



## STRATH TAIERI COMMUNITY BOARD

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Dunedin City Council  
PO Box 5045  
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Dear Mayor and Councillors

### Strath Taieri Community Board Annual Plan 2023-24 Submission

#### Priorities for our Community:

**1 Security and integrity of infrastructure from flooding.**

There is an absolute need to resolve – as a matter of urgency – ongoing issues within and adjacent to the Middlemarch township with regard to flooding.

Specifically it is imperative that there is an overarching management approach adopted to encompass the whole catchment area from the summit and upper slopes of the Rock and Pillar Range through to where the flood waters enter the Taieri River. Coordinated planning and implementation across land of all tenure is essential.

The Board strongly urge the DCC and ORC to take a joint lead role in this coordination.

**2 Securing ongoing commitment to the Taieri Gorge Train link between Dunedin and Middlemarch.**

The Taieri Gorge train trip from Dunedin to Middlemarch is one of the country's iconic scenic and heritage journeys. Loss of that asset would be a net loss to the entire Dunedin "visitor experience". The combination of viaducts, tunnels, expansive and impressive scenery combined with the heritage values of both the Dunedin and Middlemarch railway stations is an invaluable asset to the overall marketing of the wider Dunedin visitor opportunities and promotions.

Accordingly the Board encourages Council to actively pursue options for retention and operation of that asset, line, and experience through an appropriately structured business proposition. That could include a local business element and should additionally weave that experience and opportunity into the overall fabric of the Dunedin Tourism Growth Framework.

In addition the Board supports further investigation of a potentially complementary cycleway component for those parts of the line where it can safely be incorporated in the overall railway experience.

In seeking to have a wider understanding of the full range of opportunities that may be available through the Taieri Gorge Experience, the Board requests early briefings and regular updates along with encouraging Council to commit to wide community consultation an options prior to decisions being taken.

**3 Protection, Enhancement and Use of the Middlemarch Railway precinct.**

The Middlemarch Railway precinct is one of the very few railway station complexes left intact in New Zealand featuring a well preserved station building, station masters house, goods shed, water tower, turn-table, and a variety of other heritage features.

The Board strongly urges Council to pursue gazettal of that complex through Heritage NZ as “an actively operating heritage railway precinct” with management responsibility retained within the appropriate sector of Council and day-to-day oversight vested in the Strath Taieri Community Board area.

Further the Board would like to see that complex given a breath of life through enabling community groups to utilise those buildings, under appropriate conditions, for approved community usage such as a small self guiding (non staffed) visitor centre and community hub, and be available to spinning/weaving groups and/or arts/crafts people as a base.

The present curtilage around the Station masters house is utilised as a community garden and that should be formally acknowledged and approved along with their access to and use of the building.

The present Goods shed is utilised by the local Project Steam group and similarly that use should be formalised.

**4 Formation of Locally driven Destination base Steering Committee.**

In order to identify and optimise opportunities, ensure local engagement, and help create a strategic vision for the future of tourism within the Strath Taieri area it is proposed to encourage the reforming of what was previously the “Middlemarch Promotions Committee” (currently in recess).

It is anticipated that this should also encompass the community led group established to lead investigations into the Heritage Park concept – the concept being based around a “destination” attraction to support smaller tourist based business in and around Middlemarch.

This group would require input and guidance from Council to maximise effectiveness in bringing a strategic vision to align opportunities across the Strath Taieri with directions established for the Greater Dunedin area. In doing this it will significantly assist both the Board and Council in future decision making and promotions as well as ensuring the opportunity for open consultative communications across all sectors of the community.

**5 Safe and Consistent Water Supply.**

Residents of both Middlemarch and Sutton rely on various sources for their home water supply.

Nationwide the issues arising from untreated water supplies is well documented.

Accordingly the Board asks the Council to investigate options for drinking water quality supplies within the Middlemarch, Hyde and Sutton township areas.

**6 Communications.**

Promote the development of high-speed internet within the wider community.

Middlemarch is increasingly attractive to those seeking an alternative lifestyle to that available in a city. Many of those are seeking locations with high speed internet to enable them to conduct e-based business from their homes. In a similar vein most farming operations these days are also reliant on fast reliable internet for their business. Provision of such a system within the district would be of immense benefit for all.

**7 Beautification.**

A beautification plan is planned for the Middlemarch township and cemetery in collaboration with locals and the Community Board. This will look at the overall appearance and cohesiveness of the special features of the Strath Taieri and feature them in “our place”. As a key part of that it is important that signage across our whole area is also looked at not only from the perspective of visual integration but also importantly to ensure consistency and accuracy both in message conveyed and destination direction given.

Support, assistance and guidance from Council staff is sought in this venture.

**8 Undertake a Review of the Long term needs for a Community Hub/Complex.**

Our current Community Hall is in excellent heart for its age. However looking towards future likely community needs this facility may need either significant revamp or replacement. Lead in times for such a largescale capital project is usually in the order of 15/20 years – which is preceded by extensive community consultation. It is believed appropriate to start those discussions within the community in the near future with a view to achieving some consensus to proceed (or not) within the next 5 years.

**9 Foulden Maar.**

With the recent acquisition of Foulden Maar the Board is very interested to discuss with Council what opportunities may be available with regard that site in the future. Early dialogue and engagement with the Board is sought.

**10 E-Vehicles**

The Board advocates for Investigation of an additional E-Vehicle charging base in Middlemarch (adjacent to railway Station) and one also at Hyde in the vicinity of the Rail Trail carpark.

Use of E-Vehicles through the Strath Taieri has notably increased since the first station was installed adjacent to the hall and this is expected to increase yet further as more vehicles venture through SH87. The addition of an additional charging base at Hyde would be a major boon for those travelling through to Ranfurly and beyond as well as those travelling through from Dunedin to enjoy the rail trail.

**11 Community Shed**

There are well documented health and wellness benefits especially for rural communities accruing from the ubiquitous “Blokes” or “Menz” sheds. To encourage a wider community engagement with this concept though we have chosen to use the more encompassing title of “Community Shed”.

The Board is supportive of such a venture taking form in our Community to support and enhance the health and wellbeing of our residents.

**12 Recycling**

The Board is very supportive of extended recycling opportunities within the Strath Taieri Community.

In addition to existing stations it is recommended that a further base be established at the Hindon Hall to service that area and minimise residents travel to recycle materials at other stations. The Hindon Hall site is easily accessible by vehicle and material could readily be collected by truck on its return journey from clearing the stations at Middlemarch and Lee Stream with only a limited diversion required.

### 13 Carbon Zero

The Strath Taieri is largely a rural farming hub and contains the largest area of rural land of any Board area in the DCC rohe.

With 46% of Dunedin's emissions being agriculture based there are potentially significant impacts on our community in reaching the desired reduction levels by 2030 especially given the current lack of viable "clean energy" farming vehicle alternatives. That along with the proposed biogenic emission reduction targets sets a very high hurdle for our community.

While we support some farm forestry mitigation approaches we caution against wholesale farm conversion to achieve those reductions. Impacts from that approach not only hit food production potential but also has huge social consequences with loss of families and infrastructure from our communities.

The Board would encourage further work being done in the area of carbon sequestration through both riparian and other planting of long lived native plant species as a viable and effective tool to reduce carbon impacts. In that light we commend the work currently being undertaken by Mid Taieri Wai and various private landowners locally.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the 2023/24 annual plan. The Board wishes to speak in support of this submission.

Kind regards



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