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Two trail founders honoured

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Queenstown Trails Trust chairman Tony McQuilkin (left) and Queenstown Lakes mayor Vanessa van Uden flank trail founding fathers John Wilson (second, left) and Terry Stevens, who have had coves at Kelvin Peninsula named after them. Photo by Mandy Kennedy.

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Two Queenstown men have been honoured for their part in establishing the Queenstown Trail, and coves on the Kelvin Peninsula Loop now bear their names.

Former chairmen of the Queenstown Trails Trust, formerly the Wakatipu Trails Trust, John Wilson and Terry Stevens were recognised at a ceremony on Thursday night. Queenstown Lakes Mayor Vanessa van Uden unveiled the signs for John Wilson Cove and Terry's Cove.

Mr Wilson was the first chairman of the trust and had a community mandate to create trails in the Wakatipu basin.

Present chairman Tony McQuilkin said with a group of "hands-on, build it now and do it ourselves people" Mr Wilson helped guide the trustees through the process of developing a clear vision and creating a strategic plan, balancing the tensions between the horse riding, mountain biking and walking communities.

Mr Wilson, with trustee Dawn Palmér, led the appointment of Tourism Resource Consultants to develop the first 10-year strategy, heeding advice that "if it works for our community, it will work for the visitors".

"John completely took this on board and it predicated every decision the trust made.

"From the spider web of the trails wish list ... John strategically led the selection of the first all-important tracks."

Mr Wilson's strong relationships with related parties and his know-how and knowledge from years as a councillor and trustee for the Wakatipu Islands Reforestation Trust enabled Fernhill Loop, Lake Hayes and Jack's Point to be the first trails "across the line", Mr McQuilkin said.

In 2008, Mr Stevens was "shoulder tapped" when the trust needed a chairman with strong marketing, brand and business skills.

Funding was a key issue and Mr Stevens was part of the team that worked on an initial application for part of a \$50million "pot of gold" put up by the Government to develop cycling trails.

The trust was awarded \$2million, for the \$6million Queenstown Trail, which opened on time and on budget.

"Terry insisted that the Queenstown Trail be world-class ... and led the trust in developing a strategic fundraising plan to raise the \$4million shortfall."

Mr McQuilkin said the trust, under Mr Stevens was kept to its core strategy, while groups like the Queenstown Mountain Bike Club were encouraged to develop their own strategic and implementation plans for the trails they wanted.

That often enabled the trust to provide seeding money for their various trails and had seen the club become a force in its own right.

The trust's \$25,000 grant to help keep the Queenstown Bike Park going in its formative years had helped it become the most commercially successful gondola-assisted mountain bike course in the southern hemisphere.

At the ceremony on Thursday night Mr McQuilkin told Mr Stevens his "careful and considered" stewardship of the trust during the development period had resulted in the trail attracting more than 450,000 users since it opened in October 2012, making it the most used trail in the country, which had also enabled new businesses to open and existing ones to expand and thrive.

Queenstown Lakes

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