



Godley Peaks Station Ltd

Godley Peaks Road
Po Box 10
Lake Tekapo 7999
New Zealand

Monday, 11 November 2024

Owner's Statement

Godley Peaks Station holds a deeply personal connection for me, forged through long-standing Scott family ties and my many formative experiences there. I see myself as the custodian of Godley Peaks and am committed to restoring and sustaining its biomes, buildings and beauty for the generations who come after me.

Making Godley Peaks work far into the future means doing things differently, and I have developed a five-year plan to achieve a sustainable outcome. The new homestead will install a beating heart into the station, but the plan is much more than a set of sensitively located buildings. I intend to transform Godley Peaks into a net zero carbon¹ farming operation that can give back to the community - yet also become financially viable.

Godley Peaks is now my second home. I already spend a lot of my time on the station, thanks to Starlink that keeps me in touch with my ongoing businesses. I will have my finger on the daily pulse of the development project till it's done, and beyond.

History

For almost sixty years from 1937 to 1996, the Scott family farmed Godley Peaks Station. Jack and Connie Scott bought the lease on Godley Peaks Station in 1941 and raised their four children there, only leaving to go to town a few times a year.

Bruce Scott, their younger son, became my father's best friend at Timaru Boy's High School. They found they shared a love of the land, and a similar outlook on life and what mattered. My father often returned to Godley Peaks with Bruce in the school holidays, when he wasn't at our Lewis family bach nearby at Lake Alexandrina. That bach started to take shape in 1931, so, between them, the Scott and Lewis families have Tekapo roots that go back nearly a century.

Bruce was the Scott son who wanted a working life on the station. For his first few years after leaving school, he was a full-time shepherd and, over winter, the boundary keeper. That meant living up-country at Sutherlands Hut from May to August, managing the stock, and living a frontier life. Food was dried goods topped up with whatever you could catch or shoot, and transport was by horse - or on foot. You could say Bruce was the classic high-country farmer. Tall, lean, tough, straight, no messing around.

¹ Carbon means carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, especially methane and nitrous oxide

My father and Bruce stayed firm friends into the years of marriage and kids. Bruce married Liz Newton in 1966. During the 1980's, to ensure succession, they bought Godley Peaks.

Bruce and Liz became my godparents, and that unique tie gave me countless weekends and holidays at Godley Peaks. I'd go up whenever I could, and I loved every minute. My family would be at our nearby bach, but I'd spend my days at the station as a farm hand, learning to drive tractors and dozers, make hay, paint, and build. I didn't get special treatment, but I did get opportunities. Bruce and Liz were hugely influential during my teenage years: the things they shared and showed me at Godley Peaks, and the lessons they taught me, have stayed with me my whole life.

Buying Godley Peaks was an easy decision because I already knew every inch of it.

Vision

The Scott family managed the land with a careful balance between use and preservation. I will rekindle their ethos of sustainable stewardship with modern practices that will rebuild the ecological health and community amenity of Godley Peaks but also the cashflow to support those goals.

For all its history and grandeur, the station is in poor shape today. It's losing hundreds of thousands of dollars annually and the soil, fences, bridges and historic outbuildings are all run down. Natural habitats for wetland and upland fauna and flora are gradually being choked by crack willow and threatened by the spread of wilding conifers.

Insanity, it's said, is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different outcome. Godley Peaks' status quo must end, and a five-year sustainability plan needs to start. To be clear, the plan applies to the 2676 freehold hectares, far more than the immediate area around the proposed homestead site.

I believe it's possible to rebalance the farming unit so that in five years its activities are on track for carbon neutrality by 2045-50 yet producing enough cash to cover operating expenses and necessary financing for the upgrades. With expert input, I've identified the key levers and pathways to make this vision a reality. There are details to be finessed, and some unknowables like sheep genetics, but this isn't pie in the sky.

Helicopter view for reaching my goals for Godley Peaks:

- farming unit: we'll build cash through an optimum mix of soil fertility, dry matter consumption and stock management choices like breeds, replacement rates, finishing times etc.
- net zero carbon: we'll blend forest sequestration (exotic harvest and native plantings) with low methane stock tools as they come online. And a hydro scheme, subject to a future consent application
- environmental integrity: we'll implement the Farm Biodiversity Plan. It collates biodiversity values across the station's different biomes and establishes how to manage, protect and enhance the values
- community amenity contributions: we'll upgrade huts, including those in the Conservation area, and contribute significantly to an improved Cass River bridge and roads to the Recreation Reserve.

Is it ambitious? You bet. But something else they say is that a goal without a plan is just a wish. I've got a plan, and I don't plan to fail.

Homestead: Looks and Location

Every station needs a homestead, but Godley Peaks hasn't got one. The last owners pulled down what the Scotts had developed in a sheltered inland spot. The farm manager's home is a simple residence that can't cope with all that the five-year plan will demand. Functionally, what's called for is a homestead that can be the heart of the station, serving conservation, farming and community activities as well as a place for current and future generations to live. That requires a collection of buildings, from house to garage, to sheds, to service and storage areas.

Visually, the homestead has to be heritage Mackenzie to its very bones, built of local greywacke, slate, and timber, and looking like it shared the same masons as the Church of the Good Shepherd down the Lake. I don't want to create an eyesore. I will not even be having a lawn! The native plantings will come right up to the buildings, with fast growing trees screening the homestead from the south. I've told the architect: embed it into the landscape so it looks like it's been there a hundred years and build it to such a high spec it will last at least another hundred.

Now, the location. Two thousand plus hectares, yet I'm seeking permission to build within the restricted Lake Protection Area. I'm not being bloody-minded. I truly believe the location I've chosen will honour the station, be uplifting to all who work from the homestead, and soon become an invisible part of the western shoreline for passersby.

The Mackenzie Basin has lots of high-country stations, but Godley Peaks has a unique and defining attribute: Lake Tekapo. To date no one has built near it except for a woolshed in the Scotts' time, and that blew over. It's strange, the Lake is ever-present, but it has never been truly integrated into the station's operations or identity. To have the Godley Peaks' enduring hub in sight of the water at last would lock land and Lake together.

The precise location matters, too. I want the people living and working at the homestead to be awed daily by as much of Godley Peaks' inspiring landscape as possible. I want us to see the Lake to the east, up to the Godley River outlet to the north, and back up the Cass Valley to the west. There's only one spot that connects all three. This most Southeastern position. The Scotts knew it very well, but their freehold only gave them a site about 500 metres north, and in the end their money had to go on a new woolshed...

That's it. I'll end by saying that Godley Peaks Station is a part of my history and has had a profound impact on my life. I love this land, and it is where I will spend the rest of my life.



Warren Lewis

warrenl@fmi.co.nz

+64 21 742 919