

## **Crown Pastoral Land Tenure Review**

**Lease name: THE LARCHES**

**Lease number: PO 254**

### **Public Submissions - Part 4**

These submissions were received as a result of the public advertising of the Preliminary Proposal for Tenure Review.

**November**

**08**

The upper slopes, skyline scarp and rolling plateau do have however, significant inherent values which enhance their value for recreation and conservation. The upper slopes between about 1,000 and 1,100m carry good tussock grassland among a steep landscape dotted with schist tors and bluffs (Fig. 6). The rolling plateau rises gently towards the summit of the Pisa Range and is bisected by the upper reaches of Luggate Creek. Near the eastern boundary this is deeply incised and bounded by steep and rocky valley sides (Fig. 7), while above the Criffel Diggings the usually more gentle streams are paralleled by multiple water races. The complex of races and diggings add an important historical value to the plateau part of The Larches (Fig. 8).

### **RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES AND POTENTIAL**

The recreational significance of the property lies in its position at the northern end of the Pisa, on what is usually known as the Criffel Range. The rolling plateau area lies near the source of Luggate Creek, and at the top of the Criffel Diggings Pack Track. There is much of historical goldmining interest to explore in this area including two separate areas of gold workings and an intricate network of water races (Figs. 8 and 9).

Mason (1988) has reported that: - *"The main recreational potential for the Pisa Range is for cross country skiing."* He does add that there is potential for horse riding at several locations, including the Criffel Diggings Pack Track, and that: *"The Criffel gold workings are of interest for the energetic walker who wishes to piece together the network of water races and other field remains."*

The Criffel Pack Track is also used by a commercial recreation concession – Criffel Peak Safaris – which offers guided trips on 4WD farm bikes.

The southern boundary of the plateau section of The Larches adjoins a new area of Conservation Land, the Pisa Conservation Area, derived from the Avalon tenure review. Walking access to this area is available up the slopes of Avalon, although this is steep and particularly the upper slopes are very steep. Access via The Larches or the Criffel Diggings Pack Track would be much better. If alternative access could be made available through this tenure review, round trips would become possible to Criffel Peak and Little Criffel, and the new Pisa Conservation Area, with the return down through Avalon,. The views of the Cardrona, Lakes Wanaka and Hawea and the Upper Clutha are superb and are a fitting reward for some 3 or 4 hours of climbing (Figs. 1, 3 and 10). The Little Criffel Trig seems to have its resident New Zealand Falcon, as this has been seen on the same perch on several occasions (Fig. 11). These views, landscapes and both natural and historical features add greatly to the recreational value of such trips.

The landscapes and historic features of the plateau block of the Larches are complementary to the features of the adjacent Pisa Conservation Area derived from Avalon. Although the former is dominated by tussock hawkweed (Fig. 5), the Pisa Conservation Area has much greater biodiversity on its rolling uplands with better tussock grassland, sub-alpine cushion plants and wetland communities.

The plateau area of The Larches is not as high as much of the remainder of the Pisa Range, so snow does not persist as long in winter. The plateau area does however, include some topographic shelter in the gullies near the head of Luggate Creek. These could be used to establish a base camp for more extensive ski touring on the northern part of the Pisa Range.

The mix of landscape, historic and natural values, and the opportunities for ski touring in winter, makes trips to the Criffel Range appealing, and would add significantly to the recreational opportunities currently available on the northern end of the Pisa Range, and within easy reach of Wanaka.

As part of the tenure review agreement for The Larches, public access easements for foot, mountain bike and possibly horse riding should be negotiated as indicated on the attached map. The highest priority is to provide access to the Criffel diggings and to the track system leading to other gold mining areas such as the Fat Boy Diggings and to the new Conservation Area derived from the Waiorau tenure review.



The recreational significance of this property should be assessed not only on its present usage but also on its potential. This is because current usage is much less than its potential for a number of reasons. Because of the current land tenure under pastoral lease, and because access to some parts of the range has not been easy in the past, the recreational use of The Larches and the Criffel Range is less than it might have been if these impediments did not exist. There is significant potential for greater use and it is the full range of possibilities which should be considered during this tenure review.

In summary, this assessment indicates that there is considerable scope on the Criffel Range for day walks, and tramping or mountain bike trips to more distant parts of the Pisa Range, exploring the historic gold workings, possible horse riding, and in winter cross country ski touring. It is recommended that public access for all these activities should be secured as an outcome of tenure review.

### **SIGNIFICANT INHERENT VALUES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE FOR RECREATION**

This report focuses on those features of The Larches which are known to be important for public recreational interests. It should be noted that while much of this interest focuses on access, the natural and historic values and landscapes of the areas concerned and views to be had from the many vantage points have a fundamental impact on the recreational value of the back country and greatly influence the quality of recreational experience enjoyed. It is for this reason that reference is also made to both natural and landscape values of this property.

As noted in the general description of The Larches, the lower to mid- and upper slopes of the Cardrona faces has been classified LUC Class IV or VI, which should be capable of supporting sustainable pastoral use with appropriate maintenance (Fig. 4). Much of the vegetation on the Cardrona faces has been modified from its natural state by grazing and burning, but there are important areas of shrubland which add significantly to the biodiversity of these slopes. The access track up the front face passes through some "old man" kanuka which is some 6 to 8m tall in places. The shrubland also appears to contain a variety of species including Olearia and Coprosma as well as kanuka, manuka and matagouri (Fig. 12). Consideration should be given to setting aside the best of the shrubland either as Conservation Reserve, or under a protective covenant.

There is a conservation problem on these lower slopes, and that is the potential spread of wilding pines. These could spread from the isolated trees on the slopes or from the plantation of Radiata pine and Douglas fir near the homestead. The Tenure Review agreement should include a commitment by the prospective freehold owner to eradicate the wilding conifers.

There are considerable areas of significant inherent value on the upper scarp slopes and skyline, and on the rolling plateau above about 1,200m. The slopes between the fences at about 1,000 and 1,200m are mainly short tussock grassland, but with increasing invasion by tussock hawkweed towards the crest of the scarp (Figs 6 and 10). The combination of dramatic landscapes with tors and bluffs and the tussock grassland is sufficient that these significant inherent values should ensure that this upper landform becomes conservation land, rather than freehold. Although the rolling plateau is heavily infested with tussock hawkweed there is also significant biodiversity especially in the headwater gullies of Luggate Creek, and in the associated areas of wetlands. The historic value of the extensive network of water races is high and complements the goldmining sluicings at the Criffel Diggings. The entire plateau block should become conservation land through tenure review, and be added to the adjacent Pisa Conservation Area.

The Cardrona faces of the Criffel Range are a prominent feature of the landscape seen from the increasingly popular Crown Range Road (Fig. 4). As noted in the introduction this road (now that it has been sealed) is being used as a major tourist route in summer and as an important access route to ski fields in winter. Because of this increasing tourist usage, the landscape values of these faces are increasingly important. It is doubtful whether landscape provisions in the Queenstown Lakes District Plan are sufficiently robust or durable enough to achieve adequate protection from the adverse effects of inappropriate development, and landscape values should be more securely protected. A binding Landscape Conservation Covenant should therefore be negotiated as part of the tenure review and finally registered on the freehold title.

### **AREAS TO BE PROTECTED**

On the basis of the descriptions above it is considered that three areas are worthy of being restored to full Crown ownership and control, and to be transferred to the Department of Conservation to be managed for conservation and recreation purposes. These areas are as follows:-

- (i) The plateau area with the headwaters of Luggate Creek, the Criffel Diggings and the associated extensive network of water races.
- (ii) The steep upper slopes above the fence at approximately 1,000m with short tussock grassland and dramatic tor and bluff landscape
- (iii) A representative area of lowland shrubland including mature kanuka, Olearia, Coprosma, manuka and Matagouri.

### ACCESS REQUIREMENTS

The following access provisions will be required:-

Walking, mountain bike and possibly horse riding access to the extended area of Pisa Conservation Area (including plateau and upper slopes) described and recommended in the section above. Public access up the farm track in the middle of the property would be complementary to the steep walking access on Avalon, and would enable more interesting round trips to be made.

In order to minimise the inconvenience to the runholder (or owner of the new freehold) a route should be chosen from the Cardrona Valley Road to meet the zig-zag track above the plantation. This should be located well away from the homestead.

### CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT STRATEGY FOR OTAGO

There are important statements in the Conservation Management Strategy for Otago, in which the Pisa is recognised as a Special Place. The objective for this area, which includes The Larches is:-

*“To protect representative low altitude lands and high altitude lands in the area for their landscape, nature conservation and historical values; the latter lands on an extensive basis providing enhanced public recreational opportunities complementary to those already being provided commercially.”*

Implementation includes:-

*“Seek opportunities arising out of pastoral lease tenure review negotiations to protect extensive high altitude areas of high landscape, nature conservation, recreational and water and soil conservation significance.*

- *As tenure reviews are concluded, keep under consideration the unifying concept of a high altitude Pisa Range Conservation Park.*
- *Ensure appropriate public access, both vehicular and by horse where appropriate and on foot, to lands administered by the Department.*
- *Aim to protect at least one complete mining system.”*

These objectives and implementation statements accord very closely with the recommendations made in the present report. Furthermore, it should be noted that the priority for the Pisa Special Place is: *“Completion and continuation of protection negotiations at both high and low altitudes, including tenure reviews, will be a priority in this Special Place”*

### CONCLUSIONS



The tenure review of The Larches is important as it provides an opportunity to enhance the recreational opportunities and use of the northern end of the Pisa Range in general and of the Criffel Range in particular. This also provides an opportunity to increase the range of opportunities available in the Wanaka area generally. Furthermore, it is also an opportunity to improve the quality of recreational experience on those lands by recognising and protecting the significant landscape and historic values described above.

Additions to the public conservation land on the Pisa Range, for example by extending the Pisa Conservation Area derived from the tenure review of Avalon, and the nearby new conservation lands derived from Mid Run and Lake McKay, and from Waiorau, are assisting in the realisation of the Pisa Conservation Park, foreshadowed in the Conservation Management Strategy for Otago. New conservation land generated from the tenure review of The Larches would further enhance the development of this concept.

The outcome of the tenure review of The Larches, if it includes the important recreation and conservation recommendations included in this Report, could contribute significantly to the achievement of the objectives declared for the Pisa Special Place in the Conservation Management Strategy for Otago.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

FMC is grateful for assistance from authorities in making the assessment possible. The site inspection was carried out in December 2001 and FMC is grateful to the runholder for co-operation and granting permission for access, and to Opus staff for making the appropriate arrangements.

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**Dave Payton**

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**From:** mclark@doc.govt.nz  
**Sent:** Monday, 15 September 2008 09:53  
**To:** dave.payton@opus.co.nz  
**Subject:** SUBMISSION ON TENURE REVIEW OF THE LARCHES PASTORAL LEASE  
**Attachments:** DOCDM-346197 bd tenure review submission - the larches(1).doc

**Attention: Commissioner of Crown Lands**

Dear Sir,

Attached is the Otago Conservation Board's submission on the tenure review of The Larches pastoral lease. I have posted a hard copy.

<<DOCDM-346197 bd tenure review submission - the larches(1).doc>>

Yours sincerely,

**Mark A Clark**  
**Community Relations Officer**  
(Otago Consvtn. Board Support/Concessions)  
Dept. of Conservation, Box 5244, DUNEDIN 9058  
mclark@doc.govt.nz (03) 474 6936 VPN 5636

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**Attention:**

This e-mail (and attachments) is confidential and may be legally privileged.

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# OTAGO CONSERVATION BOARD

Our ref: SBC-08-34

15 September 2008

Commissioner of Crown Lands  
c/- Opus International Consultants Ltd  
Private Bag 1913  
DUNEDIN 9054



Dear Sir

## SUBMISSION ON TENURE REVIEW OF THE LARCHES PASTORAL LEASE

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the preliminary proposal for the tenure review of The Larches Pastoral Lease.

This tenure review offers an excellent opportunity to add an important piece to the jigsaw that will form the proposed Pisa Conservation Park.

The board supports the following aspects of the preliminary proposal:

- the designation of about 857 ha as land to be restored to Crown control as a conservation area (CA1);

The board accepts that the boundaries of CA1 are appropriate and enclose the most of the unmodified natural vegetation on the property. The decision to not offer any ongoing grazing in the conservation area is also appropriate. In order for this area to have conservation value in the long term, there is an urgent need to allow the native vegetation to recover.

- the conservation covenants (CC1 and CC2) over a total area of about 198 ha, for the purpose of protecting native grasslands, shrublands, and landscape values;

Unfortunately, tenure review of The Larches offers little opportunity for the conservation of lowland or mid-altitude ecosystems. What opportunity does exist is adequately covered by CC1.

CC2 provides for some additional landscape protection in a highly visible area where there is a need to maintain a natural appearance and avoid development.

The board believes that the proposal should be changed as follows:

- the proposed easement for public access (b-d-e);



The lack of public vehicle access to the northern Pisa Range is of concern. Although the property does not provide an opportunity for vehicle access, it can offer improved non-motorised access, which is an equally important issue. The board believes that this access should be as practical as possible. As such, it should go directly from b to c on the existing track (i.e. the same track associated with the proposed DOC management easement). There seems to be no good reason not to use this route for public access as well.

The proposed route (b-d-e) up the eastern boundary is definitely a second rate option. A direct route up the boundary is impractical, particularly for biking, although the width of the easement (150m) might allow for a zig-zag route to be formed. The route includes an unnecessary dog leg that involves a greater distance and a loss of altitude down a gully near its start (to point d). Before forgoing the option of the farm track, the Crown would need to be very confident that a practical walking and biking route can be formed within the easement; and that its formation is guaranteed as part of the substantive proposal; and that the dog leg to point d is replaced by a direct route from the top end of the legal road to the property boundary.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comment on this proposal and we are willing to elaborate on any of the issues we have raised.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Langsbury', with a large, sweeping flourish underneath.

Hoani Langsbury  
Chairperson



**Mark Clark**

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**From:** Mark Clark  
**Sent:** Monday, 15 September 2008 9:53 a.m.  
**To:** 'dave.payton@opus.co.nz'  
**Subject:** SUBMISSION ON TENURE REVIEW OF THE LARCHES PASTORAL LEASE

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**Dear Sir,**

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DOCDM-3  
id tenure re

**Yours sincerely,**

**Mark A Clark**  
**Community Relations Officer**  
**(Otago Conservn. Board Support/Concessions)**  
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