



**Queenstown Lakes District Council
Proposed Freedom Camping Control Bylaw & Amended Arrowtown-Lake
Hayes Reserve Management Plan
Hearing of Submissions**

Minutes of the hearing of submissions to the proposed Freedom Camping Control Bylaw & amended Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Reserve Management Plan held on Monday 24 September 2018 in Council Chambers, 10 Gorge Road, Queenstown commencing at 9.30am.

Present

Councillors Ferguson, Forbes and Stevens

In Attendance

Dr Thunes Cloete (General Manager Community Services), Ms Jeannie Galavazi (Parks and Reserves Planning Manager, Acting), Shelley Dawson (Senior Governance Advisor) and 1 member of the media

**On the motion of Councillors Ferguson and Forbes it was resolved
that Councillor Stevens chair the hearing.**

The Chair welcomed everyone and gave a brief explanation of the hearing would run. Ms Galavazi gave an overview of the changes proposed and why the review was taking place. She noted that work was also underway on a responsible camping strategy for the district. Ms Galavazi highlighted that the proposed changes were for just two areas of reserve land and amending the appropriate documentation for them.

Donald and Heather Wallace

Mr Wallace noted that there were several positive things happening in the community such as the bus system but suggested Council could do more such as better dump stations. He commented that if a vehicle was not fully self-contained then it should go to a campground noting that the MBIE level of what constituted self-contained was too low. Mr Wallace suggested that Council provide areas with toilets and showers that could hold small numbers of campers and then charge for using the area. He commented that the technology available should be used to promote responsible camping.

Mr Wallace talked to an area near the Shotover Delta that could potentially be used by the Motor Caravan Association as an association camp site. He commented that discouraging underequipped campers would be beneficial to the district noting that small pockets of responsible, well equipped campers would remove the issues seen at the moment. Ms Galavazi was asked by the panel if QLDC could increase the standard required to obtain "self-contained" level. She commented that the current level was to national standards for consistency around the country and ease of enforcement. There was a discussion around lifting national standards and increasing levels of enforcement. After a question from the panel Mr Wallace commented that the Queenstown area was not as well liked by association members due to the current

issues and was perceived as against campers. He commented that if uncompliant campers were discouraged then word would soon get around to comply or stay away.

Evan Cummings – Friends of Lake Hayes Society

Mr Cummings commented that he represented the society, Central Otago and the people of New Zealand who see Lake Hayes as a national treasure. He commented that those responsible for the health and wellbeing of the lake had been negligent. Mr Cummings commented that the society was supportive of moves to eliminate freedom camping at the end of Lake Hayes. He commented that the area was never meant to be a free camping ground for tourists and at times it was like a small town there but with only one toilet available. Mr Cummings noted that the society wanted the situation addressed for the long term so that there was no camping at the end of Lake Hayes or at Bendermeer Bay. The society wanted the reserve left to be a reserve for all to use, not for it to be a camping ground.

The panel asked if there was any number of contained vehicles that could be acceptable and Mr Cummings replied that there would always be issues if the area was not policed. Issues of people not using the toilets impacted on the catchment of Lake Hayes and its water quality. He commented that they asked for Lake Hayes to be reserve by the lake for all to enjoy not for it to be a camping ground. Mr Cummings talked briefly to the monitoring of the lake and impacts on the catchment such as development. The panel asked if there was evidence that people soiling the surrounding area was impacting the water quality of the lake. Mr Cummings commented yes adding that it also impacted general health issues of the area itself. He suggested Council create designated large camping areas with adequate facilities and have enforcement in those areas. He noted that he could not comment on the Shotover Delta site and added that Lake Hayes was never envisioned as a camping ground.

James Imlach – NZ Motor Caravan Association

The Chair thanked Mr Imlach for coming down to speak at the hearing. Mr Imlach introduced himself as the association's national policy and planning manager adding that he was familiar with all of the relevant acts, bylaws as well as QLDC policies. Mr Imlach commented that the association empathised with QLDC's problem as it was a complex and challenging issue. He noted that QLDC was trying to make it work for the region and he commended Council for that and he also acknowledged the community's concerns. Mr Imlach commented that when they suggested responsible camping at Lake Hayes they never envisioned what had happened and they supported more controls.

The association agreed with Council on changing the management plan, having better management of camping, welcoming responsible campers and that the community should not have to pay for freedom campers. However the association felt controlled responsible camping should still be allowed at Lake Hayes and Shotover Delta. Association members were worried about getting fines in Queenstown and noted that there were not many safe responsible camping sites. Mr Imlach suggested a dispersal policy to address congestion and work with other stakeholders to set up sites. He also

suggested raising the bar on the type of vehicles allowed and confining camping areas to address issues.

Mr Imlach commented that the majority of people supported the change to prohibit camping and supported Council's actions against those being responsible. He was confident that people still supported responsible camping. Mr Imlach suggested Council craft the bylaw to expand or reduce the area to cater for seasonal demand. Talking to the previous discussion about the national standard Mr Imlach commented that there was no political appetite to amend the standard to require all vehicles to have a fixed toilet. He noted that councils could set their own standards and suggested QLDC take a leadership role as well as considering the association's solutions. The Chair suggested that if QLDC had standards that were different to national ones there would be difficulties enforcing them and issues with inconsistency for people travelling through the country. Mr Imlach commented that there was no certainty that national standards could be increased. He suggested trialling a solution where QLDC enforced a policy of a fixed toilet that would exclude irresponsible campers.

There was comment on the difficulty of proving the level of self-containment of vehicles and the need for communication and enforcement. The panel asked about the association membership and Mr Imlach commented that they had 82,000 current members. He noted that they actively promoted less visited areas and smaller towns. He explained that association sites were similar to basic DoC sites with access to fresh water, registration and were exclusive to members. The Chair thanked Mr Imlach for attending and for his submission.

Chris Blackford

Mr Blackford commented that the self-contained situation was a joke and added that there was a lot of 'not-in-my-back-yard' comments about camping at Lake Hayes. He commented that there were alternatives in the district for freedom camping and suggested parking areas not used overnight such as the events centre and the Frankton golf club. Mr Blackford commented that the Tucker Beach landfill site would be appropriate for the Motor Caravan association to develop as an association camping site. He noted that the Shotover delta site was also a good site. Mr Blackford made comments that people were overreacting about faeces noting that there was a lot of dog poo in the Lake Hayes area already.

Mr Blackford talked to his travels with a motor home in Europe noting that there were many places where limited numbers of motorhomes could park overnight. He suggested places such as the Kelvin Heights golf club and he added that there were many local association members who could help Council to develop sites. The panel noted he was talking about sites that could be used for overnight parking rather than freedom camping sites. It was noted that basic facilities were still needed and Mr Blackford was asked who would pay for them. He suggested a similar rate to an association site such as \$3 a night could be charged.

Edgar Burt

Mr Burt thanked Council for the opportunity to speak and noted that he enthusiastically endorsed a total camping ban at the north of Lake Hayes as well as endorsing the

proposed amendments to the bylaw and management plan. Mr Burt noted that he spoke on behalf of his wife Mary and her siblings John and Christine French who owned a property at the north end of the lake. Mr Burt handed out copies of a photo to the panel that showed the scale of camping at Lake Hayes. He commented that there were approximately 56 vehicles camping in the photo that was taken in January 2018. He added that there were on average 50-60 vehicles in the reserve each night.

Mr Burt commented that the lake itself needed to be preserved and applauded the actions of Council to close the freedom camping area at the north end of Lake Hayes. He commented that the sheer numbers using the reserve had a negative impact on the area and day users' enjoyment of the area. Mr Burt noted that there had been a significant increase in the daily use of the lake and the recreation area in the last 20 years. He commented that for preservation of the lake and the beauty of the spot there should not be camping there. Mr Burt noted that there was a management issue and if operating a freedom camping area there needed to be onsite control. He noted that last summer there were two serious fires in the Lake Hayes area in a dry summer. He added there were issues with open fires in the camping area in the middle of the fire restriction in very dry conditions. Mr Burt noted that there were also currently large areas of standing water in the reserve with water draining into the area from the subdivision above.

Mr Burt commented that the reserve at the north end of Lake Hayes was inappropriate for freedom camping and also endorsed a ban at all Lake Hayes reserves. The Chair thanked Mr Burt for his comments noting that the fire risk was a good point showing that camping of that scale needed to be supervised.

Donald Putan (via phone conference)

Mr Putan thanked the panel for the chance to speak and noted that as he was not a local he was commenting in general terms. Mr Putan commented that rationing parking spots for camping would not work as people ignore restrictions and rules and it was also hard to enforce. He commented that banning camping altogether from the two suggested areas would lead to more pressure in other areas and noted that New Plymouth District Council was opening up extra areas to spread the load on currently used spots. Mr Putan commented that if Council did choose to ban camping from the proposed areas then it would need to plan for potential increases in other areas. The Chair thanked him for his comments noting that Council was aware that closing the areas would mean the need for alternative sites.

Terri Anderson

Ms Anderson commented that people had become involved in the freedom camping issues as they had a passion for the environment and didn't see any benefit to this small part of tourism that was taking advantage of the community. She commented that a big problem was allegedly self-contained vehicles that were not. Ms Anderson commented that the bylaw did not specify that campers had to be self-contained, so she suggested that it should be specified and Council should enforce it. She suggested using Campermate to get the word out that if you don't have a toilet you can't stay here. Ms Anderson also suggested pushing back with commercial rental companies.

The Chair noted they had heard similar points throughout the submissions on the self-contained issue. Ms Anderson commented that Council should not have been investigating camping hubs with central government funding while the consultation was underway and she questioned if the consultation was genuine. The Chair explained that there were several streams of work underway including working with partners to find sites for non-self-contained vehicles as well as the responsible camping strategy. Ms Anderson questioned why the panel was focussing on Lake Hayes and the Shotover Delta. Ms Galavazi explained that the reserve management plan and bylaw had to be amended to prohibit camping at the two sites if Council wished to continue the ban imposed during summer. The consultation was part of that statutory process. Ms Galavazi noted that there would be further consultation and feedback on the responsible camping strategy adding that the feedback from the current consultation would be fed into the strategy.

Ms Anderson commented that it wasn't enough to focus only on banning camping at the two sites. Dr Cloete explained that in February 2018 Council agreed to close the reserves at Lake Hayes and Shotover Delta to camping. He noted that at the same meeting Council asked for a responsible camping strategy. Dr Cloete commented that staff were working with the Central Otago District Council, LINZ, Department of Conservation and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment on the strategy. Ms Anderson commented that the community needed to be represented and Dr Cloete noted that Council was representing the community. Ms Anderson commented that it was not clear that the consultation was only about the two reserves and that the community wanted action on freedom camping in the district. The panel noted that it was typical to have several processes underway at once and that Council needed to make sure the statutory process was legal. The Chair commented that Council had heard the community loud and clear in regards to freedom camping which was why they were going forward in the time frame to amend the bylaw and management plan before summer. He reiterated that the responsible strategy work was still underway.

The Chair thanked the submitters for their contribution and the Panel adjourned at 11.15am. The panel reconvened at 11.20 for deliberations.

The Chair commented that they had been given a lot of information outside the scope of the hearing. He noted that he had not heard anything that suggested Lake Hayes was an appropriate area for camping. Ms Galavazi commented that from a parks planning perspective they had to take into account the growth of the district and the increased pressure on the districts reserves for local recreation. She added that as noted by one speaker, there had been exponential increases in day use of the Lake Hayes reserves as well.

Dr Cloete commented that the process was a good baseline as the Parks team would be looking at all the existing reserve management plans as well as the reserves that didn't have one to bring them up to the same level. He acknowledged that it was a large body of work and would take some time. Councillor Forbes commented that a lot of good information had come out that could be used going forward. It was agreed that the feedback be fed into the Responsible Camping strategy. Councillor Forbes suggested that the association could establish one of their camping sites in the area and commented that she liked the idea of QLDC leading the way with their own bylaw

and standards. Ms Galavazi commented that the association had legal advice about enforcement that the team could review. She noted that the QLDC Regulatory Manager had advised that they would achieve a better outcome for the community at large by prohibiting camping at the two suggested sites.

Councillor Ferguson noted that there had not been much feedback on the Shotover Delta. He agreed that QLDC should be leading the way and making its own bylaw. Ms Galavazi commented that the consultation was for two small amendments. She added that out of the wider camping strategy there may be evidence for a full review of the bylaw.

There was discussion around the Shotover Delta reserve and it was noted that the slip road currently under construction would change traffic in that area. It was also noted that while it was a potential area for a future site currently there was a lack of facilities there. Dr Cloete commented that the association was advocating for their own site near the delta.

There was discussion about amending QLDC's standards of self-containment. Ms Galavazi commented that removing Lake Hayes and Shotover Delta as camping areas as well as adding restrictions at Kingston meant there will be fewer areas for people to camp this summer. She noted that this would give the team data to help inform the strategy. Dr Cloete commented that there would need to be good communication and relationships with DoC and LINZ during the summer.

The Chair noted that the panel agreed with the proposed amendment to restrict camping at Lake Hayes and the panel suggested all Lake Hayes reserves be included. It was noted that this had been suggested by several submitters and legal advice was that this inclusion was possible.

The Panel agreed with the proposed amendment to restrict camping at the Shotover Delta reserve noting that there may be an opportunity in the future for a camp there with enforceable defined 'self-contained' standards. Ms Galavazi commented that a full review of the bylaw was due soon however it would be appropriate to review it once the responsible camping strategy was up and running. She commented that given what they had heard today increased 'self-contained' standards for the district was something that should be included in any full review of the bylaw. Dr Cloete commented that everyone was watching QLDC and its bylaw, strategy and standards and MBIE was willing to work with Council on this. Ms Galavazi reiterated that the notified amendments were to ensure that Council had all legal and statutory processes in place to prohibit camping at the two locations.

Recommendations to Council

The hearing panel recommend to Council:

1. That the Queenstown Lakes District Council Freedom Camping Control Bylaw 2012 is amended to update 'Schedule A Maps' to prohibit freedom camping at all Council administered Lake Hayes Reserves and the parking area at the Shotover Delta located to the northwest of the Shotover Bridge.

2. That the Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Reserve Management Plan 2013 is amended to update the policy to:
17.1 Freedom Camping is permitted in the Reserves only to the extent allowed in Council's Freedom Camping Control Bylaw
3. That Council note that all submissions and feedback received through this consultation will be fed into the responsible camping strategy work that is currently underway

The panel finished deliberations and closed the meeting at 11.52am.