

Mackenzie District Council
Plan Change 13
SCENIC GRASSLANDS

May 2016

1. **Definition:** The Environment Court's Interim Decision of 14 December 2011 itemised Scenic Grasslands as one of four areas of further mapping to be carried out by the Council Landscape Architect¹. The following notes are in explanation of the maps now attached.
2. That Decision earlier had expressed a concern that along tourist roads there are, outside the Scenic Viewing Areas:
*'... other relatively small areas such as tussock-covered flats or hillsides which may not be the foreground to a distant view, but which are, in themselves, important aspects of the overall outstanding natural landscape.'*²
The same paragraph later continues
'What does concern us more is the absence of recognition of immediate views where there is little or no vista in the background. In such places the foreground becomes more important because it is the focus of the view.'
3. The Court later modified its definition from 'vistas' to 'immediate views' from the roads
'... where the foreground ... is the focus of the views.'
4. **Extent of a Scenic Grassland:** The Court envisaged Scenic Grasslands as areas close to the road, as opposed to the distant vistas identified by Scenic Viewing Areas. In practise some of the areas identified terminate in a relatively close skyline ridge but others are the foreground of quite long vistas, where the foreground forms an important focus from the road. These latter have been proposed as Scenic Grasslands to maintain significant grassland views from the road, and comply with the concept of 'immediate view' stated by the Court.
5. Where the grassland is the foreground of a continuous longer view and without an obvious boundary between, the cut-off point away from the road has been set at an arbitrary 500m. This has the aim of maintaining a reasonable foreground from the road while avoiding a Scenic Grassland covering large areas of private land. In some cases the scenic values extend well beyond 500m and in such cases 500m is taken as the distance at which 'foreground' turns to 'distance. That distance is set to establish a balance between landholders' rights and public landscape values. Where a boundary may exist on the ground the boundary is drawn to follow this, even if it may extend to (say) 1000m.
6. **Tourist Roads** are defined in the Interim Decision as State Highways 8 and 80, and Lilybank and Godley Peaks Roads. To these have been added Haldon Road from State Highway 8 to Mackenzie Pass Road, and the Mackenzie Pass Road itself. These also contain Scenic Grasslands frequently seen by the travelling public.
7. **What Constitutes a Grassland?** Not all the areas defined as Scenic Grassland contain solely good quality tussock covering. The essential quality has been interpreted as scenic openness from the road and a consistent, healthy dry grassland cover. This may comprise tussock, modified grassland such as browntop under a dry farming regime, or a mixture of the two.
8. Significant pastoral developments have occurred since the Interim Decision. Some areas identified as Scenic Grassland in 2012 have subsequently been cultivated and/or irrigated and are no longer in keeping with the Court's intentions. These, or developed parts of

¹ Interim Decision paragraph 492

² Interim Decision, paragraph 189.

them, have been deleted. Some oversown but uncultivated areas may be seasonally green but these, where the character of long dry grass prevails, are held to be in keeping with the ‘scenic’ element of the Court’s intention, and may be included within Scenic Grassland areas.

9. **Scenic Grassland Area descriptions:** The following 13 areas are considered to contain important grassland views outside Scenic Viewing Areas and Lakeside Protection Areas. The prefix ‘GA’ refers to ‘Grassland Areas’:

<i>area</i>	<i>description</i>
GA1	SH8 Burkes Pass
GA2	SH8 Sawdon Stream
GA3	Haldon Road (west side)
GA4	Haldon/Mackenzie Pass Roads
GA5	SH8 Dead Mans Creek
GA6	SH8 Whiskey Cutting
GA7	Lilybank Road (east side)
GA8	Godley Peak Road
GA9	SH8 Balmoral Rise
GA10	SH8 Irishman Creek
GA11	SH8(west side), Wolds/Maryburn
GA12	SH8(east side), Wolds/Maryburn
GA13	SH8 Pukaki Moraines

10. In some cases the above are extensions of a Scenic Viewing Area where the latter was held to not fully encompass an important grassland view from the road. In such cases the Scenic Grassland area is contiguous with the Scenic Viewing Area.
11. Maps of GA1 – GA13 accompany at the end.

EASTERN BASIN

12. **GA1, SH8 Burkes Pass:** This Area covers the roadside flats north and south of State Highway 8. North of SH8 it extends to the foot of the slopes of the Two Thumb Range, at the 760m contour near the Pass, dropping to the 720 contour in the west. The grassland values extend to the summit of the Two Thumb Range but to maintain the envisaged ‘relatively small’ Scenic Grassland area the boundary is drawn at the stated contour line.
13. South of SH8 a roadside strip comprising the Burkes Pass Scenic Reserve is included within GA1 but south of the reserve a shelter belt obscures views from the highway so the south side of the valley is not included in GA1.
14. At the east end GA1 terminates at the geographical high point of Burkes Pass but excludes the treed area south of SH1. At the west end it terminates along the ridgeline of a small spur extending from the Two Thumb Range to the intersection of SH8 and Haldon Road (Dog Kennel Corner). Along this ridgeline GA1 adjoins GA2 (see below).
15. The grasslands within the proposed area are of continuous and consistent quality, enabling the lines of the underlying topography to be clearly seen. (coherence, legibility). A particular value of this area is its being the first point of arrival in the South Island high country grassland environment, for tourist travelling south on SH8 (vividness, memorability).
16. North of SH8 an electricity pylon line traverses the slope above GA1, outside the defined area. Visually this does not detract significantly from the scenic grassland values but the earthworks of its access roads cause prominent scarring of the hillside and are a significant detraction to the visual continuity from highway to summit.

17. **GA2, SH8 Sawdon Stream:** This Area encompasses roadside flats north and south of SH8 immediately west of Dog Kennel corner, where these are not already included within Scenic Viewing Area SV7, which also is located here.
18. North of SH8 the grasslands extend in an impressive unbroken swathe from the flats to the flanks and summit of the Two Thumb Range some 12 or 13 kms to the north. The continuous nature of this progression, from flats to tops, is a striking aspect of this view, epitomising the Mackenzie Basin. This also is a popular tourist stopping point on SH8, being the first view of the Main Divide for westbound travellers.
19. To limit GA2 in size, an arbitrary (i.e. non-existent) cut-off line has been drawn 500m from the road boundary, representing a general limit to the foreground to this view.
20. South of SH8 the grasslands extend unbroken to the summit of Sterickers Mound, some 1km distant, and the preference on landscape grounds would be to extend SG2 this far. However to limit its size of GA2 south of SH8 the boundary is drawn along the foot of the slope, which is a distance ranging from 500 – 800m from the highway boundary.
21. Scenic Viewing Area 7 encompasses a triangle of flat land south of SH8 and west of Sterickers Mound. GA2 butts onto this area.
22. To the east GA2 abuts GA1 north of SH8 and terminates at the Haldon Road boundary south of SH8.
23. To the west the GA2 boundary north of SH8 has been drawn along the eastern stop bank of the Sawdon Stream. South of SH8 the boundary is with Scenic Viewing Area 7.
24. **GA3: Haldon Road (west side):** This Scenic Grassland seeks to maintain the foreground of wide outlooks westwards across the Tekapo River flats. Its south end, some 6 kms from Dog Kennel Corner, abuts Scenic Viewing Area SV10. It extends northwards to a shelterbelt south of Sterickers Mound, having a length approaching 5 kilometres. An area of developed pastureland west of Haldon Road and north of the Greys River bridge is excluded. In the absence of a visible cut off, GA3 extends the standard 500m west from Haldon Road as the foreground of this very extensive outlook. The grassland qualities are only moderate, but the setting is visually important.
25. **GA4: Haldon Road (east side) and Mackenzie Pass Road:** This wide Scenic Grassland area extends along the east side of Haldon Road and both sides of the Mackenzie Pass Road. It is a fan-shaped area, encompassing the broad sweep of views eastwards from Haldon Road across the outwash fans of the Mackenzie River, and even broader views westward from Mackenzie Pass Road across those fans to the Tekapo Flats and Main Divide beyond. The scale and continuity of these grassland areas is particularly memorable, the view westwards being one of the best in the Mackenzie Basin (legibility, coherence, memorability).
26. On the east side of Haldon Road, GA4 extends from a cattle stop about 1.5km north of the Mackenzie River bridge, in the north to the Snow River bridge (near Hakataramea Pass Road) in the south. The northern boundary radiates from the cattle stop to the 600m contour on the Mackenzie River, then upstream to where that River exits the Mackenzie Pass Valley. The southern boundary follows an existing shelterbelt south of Mackenzie Pass Road then continues westwards on that line, to rejoin the Haldon Road at the Snow River bridge.
27. The scenic grassland values are particularly extensive and wide-reaching on this dry eastern side of the Mackenzie Basin and GA4 seeks to maintain an area of these in their open

condition. The extensiveness of this area is acknowledged, although in total it is not greatly more than the combined 500m widths from Haldon and Mackenzie Pass Roads would be.

28. Mackenzie Monument: a small outlier of GA4 extends eastwards up to 2 kms into the Mackenzie Pass valley, to encompass an enclosed small basin traversed by the Mackenzie Pass Road. This is the location of the Mackenzie Monument where the sheep stealer John Mackenzie, the namesake of the Basin, was apprehended.
29. The floor of this small basin comprises general high country grassland with mixed regrowth scrub and grassland on the slopes above. This extension of GA4 is proposed in order to maintain the grassland setting of the monument, which is beside Mackenzie Pass Road. The monument is a Heritage Item in the District Plan and is notable for its inscriptions in three languages – English, Maori and Gaelic.
30. The north boundary of this extension of GA4 follows the foot of the slopes north of the Mackenzie River. It extends upstream as far as a bridge across a small unnamed side stream about 400m upstream of the monument. The southern boundary follows a small stream crossed by the Mackenzie Pass Road as it enters the valley. It then follows a pylon line about 1.5km eastwards over hills, to the unnamed side stream above.
31. **GA5: SH8 Dead Mans Creek**: 1km west of GA2 on State Highway 8 is another, more extensive grassland area north of the highway centred on Dead Mans Creek. Its values are the same as for GA2, namely impressive continuous grassland surfaces across approximately 1 kilometre of outwash plain, extending up a further 7 kilometres of hill flanks to the summit of Mt Edward. These views are notable for their scale, naturalness, vividness in changing weather, legibility and visual coherence.
32. The north boundary GA5 extends the standard 500m north from the SH8 boundary. The visual values continue unbroken to the summit but have been excluded to restrict GA5 to a relatively compact size. The east boundary of GA5 is a shelterbelt at the western extremity of the Sawdon Homestead area and the west boundary at a pine plantation 2.8km further west.
33. **GA6: SH8 Whiskey Cutting**: This area includes grasslands south of SH8, opposite the west end of GA3. Scenic Viewing Area SV5 covers the highway margin but is not wide enough to properly protect the extensive open views across the Tekapo River plain to the south-west. Area GA6 fits the Court's definition of scenic grasslands covering the foreground of views to the plains and this is another area where tourists frequently stop to views the mountains to the west.
34. The GA6 south boundary is set the standard 500m south of SH8 boundary, with its north boundary butting onto the existing Scenic Viewing Area. GA6 ends 500m south of the highway boundary, not the SVA boundary, its width therefore being less than 500m. In the east it extends to the westwards-most shelterbelt on SH8. Its western boundary is a terrace on the eastern side the Edward Stream. The length of GA6 is 1.6kms approximately.

TEKAPO & CENTRAL BASIN

35. **GA7: Lilybank Road (east side)**: This Grassland Area covers the visually impressive grasslands on the outwash slopes of the Richmond Range, east of Lilybank Road. The visual values embrace the outwash slopes in their entirety, which are widely visible alongside Lake Tekapo. Their width is about 5 kilometres, but to avoid excessive size the eastern boundary is drawn along the 700m contour, creating a GA of width 800m from Lilybank Road in the south, and up to 2000m in the north. However within this area pastoral development has occurred along nearly 4kms of Lilybank Road and developed areas, originally included in GA7, are now deleted. This results in GA7 being significantly narrower than 2000m in the north.

36. Lilybank Road could reasonably be considered a tourist road as far as the Round Hill Skifield Road so the northern boundary is therefore drawn at Coal Creek, to encompassing the visual catchment of the Skifield road. The southern boundary is at Washdyke Stream, near the Richmond Homestead.
37. **GA8: Godley Peaks Road:** This busy tourist road carries traffic to the Mt John Observatory and Lake Alexandrina as well as farm traffic to Glenmore and Godley Peaks Stations. The open grasslands and the moraine landforms as far as the Alexandrina Road are important components of the view from the road and GA8 is intended to maintain that existing grassland character.
38. The visual catchment is complex in the hummocky topography but to the west the boundaries have been drawn behind the skyline, to maintain views from Godley Peaks Road. To the east GA8 is contiguous with the Lake Tekapo Lakeside Protection Area in the north but excludes the Mt John landform and an area of developed pastures north of that mountain. To the south it abuts Scenic Viewing Area SV2.
39. Maps 24 and 44 of the District Plan show that a prominent piece of land north-west of the intersection of Godley Peaks Road and State Highway 8 is not included in SVA2. This small area is an important grassland area facing the prominent tourist intersection and is included as a small outlier in the south-east of GA8.
40. **GA9: SH8 Balmoral Rise:** This area west of SH8 encompasses hummocky slopes with a particularly good, continuous covering of clean grassland. These afford tourists a good sense of the natural landforms. GA9 extends to the skyline and a little valley about 1 km west of SH8. Its east boundary extends about the same distance along SH8. Its south boundary is contiguous with GA10 below, the two meeting at the high point on SH8.
41. GA9 is a good example of foreground grassland views leading to a close skyline as envisaged by the Court.
42. **GA10: SH8 Irishman Creek:** This extensive Grassland Area covers both sides of SH8. Its northern boundary is the high point on SH8, where it abuts GA9 above. Its southern boundary abuts Scenic Viewing Area SV11 about 3 kilometres southwards along SH8.
43. This is a remarkably beautiful area of grassland extending about 5 kilometres from south to north across gently rising outwash slopes, best seen from SH8 northbound after crossing the Tekapo Canal. The grasslands are prominent, extensive and visually clean. From SH8 the northern half of GA10 is enclosed within ridges on each side and this part fits well with the Court's definitions of foreground and close summit. The southern half is more open.
44. Defining the limits of GA10 in the west was challenging because viewed from the south, the rising slopes are widely visible and continuous, with no obvious cut off. The northern boundary on the west side has in this case been set at approximately the 800m contour, creating a SG area 3 kms from north to south. This size is justified by the prominence of the view. The western boundary of GA10 has been drawn along the east side of Irishman Creek (the waterway).
45. A smaller area of GA12 has been identified east of SH8, its eastern boundary following a local ridge that forms the skyline from the highway, about 3m vertically over the ridge when seen from SH8. In the south this area terminates where developed paddocks and a shelterbelt are, opposite SV11.

46. **GA11: SH8 (west side), The Wolds/Maryburn:** South of the Irishman Creek bridge Scenic Viewing Areas SV12 and SV13 extend for 7 kilometres along both sides of SH8, with widths typically about 150 metres. Views of an area of flats west of SH8 are often masked by hummocks close to the road but frequent small views to the grasslands here are obtained when passing on SH8, particularly on buses and taller vehicles. Scenic Viewing Area 12 covers the grassland hummocks near the highway but not the grasslands flats behind. Further south the topography becomes more open and views to grassland flats are more general.
47. The values of the flats are their extensive and continuous grassland covering, giving a good sense of the underlying moraine landforms. GA11 therefore seeks to maintain these grassland views further from SH8, even although partly obscured by roadside topography.
48. The western boundary for GA11 is drawn an arbitrary 1 kilometre from SH8, that distance to include the width of SV12. The eastern boundary abuts SV12. The northern boundary is at a roadway south of cottages on The Wolds Station, immediately south of the Irishman Creek bridge. The southern boundary is 6.6km to the south, drawn to exclude recent pastoral development immediately north of where the highway descends a terrace (southbound).
49. **GA12: SH8 (east side), The Wolds/Maryburn:** The east side of SH8 is of flatter topography than the west, the highway margins being the foreground for very long views of up to 20 kilometres eastwards across the Tekapo River Basin to the Dalgety/Rollesby Ranges. Scenic Viewing Areas SV13 and SV14 abut the east side of SH8 for 8kms, from 1km south of The Wolds main entrance to almost the Maryburn Homestead. This is a problematic area, having both widespread views and significant pastoral developments in the foreground.
50. To maintain naturalness of the grassland views where they still exist, a linear Scenic Grassland area has been drawn east of SH8, to a width of about 1km, including the Scenic Viewing Areas. The eastern boundary follows a small terrace west of Irishman Creek except at the south, where it extends below that terrace to a prominent bend in SH8 leading to the Maryburn Homestead. The western boundary abuts the SVA.
51. Two extensive areas of improved pasture exist in the north and south and the GA 12 boundary has been drawn to exclude these. The north boundary of GA12 is drawn at the boundary with the former.

PUKAKI & WESTERN BASIN

52. **GA13: SH8 Pukaki Moraine:** SH8 traverses the Pukaki terminal moraines between Simons Pass station and Lake Pukaki. These are unique landforms and contain a continuous if sometimes thin grassland covering. The views from SH8 are of great beauty and interest, and are very variable within the complex topography. This is an area of heightened tourist awareness, with travellers (southbound) about to burst upon the 'wow' views of Lake Pukaki and Aoraki-Mt Cook. Recent clearance of wildings has enhanced its grassland values although irrigation developments are proceeding or are planned to the east and south.
53. This is a challenging area to define boundaries for a Scenic Grassland, given the interlacing series of long and short views in several directions, seen in sequence from SH8. The north-west boundary of SG13 is drawn abutting the Lake Pukaki Lakeside Protection Area (LPA), and includes a small gully facing the lake in the very north-west.
54. The south-west boundary has been drawn along a succession of skylines and moraine valleys seen from the highway (left side heading south). These are located a little over ridgelines as envisaged by the Court.

55. The south-east boundary abuts Scenic Viewing Area SV16 west of the highway, noting the flats south of this are to undergo irrigation development. GA13 is entered southbound at the point SH8 first climbs the slopes into the moraine area and the boundary is drawn at the foot of this slope.
56. North-east of SH8 is another area of rapidly varying long and short views in different directions. A recent pastoral development and dairy road has occurred within the area originally identified, so the boundary now has been redrawn about 1 – 1.5kms from the highway to exclude the pastures. However it continues to include the road within SG13. This boundary has been drawn wide because the elevated views of grasslands seen from SH8 extend more than 1 kilometre from the road. In the far north-east, approaching Lake Pukaki, the boundary similarly is drawn about 1km from the highway due to the multiple views of up to this distance along glacial melt valleys, from SH8.
57. Maps of GA1 – GA13 now follow.

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May 2016
