

MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS, FAIRLIE, ON TUESDAY 1 MARCH 2011 AT 4.40 PM

PRESENT:

Claire Barlow (Mayor)
Crs John Bishop
Peter Maxwell
Annette Money
Graeme Page
Graham Smith
Evan Williams

IN ATTENDANCE:

Glen Innes (Chief Executive Officer)
Nathan Hole (Manager – Planning and Regulations)
Toni Morrison (Senior Planner)
Rosemary Moran (Committee Clerk)

I APOLOGIES:

There were no apologies.

II DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST:

There were no declarations of interest.

III ADOPTION OF CANTERBURY REGION TRIENNIAL AGREEMENT:

This report from the Chief Executive Officer referred to the requirement to formally adopt the Triennial Agreement for the Canterbury Region.

Resolved:

1. That the report be received.
2. That the draft Canterbury Local Authorities Triennial Agreement for the 2010-13 period be adopted by Council and signed by the Mayor.
3. That the updated Charter of Purpose of the Canterbury Mayoral Forum be endorsed by the Mackenzie District Council.
4. That authority be delegated to the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor to approve other minor changes to the wording of the agreement.

Graeme Page/Evan Williams

IV PROPOSAL FOR A COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE PROCESS TO PREPARE A SHRED VISION FOR THE UPPER WAITAKI:

The Mayor advised that Minister of Conservation Nick Smith had been invited join the meeting about 6.00 pm to talk about the collaborative governance process he was promoting for the future sustainability of the Upper Waitaki.

The Senior Planner summarised the issues which the Minister was expected to address. She emphasised that there were two key checks on the proposed collaborative governance process – nothing would happen unless all parties involved in the group agreed and any recommendations which the group made would have to be approved by the local authorities.

The Senior Planner presented a paper which referred to the area covered by the proposal and the proposed objectives. It outlined the role of the Sustainable Futures Trust, named the members and listed the land use and business interests, environmental and recreational community interests and other community interests to be involved in the Working Party (aka Shared Vision Forum). The paper also referred to active observers, the status of meetings, the 'consensus rule', property rights agreement, chairperson of the Working Party and the Minister's comments at the Twizel meeting.

The Mayor listed some of her concerns and those which she had been made aware of by local people, including the prospect of experienced lobbyists engaging with local, conscientious part timers.

The Chief Executive Officer noted that the Council had yet to see the application for funding, and its accompanying budget, which the interim trustees had lodged on 15 February 2011. Neither had Councillors seen the Trust deed.

Peter Maxwell suggested that although the concept might be good, the process to date had not been. He said the government wanted a collaborative governance process and would reward it. If that process was developed properly it could be in the best interests of the community and be of great help to the Council in making future decisions.

The Manager – Planning and Regulations assured the Councillors that Plan Change 13 would not be part of the Forum's terms of reference. He noted the large amount of funds expended in objecting to Resource Management Act 1991 processes and suggested there had to be a better way. He noted that there would be only one opportunity to make what seemed to be a good idea work.

The Mayor said the Mackenzie would be under a national spotlight and the Council needed to consider very carefully whether it supported the proposal and what the repercussions might be if it did not.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.30 pm for tea and reconvened at 6.30 pm

The Mayor welcomed Minister of Conservation, Nick Smith, the Minister's Advisor Phil Gurnsey and Member of Parliament for Waitaki Jacqui Dean. She also welcomed about 30 members of the public who attended to hear the Minister's presentation.

The Mayor said the Minister would be invited to speak first after which she would invite questions from the Councillors and then from the floor.

She noted that apologies had been received from Glen and Larry Murdoch and said further apologies had been given to her PA.

The Minister acknowledged the huge tragedy which had overtaken Christchurch. He said the Canterbury earthquake was NZ's worst ever disaster – one which had sent shock waves through every community. He apologised for his late appearance due to his travel plans having been disrupted. He thanked the Council for its indulgence in rescheduling the meeting later than had been planned.

The Minister said the Mayor had invited him to meet directly with the Council to talk about the challenges that existed around the Mackenzie Basin, current government thinking, the potential for opportunities to be gained from a collaborative governance process and how it might work for both Environment Canterbury and the Mackenzie District Council. He emphasised that the government had no specific agenda around the future of the Mackenzie or Omarama Basins.

The Minister said that the Government had clear objectives at a national level around environmental management; for example, it was government policy to step change the way in which New Zealand's fresh water resources were managed.

The second objective was to remove from the Resource Management Act 1991 process incentives for divisiveness and the British type obsession with the prosecution/defence approach in trying to resolve environmental issues. Instead the government wanted to provide a framework to encourage communities to come together to find solutions.

The third objective was to encourage the National Government's Blue/Green concepts. He considered there could be no future for New Zealand unless it had a strong economy, and the country was able to grow its exports, at the same time marrying that with good, common sense environmental policies.

The Minister said he made the decision in his first week as Minister to set up the Land and Water Forum. It had been engaged in trying to deliver a step change as to how fresh water issues were managed. He said people had been sceptical about getting Federated Farmers Vice President Lachlan McKenzie and Bryce Johnston of Fish and Game into the same room and twelve months later agreeing on a way forward. The process had been successful in getting diametrically opposed interest groups to find solutions

The Minister said that local MP Jacqui Dean had discerned a high level of contention in reports from Environment Canterbury and the Ministry about the increasing challenges in the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins. He said that at the beginning of 2010 he had decided to call in an application for a large dairy operation. There had been massive public interest. Subsequently Ms Dean had suggested that instead of using the drawn-out process of the Resource Management Act 1991 there was potential to use a collaborative governance process to try and make a step change forward on the way in which the Mackenzie and Omarama basins could be managed.

The Minister said he had agreed that, if all parties were willing to participate, he could provide central government resources to help fund the process. Ms Dean had engaged with interest groups, a trust had been formed and an application for funding was currently before him. He said he did not intend to apply money to the process unless the key decision makers were committed to making the process work.

The Minister clarified what he considered was different about collaborative governance. He acknowledged that people had varying ideas about what it meant. He asked why he thought it was worth it and what the advantages might be. He said in the normal way such business was undertaken, someone would come along with an issue or a problem and get officials to

come up with proposals. Submissions on the proposals would then be sought and the governing body would then try and come up with a decision. Collaborative governance was different in that, rather than local authorities trying to act as referees between different and competing interests, the process would invite those who were interested to engage and evolve solutions. He said the results of that kind of process provided more durable answers.

The Minister referred to a number of contentious issues of the 1970s and 1980s including the harvesting of native forests. He said the 1989 Forest Accord which had been signed between forestry companies and environmental groups had seen all the protest and energy around the issues disappear and 20 years later the Forest Accord remained standing. He said it had been a marked success. He said in the 1990s the Minister of Conservation was faced with a huge amount of tension between fishing, tourism, environmental and Ngai Tahu interests in Fiordland and newspapers of the time had reported that it would need the Wisdom of Solomon to reach agreement. He said the subsequent Fiordland Process had developed a sensible plan for a way forward in the management of Fiordland.

The Minister said it was his view that the scale of the imminent economic and environmental pressures around development in the Mackenzie and Omarama basins would be about as hard as it could get. He and MP Jacqui Dean were equally enthusiastic about the potential for irrigation to increase the wealth and productivity of the area. However that potential had ignited a high level of interest in what should or should not take place in the Basins which hosted some of the most iconic areas in New Zealand. He said another critical dimension was that the District stored 50% of the electricity in the New Zealand system and the Government was looking to produce and secure as much renewable energy as possible. This added to the huge, economic pressures.

The Minister also noted a further dimension - the land tenure process.

He said the Environment Canterbury processes around who might get water for irrigation, the water quality issues that flowed on from that, the land use responsibilities of the local authorities, and tenure review, represented a variety of different process which, if they were to run the traditional legal course, could end up an absolute mess. He said the potential was there to put those legal processes to one side and try a collaborative governance approach that would consider all the inter-related issues. This was the objective of the Sustainable Futures Trust.

The Minister acknowledged that where democracy sat was one of the community concerns about the collaborative governance process – would elected councillors have their say? He said the position of both himself and Ms Dean was that elected representatives must have the final say. He referred to the collaborative governance process around the Land and Water Management forum and said the final decision on whether or not any part of its report was adopted was for the elected members of the government. Equally if the collaborative governance process around the future of the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins produced a report on a way forward, it would be submitted to the local authorities and the final decision on its recommendations would rest with them; recommendations to do with tenure review would rest with the government of the day.

He said some people had asked if the government or councils retained the power to have the final say, why have such a process? He suggested that if a council had a report that enjoyed the broad sign-off of Federated Farmers, tourism, environmental and other local interests, (and that would be no different for central government), it would be difficult for a council to ignore what a wide range of interest groups was promoting as a sensible way forward.

The Minister said he worried that if people were not brave enough to give the collaborative governance process a go, Mackenzie and Omarama Basin issues could be before the courts for years and years; ratepayers would face big bills and landowners suffer high levels of frustration. He suggested the only winners would be the legal fraternity who were more consumers than creators of wealth.

The Minister made it plain that the government would not provide funds unless the Mackenzie and Waitaki District Councils committed to the process. He said if the process was to proceed it was his intention to review progress about July 2011 to see if it was worth the public investment of money and ensure that it was not turning into a talkfest going nowhere. He said both time and money would be involved, but it would be but a small fraction of what councils could spend on plans and appeals under the current adversarial and divisive system.

The Minister said he hoped he had been able to shed some light on the issues.

The Mayor invited questions from the Council.

John Bishop

How long do you see this carrying on?

The Minister

It is a limited exercise – there is no definite time frame. My view is that we are unlikely to get a decision within six months - I would say between 6 and 18 months to be worthwhile. The reason for the time limit is that the goal is to produce a report. If the time is too short then we will get a report of mush. There are hard issues to resolve and you need a reasonable amount of time to get into the thorny, hard issues.

Graham Smith

As a Councillor I'm concerned at the speed which you have tried to rush this in. I'm not prepared to sign off on something when the ratepayers really don't know the full agenda. Collaborative is a wide word - to them it could mean those who have got it will have to give and those who haven't are going to go hell-for-leather to take. Can you reassure ratepayers that they won't lose anything in this process?

The Minister

Has the process been rushed? Last November at a symposium I suggested you might want to explore such an idea. There has been a lot of discussion over the intervening period. The Land and Water Forum process and the Fiordland process would have had similar terms of reference and if there is no local buy-in it is not worth the effort.

You referred to the perspective that environmental lobby groups might have – that all the gain would be to them in the process. Forest and Bird has been campaigning to get a dryland park in the Basin. I have had tens of thousands of postcards and am continually criticised for not advancing the agenda.

Every decision made by a local council or Environment Canterbury can be appealed to the Environment Court by any of those lobby groups and many people are frustrated by the delays that go with that. My view is that if you have a greater level of confidence in carrying on business as usual in the adversarial system of the Environment Court then you should not participate in this process. Those are the alternatives.

Regarding property rights – I will be direct. The very business of central government and yourselves as councillors is the business of property rights. Every single time you make a

decision on your District Plan it is an attack on property rights if you take the doctrinaire view. We in Parliament and you in councils are defining the balance around property rights – a very important thing. I do not subscribe to the view that private property owners have the right to pollute. Do you want to go on trying to resolve the arguments around property rights in the Environment Court or do you have faith in people to try and find a balance in the areas and jurisdictions you are responsible for?

Peter Maxwell

In the process so far there has been a subtle word change from *locally driven* to *local buy-in*. It has to be drive locally and I haven't seen that so far. I read the interim Chairman of the Working Group is from Whanganui. That isn't driven locally and that is where I get nervous for the ratepayers.

The Minister

I'm not going to tell a collaborative group who they should have as a facilitator. There is a big difference between who is the facilitator and what the Group will decide to include in its plan. The important point is that the collaborative governance process relies on consensus. Any one member of the group has the right of veto and that is true for everyone, including local farmers. If they can't reach a compromise about providing a sensible way forward we won't get a consensus report. That is why I quoted the Land and Water Forum and Fiordland Accord and Forestry Accord – all the result of consensus. Only consensus has worth and we regulatory bodies, councils and government, need to make it clear that the report will only be taken seriously if there is compromise and agreement. That will be its strength.

What is going to be achieved at the end of it?

We need to achieve a plan for the next 10 to 20 years for the development of the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins. In my view the objective is a comprehensive plan for the way forward. There are going to be some parts of the Group's report that will have recommendations for the Mackenzie District Council to do with things like the District Plan, there will be some recommendations for central government to do with tenure review and others parts might impact on, for example, the controls that rest with Environment Canterbury around water management.

Peter Maxwell

If you come up with a collective agreement and the Council is asked to amend its District Plan, what is to stop objections being made?

The Minister

Good question. One of the reforms which I am looking at for the Resource Management Act 1991 is an amendment to provide support for collaborative governance. An example – on the shores of the Hauraki Gulf a developer wanted to build apartments. The local people did not consider sufficient provision for green space etc had been made. The developer engaged with the locals and a good agreement was reached. He lodged an application for resource consent along the lines of the collective solution. One person tried to appeal and was not successful. It would be obvious to provide an amendment to the Resource Management Act 1991 to provide support for local authorities to use those processes. You are being bits of guinea pigs to help us find alternative ways. The adversarial system of district plan processes, and the Resource Management Act 1991 don't work very well and that is why we are exploring this. If you decide you don't want to do it I will not try and force you. I am inviting you to take part in the way of the future. The collaborative process is a good solution. Another example is a story from Finland where they were trying to find a place to dump waste from a nuclear power station. Amazingly, using a consensus process all parties signed up to an agreement.

I am focussed on this alternative process as the way of the future and I'm looking to communities to have the intestinal fortitude to do it differently and do it better.

Graeme Page

Our ratepayers pay to the Council and Environment Canterbury and one of the concerns I have is we are getting led down a process and we don't know what the cost will be to the taxpayer and the ratepayer. Already a considerable amount of money has been spend to start this exercise. Hhow much is it going to cost to run? Our ratepayers don't have a lot of capacity.

The Minister

I would expect it to cost about \$200,000 to do properly and get researched reports etc. With some environmental issues farmers and irrigators pay expensive consultants and scientists to produce reports; environmental groups do likewise and get different science. 'He who pays the piper calls the tune.' Lack of agreement on the science front adds to the contention. We need to support the process with sound background science - if there is to be dairying in the Basin what will be the impact on water from added nutrients? You would get more accurate information about environmental effects if experts were engaged as the result of a collaborative process than each engaged by two opposing groups.

How much does the Mackenzie District Council spend each year on planning - in house and in the Environment Court? If you add up your spend of say \$400,000 per year over the next ten years that is \$4m against the amount you are being asked for now - about \$5,000. I have been asked to contributed \$200,000 and I will want to test progress in July.

This is a process of about 12 months. There will be hard yards taken in producing a report that will provide guidance for the councils, Environment Canterbury and central government around the future of the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins.

Annette Money

The thing I feel suspicious and cynical about is there are 29 groups of people with minimal real interest in the Mackenzie/Omarama areas. I'm not sure how big the voice of the dryland farmers will be in a collaborative governance process. I feel concerned for them. They are unique and make up part of the special fabric of the Mackenzie Basin. I understand the collaborative governance process but I'm cynical about people who have the volume of voice to present their opinions more strongly than others and I question how worthwhile and valuable this outcome will be for everyone.

The Minister

I cannot tell the future and it is not for me to make a success of the process. Frankly that success will rest with the broad range of stakeholders involved.

If your view is that they will never agree, you should not support the process. I'm an optimist and I think New Zealanders at heart are quite sensible. You need to be cautious when dealing with a collaborative governance process and assuming each voice is equal. In a collaborative governance process you will have some parties that have a small voice and some will have larger voices. Frankly, the voices are only as strong as the credibility that your Council and the government choses to give them.

Let's say that the Group produces a report and Federated Farmers say they can't live with it. If it doesn't have the sign off Federated Farmers then it hasn't been successful. There might be other organisations that are not able to agree, but you as the Council could say that they are not as important in terms of the big picture for the future. So you need to be relaxed about the fact that some people have greater interests than others. It is exactly the same as

when you advertise for submissions on a Plan. You will take some very seriously and of other you will say they can come or go.

Graeme Page

You are marrying Omarama and Mackenzie and that is like talking about chalk and cheese. One is green and one is brown. It seems as if the Council and the farmers and the Ministry of Works have managed this area so badly that we need another governance body over what we already have.

The Minister

It will not be a governance body. Have we done a good job? Not too bad but have we got the systems in place to manage and encourage development and the environmental pressures that will come with it?

Graham Smith

In the Plan Change 13 process the only submitters that have gone to the Environment Court are our ratepayers. By default the environmentalists have said we did a good job.

The Minister

You have tried to make a change and have appeals to the Environment Court. What money does that involve? Am I coming here with an agenda that says the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins are not being managed? No. But there are big pressures coming to bear on the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins and there has to be a better way to manage them.

Claire Barlow

At the forum there were no iwi representatives. They are an integral part of the communities. What happens if they don't participate? Where is the collaborative approach?

The Minister

Ngai Tahu's involvement is important. Mark Solomon thinks the process has potential. Ngai Tahu has resourcing issues. I was going to meet with them today to discuss the issues. I see their participation as being important.

Claire Barlow

What if they don't buy in?

The Minister

If they choose not to participate it will be a deficiency in the process. When the final report is produced, Council and central government will send it to them, but my preference would be for them to be in there.

The Mayor invited questions from the floor.

Bronwen Murray

I'm concerned that the stance on tenure review has changed from that at the beginning of the process. There is a piece of legislation for tenure review and a step by step process to follow. One has to have confidence in legislation otherwise there is anarchy. Two of us here are on a knife edge as our properties are in the public process. Today, without our knowledge or anyone telling us, you have given an extension to Forest and Bird. We feel that we no longer understand the piece of legislation we thought we did. Is that the reason the Minister is here – to confirm for us he wants to put our tenure review on hold? If I come from that perspective I can't have any trust in the collaborative governance process.

The Minister

Regarding the extension – we have just had the biggest civil defence emergency management issue in our country. Was it reasonable for the Commissioner of Lands to say stop - for those who couldn't get to their offices? So he has granted an extension.

It is not only Forest and Bird who asked for an extension. It shouldn't be a surprise and we need to be respectful. If your Council was involved in a civil defence emergency do you think you would have granted an extension?

Forest and Bird put out a press release asking for tenure review to be put on hold and I said "No". If you have issues around the process of tenure review then under a collaborative governance process those issues can be put before the other parties involved in the process if this community decides to take part. No pre-emptive decisions will be made around these issues, exactly the same as with the Land and Water Forum. At a national level there are huge interests at play around what the government is going to do with land and water reform. I refused to meet with any of them during that process. The assurance I will give you is there will be no change to the process of tenure review as a consequence of going down a collaborative governance path unless there is agreement and accord among all the parties involved in the process about ways in which the government could improve it. I think the process and time involved has been long and frustrating and it may be possible to do it more efficiently. We should not close our minds to that.

Andrew Simpson.

I want to correct you – tenure does not dictate land use. We are getting ourselves into a problem if we assume that after tenure review we are at liberty to do anything we like. Land use is dictated by the Mackenzie District Council and the Resource Management Act 1991. We have also talked about water quality and tenure review as the main focus of the collaborative governance group. I don't believe tenure review should be in there. What is the scope of the group? Are they the only two things to be looked at?

The Minister

There are grunty issues challenging the Mackenzie and Omarama – the process of change in land use to more intensified farming and the impact of that on water quality and the potential to produce a lot more wealth for the community and the country. The biodiversity question is in there as well. Council is grappling with those issues as well as the pressure of a growing tourism industry in the region. With all there are tensions and some balance is going to be required.

I hear from many people and I don't know anyone who wants to see the entire Basin converted to dairying. Nor have I met anyone who is completely opposed to that sort of intensive farming. The choices are about how much land should be involved and in what areas. Those issues are at the core of the decisions to be made for the future of the place in which you all live.

John Murray

Through the District Plan process we have had a severe change of land use on 30% of the farmed area in the Mackenzie Basin and any further restrictions in protecting biodiversity will impact on the future. Given the huge interest in the future of the Basin, is your money only going to fund a process and not the solutions? Isn't it reasonable that New Zealand comes up with the money to fund solutions? As a farmer I can't agree to a dryland park. If it looks like ending up in the District Plan or Regional Plan without compensation I would veto it. So at an early stage we need an indication that the government is looking at innovative solutions and the financing of them.

The Minister

The Government puts \$270m a year into the Department of Conservation which has been expanding its estate for decades. There has to be a limit. I think QEII covenants and other covenants are a more efficient way of getting some of the public good outcomes we are looking for. It is possible that when the report comes out it might say here is what we want and we need a government contribution. I have no difficulty with that. However just as dollars are in short supply for the Council so it is with central government. The guidance I have given to the collaborative governance processes is “Don’t count on getting big fat cheques.” That is out of step with the times.

The last point I will make is about who should pay. Where intensive farming is impacting on water quality - what is the right balance of where the cost of the fix should fall? The direct answer is that where there is a collective problem then it should fall on central and local government. But if someone is going to farm a property more intensively, it is fair enough that the farmer should meet the cost of installing, say, modern effluent systems as part of building a new dairy farm. So I am making a distinction between existing farming operations and new operators beginning developments.

John Murray

There have only been three big applications and outside of those, the impact of what the Joe Average farmer is applying for would be negligible. It is simply a case of scale. These guys have a lot to lose. They are going to get attacked on landscape and biodiversity sides and both are restrictive.

The Minister

We have given funding for a Land Care Trust collaborative governance model in Golden Bay, Nelson. There was a major issue for marine farmers caused by effluent from dairy farms. The marine farmers were not able to harvest 20% of the time. Council bureaucrats came along and said no effluent was to go into streams. They then tried the collaborative governance process. The answer lay not with the council bureaucrats or the government officials – it was the local marine and dairy farmers finding solutions and they did a good job.

John Bishop

Given the stance of Forest and Bird there is going to have to be a big attitude change.

Claire Barlow

Chris Todd is Forest & Bird's South Island Conservation Manager and he was extremely apologetic because he was not aware that a staff member was going to talk to the press. He said he was upset about the publication and that it did not represent the view of Forest and Bird. He has made it clear that this is not how a collaborative governance process works.

Penny Murray

Jen Miller (Forest & Bird's Canterbury/West Coast Field Officer) said she was apologetic about it but she also stated that Fish and Bird wanted the tenure review process halted.

The Minister

The key point is this – some groups are trying to put a halt to it. That is why I have received 25,000 post cards. It is better to tell Forest and Bird to stop the nonsense, sit down with the parties, present their views and come to agreement rather than trying to get to us politicians through the back door to try and force solutions that are not practical. I give Chris credit too – he has apologised to the other members of the forum. It is a big change and people are not used to doing business this way.

Lachlan Mackenzie had the same views as Forest and Bird – they were even more political at that level; however they came up with a sensible report around the future of water.

Paddy Boyd

My concerns are around the process being driven locally. At the meeting we pushed hard to get dryland farmers as a group who should be represented. That emphasises what was said before – they are a big group and they are not round the table.

Four irrigation groups and the dryland groups have been dropped out. I want to stress that those dryland farmers play a big part. They are under time constraints with what they are managing and are not well resourced compared to other groups that can turn up and speak loudly.

Jacqui Dean

I apologise for that. Clearly for this process to work the dryland farmers must be represented. They have the option and they have to confirm that they want to be involved in the process.

The Minister

I'm not going to decide who will be the parties in the collaborative governance process. I make this point –the culture of the way in which people can do business is changing. A number of the parties have suggested that if they split themselves into more groups they would get greater representation. Collaborative governance is not a democratic process where everyone has a vote – that isn't what happens.

Paddy Boyd

My point is that those who are affected must have a say. Federated Farmers doesn't represent everyone. Forest and Bird have one agenda and so does Fish and Game. They don't need ten people pushing one agenda.

Claire Barlow

Will the meetings be open to the public?

The Minister

That is for the group to decide. If it turns into a media circus and everyone goes back to their old habits it will fly apart. In my view people will listen and compromise and learn to understand perspectives and different points of view to come up with something everyone can live with. I'm not sure what you could expect from the process if every man and his dog was in the room.

Elaine Curin

In order for a collaborative governance process to work it should have a 50 to 100 year vision and it has to include agriculture, tourism, culture and conservation. There has to be a mix. If the collaborative governance process were to go ahead and if tourism ended up being where we could make money would that mean the Council would consider amending the District Plan to incorporate the sorts of things John brought up. The vision is huge - should that vision be limited to 20 years? It should be done in a way that opens up every aspect for this jewel in the crown of the country

The Minister

Ten to twenty years is a reasonable time frame – any further into the future and there is more uncertainty. If you look at every Act of Parliament the life is about 25 years; it was the same with the Town and Country Planning Act and the Resource Management Act 1991 and district plans. My worry is that if you start to focus your minds on a 50 year horizon there could be navel gazing and it is not really practical.

If the exercise produces a good framework to make decisions, it will have done a pretty good job. If you need to put another \$5,000 in in another twenty years' time it would be good value.

Alastair Munro

I remember the Resource Management Act 1991 being sold to us as allowing local people to have the say. It has worked the other way. When I left school there were waving tussocks in the Mackenzie but things have happened since and we have been seriously let down by central government. Some of those things are rabbits and hieracium. There used to be good pasturage for sheep going to the Grampians but now the land hardly grows a lizard. Central government needs to grapple with the sustainability of the Mackenzie before anything else is done – we have to replace the hieracium with some other plant to stop the wind blow, and we need to get rid of the rabbits.

The Minister

There is a view that the Department of Conservation is an ever-growing empire. The Minister's office is happy to consider the latest proposal to extend the Department of Conservation estate but first it would like to see a report on areas of low conservation value land which could be withdrawn from the estate. It is doubtful that there is sufficient funding to manage what we have. We need profitable land to pay the bills and need to manage environmental effects in smart ways so our grandchildren can say we have been good custodians of those areas.

John O'Neill

My question is about the integrity of the Mackenzie District plan. The area we deal with is not the Waitaki. I have lived here all my life and seen a lot of responsible people looking after the integrity of the place. Council made changes to the District Plan that were awkward, unpopular and expensive - we thought we should because of the demands of the Resource Management Act 1991. We are not Waitaki which has its own problems. If you look at history everyone wants the Mackenzie to stay the way it is because those that have lived here have taken ownership of it. Why does everyone else want to meddle?

I don't agree with the agenda of the symposium. If you are in politics and want to cure a prickly problem you need to get everything on the table first. I went to the symposium and there was no mention of rabbits. The achilles heel up in the Mackenzie is weather/rabbits/hieracium and possibly wilding trees. I'm suggesting the agenda of the symposium was deficient. I'm suggesting the District plan is a measure of the integrity of the Council.

Nick Smith

My challenge to you is to rise above the politics. The truth is that there are good features of the District plan but one of the deficiencies is that you are not going to be able to make decisions about the future of the Mackenzie and Omarama Basins unless you work together. There are issues around water management and land use. Everyone has their own 'silos' and they all have to be brought together.

Karen Simpson

I found out about this process through the newspaper. I would have thought that if you wanted to get buy-in from the people who have been there for over 150 years you should have had the courtesy to talk to them. We found out through the paper that this was happening. It would be an exciting goal for us to think we would have an input into what could work for our property. Most people have something they can give but they feel threatened and while they feel threatened and scared they are not going to have trust. I suggest we need trust. Being in a room with 29 people who want what we have got is not a good start.

The Minister

I suspect that the population of the Mackenzie and Omarama areas is about 4,000 people. It is an unreal expectation that you have to speak to everyone before something goes into the newspaper. The truth is in the real world it happens that way – it is not a conspiracy or that somehow we have not acted in good faith because we didn't talk to you at the beginning of the process.

Karen Simpson

I have the right to have my point of view. Farmers are not recognised as conservationists but we wouldn't be there if we weren't.

Peter Espie has been involved with the Tekapo Scientific Reserve since 1983. He knows the issues and needs to be listened to and heard. He was asked to speak for five minutes at the end of the symposium. That was not good enough. He knows a lot and has the trust of the farmers and they respect him. He should be allowed an input into the science issues embracing those around land management.

The Minister

If you look at New Zealand's environmental record it is very good - our lakes are the best in the world. But if I look at the international indices, New Zealand's environmental performance is ranked bottom in biodiversity. We have the most species headed for extinction. We don't want to see an on-going decline in species unique to our country. We need to increase our knowledge of biodiversity.

The whole notion of the Blue/Green concept is practical environmentalism. We need to have practical solutions and farmers have nothing to fear whatsoever from a practical approach to these challenges.

Jacqui Dean

I want to pick up on a point Karen made very well – the only way only this process is going to work is to have people like everyone here sitting around the table. That is what I envisage. You are major stakeholders and the ones on whom the pressures are coming down. The opportunity I see in this process is for everyone to get round the table, eyeball the likes of Forest and Bird and the Federated Mountain Clubs, have the discussions and see if progress can be made that way.

Simon Williamson

Why don't they split Landcorp up and give the Department of Conservation LINZ land?

The Minister

Issues with Landcorp rest with David Carter. I would make this point, the Landcorp proportion of New Zealand farmland is 2%. At some point the Crown could be interested in divesting out of that but that is not at the core of the issues facing Omarama and Mackenzie.

Karen Simpson

43% of the South Island is Department of Conservation Estate. Forest and Bird is passionate about what they want. Why don't they give examples of what they intend to do for conservation. A lot of the pieces of land are museum pieces. You are putting a lot of heat on these people and it is not a big lot of land.

The Minister

Forest and Bird represent a legitimate voice around conservation issues in New Zealand. It is just one voice. Is New Zealand better for having advocates? Yes – but you can always take a good idea too far and government needs to provide a proper balance. 45% of the members of Forest and Bird are farmers. Some of our best practical conservationists are people who champion causes.

One of the most valuable things to be gained from a collaborative governance process is that a bunch of people who have got strongly held views about the District will become much better informed about many issues, eg hieracium and rabbits. Equally your challenge is to keep your ears open and you may learn something as well. Both sides can learn, both can become richer for the solutions found. Alternatively both groups can employ lawyers who will make money fighting things out in the courts. You could let that process run its course and you can decide if you are getting a better outcome than sitting round a table talking with the parties that will appeal such decisions through the courts.

Claire Barlow

Thank you, Minister and thank you Jacqui.

I don't think any of us would be involved thus far if we didn't hope it could have a good impact on the farmers in our community. We don't like going head to head or being regulatory and enforcing. There are a lot of good ideas out there and if we get everyone talking together then we can come up with novel solutions. I'm an optimist and hope for the best. I'm not a farmer but I would say from the Council's perspective that we support you. You are our ratepayers and it is important to us that you have confidence in this process.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS,
THE MAYOR DECLARED THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.10 PM**

MAYOR: _____

DATE: _____