

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

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**Summary of Evidence Paul Norris**

22 June 2021

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## Summary of Evidence

1. My evidence provides an overview in respect of Wayfare Group tourism operations. The Group and its subsidiary companies provide significant tourism, recreational, social, environmental, and cultural benefits to the Queenstown Lakes District. These entities are a significant employer within the District, as well as offering unique and truly exceptional experiences to visitors and residents.
2. Conservation is part of Real Journeys' heritage and a cornerstone of our modern-day business. We understand we are privileged to operate in this spectacular part of New Zealand (and the world), and we take our responsibility to protect New Zealand's natural heritage and preserve our environment seriously. To honour our conservation commitments and philosophy, we work closely with both the Department of Conservation (DoC); the local communities we operate in; including partnerships with organisations such as the Rakiura Māori Land Trust.
3. It is New Zealand's natural environment which attracts the vast majority of international visitors to the region; with the attraction for visitors being able to readily get out into the backcountry and experience these remarkable areas first hand in some form. The tourism and recreational opportunities which the Wayfare Group offers, enables people to connect with, have greater access to, and understanding of these unique qualities and characteristics.
4. The Real Journeys vision is "to share New Zealand with the world through remarkable tourism experiences" and our reputational pledge is a company that:
  - Our shareholders are proud to own;
  - Our employees are proud to work for;
  - Our customers endorse to their friends; and
  - The community holds in the highest regard.

Our values define who we are and how we treat one another and are as follows:

- Keep it real;
- Make it remarkable;
- Share our backyard;
- Play as one team;
- Do it better; and
- Safe as.

Nonetheless we also aim to foster achievement in line with the values of: Kaitiakitanga; Manaakitanga; and Whanaungatanga.

5. The Wayfare Group 'purpose' is to "accelerate the world's shift to sustainable tourism (for people, our partners, and our planet) by delivering Aotearoa's most memorable experiences". Which is aligned with the Tourism Futures Taskforce recommendations that the future New Zealand visitor economy must be

regenerative, resilient and needs to deliver net benefits across all four well beings: social, cultural, environmental and economic.<sup>1</sup>

6. Through the implementation of these company visions and values, Wayfare strives to continue to offer high quality and high value tourism products in the District. In particular, this has always been achieved through reinvesting in our company to secure the company's future. Yet without a planning framework that provides for certainty, it is difficult for us to plan for the necessary ongoing company investment, and without this, the business objectives will be compromised. Which could potentially lead to stagnation, loss of market position, loss of employment and economic opportunities for the District, which (despite calls for further diversification) at this time still relies heavily on tourism.
7. Our *Walter Peak/TSS Earnslaw* operation has been significantly affected by the consequences of Covid-19. However, this operation is still vitally important to the success of our business.
8. The importance of our TSS Earnslaw / Walter Peak operation is reflected in the value of capital investment we have made in this area of our business. Specifically, the Walter Peak acquisition was \$9.5 million; TSS Earnslaw maintenance and upgrades \$2.3 million; Walter Peak capital projects (extension to Colonel's Homestead; Amphitheatre construction; Woolshed modifications; installation of generator and storage and the provision of new staff accommodation) \$8.5 million; and \$0.5 million in Wilding Pine removal / remediation.
9. Wayfare is addressing calls to re-imagine the New Zealand Tourism Industry to a more sustainable model for the future, through redefining the company purpose with a sustainability lens. I consider there will continue to be a place for tourism to grow and contribute to the social and cultural fabric of Queenstown in the future. The geographic location, the overall 'attractiveness' and the tourism product offerings in the District will continue to bring visitors to the District.
10. We need a planning framework which enables tourism operators to have flexibility and options for growth and enhancement of their products offerings. Diversification of the economy does not mean no tourism, diversification can mean the addition of other alternative employment, while continuing to provide high quality tourism products. The Wayfare Group is focussed on a high quality, high value products and experiences; as this is where there is real value is for our business.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/assets/the-tourism-futures-taskforce-interim-report-december-2020.pdf>