



Submission



Clutha District Council
2021-31 Long Term Plan

Connecting People & Advancing Business
www.otagochamber.co.nz

INTRODUCTION

1. The Otago Chamber of Commerce welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission on the proposed Clutha District Council's 2021-31 Long Term Plan. The Chamber has consistently worked to ensure the district business community has a voice in council matters, and long term plans are an essential part of this.
2. We provide constructive comments on the positive initiatives and what changes we would like to see in the final Long Term Plan document. These are based on a range of research, member surveys, and our observations and expectations from our member base. We also provide some recommendations to the Council for amendments to this draft LTP to meet the Council's vision.
3. The Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with the Council.

ABOUT THE CHAMBER

4. The Chamber is a membership based service organisation that has been the home and voice of business in the Otago region¹ since 1861. It offers business and business people a range of services and advocacy. We are dedicated to promoting and actively encouraging business growth and opportunity throughout the Otago region.
5. Comprised of over 950 members, the Chamber actively provides information, advocacy and support for business, connecting members through networking events and functions, and developing capability and skills through our training workshops and programmes.
6. We also advocate and offer a voice for business concerns and submit on behalf of members on local and national government policy. Representation occurs on behalf of a broad cross-section of business demographics including size, location and industry type, with the full range from small businesses through to large employers and stakeholders in the region.

SUMMARY

7. We are pleased to make a submission on behalf of our members, including those in the Clutha District. Overall, the Chamber supports the Council's vision "*a great place to live, work and play*" and continuing focus on promoting growth and opportunities in the Clutha District over the next 10 years.
8. The goals of having "vibrant rural towns and communities, being connected and collaborative and a healthy sustainable environment" fits well with the mission of the Otago Chamber of Commerce to have a "Thriving Otago Community", if the economy is

¹ There are two chambers operating within the Queenstown Lakes District Council area ie. Queenstown Chamber of Commerce and Ignite Wanaka.

doing well the whole community benefits. Also the Chamber is all about connections and having a connected community is vital on so many levels. Last but not least, growth needs to be sustainable both in the environmental and in the economic sense.

9. We agree that the Mayor's comments that a lack of housing, running in tandem with filling the wealth of jobs on offer, are two key economic inhibitors that must be confronted and support initiatives to address both these issues.
10. We congratulate Clutha District Council for being in a strong financial position and for having a sound investment policy which enables the Council to fund growth projects.
11. The Chamber welcomes:
 - a. The focus on investing in the district and keeping services running.
 - b. Support for businesses in the region promoting growth and attracting employees to live and work in the Clutha. Proposed initiatives spread across the district, including Waihola, Owaka, West Otago, Kaka Point, Lawrence, Bruce district, Milton and Balclutha recognise the importance of nurturing and sustaining local communities.
 - c. Priority being given to asset and infrastructure maintenance and development to ensure investment for the long-term future.
 - d. The continued investment in Milton's main street improvements plan which is positive in the longer-term for the wider businesses in the district. It is exciting and presents future potential for individual businesses.
12. We would like to see the following reflected in the final LTP document:
 - a. A commitment to finding efficiencies in current spending.
 - b. Collaboration, innovation and partnerships with the business community.,
 - c. An intent to minimise administrative 'red tape' and keep costs down for new developments, particularly in light of those impacted due to COVID-19.
 - d. Healthy and safe communities deemed the most important priority by our members, and filling jobs and investing in quality housing equally important from a business perspective.
 - e. The most important infrastructure priorities are safe drinking water, closely followed evenly by replacing ageing infrastructure and efficient road maintenance.
13. The Chamber would like to see:
 - a. Businesses within the district being given the opportunity have a role in providing the labour, skills and expertise to undertake work in council priority work and other projects, whether that be in a one-off or ongoing regular basis.
 - b. How the Council plans to do things differently to create efficiencies to afford future projects. The Chamber is concerned the current draft plan does not describe how this will happen. What projects / services is the Council going to stop, merge or redesign?
 - c. Brave decisions to ensure value and sustainability for ratepayers, both commercial and residential. Do it once and do it right is a common theme for Chamber members.

FEEDBACK ON PROPOSALS

14. The Chamber has the following feedback on the proposed projects and options as detailed in the *Our Place* consultation document. Members were surveyed to get their feedback on the range of options.

Note: comments below from members are noted in italics.

Issue	Feedback
Key priorities	We agree the council has got the key priorities right for the district. Our members have indicated the most important priority is healthy and safe communities. However, from a business perspective we also believe “Filling Jobs” and “Investing in Quality Housing” is important to the vitality and long term sustainability of the Clutha district.
Infrastructure	The infrastructure plan proposed by the Council is well thought out, balancing important infrastructure maintenance alongside developing infrastructure for the future. Our members indicated the most important is safe drinking water, closely followed evenly by replacing ageing infrastructure and efficient road maintenance.
Water	83% supported Option 1 - establishing a new supply from the Clutha River.
Financial strategy	The Chamber supports the Council’s financial strategy for the proposed mix for spending, borrowing and rating to fund the proposed asset build programme of \$276M in the 10-year plan.
Rates	<p>The Chamber supports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using reserves to keep rates down in the short term. - The council to maintaining a limit on rates, by committing to not to increase overall rates by more than 4% per annum. <p>With the expectation being that overall the rates will increase around 3.39% on average during the next 10 years.</p>
Growing tourism	<p>67% supported growing tourism in the district. Although any future tourism spending must demonstrate value and sustainability.</p> <p><i>Comment:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>tourist growth must not be at the expense of environment though – such as uncontrolled camping</i>
Lighting up the bridge	<p>Support is evenly split three ways (yes, no, unsure) on whether to permanently light the Balclutha Bridge.</p> <p><i>Comments:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>it is a local icon – seems a waste not to use it as much as possible</i> - <i>not as a priority project</i>
Milton’s main street	There is strong support for improvements being made. Option 2 and 3 were evenly supported.

Waihola playground	The majority (83%) supported the \$200,000 funding option.
Project Bruce	The majority supported the continuation of funding the project.
West Otago Health	The majority of respondents supporting the council drawing down an additional \$300,000 to fund the expansion of the health care services.
Owaka pool	The majority were in agreement to provide funding, with those evenly split between the 2 funding options.

15. In regards to infrastructure, the Chamber recognises the importance of maintaining a strong infrastructure whilst planning for future growth. We are aware that investment in infrastructure is key to the ongoing development of the region. The “opportunities’ section of your infrastructure proposal is forward thinking and recognises the key areas for growth, including the importance of re-zoning land and planning for those working from home. We support your plans to be adaptive to growth and enable private infrastructure investment where it will benefit our community’s well-being.

CONCLUSION

16. The Chamber supports the region’s commitment to vibrant rural towns and communities, being connected and collaborative, and a healthy sustainable environment y. We recognise that a strong infrastructure is important to support sustainable growth and that well considered new initiatives can bring multiple benefits to the region long term.
17. This submission is submitted on the basis that it provides feedback and the opportunity to further engage with the council on a number of issues. We are committed to joining and working with the Council to achieve our shared objective of attracting and encouraging the development of business opportunities in the Clutha District.
18. Thank you again for the opportunity to submit. The Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss this submission with the Council.

Yours sincerely,

Nicky Aldridge

Acting Chief Executive Officer