from visitors rather than just visitor numbers can also reduce some of the pressure on infrastructure and the environment. The priority aligns with Destination Queenstown and Lake Wanaka Tourism strategies.

Future proof infrastructure: This priority is focused on expanding funding options for investing in infrastructure; ensuring that adequate investment is made to maintain high quality infrastructure; and ensuring that funding sources and investment reflect the incidence of costs and benefits. The priority will directly address the challenge of the increasing pressure the District is facing to provide for adequate investment in infrastructure and help to ensure high quality connectivity.

- 6.4. In my opinion, the proposal is an elegant response to Queenstown's infrastructure issues. Importantly, it is entirely off the public grid and is tourism infrastructure with no demand on the ratepayer (as noted at paragraph 8.77 in Mr Ulrich Glasner's evidence on infrastructure for QLDC). Its ability to offer a non-vehicular activity option with very proximate access from the airport and accommodation in the Remarkables Park area, and with on-water and off-road access from central Queenstown, is likely to create reduced demand generally for private or rental vehicle use by visitors. The proposal will therefore support additional visitor activity with limited additional loading on existing infrastructure compared with intensifying visitor services in central Queenstown or any satellite location which will be dependent on the road network.

The main capacity limitations are the ability to provide visitor accommodation, which is part of the proposal, and the capacity of the Queenstown International Airport.

- 6.5. While the proposal includes free public access tracks on the right bank of the River, the core attraction is commercial and provides links between other commercial services, including those at the Remarkables Ski Area. Most importantly, the service will grow off-season (i.e. not winter) activity in the Ski Area, offering more reliable employment and utility from existing infrastructure with little additional investment beyond the gondola terminus.
- 6.6. Importantly, the proposal provides much of the trail network extension and connectivity sought by the Queenstown Trails Trust as shown in my Attachment 1. Several options for joining the network across the Kawarau River are shown and include connectivity to Kawarau Falls. While full access to Gibbston on the true right of the River is not contemplated by the existing proposal, this option is not foreclosed. I am advised that potential safety issues toward the eastern end of the QPL property currently limit the option of easily completing this link, although its development would clearly be of significant regional benefit. A connection between the ski area and Gibbston is also shown as a desired future route by the Queenstown Trails Trust, and while this is not defined as a component of the Comprehensive Development Plan, the option is not precluded if it complies with other proposed provisions of the QPSZ for, for example, vegetation clearance and landscape effects.
- 6.7. In summary, the proposal leverages existing infrastructure (Remarkables Ski Area and Remarkables Park) and local natural attractions to provide a new visitor service that will be high yield and have no impairment on existing tourism services or values. It supports both Destination Queenstown's objectives and those of the QLDC Economic Development Strategy.

7. QUEENSTOWN PARK LTD SUBMISSION

- 7.1. My understanding of the QPL submission is that it seeks to develop a statutory planning regime which enables and controls the proposed developments within the QPSZ, giving adequate certainty for investors while ensuring potential adverse environmental effects are avoided, remedied or mitigated. From a recreation and tourism perspective and considering, especially, the evidence of Stephen Brown, I consider that there is a strong potential for a tourism development to occur on the site with minimal adverse effects.

- 7.2. I prefer the QPSZ option compared with the PDP Rural Zone as the planning regime for the proposal, although this could be a reflection of my more common role in hearings where I help develop or respond to consent conditions for large infrastructure proposals. The Special Zone offers more specificity for what is a major stand-alone development akin to those already supported by special zones in the Queenstown Lakes District. It also allows me more capacity to understand the controls for proposed conditional and discretionary activities.
- 7.3. With that in mind, I have suggested the following considerations for relevant proposed controlled and restricted discretionary activities, and make some consequent observations:
- (a) Whether proposed public access opportunities complement regional walk, river and cycle networks for both construction standard and connectivity. Accordingly, the formation of a cycle/walking trail from Boyd Road to the proposed pedestrian bridge at Rural Visitor Activity Area 3 is a required element of the Comprehensive Development Plan.
 - (b) Whether public access on proposed public walk and cycleways are secured in perpetuity via an appropriate legal mechanism. Subdivision of Queenstown Park land would trigger requirements for esplanade reserves, and public trail would most likely be located within these.
 - (c) The degree to which the applicant guarantees that public access areas and tracks will be maintained to an agreed standard and one which matches that of the regional walk and cycle network. With the trail largely, if not fully, located on esplanade reserve, maintenance arrangements would most likely be as for any similar part of the regional trail network.
 - (d) The ability of gondola construction activities and bridge and wharf design to avoid or minimise effects on existing recreation and tourism activities on and beside the Kawarau River. This requirement is covered by the provisions of the proposed QPSZ.
- 7.4. The QLDC as property owner retains full discretion over use of its recreation reserve to the south of Lake Hayes Estate for any gondola infrastructure.

7.5. I do not see any need to add controls to the QPSZ for on-river activities, as these will be subject to the Navigation Safety Bylaw. The location of wharves is proposed to be a restricted discretionary activity with discretion over their location and effects on public access to and along the Kawarau River defined in the proposed QPSZ.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1. In my opinion, the QPSZ proposal will complement Queenstown's tourism industry. It effectively responds to local infrastructure issues while supporting expectations to accommodate additional visitors, and to extract more income from each of them by supplying high-quality activity and service options in a managed natural setting.

8.2. By controlling its potential landscape effects, the proposal will be able to function with minor adverse effect on existing enjoyment of the upper Kawarau Valley, which currently features frequent motorised activity in the form of jet boats, mostly above the Shotover confluence. It would become a busier visitor setting.

8.3. The QLDC retains control via the proposed planning provisions over critical elements of the development proposal.

8.4. There are established expectations for the development of public access on the true right of the River, and the proposal provides for a connection from Boyds Road to an appropriate new river crossing. Further development options for public access are not foreclosed.

Robert James Greenaway

9 June 2017

ATTACHMENT 1: RECREATION AND TOURISM ACTIVITY REVIEW