

Before the Queenstown Lakes District Council

Under the Resource Management Act 1991
In the matter of a submission under clause 6, Schedule 1 of the Resource Management Act 1991 on Stage 3B of the Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan
Between **Wayfare Group Limited (#31024)**
Submitter

Summary of Evidence Fiona Black

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Summary evidence

- 1 My evidence covers operational and detailed aspects of the Wayfare Group operations in the Queenstown Lakes District, and in particular its operations, history, and growth at Walter Peak.
- 2 The development of the Walter Peak site as a visitor destination, since the 1970's has largely reflected the changes and growth of the tourism industry in Queenstown. Investment into the Site including infrastructure upgrades, environmental enhancement, and building restoration have all been due to the success of tourism operations of *TSS Earnslaw* and Walter Peak.
- 3 Since 1991 various tourism product offerings have been tried at Walter Peak and sometimes abandoned. This illustrates how the tourism industry is always evolving and Real Journeys is constantly trialing new product ideas to keep up with this evolution. Without planning certainty or flexibility, Real Journeys does not have the ability to grow, diversify and change with the market.
- 4 The most significant developments of Walter Peak have occurred since Real Journeys' ownership of the property in 2013; including the development of a 'master plan for the site in 2017; the further extension of the Colonels Homestead (and a DoC Land Exchange process to enable this); the construction of a new rural demonstration area (the Amphitheater), new generator shed and storage shed; including significant landscaping and provision of more staff accommodation in 2019., and between 2015 – 2017 significant conservation initiatives through wilding pine removal and native revegetation and enhancement.
- 5 The key to success of "TSS Earnslaw" / Walter Peak product also hinges on the attractiveness of Walter Peak itself and the ability to increase the number passengers carried because some passengers remain at Walter Peak while "TSS Earnslaw" cruises back to central Queenstown, picking up additional passengers.
- 6 My previous evidence to the District Plan Review¹ discusses the environmental impacts of tourism development and landscapes. Real Journeys takes issue with the assumption that farmers are somehow superior custodians of rural land compared to other land owners. Tourism operators have a vested interest in ensuring the landscape values which attract visitors to the District are maintained. This has been demonstrated by the effort (and funds) Real Journeys has put into restoring and enhancing Walter Peak.

¹ [_0621 1341 0607 1342 Real Journeys and Te Anau Developments T01B Fiona Black Evidence; S0621 Realjourney T02 Black F Evidence; S0621 Realjourney T03 Black F Evidence; C0607 S0621 Realjourneys T05 Blackf Evidence](#)

- 7 Real Journeys does acknowledge that there is potential for the Tourism Industry to have significant adverse effects on the environment, but this usually arises when the infrastructure cannot keep up with demand. We do not want this to happen at Walter Peak, hence the requirement to have a flexible planning framework to provide for further development, including infrastructure at Walter Peak.
- 8 One of Real Journeys values is “share our backyard” as an organisation we are mindful that we share southern New Zealand’s amazing places with the ‘community’, incredible endemic flora, and fauna thus as a whole we must work to protect and/or nurture the environments and the communities we operate in.
- 9 In my experience of consenting and planning work, discretionary frameworks, ONL over a subject site, and even ONL classification adjacent the site of an application, complicates the consenting pathway and can make a resource consent application untenable due to uncertainty and the requirement for multiple site assessments or costly mitigation especially when trying to trial a new product, which has an unknown outcome at the application stage.
- 10 The requirement to develop new tourism products in a cost effective and timely manner has been exemplified by the need to ‘pivot’ our business post COVID-19. Specifically, Real Journeys has looked at several product development proposals since coming out of “lockdown”, and most of these propositions had to be abandoned as they were too costly and could not be achieved fast enough to provide sufficient benefit. In the last 9 months we were only able to change our product offerings to activities which were already consented.
- 11 Given that the tourism industry is never static and needs to constantly evolve with changing visitor expectations; we need a planning framework which recognises our need to continue to provide for development opportunities at Walter Peak to cater for the ongoing success of Real Journeys “TSS Earnslaw” / Walter Peak products. That is, a Zone to allow our Walter Peak business to continue to grow and diversify in the same way that it has done to date. Without this opportunity, the business may stagnate and there will be economic, conservation, employment and community losses.
- 12 We acknowledge that Walter Peak is subject to natural hazard risks nonetheless for us the setting at Walter Peak is relatively benign compared to the other places where we operate. However due to the sites natural hazard risks, Real Journeys is very concerned that the proposed Walter Peak Zoning (high to low landscape sensitivity) in the PDP is effectively shutting the door on any further development at Walter Peak. Real Journeys needs the ability to develop some of the land in the ‘high landscape sensitivity’ zone as this, with the likely effects of climate change, may be the only area that is appropriate for some developments such as additional visitor accommodation.