

University of the Third Age, Wakatipu Branch

Introduction and purpose of document

This paper summarizes the views of the local U3A membership arising from a series of three presentations to U3A Queenstown members during October/November 2011. The views are arranged under thematic headings but not according to any priority.

Attendance at the lectures varied from 60 to over 100 people. The lectures – with the theme of ‘Future Vision for the Wakatipu’ – were presented by:

- Professor Dr Blair Fitzharris – economic history, geography, population, and climate developments and trends in the Wakatipu.
- Professor Dr Bob Lloyd – energy issues for the Wakatipu in the light of peak oil and clean/green expectations.
- Dr Ralph Hanan – a vision for the Wakatipu; toward a decade of progress 2011-2020.

A questionnaire (copy attached) was distributed to participants to complete and has contributed to this summary. PowerPoint backups are available for the first and third lectures.

The lectures generated strong interest on the part of the U3A membership and some very forthright views. A consistent theme underscoring participants’ concerns was the negative effects of continued rapid population growth in the Wakatipu. Related concerns were:

1. the need for QLDC to carry out comprehensive spatial planning for the Wakatipu;
2. the ability of QLDC to take control of development and preserve the essential attractions of living in the Wakatipu;
3. the inappropriateness of the Resource Management Act for facilitating a holistic vision for the region;
4. a need to diversify the economy towards higher-value activities; and
5. the criticality of the District Plan to express and embody the residents’ vision and provide the means to for giving effect to the vision. The examples of comparable resorts such as Noosa, Aspen and Whistler, whose local authorities have taken measures to protect their environments and control the direction and pace of their development, including the means to cap population growth, resonated strongly with U3A members.

More specific points of concern arising from responses to the questionnaire and ensuing group discussions are set out below.

Climate change

Climate change will have an effect in the Wakatipu region and must be taken into account in preparation of a comprehensive spatial plan (see below). According to best estimates the following effects can be expected:

- increased risk of flooding arising from more extreme weather events;
- the potential damage to bridges, roads and houses from more intense storms;
- an impact on the local ski industry as climate warming occurs;
- increased rains and flooding may threaten the integrity of residential areas built on alluvial fans.

Spatial planning

Members felt that the District Plan should present a clear expression of the residents' vision and planning of space over the next 20 or 30 years. Supporting regulations/bylaws needs to be much plainer and more prescriptive. In particular, there is a need to:

- define the geographic locations of future public facilities -- university, tertiary institutions, innovation centre, convention centre, high school, library, hospital, rest homes, show grounds, commercial areas (shopping centers), industrial areas;
- ensure the geographic and social interconnection of the facilities so they complement each other in an integrated and synergistic manner;
- review and adapt others' successful population and spatial planning policies (Aspen, Noosa, Whistler);
- limit, or even impose a moratorium on new subdivisions (beyond those already consented) until a spatial plan has been prepared and approved;
- manage urban population density by limiting the number of building permits issued;
- preserve rural landscapes;
- apply planning and zoning regulations strictly;
- define fixed town boundaries.

As far as civic infrastructure is concerned, the view was that:

- alternative road access from Frankton to Queenstown should be planned for;
- private cars should, as far as practicable, be banned from Queenstown's CBD.

Economic diversification policy for the Wakatipu

U3A members are very conscious of the region's economic reliance on tourism and the cyclical limitations of our mono-industrial base. Of particular concern is the fact that, with tourism growth, infrastructural development never catches up with demand and the few (permanent residents) have to fund the needs of the many (visitors). For this and economic prosperity reasons U3A members see an urgent need for QLDC to adopt an economic diversification policy and related measures towards becoming a more economically robust and rounded and balanced community.

Specific points in support of this view include the following:

- discourage short-term visitors and bus tours and concentrate on longer-stay, higher-yield visitors, including FITs;
- encourage a stronger focus on walking and bike trails;
- downplay the 'party town' image and related infrastructure;
- recognize that climate change is likely to lead to decline of the local ski industry;
- actively promote convention business and develop new convention/conference facilities;
- develop higher education, health, and cultural businesses and facilities including film, IT, a knowledge economy, and environmental consulting businesses (incubated and accelerated via an Innovation Centre);
- facilitate fibre optic broadband throughout the Wakatipu;
- develop a commercial use for wilding pines (e.g. pellet fuel);
- recognize the importance to the social fabric of our community of maintaining rural land and encouraging its economic use (e.g. horticulture, viticulture and market gardening);
- establish a permanent produce market to encourage market gardening and horticulture;
- cease issuing consents for the subdivision of farm land into lifestyle blocks.

QLDC support of infrastructure to encourage economic diversification (university, Innovation Centre, Convention/Conference/Cultural Centre) does not come cheaply. Contributions to a development fund could include:

- the imposition by QLDC of airport, bed, tourism activity and pan levies;
- road tolls;
- obtaining government support for the return of an agreed portion of GST to the region.

Energy and environmental policies

Regional energy and environmental policies are critical for sustaining residents' lifestyle and the quality of tourism in the Wakatipu. QLDC should develop a local

energy policy. Energy conservation and self-sufficiency in local energy generation are realizable goals if conservation measures and renewable energy principles and options are supported by QLDC and pursued by the community. In addition, there is a strong need to conserve water and protect local waterways from degradation.

In the context of the local environment, the following points are relevant:

- include in the region's energy policy measures to lower our carbon footprint and enhance our resilience to future oil shocks;
- encourage energy storage in the form of hydrogen and water, and work towards carbon sequestration;
- promote investment in local renewable energy (e.g. small scale hydro and high pressure/low volume hydro);
- encourage residential use of solar water heating and photovoltaics and wind turbines for domestic power generation (building codes);
- promote more stringent, local residential and commercial building insulation practices by adopting relevant Scandinavian and Canadian guidelines (e.g. triple glazing and upgraded insulation as a minimum standard).

Also in the environmental context:

- limit the number of cars entering Queenstown;
- provide public parking at Frankton, supported by buses and shuttles to Queenstown;
- consider for the longer term the use of light rail between Frankton and Queenstown;
- promote greater use of bicycles and water taxis;
- require QLDC to convert its vehicle fleet to hybrid and/or electric cars;
- promote high-value commerce in energy and sustainability activities, including incubation by an Innovation Centre.

Social policy

Spatial planning and adoption of policies on economic diversification, energy, and environmental sustainability should be accompanied by social policy designed to protect and enhance the quality of life in the community. Such a policy should include the following components:

- plan for a new events and cultural facility (combined with convention center);
- implement a zero tolerance approach to crime and anti-social behavior;
- enforce noise and pollution regulations strictly;
- continue to support efforts to provide affordable housing;
- encourage residents to use walking and bicycle trails.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WAKATIPU**U3A Presentation: Professor Blair Fitzharris**

Please let us have your answer to the following questions:

- Do we need a population cap? Yes No
If yes, how?

- Do we want to limit some type of tourists? Yes No
If yes, what types of tourists?

- Do we want to encourage some other types? Yes No
If yes, what other types?

- How can we diversify our economic base?

- How can we protect our rural land?

- What are we going to do to maintain and improve our 100% PURE image?

- How should we handle an oil shock?

- Are there other key questions that might help us develop a better vision for the Wakatipu?