

Before Queenstown Lakes District Council

In the matter of The Resource Management Act 1991

And The Queenstown Lakes District proposed District Plan –
Rezoning Hearing Topic 12 – Upper Clutha mapping

STATEMENT OF EVIDENCE OF JOHN GERARD DARBY FOR

Glendhu Bay Trustees Limited (#583)

Dated 4 April 2017

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**anderson
lloyd.**

Introduction, Qualifications and Experience

- 1 My full name is John Gerard Darby, I am the Director of Darby Partners Limited; a specialist land planning and design company based in Queenstown. Darby Partners were retained by the Glendhu Bay development company to provide development planning, project management and design services for the Glendhu Bay land. Darby Partners has continued to provide broader planning and design services to GBT to support the inclusion of the Glendhu Bay Zone into the District Plan Review (DPR).
- 2 I have a Bachelor of Horticulture, Postgraduate Diploma in Landscape Architecture from Lincoln University and am a Fellow, of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects.
- 3 For the past 40 years I have practiced as a landscape architect, master planner and golf course architect both in New Zealand and overseas, including specialist post graduate studies in community planning and golf resort design at the Harvard University Graduate School of Design Cambridge USA.
- 4 I have read the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses in the Environment Court Practice Note. This evidence has been prepared in accordance with it and I agree to comply with it. I have not omitted to consider material facts known to me that might alter or detract from the opinions expressed.
- 5 Darby Partners was formed in 1998 to provide specialist master land use planning and landscape design services in areas which typically would be regarded as 'sensitive' landscapes. Fundamental to our work, are thorough research of the resource issues, opportunities and the utilisation of comprehensive landscape planning methodologies to arrive at fully integrated and sustainable land use outcomes. This process approach has been illustrated and exemplified by the successful integrated planning and design outcomes for projects such as Te Arai North, Clearwater, Jack's Point, and Omaha South, which are all world class golf course resorts. The intention behind the design and development of Glendhu Bay was similarly to identify a sustainable land use option that balances landscape, environmental, recreational and community requirements and benefits with land use economics.
- 6 The Environment Court decision granting consent for the Glendhu Bay project is essentially intended to be replicated with some updates into the district plan framework, to enable a level of commercial and land management flexibility in the longer term in implementing the consent and ancillary activities, and ensure the site's longevity and consistency with remaining aspects of the DPR, including wider District objectives. With the benefit of further refinement of the plans as consented, the proposed Glendhu Station Zone seeks to ensure the same or better ecological, and landscape outcomes as well as ensuring the economic

viability and implementation flexibility required to give effect and manage the Glendhu Bay land now and for future generations.

- 7 The area proposed for the Zone is an important resource. Its ongoing use and development will be most effectively and efficiently managed in the long term subject to consents governed by an over-arching site specific district plan framework.

Executive Summary

- 8 My evidence addresses the following matters:
 - (a) A summary of the background of development and land management practices of Glendhu Station and its surrounding rural land resources.
 - (b) The general options and approaches to management of the rural land resource and landscapes generally within this District.
 - (c) A review of the benefits of providing for a combined management approach to the Glendhu Station land and surrounding natural and physical resources as a comprehensive zone contained in the District Plan.
 - (d) A summary of the key refinements to the structure plan, layout, and design of the Glendhu Station Zone.
 - (e) The values of tourism recreation to the District generally; how the Glendhu Station Zone will affect Wanaka as a tourist destination, and golf tourism in this District in particular; transition from farming to tourism.
 - (f) A conclusion on the landscape protection, ecological enhancement, public access and recreation benefits to the community to be derived the integrated land management approach proposed.
- 9 The proposed zone achieves the following key outcomes:
 - (a) The zone provides a comprehensive planning framework for Glendhu Station and greater flexibility in implementing the development approved by the Environment Court without creating adverse effects. For example, the Consent granted imposed onerous and costly sequencing of activities as part of consent implementation. The proposed zone establishes a framework to enable variation of those sequencing requirements while still in the long term achieving the same environmental benefits.
 - (b) The zone provides a refined overall structure plan that remains rooted in protecting and enhancing recreational, ecological, conservation, and amenity values while providing for 8 of the originally proposed residences

without adverse effects through careful siting of homesites and integration with the landscape.

- (c) The zone enables the McRae family to diversify their large landholding by providing for activities through a planning and consent framework that balances certainty, economics and landscape and environmental protection for generations to come.

Background, History and Philosophy

- 10 Darby Partners and the McRae family have enjoyed a long standing partnership for realising the vision for use, management and development of Glendhu Bay Station. Darby Partners was originally approached by the McRae family to assess the concept and feasibility of a golf course being established and operated on their family station at Glendhu Bay.
- 11 The McRae family had at the time recently undergone an extensive process of tenure review and dealing with farm and family succession planning to provide for the future generations of the McRae family and the ongoing viability and management of the Station. I have always admired the McRae family objectives of retaining the Station within the family and looking to continue productive farming, whilst diversifying the use of the land resource. The McRae family did not consider large scale subdivision and sale of the Station as a realistic option, but also needed to consider alternative land management practices to farming which would enable intergeneration use and provide other sources of income. The logical option to achieve these objectives was to spring board from this District's large recreation and tourism potential while seeking to respect the landscape within which the family has acted as stewards for several generations.
- 12 This approach to land management of the rural land, particularly in this District within outstanding natural landscapes I believe is also shared by other farming families. It is important that conceptually the District Plan provides a framework to enable landowners to diversify and adapt land management practices and therefore income sources for rural land, including those within outstanding natural landscapes. This is not to say that primary production or traditionally 'rural activities' are not important in rural areas. But rather, that acknowledgement needs to be had within this District, that to enable continued protection of the matters which are of importance (i.e. landscape values and amenity in particular) are provided. To do this, landowners need to derive an income basis to provide for this protection. This is not realistically able to be achieved in this District now through solely primary production given land values and operational costs involved.

- 13 The Glendhu Station Zone is intended to provide for this diversification and protection long term. I.e. it envisages appropriately sited and sensitive recreation activities to occur (such as the golf course and various public walkways) as well as ecological management, and low scale commercial and visitor accommodation activities which allow visitors to enjoy and understand the landscape's values and history. The alternative option is for Council to recognise this diversification through the District-wide provisions for management of landscapes and the rural zone. Undertaking this approach District wide will assist other landowners to realise the diverse potential of their rural lands, and ensure that important values such as public access, ecological protection and enhancement, and landscape management can occur for the benefit of future generations.
- 14 Specific environmental protection and enhancement provisions included in the proposed Zone provisions are intended to further support this objective, such that it allows flexibility and options for landowners in the future to consider alternative sustainable land management practices to primary production, where positive environmental enhancement is secured, for instance, in the form of a comprehensive Revegetation Strategy that advances the approach the Environment Court consented for the Glendhu Station land. If this flexibility is not offered to landowners, and alternative means of deriving income from the rural land resources are not enabled, these significant environmental benefits are realistically not able to be achieved. Again, I consider this is a model which is not specific just to this zone, but could and should also be extended district-wide where appropriate, and has formed part of submissions on the district plan our group has made in other areas.
- 15 We undertook detailed studies, secured the McRae's support and held open days. In the end we had 2 opponents, which went through a long, arduous and stressful process financially and personally for the McRaes. We deferred the lodge concept and 8 of the residences/visitor accommodation so that we could find a way forward, but as outlined in the Environment Court decision, there remained capacity within the landscape to absorb further development, subject of course to appropriate conditions and covenants. We have put those measures in place, including a wide reaching and integrated Revegetation Strategy, and are spring boarding from the foundation we have created to establish this Zone.

Environment Court Process

- 16 A core element of the Environment Court Glendhu Bay consent centred around a complete package of development and conservation. One core element of this was the development of a central golf course and associated facilities and amenities.

- 17 The design of the golf course is intended to integrate visitor accommodation amenities with local community uses in an operating model which worked for the McRae family objectives and was also economically viable. The model which Darby Partners employed for this was also used for other golf course developments – the model has proved successful previously in combining local and visitor uses to assist with economics of operating and maintaining a high standard of golf course- something which is normally beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest clubs in high population areas.
- 18 Another core aspect informing the design and location of the Glendhu Bay golf course development was to ensure that it was an accessible amenity to the local community as well as a course destination of a high quality to attract the support of visitors to the District. In order to achieve this, the course is designed as part of a holistic package within the broader proposal; this involves the provision of nearby visitor amenities and ancillary commercial and low scale retail activities.

Summary of Amendments to Glendhu Structure Plan

- 19 The amended structure plan for the Glendhu Station Zone (appended to Brett Thomson's evidence) further refines the layout and integration of activities across the zone, while providing for the core elements of the Environment Court's consent decision. The objective in undertaking these refinements has been to ensure a more logical and feasible pattern of development to occur on the most suitable sites while ensuring that this does not create any different or adverse environmental effect, while otherwise materially and significantly enhancing the quality of the environment and amenity, recreational, conservation and ecological values.
- 20 The amendments to the golf course location alongside adjacent residential areas allows for an element of flexibility in implementing the proposal. The location of the golf course in this area is critical to its use, enjoyment, and ultimately its economic viability. The natural rolling topography of the golf course site provides an ideal foundation for that development to occur and be designed to fit within the natural shape of the land, thereby minimising earthwork volumes, costs, and minimising adverse landscape effects.
- 21 Further refinements have also been provided to the zone structure plan to ensure that critical ecological aspects of the Environment Court consent decision are incorporated into the proposed zone in the form of a Revegetation Strategy. This was an important element of the original Glendhu Bay consent package, which proposed extensive planting of local native species, and revegetation management plans.

- 22 Consolidation of the residential pods will also provide for an element of flexibility when implementing the proposal on the ground, while ensuring sufficient certainty that values are protected by confining scale of buildings, design constraints, locations, and associated conditions. From experience, projects such as this benefit from a long term approach which allows for such refinements to occur with a degree of certainty.
- 23 The proposed zone includes eight carefully selected homesites that have been identified following further and recent assessment and refinement that has been carried out following the Environment Court Decision. These homesites have been identified in locations within the landscape that can absorb change without generating adverse visual, visibility, amenity or other effects.
- 24 The provision for the low scale golf clubhouse, shearer's quarters and carport with flexibility for refinements or small additional commercial recreation activities within the L/S area, as well as visitor accommodation associated with the golf course is an important element of the zone's objective. These aspects of the Environment Court's consent decision are complementary to the campground and visitor accommodation areas (the campground and F/H areas) of the wider Glendhu Station land now being incorporated into the Glendhu Station Zone package, including to assist the McRae's to diversify.
- 25 With respect to the visitor accommodation provided for within the original Glendhu Bay proposal, substantial landscape, economic and financial feasibility studies were undertaken by Darby Partners to determine the minimum number of visitor beds required to sustain the development and for the operation of the golf course.
- 26 Golf courses typically cost between \$10m and \$16m to construct and, approximately \$1.2m - \$1.5m per annum to maintain. Without the associated visitor accommodation residences and shearers' quarters, at this minimum level, the golf course would not be viable in present day or going forward in terms of the capital investment and annual operating cost. Put simply, one cannot exist without the other. Within this refined structure plan, a total number of 50 visitor accommodation / residential units are now provided for, to support the viability of the Glendhu Station Zone. This is a minor increase from the Environment Court consent decision, and resulted from further site studies and refinement of the visitor accommodation / residential model based upon more recent development experiences.
- 27 A mixed model of residential and visitor accommodation such as this has been proven to work in similar markets / resorts such as Clearwater. The income derived from rental and visitor accommodation contributes towards the costs and maintenance of the land, including the golf course and ecological

enhancement. This income is in addition to that generated from the golf club membership, daily green fees, and the clubhouse and commercial ancillary facilities.

Tourism in Wanaka, Golf Tourism, and the Glendhu Station Zone

28 I believe the Glendhu Station Zone will provide a high quality destination for international and domestic tourists which will align with the vision for Wanaka to continue as an international tourism destination.

29 Tourism is a significant and growing component of New Zealand's overall economy, and in particular in the Queenstown Lakes District. The visitor economy is the key economic driver for the Wanaka region and provides the community with a better quality of life. In the 2015/16 period, visitor spend increased by 20% to contribute **\$399.14 million** (or **\$1,093,534 per day**) to the Wanaka Community's economic wellbeing, creating the majority of jobs and providing our community with a level of infrastructure and amenity that wouldn't otherwise be supported by a population of approximately 7,000 residents.¹

30 The Lake Wanaka Tourism Strategic Plan describes its strategic goals and vision in light of the growing tourism market as follows:

*The Wanaka region is well poised to take advantage of these trends but needs to ensure its brand identity is strong and LWT's marketing activity is tightly targeted yet innovative to build on our long term strategic advantages and capitalise on opportunities in order to **achieve our target of 1,045,000 guest nights by 2022**. LWT's mission, on behalf to our 460+ members, is to promote our spectacular region to the world, to inspire people who share our values to visit, stay and share their experience.*

31 I consider this vision to create sustainable long term growth in the Wanaka tourism market, and provide for increasing tourism opportunities is critical to promoting the Wanaka region to the world as a four season destination, inspiring people to visit and stay there. A core aspect of this is ensuring that sustainable management recognises this growth, as well as protecting those values which are important to the region, including public access, open space, and ecological enhancement and protection. I consider that the Glendhu Station Zone provides for all of these elements.

32 An obvious observation on the pattern of tourism development in and around Wanaka is that increased visitor arrivals, nights and expenditure have been associated with increased development in accommodation, products and services and residential growth. This growth has not had the effect of deterring new visitors, but rather has contributed to the attraction for more people to visit.

¹ Lake Wanaka Tourism: Strategic Plan 2012-22 (updated July 2016)

The enhanced recreation and unique accommodation opportunities offered through the Glendhu Station Zone will further contribute to future growth of Wanaka as a destination. Given the strict landscape and visual design parameters that the proposed Zone offers, this area will be in-keeping with the character of Wanaka and will enhance the ability for all people to access and enjoy this land.

- 33 In terms of activities, the Zone includes provision for a significant number of public walking trails, boating, golf, mountain biking and sensitively designed accommodation, all of which are in-line with the current positioning of Wanaka. These offerings, within a beautiful setting, and subject to strict design and landscape constraints will complement the visitor facilities and activities offered in Wanaka. Moreover, the inclusion of the Glendhu Bay campground into the Zone will incorporate a much-loved and treasured community feature into a confirmed planning regime. This will protect and recognise its importance to consolidate, grow and develop in the future and continue to provide an opportunity for many families to visit and recreate in the future. I believe the two aspects of accommodation, being those associated with the Glendhu Bay golf course, and that of the campground, will be complimentary of each other and will offer a unique visitor experience on across the full spectrum of visitors to enjoy.
- 34 My intention is that this zone will be viewed as an environmentally responsible form of development, providing opportunities to experience the beautiful scenery of Lake Wanaka. In this sense, the development can be regarded as being in-keeping with the character of the destination and the current vision for and positioning of Wanaka as a tourist destination.
- 35 The proposed Glendhu Station Zone is approximately 35 kms from the Matukituki Valley entrance to Mt Aspiring National Park. Visitors would have to drive past the development and a few kilometres further on, pass the Treble Cone Ski Area access road and Mount Aspiring Station before entering the park boundary.
- 36 Park visitors have increased in number along with the growth in Lake Wanaka as a destination. This trend is also noticeable in other comparable national park destinations such as Aoraki Mount Cook, Abel Tasman and Fiordland. I consider one aspect of this is an increase in facilities and developments near national park boundaries which enhance access to those areas. For example, the Hermitage Hotel at Aoraki Mount Cook and Glentanner Park situated 8 kms from the Aoraki National Park boundary.
- 37 Given the level and type of development in and around Wanaka, including the level of activity at Glendhu Bay over summer, I do not consider that visitors

travelling towards the National Park will be surprised by development of this Glendhu Bay Zone, or that this would in some way detract from that overall visitor experience. For most visitors, there would not be any direct connection between Glendhu Bay Zone and Mt Aspiring National Park. I consider these are clearly two entirely separate features given the distance of the development from the Park's boundary and the fact that the Treble Cone Ski Area and other signs of domestication (Mt Aspiring Station) lie in between.

- 38 In addition to the above general tourism considerations, the golf course development of Glendhu Station Zone is an obvious and critical component of the Zone 'package' which will contribute a specific type of recreational opportunity to domestic and international visitors.
- 39 Golf is becoming an increasingly popular tourist activity with thousands of visitors travelling to New Zealand each year to play the sport. There are strong links between golf tourism and other tourism activities, such as food and wine experiences, and Tourism New Zealand has leveraged this in its golf marketing activities and strategy. Between 2006–2016, more than 712,000 golf tourists visited New Zealand.²
- 40 International golf visitors want courses that have amazing vistas and are clearly different from the courses they play at home. New Zealand's points of difference are:
- (a) Stunning vistas (our courses are set against a backdrop of stunning New Zealand nature and awe inspiring scenery).
 - (b) Local and diverse (NZ is filled with golf courses offering a diverse range of experience).
 - (c) Post-game indulgence (although courses are immersed in nature, world class food and wine, spa, vineyards and accommodation are never far away). Domestic golf participation is also growing and is high in global terms and in comparison to other activities.
- 41 New Zealand tourism has a strong focus on visitors with a high daily spend on accommodation and activities when in New Zealand. The significant growth of luxury lodge accommodation is focused on this market niche with a particular focus on the US market. Historically half the world's golfers have lived in the US. New Zealand (and the Queenstown Lakes region) is easily accessible for Australians with direct, cost effective flights. The direct flight access from Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland will also support the growth of golf tourism.

² Tourism New Zealand Corporate website, 28 September 2016

- 42 The quality of golf facilities within the Queenstown Lakes region is exceptional, with the following courses: Millbrook, Jacks Point and the Hills in particular having excellent international recognition. Queenstown Lakes could be the first New Zealand region to have the scale and quality of courses, golf tour operators and services to meet domestic and international visitor's needs with sufficient international standard courses to enable variety of play across several adjacent courses, during a week of holiday. The golf course within the Glendhu Bay Zone will add to this growing market of tourism in providing world class, championship course which will complement others already established in building the region as a golf destination, rather than competing against each other.
- 43 There are very few facilities of this type located in alpine environments or year round locations. This location matches the current imagery used in the 100% Pure New Zealand promotional campaigns and will have strong association with a New Zealand experience for visitors. Local Wanaka golfers will be encouraged to use the golf course and facilities which will support the connection with the local community.
- 44 Environmental management practices are growing in importance for international visitors. Golf courses are using design and maintenance practices to improve sensitivities to this. The ecological restoration and management regime to be implemented through this proposed Zone will complement this.
- 45 In combination with Millbrook, the Hills and Jacks Point golf courses, Glendhu Bay will enhance the development and promotion of the regional golf cluster that will have the scale to focus on the key Australian and domestic golf tourism markets.

Conclusion

- 46 The diversification of the rural land resources of Glendhu Station, including provision for an internationally regarded golf course, associated small scale and appropriately sited commercial, retail, and accommodation activities provides a comprehensive alternative to a sequential consent that would take approximately 8 years to implement, or otherwise historical primary production that is not realistically sustainable economically, nor sustainable from a land management or biodiversity perspective as compared to the proposed zone. . Adverse environmental effects are an inevitable consequence of farming in highly valued areas such as Glendhu Station. Such adverse effects include fencing natural landscapes, shelter belt planting and the reduction of biodiversity. Within this conventional model, landowners' often also otherwise resort to incremental subdivision and piecemeal development overtime to

supplement that primary source of income. This also has the effect of slowly eroding the valued character of the landscape.

- 47 This proposal provides an alternative model for comprehensive and integrated land use, management and development with its foundation based on the Environment Court's decision that ensures open space protection, the provision of public access, and enhanced ecological management of the land, all within an economically feasible model.
- 48 The Glendhu Station Zone implements the Environment Court's consent decision within the District Plan framework while providing a balance between flexibility in implementation and certainty of outcomes. It builds upon the Court's findings that the Glendhu Bay proposal appropriately protected the valued character of the landscape at Glendhu Bay and extended the biodiversity and recreation values of the land for the benefit of the wider public. This proposed Zone ensures that visually sensitive land around the lake margins and within views of the road corridor are set aside as open space that makes up the golf course. The quality and location of the course itself is integral to the Zone's viability and success in the future. The refinements proposed through try to ensure its longevity as an open space area and protect the land from inappropriate future development.
- 49 All of the above evidence, and the refined proposal have been informed by the McRae family and Darby Partners joint overall objective to deliver a sustainable management model for this land which benefits both the environment and the community. These benefits cannot be realised without sustainable and diversified economics.
- 50 The Zone overall therefore seeks to achieve a combined land use, management and development package which is also economically sustainable, particularly through careful planning and design of built elements, identified activity areas, open space and landscape protection, as well as ecological and recreation / public access enhancement. Overall the proposal has a built footprint of considerably less than would result from actively and intensively farming the Station. The scale of golf and visitor development is at absolute minimum end of any industry standard when compared to other golf course and resort projects.

Dated this 4th day of April 2017

John Darby