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He Wāhi Tūhāhā. He Ām

Attachment 3 - Attachment 3 Prof Higham comments relating to DMP

Attachment 3: Prof. James Higham comments on DMP

13 January 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the current draft of the Queenstown DMP titled 'Travel to a thriving future: Haereka whakamu ki to ao taurikura'. I have read the draft and would offer the following initial comments, noting that my time does not allow for a comprehensive review of the full draft plan which is presented in relation to several key pillars. Due to time limits I offer general comments and some specific thoughts on Pillar 2 which relates most closely to my research interests.

General comments:

First and foremost, I would commend the effort and endeavour that has been invested in this DMP. I am really pleased to see that some of the key discourses that have emerged in tourism in the last 2-3 (Covid) years, particularly relating to rebuilding tourism to face the challenges of the 21st century, have clearly informed this DMP. Much has been said about reinventing tourism, and many efforts have been advanced to address the reinvention of tourism (e.g. Tourism Futures Taskforce, Parliamentary Commission for the Environment, Industry Transformation Plans (ITP), Aotearoa Circle Industry Adaptation). Now that the tourism rebound has started (and is already happening faster than perhaps anticipated) it can be expected that questions will be raised as to 'what has changed?'. Communities may feel that without concrete evidence of progress towards change (e.g., changes in policy settings such as those recommended by the Parliamentary Commission in February 2021) a sense of disillusionment and frustration may arise. Given the rhetoric of change that has emerged in recent years, the DMP process is critical, and it is reassuring to see that key points of debate have clearly informed this document. In this respect I welcome the strong focus on carbon emissions, and the commitment to urgent action on decarbonisation to achieve 2030 goals. I agree that a regenerative approach to tourism is impossible without a strong commitment to urgent decarbonisation.

That said, I think it is important to acknowledge some of the potential challenges that arise from the draft DMP as it currently stands. I make these points not as a criticism, but rather in anticipating the potential risks that such an ambitious plan will inevitably face (and the criticisms that may be levelled against it). In my view, such a consideration should draw attention to:

What is regenerative tourism? The concept of 'regenerative tourism' is so central to the plan that it is important to define it comprehensively from the outset. How is the concept of regenerative tourism understood, and what are the key measurable indicators of progress towards regenerative tourism in the regional context in question? Definition is critical. I am conscious that key terms in tourism are rarely well defined and used with a common or shared understanding. Use of the notion of 'values-based tourism' is one case in point (which values, according to who, with what relative priority, and how?). Without clear definition it is easy to revert to what we know (i.e., economic value). I note that aspects of definition and supporting text are provided later in the document, but I did feel that rather as 'What is decarbonisation?' is addressed in a panel (right margin) at the start of the document, so too should 'What is regenerative tourism?' be addressed to at least some degree from the outset.

Is 'carbon zero 2030' realistic? Clearly not, least of all in a regional context that is highly dependent on aviation. The language is important. 'Carbon zero' is very different to 'net zero' which is the framing of most intergovernmental and national government/regional decarbonisation strategies. Ambition is commendable, but it does risk rebound effects in order to demonstrate measurable progress. Cutting emissions at source and including Scope 3 emissions are also commendable, but this may be seen as a threat to the future operations of key partners that must be engaged collaboratively to advance the implementation of the strategy. Decarbonisation does not necessarily mean 'eliminate', but rather can be seen as a mitigation

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trajectory that is aligned with stated goals and timeframes. System-wide elimination of emissions will no doubt be seen as a threat to sectors that face the challenges of 'difficult to abate' emissions (e.g., aviation). Ambition is needed, but must be balanced with legislation, investment and technology interventions that do need to be specific and stated in terms of decarbonisation timeframes/trajectories.

It is great to see efforts to align with Kāi Tahu values and the commitment to community engagement. These inform core values and guiding principles that provide a sound basis for planning.

Pillar 2: Restore environments and decarbonise the visitor economy.

Pillar 2 is critical to the DMP. It will be advanced through a series of projects that will (among other things) measure GHG emissions, including Scope 3 emissions and establish a framework for periodic measurement to assess progress towards key goals. I note that the decarbonisation project is going to be scoped up in Jan and Feb to really understand all of the knowns and unknowns, risks, pitfalls and possibilities. Despite the stated need for 'urgent and immediate action' the importance of rigour in the processes outlined in the various projects is critical. Project 8, for example, recognises the need for accurate accounting of total emissions and CO2/\$GDP, measures of Scope 1-3 emissions to inform marketing plans, and encouraging businesses to measure their own emissions. These are important steps and rigour in the methods and data underpinning these steps will be critical. With this in mind, the following paper may be useful in informing the processes that underpin these steps (attached):

Sun, Y. Y., & Higham, J. (2021). Overcoming information asymmetry in tourism carbon management: The application of a new reporting architecture to Aotearoa New Zealand. *Tourism Management*, 83, 104231.

Close links to other QLDC plans (e.g. QLDC transport plan) and collaboration with offices of local/regional government and other stakeholders (e.g. industry organisations, tourism businesses) will be critical to the coordinated approach that will be required to advance the strategic goals of the DMP. Decarbonising Scope 3 emissions will require collaboration with Air New Zealand, Airports New Zealand and Queenstown Airport (among others). Collaboration will also be key to the need for market optimisation analyses as outlined in the DMP, and actions informed by market optimisation analyses. This goal cannot be advanced without alignment of Destination Queenstown and Tourism New Zealand marketing strategies given Queenstown's central position in tourism in Aotearoa/New Zealand. As above, rigorous methods of research design, analysis and interpretation will be fundamental to the success of this strategy, which may be usefully informed by the following papers (also attached):

Sun, Y. Y., Lin, P. C., & Higham, J. (2020). Managing tourism emissions through optimizing the tourism demand mix: Concept and analysis. *Tourism management*, 81, 104161.

Oklevik, O., Gössling, S., Hall, C. M., Steen Jacobsen, J. K., Grøtte, I. P., & McCabe, S. (2019). Overtourism, optimisation, and destination performance indicators: A case study of activities in Fjord Norway. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), 1804-1824.

Prof. James Higham

Department of Tourism, University of Otago