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Queenstown Trails Trust Celebrates Gibbston River Trail Upgrade

The \$370,000 Gibbston River Trail upgrade was celebrated today (November 8) by the Queenstown Trails Trust and recognised the commitment of the Gibbston Community Association in spearheading the original trail alongside the Kawarau River.

The official launch of the 8.7km trail, held at Gibbston Valley Winery, was attended by M.P. for Clutha-Southland Todd Barclay and Queenstown Lakes Mayor Vanessa van Uden along with Gibbston and Wakatipu residents.

Trust chairman Tony McQuilkin told guests that the original trail was installed by the Gibbston community as a Department of Conservation standard day walk in 2010. He referred in particular to the drive of former Gibbston Community Association chairperson, Susan Stevens, in creating the walkway which has become a key part of the Queenstown Trail walking network.

“When the Queenstown Trail opened in 2012 we predicted that in five years it would have 35,000 users but we reached that number by the end of the first summer making it the most used trail in New Zealand. One of the most popular rides has been the Arrowtown River Trail over the Edgar Bridge to Gibbston, which wasn’t surprising because of the stunning scenery and the opportunity to visit award-winning wineries,” he said.

“However, what we did find through feedback from visitors and tour operators was that the Gibbston trail was too challenging in parts for the average recreational cyclist.”

“With this in mind the Trust, under the chairmanship of Terry Stevens, approached the Gibbston Community Association and key landowners, Gibbston Valley Station and Peregrine Wines, to identify support for upgrading the trail to suit a wider cross section of people. After consultation with the Gibbston Community Association we got agreement from everyone involved including seven other landowners who provided easements.”

Mr McQuilkin said the trail, which has a spectacular backdrop, now has a maximum 1 in 10 grade making it achievable for a wide cross section of users.

He paid tribute to the work of Wilson Contractors in developing the trail to a high standard, which has been commended by the New Zealand Cycle Trail (NZCT).

“I also pass on our thanks to the Queenstown Lakes District Council and its Parks and Reserves team for their support throughout the upgrade and in particular for the outstanding signage in place along the trail.”

Gibbston is gaining a high profile as a cycling destination and Mr McQuilkin congratulated operators including Gibbston Valley Winery for providing a range of facilities to attract bikers to the area.

“Such amenities as the Rabbit Ridge Bike Park add to the many attractions, particularly the prominent Central Otago wineries, already available in Gibbston. There is no doubt the area will see an upsurge in visitors because of the efforts being undertaken by Gibbston people.”

Queenstown Lakes Mayor Vanessa van Uden considered the Queenstown Trail is an excellent example of the council partnering with Trusts and the community.

“The Gibbston Trail upgrade reflects that ongoing partnership which has created a wonderful asset for the community.”

Nine landowners who provided easements for the Gibbston River Trail upgrade were presented with certificates marking their contribution. Their names will also be listed on the Wall of Recognition on the Queenstown Trail.

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