



Central Otago District Council

Draft Annual Plan 2011 – 2012

The Otago Chamber of Commerce would like to speak to
this submission

Submission prepared by:

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Submission

INTRODUCTION

Ultimately, local economies are about the people that work, visit and live in them. Economic downturns threaten the quality of life of people. And so for Central Otago to remain healthy local leaders must listen to, communicate with, and craft and implement solutions to support people and businesses.

Good plans are not just about generating business or cutting rates; they are about enhancing a quality of life that will retain our community wealth and developing leadership that has intellectual ability to build our region in a positive way.

We believe enhanced community wealth and a higher quality of life comes as the result of a strong economic base built by a business community which generates employment opportunities.

The business community generates the wealth on which our region and its residents depend. It is for this reason that we make this submission. The Otago Chamber of Commerce is pleased to be able to present this submission on behalf of the 1300 Otago businesses.

The businesses that we represent are a broad cross-section of business demographics with regard to size, location and industry. Furthermore, these businesses are representative of the region's wealth generators as well as being owned, managed and staffed by the region's core residents. As such, the Chamber's members are large stakeholders in the economic, social and environmental future of the Otago Region.

The Chamber continues to support you in helping to achieve your goals as a representative of business throughout the district.

SUBMISSION

TARGETED RATES – PROMOTION

As an organisation we have submitted and discussed our views on the promotions levies that are targeted at various wards. This levy, as we understand it, is administered by the Community Boards and applied to promotions groups.

The Chamber in previous submissions asked for more accountability to be put into this process. We understand that significant progress has been made in this area, and we are pleased Council has taken on board our previous comments on this topic. We would like to reiterate:

Any organisation receiving funding through Community Boards should have to provide evidence that their objectives are aligned to the Central Otago District Council's and any regional strategies.

We recommend Council ensure Community Boards have sound service level agreements with agreed objectives, measures and funding clearly outlined.

We recommend all organisations in receipt of any funding are asked to present an annual proposal of spending, which has supporting acceptance from the community that it represents.

INDUSTRIAL LAND & DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

The Central Otago District is short of good industrial-zoned land with appropriate services. It is imperative that this situation be dealt with proactively for long term growth opportunities, particularly in Alexandra.

The Chamber encourages Council establish a Council Industrial-zoned Land Working Party to review the current policy and make recommendations to take back to Council.

The Chamber and Council have a good track record of being able to work through complex issues, and we offer our expertise and assistance to address the industrial land requirements of the district.

We request Council form a Working Party to review the Industrial-zoned Land.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic wellbeing is an essential part of any community plan which we believe is underpinned by two fundamental platforms; economic development and business development. We strongly support Council investing in economic development, including tourism, and offer the Chamber knowledge and support for any assistance required in these areas.

We know the importance of investing in this area with a long term perspective in mind, and acknowledge how difficult it is to measure outcomes that are tangible. This is where the

implementation of an economic development strategy is important, along with the regular monitoring of required outcomes.

The regions ultimate goal should adopt a long-term approach that builds community assets and encompasses the region's strengths.

To maximise the benefit, strategies for economic development and tourism need to focus on implementation, monitoring and evaluation of measurable goals.

BUY LOCAL

The Chamber is supportive of initiatives that encourage supporting local businesses. We appreciate that Council has to manage its expenditure, but we would ask Council to fully explore the ramifications of not supporting local industry where appropriate. There is a strong economic argument for such an imperative, and we would be encouraging Council to support local industry.

CENTRAL OTAGO TOURISM

Tourism Central Otago (TCO) has a budget of in excess of \$1.2 million including Visitor Information Centres (page 67 CODC 2010 Annual Report).

Reservations are expressed as to the effectiveness of some TCO expenditure on the promotion of Tourism in Central Otago. It is difficult from the public information available to establish in what areas and for what purpose the TCO budget is spent.

The Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT) is the major attraction in the district that brings tourists to the Central Otago (CO) area. In the 2009-10 season an estimated 15,000 (minimum) people cycled the trail. In 2010-11 it is estimated that 13,500 used the trail. For the previous 5 years the average number is estimated to be 10-12,000. (Source Graeme Duncan Wedderburn).

It would appear that the OCRT may be approaching a mature phase in its growth and will in the short term be facing competition from other cycleways being established throughout New Zealand. There is a need to ensure that this icon of Central Otago Tourism is promoted to enable it to retain its position as the leading cycleway in the country.

The Otago Central Railtrail Trust (OCRTT) is charged with the development and maintenance of the OCRT. The OCRTT has two very significant tourism assets. The advertising brochure it produces and it's Website.

It is estimated that at least 90% of business operators servicing the OCRT spend little or nothing on marketing their business and or the trail. The reasons are likely to be that they have limited resources and traditional means of advertising produces little of measurable value.

We believe there is an unquestionable need for a coordinated marketing strategy involving TCO, OCRTT and the operators on the Trail. We suggest that this strategy could be established by a working party comprised of representatives of Operators, TCO and the OCRTT. If considered necessary, outside resources could be utilised.

It is our view that the costs of putting in place such a strategy should be borne by funding from Operators and direct funding from CODC through COT. In addition funds could be generated through a marketing section of the OCRTT from the income generated by its brochure and Website.

It is suggested that additional income could be generated by the OCRTT by way of a review of the Railtrail Passport scheme.

We are aware of the Forum that is being held in Omakau on the 20th of May to consider the future of the Trail. We would expect that this will provide valuable input in relation to the future operation of the OCRT.

We encourage Council to establish a Working Party to follow up from this forum.

FOR TRADES APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING TRUST

The Chamber supports the For Trades Apprenticeship Training Trust (4Trades) in working with youth in the Central Otago District. 4Trades currently has 11 apprentices in a range of trades. For the last 5/6 years this initiative has been funded by employers and the Trust. We understand the Trust is keen to continue this level of support and to grow the programme but is faced with increased costs of delivery.

We recommend that the Council contribute \$20,000 per annum to this programme to provide an apprentice/trade pathway for their youth and a sustainable supply of skilled labour for their communities. The Trust would welcome an approach from the Council to discuss this matter further.

CONCLUSION

The Otago Chamber of Commerce is very encouraged by the relationship that it has with the Central Otago District Council. Together we have been able to discuss and work on initiatives that benefit the district. We offer Council the skills and support of the Chamber, and look forward to working with you into the future.