



DERWENT VALLEY COUNCIL

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By email to: TourismMasterPlan@dpiwpe.tas.gov.au *No hard copy to follow*

Dear Andrew

TWWHA TOURISM MASTERPLAN – PUBLIC COMMENT

Thankyou for the opportunity to comment on the above.

As a Local Government Area which not only borders on, but has significant land mass within the TWWHA this document is particularly significant to the Derwent Valley. Recent growth in the adventure tourism and cruise ship market in the area also makes the Tourism Master Plan (Master Plan) relevant to our community.

Those involved in the creation of the Master Plan should be commended on recognising the importance of regional dispersal of tourists to local economies and its inclusion with the document.

Our Council commends DPIWPE on the overall direction provided by the Master Plan and looks forward to working together with stakeholders to implement the plan.

Please find attached feedback on specific sections of the Master Plan.
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dean Griggs'.

Dean Griggs



DERWENT VALLEY COUNCIL

GENERAL MANAGER

Derwent Valley Council response to TWWHA Master Plan

Introduction:

Council notes that the Master Plan is subordinate to the TWWHA Management Plan (Management Plan) 2016, and is therefore to some extent limited by the confines of the Management Plan. The Management Plan is now some four (4) years old, and that during that period there has been exponential growth in tourism in Tasmania, with a stronger focus on 'adventure' and 'wilderness' tourism. There is significant potential for growth in these types of tourism operations both in (appropriately designated areas) and at the fringe of the TWWHA. It would be pleasing to see the Management Plan updated in the near future to reflect this change while still maintaining the OUV of the TWWHA.

We have formulated our response to include what we believe are the major areas of significance to our Council:

- Infrastructure and Planning;
- Community Sentiment;
- Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Recognition and Ownership;
- Tourism Market, including impacts of COVID-19;
- Activity Nodes, and;
- *Our Valley 2030* (Council's Community Strategic Plan)

Infrastructure and Planning:

We welcome a focus on infrastructure planning as the community and tourism industry have often raised concerns that Mt Field and the area beyond is missing out on valuable infrastructure and other investment. This is despite an almost doubling of visitation in recent years. This focus provides an opportunity for the development of a localised plan, which, as forecast in the Master Plan would act as a vehicle for greater community and stakeholder input. It may also assist in allaying some of the concerns of the community which are noted in the following section.

Greater detail regarding localised plans, along with some certainty around the prioritisation of such plans would bring renewed confidence to the area while not impacting the OUV of the TWWHA. In some cases, this may allow for private investment in the areas fringing the TWWHA. These measures combined may lessen the likelihood of damage to the TWWHA through visitors not having access to infrastructure, way finding or instruction on appropriate cultural practices.

The Master Plan as a strategic document provides a framework and guidance regarding the placement of infrastructure and tourism activities, leaving some

discretion regarding the specifics of activities. Given the growing demands being placed upon the TWWHA as visitor numbers increase further consideration could be given to the preparation of a more prescriptive document to provide detailed guidance. This would ensure that any proposal met required criteria before going through assessment processes and be a saving in both time and finances for prospective investors and the Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS). It would also provide clarity around the type of investment that is acceptable within the TWWHA.

The Primary Activity Node table which includes a section on Mt Field, clearly states that visitation has surpassed the level of service available, but underestimates the potential for further growth as a result of developments such as the Maydena Bike Park and the Western Wilderness journey project. Collaboration between tourism operators also aims to drive people past Mt Field and encourage increased overnight visitation. In addition, the increasing number of localised tours and adventure tourism operators in the area will no doubt place additional demand on infrastructure and services. While we appreciate that the Master Plan notes that Mt Field is a high priority, we do not believe that the urgency of the situation has been recognised, particularly in relation to the provision of infrastructure, and estimated requirement for improved infrastructure.

The consideration of Mt Field becoming an Icon Pass site is welcomed, provided that funds are returned to that Park for use on projects within the Park.

Similarly, it is gratifying to see that Strathgordon has been included as a Secondary Activity Node. While we recognise it does not fit the criteria of a Primary Node, we feel that the importance and value of that area has been somewhat overlooked.

The inclusion of Maydena as a Gateway Town is also pleasing. It should be noted that the stated opportunity to increase motorhome, RV and campervan services may pose some issues due to the nature of infrastructure in the area, planning requirements and the limited availability of suitable land. These are not insurmountable issues, and can be dealt with through a well considered localised plan, or possibly the consideration of the extension of camping and self contained motor home facilities at Mt Field's current camp area. The suggestion to better utilise the visitor services zone within the current Maydena Bike Park lease is welcomed, subject to further detail.

Community Sentiment

Section 2 (Strategic Framework): Strategic Principle 1 – *Protecting and Maintaining the OUV* and Strategic Principle 3 – *Supporting Regional Communities* - Make brief note of ensuring that local communities are not

disenfranchised by the preservation of the OUV. We acknowledge that the Master Plan is focused on the preservation of the TWWHA overall. It should, however be noted that many of the outlying communities in the Derwent Valley are still adjusting to the extension of the TWWHA and both the potential and limitations (on activities) that this brings with it. Many of these communities were heavily impacted by the changes to forestry in recent years, and have made the association between this and the extension of the TWWHA.

While noting that there may be disenfranchisement, it is also important to provide strategies that provide some optimism for those that are finding adjustment challenging. This could be included in documentation that provides guidance for potential investors, could take the form of additional information provided to communities regarding their access to the TWWHA or be incorporated into local plans.

Section 2.2.3, notes that tourism in can bring undesirable consequences in towns on the edge of the TWWHA, if infrastructure required to support destination dispersal and increased visitation does not meet demand, or if activities are incompatible with local social values. This point should be further explored, perhaps offering a framework for the development of infrastructure and engagement with the affected communities. The broad statement included in this section, while acknowledging that there may be discord, does not address who would be responsible for the provision of infrastructure, or how communities can be more fully engaged in the process.

Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Recognition and Ownership

The focus on the provision of appropriate infrastructure, way finding and cultural interpretation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal ownership of the land and cultural heritage is welcome and mirrors the discussions that occur within the local tourism industry and anecdotal information from the local community.

While recognising that the final decision will belong to the Tasmanian Aboriginal People, we would welcome consideration of a cultural presentation hub at Mt Field or nearby. The story of the first Tasmanians has not been well told in this area, and it is crucial that when told, it is done in a culturally appropriate manner.

Tourism Market, including impacts of COVID-19

We acknowledge that the current COVID-19 situation will cause an immediate downturn in visitation. However, it is likely that the intrastate marketing campaigns currently being finalised will see visitation rise again soon after the lifting of restrictions as will the re-opening of intrastate travel. It is therefore important to resolve issues around the prioritisation of both visitor services

and infrastructure in and around the Mt Field area, and beyond to the Secondary Activity Node of Strathgordon and the Gateway Town of Maydena.

It is pleasing to see that the Master Plan takes into account the State's Tourism 21 Strategy, while noting that the strategy is currently under review and will expire at the end of this year. We look forward to seeing the Master Plan recognised in the replacement document for Tourism 21.

The drive from Mt Field through to Strathgordon allows people to experience the 'wilderness' from the comfort of their vehicle, thus limiting human impact on the surrounding landscape, while giving those people who are not self-reliant visitors an opportunity to 'drive through' or 'experience from the edge' or 'in from the edge'. The Strathgordon reference does not accurately describe the intent of the Western Wilderness journey, which has as one of its aims desire to direct visitation past Maydena. It is important to note that since its inception the Western Wilderness project has changed significantly to now include areas within and on the fringe of the TWWHA, such as Strathgordon and Maydena and in doing so encourages people to travel through the TWWHA. This change was made in response to concerns raised that the original proposal did not engage tourism operators in the Derwent Valley. It is envisaged that this will encourage increased overnight stays and visitor yield for the surrounding tourism operations. With increased accommodation options between New Norfolk and Strathgordon and additional 'wilderness' and 'adventure' tourism operations in the area this is an opportunity to fully integrate the local tourism community in the TWWHA experience.

In addition to the Western Wilds, the formal journey based experience, there are many opportunities to improve existing or partially existing attractions. This would result in both an improved visitor experience and a deeper understanding of the value and importance of the TWWAH and its OUV. This area, particularly beyond Maydena to Strathgordon provides many locations for interpretation, short walk opportunities and iconic photography. The diverse natural values of the area provide an unrivalled opportunity for visitors to explore and learn about not only the landscape but also the impacts that settlement has had on it over time and the cultural history of the TWWHA.

We note that story telling will be a focus in future interpretation. The Council is currently implementing a new community branding initiative, which focuses on storytelling of the area and includes as part of this the natural and heritage values of the region. We would welcome the opportunity to collaborate to explore possibilities for its use in tandem with the PWS to present a consistent and recognisable presence in the TWWHA.

Activity Node

It is concerning to note that the node hierarchy is based on existing visitation numbers (pg. 18 Master Plan). If, as is forecast, the visitation to the TWWHA grows in line with scenario two (2) (the 'likely' scenario) as predicted in *Towards a Tourism Master Plan* the infrastructure and resources at Mt Field will become further stretched. This may lead to an unsatisfactory visitor experience and impact negatively upon the image of not only the TWWHA and PWS, but also the Tasmanian visitor experience more generally. The December 2019 *Towards a Tourism Master Plan* document notes (pg. 24) that in recent years there has been an approximate 99% increase in visitation to Mt Field National Park. While that visitation may not be indicative of visitation to other areas of the TWWHA, it is important to recognise that at least some visitation from Mt Field will extend to other areas of the TWWHA.

Our Valley 2030

We look forward to collaborating with DPIPWE and PWS to prepare additional master plans for special outcomes, as mentioned on page 12 of the Master Plan.

We also welcome the proposal to look at all-weather road safety in the visitor service zone and Lake Dobson Road. The safety of the Lake Dobson Road in particular is of concern having been identified as a priority during the Council's consultations to create a new community strategic plan, *Our Valley 2030*.

Over 250 people were involved during the consultations for *Our Valley 2030* resulting in the following action items being included in the final document:

- 1.14: Advocate for increased private transport options to attractions during peak tourism season; and,*
- 2.4: Advocate for improved tourism road quality especially sealed all-year roads, e.g. Lake Dobson Road.*

Our Valley 2030 recognises that the Council's role in these action items is one of advocacy and would be pleased to be involved in any activity that would further the desired outcomes.

In closing I would like to reiterate that given the constraints of developing this document, it is overall a solid Master Plan for the TWWHA. Those items that we have highlighted as a concern or as needing additional discussion are in the minority and can be addressed during the life of the Master Plan and through consultation as part of the implementation of the Plan.