

**QLDC Council
25 October 2018**

Report for Agenda Item: 4

Department: Community Services

Responsible Camping Strategy 2018

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to consider the Responsible Camping Strategy 2018 for adoption.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report and in particular the collaborative approach taken by DoC, NZTA, MBIE, LINZ and QLDC to develop this district wide strategy.
2. **Adopt** The Responsible Camping Strategy for the Queenstown Lakes District.

Prepared by:



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Manager (Acting)

10/10/2018

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Thunes Cloete
Community Services General
Manager

11/10/2018

Background

- 1 The Queenstown Lakes District is seeing significant growth in camping numbers in all locations, including camping in formally established campsites where a fee is paid, and freedom camping.
- 2 In particular, the number of freedom campers has expanded. The majority of freedom campers are responsible, respectful, and bring economic benefit to the area. However, in key areas where freedom camping has increased significantly (specifically Lakes Hayes, Shotover Delta, Wanaka Lakefront) residents have escalating concerns regarding freedom camper behaviour such as human waste, overcrowding and the use of lakes to wash in.

- 3 The land upon which formally established campsites are located includes private land and reserve land. Some of this land is coming under pressure from other drivers such as provision of affordable housing and commercial returns.
- 4 The land upon which freedom camping takes place is a mixture of freehold land and reserve owned or administered by Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**), Department of Conservation (**DOC**), New Zealand Transport Agency (**NZTA**) and Land Information New Zealand (**LINZ**).
- 5 In November 2018, the representatives from each of the parties attended a one-day Investment Logic Map (**ILM**) workshop to flesh out the problems, benefits (including Key Performance Indicators), strategic responses and changes to address the problems. The ILM that was created formed the backbone for the camping review and the basis on which the strategy was written.
- 6 From the ILM, the key problems caused by camping in the District were determined as:
 - a. high demand is increasing costs, impacting the environment and frustrating the community;
 - b. inconsistent data, rules and regulations are leading to perverse behaviours; and
 - c. supply is poorly matched to demand leading to less than optimal outcomes.
- 7 The Parties (as mentioned in paragraph 4) agreed to establish a Governance Group and a Project Control Group (PCG) for the purpose of producing a joint Strategy for Responsible Camping in the Queenstown Lakes District (**the Strategy**). At this time the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (**MBIE**) joined the Governance Group and PCG. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed to:
 - a. Establish a shared set of responsibilities to undertake a review of camping in the District;
 - b. Provide a mechanism for confidential sharing of information to enable consistent communication flow between all partner agencies;
 - c. Apportion the fair allocation of resources (both human and financial) to assist with the delivery of the camping evidence and strategy components; and
 - d. Establish the relationships and governance for future implementation of the camping strategy.
- 8 A funding agreement was subsequently signed by all parties to fund the development of the Strategy and the supporting research.
- 9 Central Otago District Council and Southland District Council subsequently joined the PCG to ensure a broader regional approach and to avoid unintended impacts on the neighbouring districts.
- 10 Xyst Limited were engaged to prepare the Strategy on behalf of the partner agencies.

- 11 To understand the campers in the system (demand side) and the drivers of their behaviour the PCG engaged Thinkplace Limited to understand this and the data set required for the foundation for the strategic decisions.

Comment

- 12 The Strategy is included as Attachment A to this report.
- 13 The definition of camping and why it is important is addressed at the beginning of the Strategy. Camping is defined as ‘Staying overnight for recreation in an outdoor area for one or more nights, usually in a tent, cabin, caravan or other vehicle’. It excludes living temporarily or permanently in a campground.
- 14 Camping is important as it provides an affordable option for visitors who want to stay in the district and for residents who want to explore and holiday in other areas of the district. Camping is a popular recreation activity and campers can experience and connect with nature and the outdoors. However, the sheer numbers of campers coming to our district means that campers need to camp responsibly and that facilities need to be provided to minimise the impact on our environment and residents. Different groups of campers have different needs, expectations, mindsets, skills and equipment.
- 15 The vision of the Strategy is: ‘Leading the way for sustainable and responsible camping in Aotearoa’
- 16 The purpose of the Strategy is ‘to promote the sustainable use of our environment for visitor and community experience through well managed, coordinated and responsible camping in the district’. How the strategy is turned into action is then set out through principles, goals and objectives.
- 17 In a nutshell the Strategy will:

Control freedom camping

- 18 Unmanaged non-self contained camping harms the environment and frustrates our community. Non-self contained camping will be removed from the sites where this activity is concentrated and be controlled on-site or elsewhere.

Maintain responsible camping

- 19 Opportunities for self-contained camping in permitted zones will continue under continuous review.

Develop basic camping

- 20 More opportunities for reasonable cost basic camping facilities will be developed.

Provide a unified approach

- 21 Agencies will work together in a unified manner to manage camping, improve knowledge and provide consistent information, education and compliance.

Understand demand

- 22 The Strategy will have actions to gain a better understanding of the demand, motivations, costs, and benefits of camping across the typologies so that we can be responsive and agile.
- 23 A detailed Action Plan forms part of the Strategy, this is broken into short term (2018/2019), medium term (2020-2023) and long term (2024 +).
- 24 The first short term action is “Develop a unified approach between key stakeholders’. The Department of Conservation (DOC) provided a letter of support (Attachment B) for the development of a unified approach to implement this strategy.
- 25 The second short term actions is for the agencies to prepare a detailed implementation plan. This differs to the action plan in that it has specific tasks, costs and responsible agency.
- 26 This Strategy has been developed at pace to ensure alignment with the Tourism Investment Fund (TIF) and short term actions, to manage the 2018/2019 summer season freedom camping demand. It is an initial step with a review planned in two years to take advantage of improved information and data that will result from the short term actions, and to ensure alignment with potential legislative changes that relate to camping, and the outcomes from the Central Government Responsible Camping Working Group.
- 27 It is an agile approach to camping issues that seeks to gain a better understanding of the demand, motivations, costs and benefits across the camping spectrum and to respond quickly and appropriately.

Options

- 28 Option 1 Do not adopt the Strategy (status quo)

Advantages:

- 29 None

Disadvantages:

- 30 The demand for Freedom camping will continue to increase, and consequently the issues associated with not managing this will continue to increase, which will anger the community.
- 31 Poor camping behaviours will continue and damage to the environment and treasured places spaces will continue.
- 32 Council will not be fulfilling the commitments made to the partner agencies in the MOU.
- 33 An opportunity will be lost to work collaboratively with partner agencies and to lead the way nationally.

34 Option 2 Adopt the Strategy

Advantages:

- 35 The community values for their district and open spaces will be protected.
- 36 The international reputation of the district as a premier place to camp will be protected.
- 37 The environment will be protected from the adverse effects of camping.
- 38 The opportunity to work collaboratively with our partner agencies will be realised.
- 39 Central Government will continue to support our efforts to manage and improve camping opportunities.

Disadvantages:

- 40 There will be costs to the rate payer to implement some of the actions in the strategy.

This report recommends **Option 2** for addressing camping related issues.

Significance and Engagement

- 41 This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy due to the high level of public interest and the extent to which the Strategy will impact on the environment, culture and people of the District.

Risk

- 42 This matter relates to the strategic risk SR1 Current and future development needs of the community (including environmental protection), as documented in the Council's risk register. The risk is classed as moderate. This is because the Strategy provides policy and guidance for managing the future of camping and freedom camping across the district.

Financial Implications

- 43 There will be operational and capital expenditure required to implement the Strategy. It is anticipated a funding agreement will be signed between the partner agencies and that applications will be made to future annual and long term plans.

Council Policies, Strategies and Bylaws

- 44 The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Reserve Management Plan 2012
- QLDC Freedom Camping Control Bylaw 2013

45 The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policy/policies.

46 This matter is not included in the 10-Year Plan/Annual Plan. Applications will need to be made.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions

47 The recommended option:

- Will help meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses by providing a strategy to ensure that camping will be managed, coordinated and sustainable;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not alter significantly the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council, or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

Consultation: Community Views and Preferences

48 The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are the residents/ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes District community and visitors to the area.

49 The Council has consulted with key stakeholders such as campground operators and the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association and two public drop in sessions were held in September. Public and stakeholder consultation will continue throughout implementation of the Strategy. Amendments to the bylaw and RMP were publically notified and all submissions received informed the drafting of the strategy and will inform the implementation plan.

Legal Considerations and Statutory Responsibilities

It is considered that the Strategy is consistent with the principles of the Reserves Act 1977, the Local Government Act 2002 and the Freedom Camping Act 2011.

Attachments

- A Responsible Camping Strategy 2018 (circulated separately)
- B Letter from Department of Conservation



5 October 2018

Thunes Cloete
General Manager, Community Services
Queenstown lakes District Council
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Queenstown 9348

Dear Thunes,

Queenstown Responsible Camping Strategy

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your leadership of the multi-agency collaboration to create the Queenstown Lakes District Council's Responsible Camping Strategy.

We support the approach taken by Queenstown Lakes District Council to develop the strategy. Like you, we are committed to working with others to sustainably manage visitors, protect and enhance the values of New Zealand's natural, cultural and historic values and support our communities.

We believe the collaborative process you have lead is a great example of local and central government agencies working together to shape and agree to a unified approach.

We are particularly impressed that the six agencies (Queenstown Lake District Council, Department of Conservation, Land Information New Zealand, New Zealand Transport Agency, Central Otago District Council and Southland District Council) have created a strategy that understands and supports our shared goals as well as aligning to our individual mandates.

We look forward to continuing to work with Queenstown Lake District Council in future. We anticipate a logical next step; and would support, a broader tourism spatial plan or tourism strategy for the region.

On behalf of the DOC team it was pleasure working with you. We have appreciated your leadership and cooperation throughout this project.

Yours sincerely

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