

SUBMISSION TO QLDC ON BEHALF OF THE QUEENSTOWN STAKEHOLDERS GROUP – EXPANSION OF QUEENSTOWN AIRPORT AIR NOISE AND OUTER CONTROL BOUNDARIES

Introduction

- [1] In early 2018 Queenstown Airport Corporation Limited (“QAC”) announced a proposal to expand the capacity of Queenstown Airport (“QAC’s Proposal”). QAC’s Proposal would result in approximately 5 million passenger movements per annum. This is around 2.5 times the airport’s current operating capacity.
- [2] Following notification of QAC’s Proposal, The Queenstown Stakeholders Group (“QSG”) has been formed as a result of discussions between local tourism businesses, residents’ groups, local iwi and interested members of the public.
- [3] QSG submits that QAC’s Proposal is both premature and unsound ahead of detailed assessment of the impact and consequences of any such expansion of the airport’s operating capacity.

Proposal for expansion of Queenstown Airport

- [4] In short, if implemented, QAC’s Proposal will increase the number and frequency of flights within the current operating hours of 6.00am to 10.00pm.
- [5] There has been significant community opposition to QAC’s Proposal.
- [6] QSG is fundamentally opposed to QAC’s Proposal in its current form.
- [7] There are a number of matters that are of concern to QSG. The key issue is however, the complete lack of community infrastructure planning accompanying the expansion proposal, and the subsequent potential and very high risk of the loss of amenity values which firstly bring people to Queenstown as visitors, and secondly which are enjoyed by residents in the Wakatipu.

The Council’s role

- [8] QSG submits that the Council has a significant and fundamental role in the process leading to decisions about the growth of Queenstown Airport. The Council has a role as the responsible Local Authority. It has a key role to play in taking a sustainable development approach to provide good quality local infrastructure, and local public services. In taking a sustainable development approach the Council must take into account social, economic and cultural interests of its people and communities.
- [9] QSG is concerned at the process by which QAC seeks to use the District Plan variation process under the RMA. Using that variation process would require that Council to “adopt” the QAC Proposal as the community’s own. QSG submits, in light of community opposition, that the Council has no mandate from the community to promote QAC’s expansion plans as a variation to the Proposed District Plan.
- [10] QSG submits that the Council has a role to consider the responsible management of tourism in its district with a view to:
 - [a] Maintaining and enhancing the visitor and resident experience;
 - [b] Addressing the region’s infrastructure and capacity concerns and associated funding challenges;
 - [c] Developing a destination management strategy and plan before enabling further growth in the QAC Proposal;
 - [d] Managing responsible growth. Smart growth not fast growth is needed;

[e] Referencing the above points back to QAC's Statement of Intent.

Protecting the tourism experience

- [11] QSG supports managed and responsible growth for the Queenstown Lakes District. The region already suffers from serious capacity, infrastructure and funding challenges.
- [12] QSG is not anti-tourism. However, the resident and visitor experience and Queenstown's reputation as a premium visitor destination must be properly planned, protected and maintained.

Destination Management Masterplan

- [13] It is time for the Council to be proactive and embark on the preparation of a Destination Management Masterplan and Strategy that reviews the effects of ongoing increases in tourism numbers, engages with the local community and tourism industry, assesses the effects of ongoing increased visitor numbers to the region on residents and our communities, and addresses how our infrastructure can sustain the increased numbers of people in the area.

Stakeholder concerns regarding the proposed noise boundaries

- [14] Accepting QAC's Proposal is premature.
- [15] The Council's 10-year \$980 million plan does not include any allowance for the scale of visitors expected as a result of QAC's Proposal, in particular increased demand placed on infrastructure such as sewerage, roading, transport, and parking.
- [16] Significantly, there is no additional funding mechanism for the region approved by central government to address the burden on the region's small ratepayer base to fund ongoing growth of the scale that can be expected if QAC's Proposal proceeds.
- [17] The social and environmental impact of the QAC Proposal is not confined to air noise and the outer control boundary expansion. There are greater detrimental effects on the community and visitor experience that will arise from increasing the capacity of the airport. Approximately 3000 homes, almost 12,000 people, 80% of Queenstown tracks and trails, schools, pre-schools and the hospital will be significantly impacted by the adverse effects of increased noise levels and frequency of aircraft movements.

Conclusion

- [18] QSG submits that any immediate attempt by QAC to progress QAC's Proposal must be declined by QLDC.
- [19] The Council in consultation with key stakeholders including local businesses, iwi and residents has a statutory role and function in leading the process and ensuring decisions about growth are well researched and planned and above all else, sustainable.
- [20] The future of Queenstown depends on how we manage growth of our greatest economic and social asset, the tourism industry.