



Piopiotahi community engagement

22 May 2024 (5pm and 9pm sessions)

In attendance: 16

MOP Team: Phil Tisch and Lizzy Sutcliffe

Key points:

- This community looks after a million visitors. They need some basic infrastructure to help to do their best for visitors.
- Governance is the thing we want resolved. It's so hard to get anything done.

Notes from meeting:

Milford Sound Piopiotahi community context

- This is a community like any other community. They need a basic recreation area. The community looks after 1m visitors. They need some basic infrastructure to help to do their best for visitors. They need the appropriate amount of respect.
- Lots of people see this as a place where we make money and don't see it's our home.
- Even now if you're cruising back people ask where do you live – if you look really hard you can see a bit of the village but there's nothing that stands out. It's all well-hidden currently – a Gondola wouldn't be like that.
- A lot of people come to New Zealand to come here. It draws so many people to NZ. Yet we don't have a community centre. We're not treated like a community there's no investment.
- We love it here, but it would be great to have a spot where you can decompress away from work and customers.
- The business owners don't speak for us. There's no one from here who is representing our voice. We don't have a voice locally. We don't have control over our place.
- We love it here, but it would be great to have a spot where you can decompress away from work and customers. This is a community like any other community. They need a basic recreation area. The community looks after 1.1m visitors.
- There's an opportunity to do it really well if you're thinking about moving the village and putting it somewhere else. It could be amazing if its designed right.
- Tunnel work has been a nightmare. One worker stuck there until 6 am.

- The skippers have been here a long time and don't want to be involved with the young people. But the crew we're young and in here the majority of the year.
- There are some people here for a season, but some of us live here. Business owners think this is their place, but we don't see them here. They are making a profit out of this place, but they are not here.
- I understand the connection that all those people [businesses] have is important too.
- One thing that is significant to me is the cultural significance to Ngāi Tahu. They want to bring their stories alive here. Why couldn't we do this sooner? Why is it only coming in through MOP?

Risk

- My [risk] induction when I started, the number one thing you get told is that if you are here over 3-4 months your chances of dying go up exponentially. If you're nervous about it, you will leave.
- People do leave. I've had friends who moved away after an earthquake.
- We have a community meeting at the beginning of the year. The police talk to us. They know it's going to happen.
- We went through a sort of version of that in 2020 when the road was washed out. We were on our own. Self-sufficiency.
- An event of that size will probably destroy the airport completely.
- Some of our staff even though they work on the boats they can't swim. We all have grab bags and life jacket.
- There's a natural hazard – it's a real thing. When we talk about the risk – we assume it's going to happen at nighttime.
- There's a general acceptance of risk. If you're used to being out in the natural elements.

Milford Community Trust

- The city of Milford Sound has been here since Donald Sutherland.
- Fiordland Community Board doesn't really represent the national park. The Milford Community Trust has played the role of that Board traditionally, but it's in a hiatus. Meant to be a representative of the people. [Members have] put lot of work into that.
- Having the Milford Community Trust would be a good way of showing we are a community too. We have a voice.
- Do we still want representation of this community – absolutely! Whether that's a trust or a seat at any governing entity. We need to have a voice too.
- We're not Te Anau. We are a very different community. It's important, Te Anau is not our town, we live here. There is a town here. We have our own things going on. We have a strong relationship with Te Anau.
- Good to have the ability to talk to a representative where residents can go to get something fixed etc.
- The community centre sounds awesome to me. Foreshore walk was DOC. Tennis court was a trust project. That's now a basketball court.

- We're [businesses] currently rated twice – we paid Southland District Council (SDC) and also the Community Trust. The trust has been on hold for four years. There's \$500,000 available. Makes sense for you to carry on if you're still here. There's a need for a new trustee.

Mat Wilson Milford Community Trust Chair (SDC Councillor)

- With a council hat on, there is so much discussion around risk. As long as all the information is shared, the objectives of the Community Trust is to inform the residents of Piopiotahi and ensure they are well informed.
- Community Trust – looking for members. Pathway between terminal and carpark a trust project.
- Not sure who's doing an emergency response.
- Plan is that by September we understand what the future spatial plan is. What's the governance going to be etc.
- Trust has been missed out of the masterplan.
- I've talked to people about the community centre – people are leaving the place because it doesn't exist. Really needed.
- Not sure the money we have will now cover a community building.
- No point in putting a community centre in if that might not be where the village is going to be.

Governance

- Is there any discussion regarding governance and how that reflects a community voice?
- You'd need someone who lives and works here on any board. The business owners don't live and work here.
- A democratic area where we have voting rights, we'd like that.
- Sometimes red tapes is good. Can't just let people do what they want to do.
- Whatever entity has responsibility for this place there needs to be representation of the businesses and there needs to be representation of the residents. Ngāi Tahu needs to be involved. Needs to be high level and democratically elected.
- Governance is the thing we want resolved. A three-year plan of what we can expect. It's so hard to get anything done – for anyone – for DOC too. The National Park Management Plan expired but everything based on it. So many different government agencies – water management, marine management. It's so hard to get anything done. Keeping governance updated.

Levy

- As an international visitor from Canada, I would expect to pay a fee to come here.
- Paying for a car park? It depends what the money goes to – so long as it goes into the place.
- I'd be happy with a levy if you could see dollar for dollar where it's going - its transparent.
- You feel different about paying something if you know if it's going back into the place.

- It doesn't take long to do the maths if numbers do hit 1 million. There's so much you could do for the community. Predator free would be amazing. Blue skies stuff. Benefit other near communities too.
- Not many backpackers could afford to come here already though.
- Would I have to pay if I'm on a visa? Would it get rid of the international workers? I'm all for the fee but you need to make sure us workers are taken care of.
- Can they apply a fee to just one park. There's kind of a precedent in Rakiura with the levy for every visitor unless you're a local. It's got a very clear gate. That money goes into a committee who decides where it goes into. With the IVL [International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy] there's not much option to access that money from central government.

Managed access

- Get people off the road would be amazing. Just the other day someone went into Lake Gunn. Some of these valleys will never see the sun in winter.
- Really like the idea of the bus hub – electric buses sounded awesome.
- I moved here from Australia to escape the heat. Climate change is happening.
- Would it still be the foreshore area where people need to park – would it go to Little Tahiti.
- We worked on Ruapehu. They tried the booking parking system, people were just blanket booking it and they thought maybe I'll show up. You get a whole carpark booked up with no one showing up. With boaties you'll get the same.
- So, there are lots of levers to encourage people to create an organic system that encourages people and at the other end is pushing people onto buses.
- Lots of North Americans are so used to the system – Zion National Park they'll have no trouble getting on a bus. They'll enjoy it more if they don't have to drive. However, in Australia they like to self-drive.
- What about people coming in to do all the walks in the corridor can they drive to those?
- Has there been any discussion about the type of vehicle you can drive – big campervans etc.
- Where would the ideal location for the park and ride be? Almost a barrier would need to go up on the road stopping people going in.
- Could you do parking at the Homer Tunnel and then bus people in?
- You need to manage the volume – people who want to climb a mountain or whatever aren't creating a problem. Don't need to address every visitor to Milford.

Visitor experience/infrastructure

- A few potholes. Doesn't feel like you're going to this magical nature place. I guess you can't change the car parks, but it feels like capitalism. When you get here. You've got beautiful landscapes. But then it's a carpark.
- Foreshore walk is great. Trail in from the village isn't great, it isn't super accessible.
- Need more walks. Trail from here to the cruise terminal needs looking at in terms of safety.

- You go for a run in the village - it takes 10 minutes. It would be great to have more options. A few of us have been here several years. If you're a runner – it can feel like Groundhog Day,
- A walk to the chasm or something would be amazing. Somewhere you can walk not take the car.
- Been here since 2018, it feels almost as busy as it was pre-COVID.

Next steps

- So what happens next for you guys?
- What's happening with the hydro – the power and the water scheme. Would that be in scope if you got the go ahead and the levy?
- How is the briefing to ministers going to work? Will the briefing be a discoverable document at some point?
- What's the consultation process? How do we keep track of that? How will we know?
- We'd like to see boots on the ground – something started, even if it's a new walk, the gateway – the Pou, something that signals holy crap this place is going to be amazing! The community centre.
- Thank you for listening