# Great Barrier Island: a case for a participative approach to integrated destination management

**Julie Warren**

**Centre for Research, Evaluation & Social Assessment (CRESA)**

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 The overall research background and objectives

This case study is part of a larger research programme that aims to develop an integrated approach to planning and managing natural areas for tourism and related activities in New Zealand. This research programme is funded by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST). The programme's objectives are to:

- evaluate existing approaches to planning and managing tourism and related developments in natural areas;
- define an integrated approach for application in multi-stakeholder management contexts; and
- pilot, evaluate and refine the approach for specific applications.

The overall research programme has been designed to support the New Zealand tourism industry's increasing recognition that it needs to be environmentally, socially, culturally and economically sustainable. A sustainable future for the industry depends on careful and integrated management of its most important resources, which include the natural environment and the diversity of host communities. The research intends to contribute to this endeavour by developing a model or set of practical management tools that can be used in a co-ordinated way for managing sometimes competing requirements of tourism and recreation activities, cultural and amenity values, and the conservation of natural areas. The final model will include information about the individual and collective usefulness of these management tools for application in particular types of natural areas, development contexts and management problems, and social, political and cultural contexts. The tools are drawn from several disciplines, including economics, landscape architecture, ecology, tourism planning, regional and resource planning, community development, public participation, leisure and recreation management, law, and impact assessment.

## 1.2 The case studies

The Great Barrier Island study is one of four action-research case studies. These case studies were designed to provide more in-depth analysis of particular aspects of the integrated model, identifying strengths and weaknesses of particular tools, and considering issues of capacity building. The applied case studies were also designed to address issues around the application of the tools that collectively make up the integrated approach. The other case studies focus on Bastion Point, Tongariro Crossing and the Catlins.

The overall objectives of the case studies were to:

- test elements of the conceptual framework and tools developed over the first two years of the research, and assess the ability of particular tools to meet the needs of specific planning and management problems;

- identify elements of capacity building in particular agencies and communities, including barriers to and opportunities for capacity building that supports an integrated approach to planning and managing tourism in and around natural areas; and
- use the information gained to develop the next level or iteration of the framework.

## 1.3 The Great Barrier Island case study

The Great Barrier Island (GBI) case study focuses on the development of a shared vision for the island's future development, including tourism development. The approach to the case study was as follows:

- scoping, which described the natural area, profiled the community (including recent trends), identified stakeholders to participate in the shared vision process, described the values of the island, described the mix of existing tourism-related activities and identified key issues;
- exploration of options for community participation for the development of a shared vision;
- examination of the barriers to and opportunities for implementing community participation tools;
- planning for and conducting a structured participation process;
- developing a shared vision statement through an iterative process;
- identifying opportunities for appropriate agency/ies to adopt the vision as part of their planning documents.

We selected Great Barrier Island for a case study for a number of reasons including:

- its location in the Hauraki Gulf;
- its high natural values;
- a growing interest in the island as a holiday destination (including the rapid development of expensive holiday homes);
- its proximity to the county's largest metropolitan area; and
- the diversity of stakeholders.

The timing of our case study coincides with the current attention to the Hauraki Gulf in general and GBI and interfaces with the related activities of local and central government agencies. The Hauraki Gulf Forum was set up to integrate management of the Gulf across the boundaries of statutes and districts, through co-operation and improved communication between the key agencies. The forum operates through special enabling legislation, the Hauraki Gulf Marine Park Act 2000, which interfaces (with varying success) with the Resource Management Act and the Conservation Act. The Auckland City Council (ACC) is currently carrying out the Long-term Council Community Plan (LCCP) development process, and preparing a new district plan, working closely with the Auckland Regional Council (ARC). The Department of Conservation (DOC) has recently completed a Recreational Opportunities Review, which identified new amenity needs for the island and has proposed a marine reserve on the north-west coast of the island.

## 1.4 The framework

An essential aspect of developing the *kete* and making it accessible was to describe a framework which incorporates all the relevant tools and demonstrates the linkages between them. The approach adopted was reflected in a hexagonal diagram linking the high level categories of tools (Figure 1). Behind each of the six components of the hexagon are three layers containing (1) the tools, (2) a range of short case studies illustrating application of the tools and (3) resources for capacity building. The framework can be used both to describe the overall integrated model and also as a means of structuring the findings of the individual case studies.

**Figure 1. The high level framework**
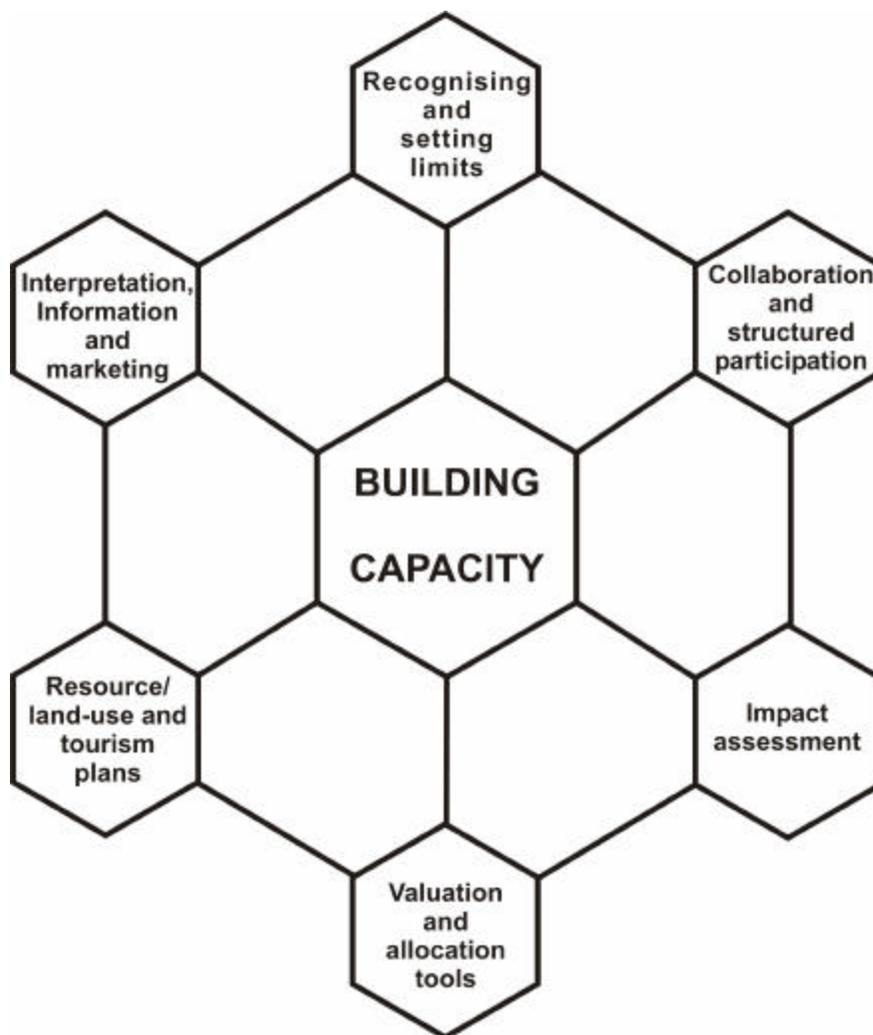
The six sets of tools are broadly those that:

- inform the recognition and setting of limits to tourism growth and activity, either on an area basis or at particular sites
- structure public participation, including Maori participation, in processes around community participation, including strategic planning
- are used to assess the social, biophysical and cumulative impacts of tourism
- assist with the valuation and allocation of the natural resources that tourism is based on
- make up the legislative and planning context through natural resource, land-use and tourism plans
- provide visitor information and marketing to attract and direct visitors to an area, modify their behaviour when they get there, and enhance their experience.

Together, the tools provide the basis for building community, industry and agency capacity to manage natural areas in an integrated way for tourism and related activities.

# 2. GBI – background to the visioning statement

## 2.1 Great Barrier Island

GBI lies 88km northeast of downtown Auckland on the outer edge of the Hauraki Gulf. At 285 square kilometres, the island covers more than half the land area of the Auckland metropolitan area. It is the largest island off the North Island coast and hosts a range of wildlife. The island is possum free. More than 60 percent of the island is public land administered by the DOC.

Access to the island includes sea and air services. While there is no regular transport system on the island, taxis and car rentals are available and, at peak holiday times, buses run trips to campsites and other tourist facilities.

The local economy is a mix of accommodation, retail, transport and experience tourism. Farming is not an economic proposition for most property owners, only a handful of properties could be described as working farms that provide an income.

# Figure 2: Great Barrier Island

## 2.2　The Great Barrier Island community

The main population centres on GBI are at Tryphena, Claris, Port Fitzroy, Whangaparapara and Okupu (see Figure 1). At the last Census, in 2001, the total population count for the island was 1,047. Current estimates put the permanent population at well less than 900 people. As the resident population shrinks, the number (and scale) of holiday houses is increasing; currently over half the houses on the island are unoccupied for most of the year. Incomes are comparatively low and dependence on benefits is comparatively high. However, a number of employers report difficulties in filling vacancies.

Population decline is a general concern, given possible loss of services and diminishing economies of scale that potentially make service and infrastructure development uneconomic. Most people, including within the Auckland City Council and the Auckland Regional Council, recognise that any reversal of the current decline requires economic development, with tourism one of the few options currently available.

The resident community is diverse, with some agreement amongst local people that there are four main groups that may be of more or less equal size. These include:
* people with multi-generational ties with GBI. This group includes both Maori and non-Maori who can trace their whakapapa or roots back over generations (for Maori over hundreds of years and for families like the Medlands, Sanderson and Blackwell, back to early days of European settlement). Some of these people have lived on the mainland for some of their lives but returned to GBI;
* people who have been on the island for shorter periods of time (anything from almost all of their lives to 2-4 years) and are well integrated into the local community. Some of these people are key to local initiatives such as the GBI Trust and tourism development;
* people who are on the island for a short and defined period of time (for instance, some DOC or Auckland City Council staff, teachers, police, contractors) and are less well integrated into the community;
* people who have a more itinerant life style may live on the island for short or long periods of time but have little interaction with the community. Some people report that a good proportion of these people have moved from Waiheke Island, disenchanted with its rapid growth, suburbanisation and increasing housing prices.
* off-island property owners can also be characterized in similar ways. Some families have had a connection with the island for many years, including across generations, and are well integrated into the local community. Other families have shorter GBI histories, and may include both people who are well integrated into the local community and those that are not.

There is a range of shops and services on the island but no bank (on Census night 2001, there were 93 business units). The Auckland City Service Centre at Claris provides Council services and information and houses a small public library. The island has three primary schools in Okiwi, Claris and Tryphena. Most secondary

school students attend boarding schools in Auckland City; some study via correspondence. The community has a health centre, a family support organisation and a Visitor Information Centre.

## 2.3 Island values

The island is valued for its community characteristics, the natural environment, its cultural heritage and the recreational opportunities it provides.

### 2.3.1 Community characteristics

People on GBI proudly characterize their community as independent and resourceful, with a pioneering spirit. They attribute these qualities to the isolated and rural nature of the island, the ruggedness of the landscape and weather, and the need for residents to generate their own power, collect their own water and maintain their own sewerage systems. People outside the island, for instance local and central government staff, also generally admire these characteristics, although they see them as sometimes creating barriers to constructive working relationships, for instance when local people react strongly to any limits placed on their activities.

### 2.3.2 The natural environment

The natural environment of GBI is highly valued by most people and organisations with an association with the island. Valued features include its island status, the existing ecological values, the diversity of landscape and scenic beauty, the island's freedom from possum and its potential to be pest free. The natural environment is also valued for the recreational opportunities it offers (discussed in more detail later).

Staff in DOC, ARC and ACC, as well as self-identified environmentalists on the island (e.g., the GBI Trust), recognise the special significance of the island, given its substantial size. Some of the specific advantages of its size include that:
- the island is a microcosm geographically;
- there is a range of animal and plant species; and
- large scale protection programmes are possible, providing lessons for mainland activities.

The ecological value of the island, given the diversity of landforms and flora and fauna, include a number of rare species and unique natural features. Some of the specific ecological qualities include: black petrel; brown teal (60% New Zealand's total population live in Whangapoua Estuary); spotless crake and fernbird (rare on other offshore islands); North Island kaka; banded rail and 13 species of lizard, including the rare Great Barrier chevron skink. The Kaitoke wetland area is the largest fresh water wetland in the Auckland region. Planned pest eradication programmes are expected to further enhance the ecological values of GBI. The local GBI Trust, DOC and ARC expect to work together in pest eradication programmes over the next 10 years.

### 2.3.3 Cultural heritage

Culture and heritage values range from early Maori history, to early European economic activity and settlement, to ecological heritage values, to the strong relationships between Maori and other communities on the island. Specific heritage values identified include signs of:

- Ngati Rehua's association with GBI over many centuries. These include numerous archaeological sites, generally occurring in coastal locations, such as pa (with defensive and habitation features); agricultural and settlement sites (with still visible terracing, storage pit depressions and deposits of food waste or 'midden'); and stone-working sites;
- previous off-shore economic activities. For instance, there are remnants of a whaling station built on Maori stone fields as well as remains of the last whaling station to be established in New Zealand (built in 1955 at Whangaparanga);
- land-based economic activities. There was mining on GBI from the 1840s. The concrete foundations of the Oreville Stamping Battery, alongside the road to Whangaparapara, show where quartz from the Te Ahumata field was crushed and treated to extract gold and silver. The recently restored 1926 Kaiarara kauri timber driving dam on the Kaiarara Stream provides an insight into early kauri-based forestry. People also talked about a timber working treadmill, including mill sites and a township site; and
- early European settlement. The Harataonga Homestead (c.1906) is one of a few surviving early homesteads on the island. Nearby is a small cemetery where members of one of the early European settler families are buried.

A number of ships have been wrecked on GBI's coastline, the most famous being the SS Wairarapa, which struck rocks in 1894 with 140 deaths. Some of the victims are buried on the island at Onepoto and Tapuwai historic reserves.

Some parts of the island remain largely unmodified. Some areas, especially in the north, provide what some called a unique state of preservation.

### 2.3.4 Recreational values

The island's identified recreational values include boating, diving, fishing, bush walking and tramping, hunting and, of course, swimming and other beach activities. Other aspects include:

- the clear waters, unspoiled and varied coastline and sheltered harbours and bays attract boats and yachts;
- the underwater topography, sheltered bays and coves, shipwrecks, underwater volcanic terrain, seaweed forests and abundant fish life also attract divers;
- the coastline, which provides good fishing for independent recreational fishers and visitors - through boat and rock fishing charters;
- a range of walks and overnight accommodation (including camp-sites and one hut) available on land administered by DOC. DOC's recently completed review of recreation opportunities on the island will lead to further track and hut development.

- hunting on the island (by permit), especially pig hunting.
- white-sand, and often deserted, beaches on the east side of the island.

## 2.4    Tourism development

Most of those who support tourism development on GBI are interested in its potential to provide economic benefits, especially employment, as a basis for maintaining or enhancing population levels and, in turn, services and amenities. There may also be other conservation-related benefits. For instance, if GBI becomes an eco-destination, tourism has the potential to:

- enhance public awareness of, and support for, conservation;
- demonstrate how a model for ecological restoration on an inhabited island can work;
- provide the economic justification for further investment in pest eradication and other strategies to enhance biodiversity.

Key tourism organisations are beginning to see Great Barrier and Waiheke Islands as the two crown jewels of the Hauraki Gulf, albeit with distinctly different qualities and attractions. While Waiheke Island can be characterised as a scenic commercial retreat that offers a mix of cafés, restaurants, vineyards and beaches, the focus in GBI is the natural environment, which is enhanced by its more rugged and inaccessible terrain. The island is also different in that there are fewer people, which adds to its appeal. Any development of these two destinations needs to ensure that the unique qualities of each are enhanced, and their points of difference are taken advantage of and protected.

To some extent the visitor profiles of both destinations are similar. On Waiheke, 75% of the visitors are Aucklanders, followed by Australians, mainly through conference and incentive travel attached to conferences. Most of these visitors are day visitors. Most visitors to GBI are also Aucklanders. The visitor statistics built up by the visitor centre, and confirmed by GBI health providers as they plan for the peak summer season, show that 75% of visitor come from Auckland and 25% from other areas (including around 5% that come from overseas). There are no reliable statistics of the number of visitors to the island per year and little in the way of data about visitor motivations. One estimate of numbers is somewhere between 27,000 and 30,000. A recent DOC survey of campsite users (2003) shows that 54% of users came to the island for a holiday (which is not particularly informative) and 12% were attracted to the relaxing and quiet environment. Eleven percent visited the island on the recommendation of other people.

Given GBI's distance from Auckland and the modes and costs of transport available, most visitors stay at least one night. Locals talk of past daytrips provided by Fullers with distain – the arrival by boat, bus trip south to north and boat trip home are assumed to have provided little enjoyment for the visitors and generated virtually no revenue for the island. Many visitors arrive and stay on their own boats, although they may use island amenities. Hundreds of boats may be moored at any one time at Port Fitzroy and other sheltered bays. At the same time, there are

visitors staying in DOC camp sites, the wide variety of accommodation outlets, private holiday homes and with friends and family.

There is general agreement that GBI tourism is likely to grow as visitors continue to look for new and unspoilt destinations. Some see the growth as positive, with opportunities for the community to build on the unique qualities of the island, and develop tourism that is sympathetic to the very qualities that attract visitors. In this scenario, and with the appropriate product, amenities and infrastructural development, GBI could be marketed as an icon of Auckland. Some strategies suggested by local people for achieving this outcome include:

- effective promotion of GBI and its attractions to the people of the Auckland isthmus;
- maybe establishing a National Park on the island;
- eradicating pests and conferring a special status on GBI as one of the largest pest free islands in world;
- levying visitors as a way to fund pest eradication and other conservation activities on the island;
- developing a complementary range of accommodation types and visitor activities;
- better co-ordination between tourism operators for promotional activities and putting together packages of accommodation and activities for visitors;
- information resources to inform visitors of the special qualities of the island, and its lifestyle, both before they reach the island and at key visitor sites.

Others are more sceptical about tourism growth. While they agree that it is likely to happen, they are less positive about the benefits. One scenario sometimes mentioned by local residents is growth in the number of visitors and holiday homes, with subsequent rises in property prices. In this scenario, residents see little opportunity for desirable economic development at the local level. Instead, they rather pessimistically see the island way of life disappearing as residents become "the carriers of vacuum cleaners" (as some anticipated) or variously engaged in other menial tourism-related occupations. Given increasing house prices, these jobs are not seen to even provide the workers with the incomes necessary to remain on the island.

Regardless of their view of tourism's future, there is general agreement among the GBI community and other stakeholders that tourism development needs to be managed if it is to provide the anticipated economic and conservation outcomes, protect the island's unique points of difference and provide incomes for residents that enable people to remain on the island. Considerations for management include identifying the best mix of visitors that would provide the economic benefits but protect the island's values. Some stakeholders believe that the best mix is likely to be based on low numbers and high yield per visitor rather than high volume of visitors and relatively low yield, which typifies some of the current tourism activity. Such a management approach is also predicated on high quality products and experiences. Some other stakeholders disagree, for instance because they are interested in maximising occupancy (especially relating to transport) or in

encouraging visitors to experience the natural environment while also protecting it (dual goals of DOC).

Issues to consider in protecting the island's natural, recreational and cultural values centre on maintaining the GBI lifestyle, which forms part of the appeal of the island to visitors. There are some reports that some community members have been, for instance, so protective of their lifestyle that they have resisted amenities that might be seen to make life easier, in particular the upgrade to the telephone system. Some are also opposed to any lobbying activities aimed at getting GBI access to reticulated power. Other issues relate to the ecological values of the island. For instance, how can predator risk be managed in the face of increased numbers of visitors to the island? Increases in visitor numbers, with possible crowding in some island locations, have also been perceived as compromising both lifestyle and recreational values.

Further tourism development will always be constrained by the limitations of GBI's infrastructure, given the island's isolation and, to some extent, terrain. The limitations on tourism imposed by these infrastructural limitations are looked upon both positively and negatively.

The current transport options include a mix of cheaper, but slow and uncomfortable, ferry trips from Auckland (provided by Subritzky) and fast but more expensive flights from Auckland and Whangarei (by Great Barrier Airlines). Flights are limited, however, to daylight hours. Most demand for night flying is for emergency and compassionate reasons. Airline operators would like some extension to the flying hours to provide greater capacity during peak summer period. During these peak summer periods, more frequent and faster ferries are temporarily provided by Fullers. The current range of ferry options to the island is more limited than two to three years ago. Some see these transport options as curtailing tourism development and would like to see more regular ferry trips, including in the shoulder periods, that would enable families and others on tighter budgets to visit the island on a more regular basis. Others see the provision of cheap transport to the island, and the influx of many visitors, as potentially undermining the things they value about the island and its community. They see the transport difficulties as an effective, if indirect, way, to keep visitor numbers down and, because flights are more expensive, discourage less wealthy visitors from going to the island. Thus, the transport problems could be seen as an opportunity to put into action a tourism strategy that encourages high yield visitors.

Roading is another issue, both in regard to road sealing and to speed limitations. Road up-grading was by far the most frequently identified improvement on the island by on-island residents and off-island property owners over the last five years. Current indications suggest that it will be a long time before the road between Claris and Port Fitzroy is sealed. While local people are tired of the dust and wear and tear on cars, especially given the extra servicing costs they face, they also see the roads as a barrier to tourism development, especially in the north, and a danger given visitors' inexperience of metal roads. The open speed limit, coupled with the metal surface and drivers' inexperience, provides further reason for concern.

Both the local community and interested agencies are ambivalent about sub-division as both a catalyst for further development and a means to provide affordable housing. Some local property owners are frustrated by the consent process under the Resource Management Act, because they see the District Plan as more relevant to Auckland urban circumstances than to island circumstances, and because of the long and expensive consent process. Others are entirely against further subdivision, given that the current number of sites, many of which are not built on, would allow housing for more than 3,000 people. Nevertheless, there is general agreement that subdivisions should be limited, for instance to a certain size that enables sustainable land management (e.g. for sewerage disposal), to places that prevent further ribbon development along the coast line and in places that are already relatively intensively used.

# 3. Demonstrating the application of the framework

## 3.1 Participatory approaches to tourism planning and management

A participative approach to planning and management of natural areas for tourism provides one means of ensuring that a broad range of values and interests are considered. The effectiveness of such an approach depends on factors such as the broad approach taken (which is closely tied to who initiates it and determines its form and evolution); the techniques or tools used; the issues and priorities to be addressed; which stakeholders are involved; and whose knowledge and priorities are taken in account.

Other factors also affect how well the approach taken can provide the means for all values and interests to be accounted for in planning and management processes. For instance, a process determined by one dominant cultural group cannot necessarily ensure that the views of other cultural groups are included appropriately and influence decision making. Also, it is more difficult for less wealthy individuals and communities to commit time to participatory processes. Operationally, it is difficult to ensure equal access to information and ensure co-ordination within and between stakeholders. Some stakeholders are in more powerful positions structurally and, therefore, can have more influence over decision making. It is also the case that individuals and communities are increasingly sceptical about the value of participating, given their disappointment with previous processes and/or outcomes. The history of relationships between the participants can have a strong influence on the effectiveness of the process.

## 3.2 Visioning exercises

The GBI case study was conducted to test the effectiveness of 'visioning' exercises as a basis for enabling more integrated planning and management of the island as a whole. 'Visioning' exercises are participative processes whereby groups or communities develop agreed strategies in response to commonly agreed problems and desired outcomes. They are typically intensive planning sessions,

usually held at the community level, where small groups of participants, over time, discuss particular problems or sets of problems and develop strategies or plans in response. Participants usually try to achieve a level of consensus or agreement about the actions required. They often involve the use of a charrette,[1] which provides an opportunity for accelerated processes of problem analysis, strategising and putting together an action plan. It is intended to allow in-depth discussion and the development of relationships amongst participants. The technique, which shares some of the qualities of soft-systems methodologies and other facilitated processes, requires skilled facilitators.

The Great Barrier Island case study built on from a series of minor case studies throughout New Zealand. Visioning processes had occurred in a number of these case studies (e.g., Pupu Springs, North Head, Waitomo, Punakaiki and Kaikoura). These processes typically included a wide range of stakeholders, including DOC, iwi, local government, residents, recreational groups, conservation groups, tourism operators, and other commercial interests. Some of those involved in these visioning processes, in reflecting on the experience, noted the difficulties involved in turning the resulting 'vision' into action.

The design of the visioning process for GBI tool was informed by the particular characteristics of GBI, especially the community, and perceived shortcomings in the application of the process in other planning contexts. As a consequence, we planned a visioning process that took the following into account:

- tourism planning processes are predominantly *issues* oriented. They are able to operate most effectively when issues are local and can be approached at an early stage in the planning process, before commitments are made and conflict arises (Murphy, 1987: 171);
- effective participation and consensus building may require a long time line, and should be flexible and responsive to stakeholder needs (Tosun, 2000:630);
- stakeholders need timely, quality information (about eco systems, land use, visitor profiles, legal issues, zoning etc.) to make effective decisions. (Willams and Penrose, 1998; 886);
- interests of stakeholders will be dynamic, fluid, and can change throughout the consultation/participation process (Jamal and Getz: 2000);
- the ground rules which underpin a negotiation/consensus building process may need to change during the different phases of the process in order to empower or introduce different stakeholders (Jamal and Getz, 2000: 172);
- management of stakeholder expectations is a critical issue. Participation does not always guarantee 'ideal' or anticipated outcomes from a stakeholder perspective, especially if the participation processes employed are consultative or functional; and

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[1] A charette is a facilitated, intensive planning process whereby a group of participants, through a series of meetings, discuss problems and, through a consensus building process, develops strategies or plans in response.

- 'ownership' of natural areas by local ('grassroots') stakeholders can be problematic. After being provided the opportunity to manage a natural area, a key stakeholder may return overall management to a statutory body, as it may not have the resources or legal mandate to manage the area adequately. A new partnership may then be realigned between stakeholders.

In the process of carrying out the visioning exercise for GBI, it became clear that the final product could be improved through the application of a broad range of participatory techniques rather than relying on the charette technique alone. The application of a range of techniques provided more opportunities for stakeholders to express their views independently and to discuss their views and possible strategies in fairly homogeneous groups (e.g. tourism operators). This approach also provided the stakeholders with the opportunity to listen to views that might differ from their own. This provided a basis for them to identify areas of common ground and, collectively develop plans and development strategies that most could agree to. The range of techniques was needed to account for the size, distribution and diversity of the GBI community (which includes on-island residents and off-island property owners), the range of other stakeholders, the resources available, participants' interest in the process and the complexity of management and planning issues.

Techniques employed included face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, meetings, workshops, surveys and a charrette exercise facilitated by the research team. The charrette, which is an intensive planning session, was held at the community level, and included a series of meetings between the research team and different stakeholders. These meetings, held over two days and an evening, were used to discuss and review our interpretation of the set of problems that the island faces, stakeholders' aspirations for the future and strategies in response. These were presented in a draft visioning document. The research team sought consensus about all aspects the document and made the necessary changes to achieve this.

The next sections of this case study include an evaluation of the techniques used in the development of the shared vision document. Key parts of the document are included in section 4.

### 3.3 Background data collection and community feedback

This phase of the visioning process included face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, meetings, workshops, and postal surveys.

Given the characteristics of the GBI community, as described above, and the shortcomings of previous visioning processes at application (the findings from previous case studies), the research team decided to adapt and extend the traditional approach to developing a shared vision. This extended approach, which had a considerably longer time frame, included carrying out more baseline research and

increasing the opportunities for stakeholders to be involved in the development of the document.

There was a need to carry out more baseline research because previous documents regarding tourism on the island were dated. The last tourism strategy was prepared in 1993 and the research team could find no evidence of any research identifying what the islanders, key agencies and other stakeholders considered were the important features of the island that might require protection, and what they thought about tourism development. A local environmental trust's stated intention to raise funds to do similar exploratory research provided the team with further evidence of the community's interest in and perceived need for such research. The team was also of the view that the more activity that occurred around the development of the shared vision the more that people might make the effort to become involved.

The research proceeded in three stages, with each stage designed to widen the range of participants that were involved in the previous stage. The research feedback processes that were integral to each stage were designed to increase participants' exposure to the views of others, and provide opportunities for discussion around areas of agreement and dissent.

The first stage in the development of a shared vision involved a general scoping of Great Barrier Island that:
- described the natural area;
- profiled the community (including recent trends);
- identified GBI stakeholders that would need to participate in the development of the shared vision;
- described the values of the island (from the perspectives of the stakeholders);
- described the mix of tourism-related activities (including recent trends and proposed developments); and
- identified key issues that a shared vision would need to address.

The information was collected through:
  i. an analysis of census statistics;
  ii. a review of some key reports;
  iii. interviews and focus groups with Great Barrier Island residents, including tourism operators, farmers, contractors and other local business people, service providers and local environmental groups; and
  iv. interviews and focus groups with a range of officers in the Department of Conservation (DOC), the Auckland City Council (ACC), the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and Tourism Auckland.

The resulting report provided a summary of community profile information and participant perceptions of important GBI features, trends and development issues.

We intended the report to provide a basis for further discussion of the elements of a shared vision. This report was distributed to participants for comment and the final report (attached) incorporates their views.

The second stage of information collection included two surveys: of off-island and on-island property owners. ACC assisted with these surveys by posting questionnaires to their rate payers (for confidentiality reasons we could not have access to these lists). The Council also enclosed letters in each of the surveys giving its support. An enclosed participation form provided the opportunity for participants to provide us with their details if they wanted to have further input into the vision development (for instance, through focus groups that discussed changes).

The surveys were designed to collect data from property owners about:
- what they value about the island,
- changes on the island in the last five yeas
- their vision for the future of the island; and
- who should be involved in planning for Great Barrier Island.

The resulting reports were also distributed to key stakeholders for their information and comment. The final reports are attached as Appendices.

## 3.4 Information sharing and the charrette exercise

Stage 3 involved various on-island and off-island focus groups and workshops with survey participants, a range of on-island interest groups (e.g., commercial operators, people interested in sub-division and development, arts groups) etc) and other interested stakeholders. They were used to verify research findings and identify areas of agreement and disagreement for the preparation of a draft shared vision.

The final stage of the shared vision development involved a charrette exercise. This was designed to get specific feedback about each element of the shared vision document from as wide a group of stakeholders as possible. The preparation of the document was informed by the considerable background research carried out in stages 1-3 described above. The draft document was designed to allow participants to comment on and agree or disagree with each paragraph.

Three community meetings were planned, the dates and venues designed to encourage wide participation. The meetings were advertised in the two GBI newspapers/newsletters and fliers were delivered to every on-island household. A draft document was sent to the GBI Trust prior to our visit to the island. Two of the research team attended the meetings with a pile of draft documents for people to read and comment on.

The comments received on the day and those received over the next couple of weeks informed refining of the shared vision document.

### 3.5    Ensuring application of the shared vision document

The final stage of developing a shared vision involved acceptance and sponsorship by the three main planning agencies: DOC, ACC and ARC. These agencies were invited to participate in the charrette process and also had opportunity to comment on the content of the vision document in meetings with members of the research team. These discussions resulted in refinements of elements of the document, commitments to participate in a final strategy workshop and agreement to use the document in the formulation of relevant planning processes.

# 4.    Other tool applications

In the practical application of the visioning and charrette processes it became clear that any application of the outcome (that is the shared vision) would entail the use of a number of other tool sets from the integrated management framework. Although the use of other tools was not the focus of the case study,  need was implicit in the aspirations of stakeholders and in the principles that stakeholders felt should guide future development.

The hexagon model framework has already been described in section 1.3 (see Figure 1).  Integration requires coordinated application of tools as described in the model.

The following parts of the integrated approach  were implicit in the development of the GBI vision document, particularly in the principles developed for informing tourism related decisions :

**Recognising and setting limits** – future management strategies require the setting of an overall cap for visitor numbers to GBI. That cap is likely to be considerably higher than is currently the case, but tourism development needs to proceed with a cap in mind. Overall or site specific carrying capacity may already have been reached during the Christmas period. Baseline data about current visitor levels is required as a starting point to identify optimum visitor numbers.

**Structured participation** – further community, hapu and stakeholder input is needed if the vision document is to be implemented. The structured participation process core to the development of the vision document can be further extended as agencies, especially ACC, make use of the vision in their planning processes.

**Impact assessment** – a continuing process for assessing the  social, cultural and environmental implications of tourism development proposals, resource and conservation plans, and concessions, and for monitoring the effects of change at particular sites and over GBI as a whole, including cumulative effects.

**Valuation and allocation** – using mechanisms such as concessions and pricing for transport to the island as ways of managing visitor numbers and visitor activity.

**Tourism and natural resource plans** – coordination between the vision document, and the wider strategic planning processes of ACC, ARC and DOC.

**Visitor information and interpretation** – use of visitor information to attract particular types of visitor and interpretation to influence expectations and visitor behaviour.

**Building capacity** – use of capacity and capability building enable the community, industry and agencies to use the tools available to achieve their vision (as outlined in the vision document).

## 4.1    Recognising and setting limits

*Total visitor numbers***:** The total number of visitors to GBI has fluctuated greatly over recent years, particularly in response to transport availability. For instance, visitor numbers possibly peaked when Fullers ran a one day ferry service that dropped visitors at one end of the island and bussed them to the other end for pick-up at the end of the day. Most visitors come from Auckland and most come during the two-week Christmas holiday period. Total visitor numbers are not known, especially as they can come via commercial air and sea services and via private boats. It is unclear how much time private boat arrivals spend on the island. Estimates put the total number of visitor arrivals at around 25,000 to 30,000 per year.
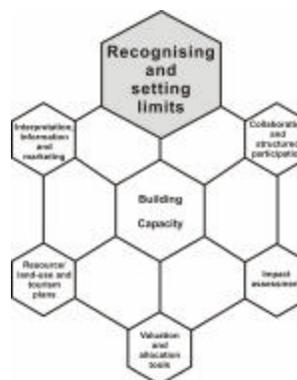
Increased numbers are expected. Residents and other stakeholders are generally supportive of increased numbers, with a general agreement that the island could accommodate at least double the current numbers (if not three or four times the current level), especially if they visited throughout the year and travelled throughout the island.

However, most people agree that visitor numbers overall would need to be limited to protect the GBI life style and recreational and other values. At the same time, sufficient numbers are needed to enable individual business profitability, support infrastructure development (especially roading), enable a mix of transport options, and satisfy DOC's and others' goal to encourage visitors to experience and appreciate the natural environment and heritage values). Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) is one approach to establishing what the visitor threshold might be for any one site or destination, taking account of matters such as visitor satisfaction. The use of this tool, in association with impact assessment (discussed in section 4.3) could be used on GBI to establish optimum visitor numbers to protect island values and meet visitor expectations.

*Limiting access and numbers at some sites***:** Some local people considered that they might be a need to set a cap on visitor numbers in some areas of high cultural, heritage or ecological value. Their views reflected concerns about social and cultural impacts of too many visitors (e.g., on residents and fellow visitors) rather than views about the physical impacts of visitors.

Residents and others have discussed various options for managing tourism numbers. Transport costs already act as a limitation. Some residents and tourism operators are happy for costs to remain high, despite the personal inconvenience, to prevent large numbers of visitor arrivals. One of the most common fears is for Fullers or another operator to reintroduce the cheap daily ferry runs, and any return to the day excursion style of tourism.

## 4.2   Collaboration and structured participation

Other *structured participation processes* that GBI stakeholders have been involved in (in addition to the visioning process) have included the LTCCP process with ACC and consultation around the marine reserve proposal. However, the extent to which the latter was a structured participation process was questioned by some residents, who felt that opportunities to participate in the process were limited.
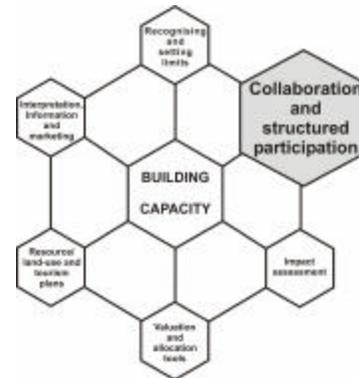


As described earlier, several factors undermine GBI community integration. More than half the houses are owned by off-island property owners and are vacant for much of the year. Up to a quarter of the resident population are on the island for a limited time (e.g., some teachers, DOC staff, ACC staff, etc). Others are living fairly isolated lives and have little involvement in community activities. Also, although there are some community hubs, houses are scattered across the island. And, overall, the community tends to celebrate its independence and, to some extent, suspicion about the 'mainland' and bureaucracy. These community characteristics make it hard to carry out structured participation processes – it is difficult to convince people to be involved and logistically difficult to reach people and to get people to participate in organised events.

Collaboration amongst GBI tourism operators is needed. They recognise a need to identify opportunities for co-ordination amongst themselves and with off-island operators (particularly transport operators) to both ensure that transport options meet the needs of visitors and that products and services meet visitor expectations. However, the only recent collective meetings had been as part of the visioning process and as part of the LTCCP process.

*Intr- and inter-agency collaboration* is patchy. For a time, the relationship between the GBI Community Board and ACC staff was particularly poor but the change in chair of the Board may remedy that. ACC and DOC, both of which have area offices on the island, rarely work together, but agreed to participate in the final meeting of the visioning process to identify strategies that fall out of the shared vision document. ACC and DOC work together closely on strategies to eradicate pests on the island and ACC and ARC are working together over the District Plan for the Hauraki Gulf. ACC, DOC, and ARC have each been very supportive of the

visioning exercise and have each expressed a willingness to assist in the implementation process.

## 4.3    Impact assessment



There is some ambivalence about tourism among both residents and off-island property owners. On the one hand, it seems that most people see tourism as one of the few options they have to diversify the local economy, thereby making it possible for people to remain on the island. But on the other hand, people see an influx of visitors as a possible threat to some of the things they most value about living or staying on the island, including isolation, the small population and community spirit (mutual care, etc). As noted earlier, some are also worried about the sorts of jobs that might result from tourism development, for instance low paying cleaning and other service-related employment.
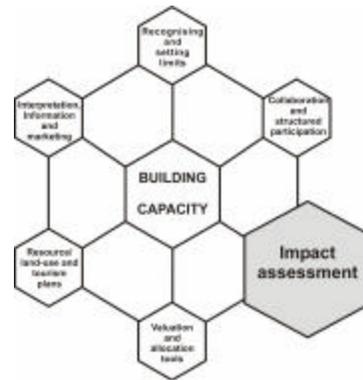
A cap on visitor numbers is the most preferred response to these anticipated impacts. However, establishing this cap would require impact assessment, to identify likely impacts and any mitigation and management strategies, along with some application of Limits to Acceptable Change (LAC) tools to establish a preferred visitor limit. Currently, there are no visitor number statistics available.

As discussed in Section 2, the island is highly valued for its ecological and cultural heritage qualities. However, there has been little in the way of systematic consideration of the potential impacts of anticipated visitor growth on the ecology of the island and on culturally important sites. GBI provides an ideal opportunity for agencies like DOC and ARC to carry out some baseline studies so that future monitoring of impacts, including cumulative impacts, can be carried out. This will provide the basis for on-going planning and management of tourism on a sustainable basis.

Concern about the cumulative effects of current tourism on GBI tends to focus on traffic. Over the summer period, there are more cars on the roads and visitors are perceived as inexperienced at driving on metal roads. Local people worry that the speed with which visitors drive and the larger numbers of cars on the road pose risks for both visitors and residents.

## 4.4    Valuation and allocation tools



As is the case in most tourism destinations that rely on the natural environment for their main visitor attraction, there are no visitor fees or charges to many of the GBI attractions. Many of the visitor sites are on public land administered by DOC managed land or around the marine and coastal environment. By statute DOC is not able to charge directly
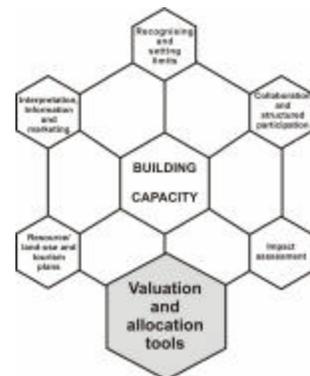
for access to land that it manages.

Businesses operating on DOC managed land are required to obtain a concession. A concession, in the form of a lease, licence, permit or easement, is an official authorisation to operate in the area. Concessions are required for accommodation facilities, water, air or land transport services, commercial education or instruction activities, guiding (including fishing, hunting, tramping, walking, kayaking/canoeing) and services such as shops, tearooms, restaurants, garages, or hire services. The process for obtaining a concession varies between conservancies, but all applications must include a description of the environmental effects of the proposed activity and how any adverse effects will be managed.

Currently, there are no operators with concessions to operate on DOC administered land on GBI. While there have been a small number of applications for concessions in the past, these have not been finalised. It is DOC's view that in these cases the cost outweighed the benefits.

It may be that, in the future, people see product opportunities around the marine reserve (if it is established). While the current Marine Reserves Act does not require concessions for operators to carry out permitted activities it is expected that the new marine reserves legislation (when it is enacted) will.

## 4.5 Resource/land use and tourism plans

The focus of this case study has been the development of a shared vision for GBI. As described above, to be effective that vision needs to integrate with and inform local and regional land-use plans, in particular the Hauraki Gulf District Plan and the DOC Auckland Conservation Management Plan (CMS). It also needs to integrate with ARC Regional Policy Statement (as it aligns with the district plan) and particular policy strategies), especially relating to cultural and heritage management and pest management. The vision statement also needs to align with and inform the regional tourism strategy.



Land-use planning takes place under the Conservation Act (60% of the land is administered by DOC) and the Resource Management Act (RMA) through the Auckland City Council and the Auckland Regional Council. There is continuing pressure for residential development on GBI with, as has happened elsewhere in New Zealand, considerable interest in purchasing and developing coastal land for holiday housing.

Issues around subdivision residential, community and other use continue on GBI. ARC and DOC are concerned that land subdivision, and subsequent development, occurs in locations and in a manner that does not compromise natural and cultural values. ACC are currently considering policy around subdivision as part of the district planning process. Some local people are frustrated by ACC's seeming reluctance to allow further subdivision. For those who have sub-dividable land and want to sell off parcels, they see ACC's actions as limiting their ability to maximise their investment – especially when the income from primary production is only a fraction of that available through land sales. Some see the lack of a GBI-specific policy as limiting commercial and community development. Others are concerned about the lack of affordable land for local housing development. There are also people who are supportive of the limitations. They see further subdivision as encouraging suburbanisation of the island and enabling the growing domination of holiday properties that are vacant for most of the year.

The shared vision (see Appendix 1) includes some principles of development that could be used to guide decisions around subdivision.

Structure plans have been developed elsewhere as one council response to such issues. A structure plan provides an opportunity for community consultation to consider issues around landscapes, natural values, cultural heritage and social-economic wellbeing. It can ensure special or particular environmental, social and cultural heritage features and issues are addressed when subdivision and development is proposed for a particular area or locality. They may be either non-statutory or statutory (by being referred to in the District Plan). Structure plans can result in variations to district plans in a coordinated approach rather than on an *ad hoc* basis.

There is a proposal to create a marine reserve on the northwest coast of GBI. DOC can create marine reserves under the Marine Reserves Act, the purpose of which is to establish marine reserves 'for the scientific study of marine life' as well as to preserve the marine habitat in its natural state. In practice, marine reserves generally become 'no take' areas for commercial and recreational fishing. The GBI proposal, like that at Nugget Point in the Catlins area, is highly controversial. Opposition is coming from people on the island as well as from highly organised recreational fishing lobbyists in Auckland and further afield. Much of the opposition stems from people's response to DOC consultation processes and subsequent reports and actions. However, there is also considerable support for the reserve amongst on-island residents.

While justification for the reserve has included reference to possible tourism opportunities, local GBI residents point out that the reserve is in a fairly remote area, with poor road access.

The Auckland Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) outlines the overall management strategies for the island. The most recent CMS (published in 1997) set

out management priorities for conservation over the next 10 years. That CMS is currently due for review.

DOC has also recently completed a Recreational Opportunities Review, the outcomes of which include new track and hut development on the island over the next 5 to 10 years.

Both DOC and ACC are interested in the development of a tourism strategy for the Hauraki Gulf as a whole, with any strategy for Great Barrier Island integrated into the broader strategy. A destination management plan may also be needed to decide on the best mix of products and experiences (e.g., accommodation types and visitor activities) to meet the expectations (quality and variety) of the targeted visitors and to be consistent with the shared vision.

## 4.6 Interpretation, visitor information and marketing

The provision of information about the special cultural, natural and other qualities of GBI (as identified in the vision document) is integral to ensuring that visitors come to the island, that their expectations are met and that their behaviour is appropriate. Such information provision is generally known as interpretation. It aims to provide information about an area to attract visitors or get them to stay longer as well as increase their enjoyment of a place, encourage appropriate behaviour, and increase their knowledge, understanding and respect for the environment, heritage, culture or property. More detailed information about interpretation is provided in the Catlins case study.
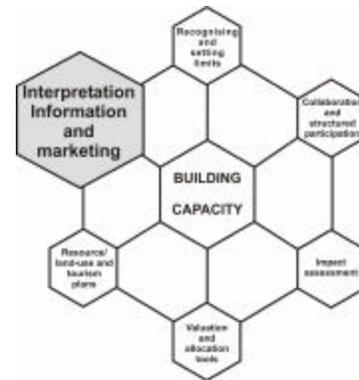


Part of the challenge for GBI is encouraging more people to come to the island, ensuring their expectations are met (or surpassed) and ensuring that they will come again and encourage their friends and relations to come. Word of mouth is still the most important catalyst for visitations to a destination. It is important that visitors are aware of what they are coming to, in terms of amenities (or their lack), attractions and weather. These are all part of the charm of the island, but may appeal to some visitors and not others.

Visitor marketing is closely allied to interpretation. It provides the basis for GBI to attract the sorts of visitors they want as well as the numbers. A profile of GBI's current visitors can be built up from a number of sources including the local visitor information centre and the health centre. However, there is a dearth of baseline data to act as a foundation for visitor marketing strategies. One estimate is that a total of 25,000 to 30,000 visitors come to the island each year. Seventy-five percent come from Auckland and most stay at least one night. In addition, there is another large group who arrive and stay on boats. But they may use at least some island amenities in the same way as land-based visitors do.

## 4.7 Building capacity – industry, community, agency

Integrated planning and management requires the application of a large and diverse range of tools and approaches. The GBI case study, as a piece of action research, evaluated one aspect of structured participation - visioning. However, activity highlighted the need for a coordinated use of the range of tools available if the vision is to be implemented. As well as further structured participation, as the above discussion shows, there is a need for recognising and setting limits, impact assessment, valuation and allocation of resources, tourism and natural resource plans and visitor information and interpretation. To support and enable this use of tools there is also a need for capacity and capability building at community, industry and agency levels.
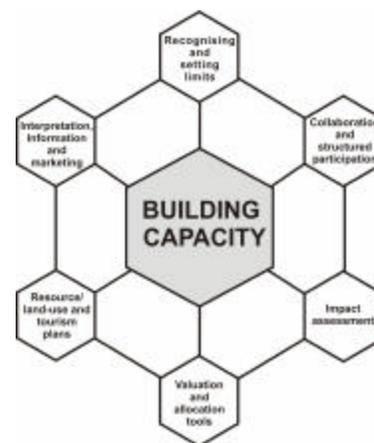
Putting the vision into action will require a number of supported activities, including:

- expertise - skilled people in DOC; ACC (including the GBI Community Board); ARC; the tourism industry (existing and new operators); tourism organisations (e.g., Tourism Auckland); local community groups (e.g., the GBI Trust), and local service providers (e.g., health centre) to draw on and build on the experiences of each other and others;

- agency support - from ACC, to ensure the vision is reflected in planning documents, infrastructure development, interpretation of current policies and other practices; from DOC, to ensure the new CMS and other planning documents, the marine reserve proposal (and the reserve management plan if the reserve is approved) and amenities development (as identified in the Recreation Opportunities Review) reflect the content of the vision;

- industry support - from the operators and tourism organisations to work towards developing local products and services; interpretation, marketing and other information-related strategies; and visitor management strategies that reflect the intent of the vision document; and

- leadership - most importantly from the community to ensure the shared vision is put into action.

# 5. Lessons from the GBI case study

*The independence of facilitators can be advantageous* to 'visioning' processes, particularly when working with distinctive communities like GBI. Because this research was funded by an external agency (i.e., FRST), which does not have any stakeholder relationship with GBI, the research team was able to explicitly distance itself from the interests of all of the stakeholders. This clear independence of the team assisted the development of the shared vision because it facilitated community engagement with the process. Even so, establishing rapport with some community members, and gaining their trust, was still problematic and time consuming. Some community members presumed that the researchers must have an

agenda, and / or must be working in the interests of one of the stakeholder groups (e.g., ACC or DOC). As a consequence, they were reluctant to contribute at first and agreed to participate only after being reassured that the researcher was independent.

The independence was also essential in working with local and central government agencies, all of which were actively supportive of the visioning process. This was especially the case in the final phases of the case study, when the researchers worked with these agencies to find ways to implement the vision, identify key tasks and establish responsibilities. Again, the team's independence was necessary to ensure that stakeholders had confidence that the agencies would work in their best interests.

*Conflicts and aspirational differences at the broad level are likely to be less significant than stakeholders assume.* The GBI community, outside agencies and other stakeholders tended to characterise GBI as full of discord and disagreement. Any notion that there could be a shared vision was treated with some distain by both community members and agency staff. However, as the development of a shared vision has shown, any disagreement tended to be in the detail rather than in any broad principles about island development.

*Need for integrated approach.* The shared vision for GBI centred on tourism as a vehicle for community and economic development. However, community members, outside agencies and other stakeholders were determined that the type of development pursued should enhance or protect GBI values rather than undermine them. This requires a managed approach to tourism, guided by principles of development outlined in the vision document. Implicit in these principles is the application of tools relating to the recognition and setting of limits, further community participation in planning and management, impact assessment, the use of economic tools to management tourist numbers and protect the environment, the vision being explicitly reflected in key planning documents, and visitor information and interpretation that supports local aspirations. The use of these tools will require capacity building at community, agency and industry levels.

A *lack of coordination between and within public sector agencies, the community and tourism operators* was revealed in the vision development process. For instance, it is rare for the agencies to work together over GBI issues. Although DOC, ACC and ARC were each focusing on aspects of GBI's future, coordination between the agencies was limited. There is some interagency coordination between ARC and ACC as part of ACC development of a district plan for the Hauraki Gulf Islands. The Hauraki Forum also provides some opportunity for coordinated activity around aspects of the wider Hauraki Gulf catchment management. DOC and ARC also work together to some extent over pest control and individuals with DOC and ACC talk together about common planning issues. However, other coordination is rare. Notable gaps include: tourism operators meeting together or with key agencies to discuss tourism development or management strategies; the community meeting together to discuss strategies for the future, etc. The district planning process and the LTCCP process requires ACC to consult with the community about its aspirations and priorities.

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# Appendix 1: A shared vision for Great Barrier Island

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Great Barrier Island, in the Hauraki Gulf, is currently facing some important planning and management issues. These include:

- continuing fluctuations in the resident population (with a downwards trend) and, potentially, reducing economies of scale around service provision and infrastructural maintenance and development;
- increasing pressure for building sites for holiday-homes and other development;
- increasing land values and, therefore, decreasing housing affordability for local people;
- a decrease in rental housing stock as houses are purchased for holiday homes;
- the need for economic development and diversification; and,
- potentially, increasing visitor numbers.

Factors influencing visitor numbers include the active marketing of the Gulf Islands by Tourism Auckland and others and the increasing appeal of places off the beaten track to international and domestic visitors.

This project, the development of a shared vision for Great Barrier Island (GBI), is part of a larger research programme funded by the Foundation for Research Science and Technology (FRST). The overall research programme aims to develop a model for the integrated management of natural areas for tourism and related activities. It will contribute to the development of a tourism industry that is more environmentally, socially, culturally and economically sustainable.

The project coincides with Auckland City Council's new Long Term Council Community Plan (LTCCP) process and its review of the District Plan. Other agencies giving current attention to planning matters in GBI include the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and the Department of Conservation's (DOC) Recreational Opportunities Review, biodiversity work and proposed marine reserve.

## 1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the visioning exercise are to:

- Conduct an inclusive participatory approach to the development of a vision for Great Barrier Island through profiling the community;
- Identify the natural, social, cultural heritage and recreational values of the island;
- Develop a vision for Great Barrier Island, with wide participation of the local community, off-island property owners, key government agencies and other stakeholders

- Identify the steps necessary to establish an action plan for implementation.

## 1.3 Approach

This project is about community-based planning and management, particularly of tourism and other related activities, on GBI. Tourism and related activities are, however, considered in the context of other development options.

Because the aim is to develop a shared vision, considerable effort has been taken to enable wide community participation in its development. The shared vision also includes the views of key local and central government agencies.

The process used to develop this shared vision has included the following steps:
- An analysis of census statistics and review of key reports
- Exploration of options for community and stakeholder participation in the visioning exercise
- Application of a range of community participation processes including:
  - interviews with on-island residents, including tourism operators, farmers, contractors and other local business people, service providers and local environmental groups
  - focus groups and workshops with on-island groups including artists, accommodation and other tourism providers, local business people and developers
  - focus groups and interviews with off-island property owners and other stakeholders (e.g., planners engaged by on and off-island property owners)
  - interviews and cross-departmental meetings with local and central government officers in the Department of Conservation (DOC) [Auckland Conservancy and GBI based], the Auckland City Council (ACC) [Auckland and GBI based], the Auckland Regional Council (ARC) and Tourism Auckland
  - surveys of on-island residents and off-island property owners
  - preparation and distribution of three reports for comment (attached as appendices)
- Preparation of a draft vision document
- A charette or community-based planning session for residents and stakeholders to comment on the draft vision
- Distribution of the vision document to key agencies for comment
- Review of the vision document in response to comments
- Liaison with the Auckland City Council and the Department of Conservation to discuss the vision's application/links with their planning processes.

## 2. Context

### 2.1 GBI – an overview

GBI lies 88km northeast of downtown Auckland on the outer edge of the Hauraki Gulf. It is the largest island off the North Island coast. The island is highly valued for its natural features, hosts a range of wildlife and is possum free. It is also valued for its water and land based recreational opportunities. More than 60 percent of the island is public land administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

At the last Census, in 2001, the island's total population was 1,047. Current estimates put the permanent population at well less than 900 people with at least as many property owners also living off-shore, particularly in Auckland. The island's main population centres are at Tryphena, Claris, Port Fitzroy, Whangaparapara and Okupu (see Figure 1).

As the resident population shrinks, the number (and scale) of holiday houses is increasing; currently over half the houses on the island are unoccupied for most of the year. Incomes are comparatively low and dependence of benefits is comparatively high. However, a number of employers report difficulties in filling vacancies.

The local economy is a mix of accommodation and activity-based tourism, retail, transport and some contracting services. Farming is not an economic proposition for most property owners: only a handful of properties could be described as working farms that provide an income. Commercial fishing declined after the introduction of the quota system

There is a range of shops and services on the island but no bank (on Census night 2001, there were 93 business units). The Auckland City Service Centre at Claris provides Council services and information and houses a small public library. The island has three primary schools in Okiwi, Claris and Tryphena. Most secondary school students attend boarding schools in Auckland City; some study via correspondence. The community has a health centre, a family support organisation, a Visitor Information Centre and at least two voluntarily run libraries in addition to the one in the service Centre.

Access to the island includes sea and air services. While there is no regular transport system on the island, taxis and car rentals are available and, at peak holiday times, buses run trips to campsites and other tourist facilities.

Local residents and off-island property owners are highly protective of the lifestyle the island provides, mainly because of its isolation, ruggedness, lack of amenities and small population but also because of the resulting independence and resourcefulness of the local community.

## 2.2 The GBI community

The resident community is diverse, with some agreement amongst local people that there are four main groups that may be of more or less equal size. These include:

- People with multi-generational ties with GBI. This group includes both Maori and non-Maori who can trace their whakapapa or roots back over generations (for Maori over hundreds of years and for some families, back to the early days of European settlement). Some of these people have lived on the mainland for some of their lives but returned to GBI;
- People who may have been on the island for substantial periods of time but do not have multi-generational links. They are well integrated into the local community and some are key to local initiatives such as the GBI Trust and tourism development;
- People who are on the island for a short and defined period of time (for instance, some DOC or Auckland City Council staff, teachers, police, contractors) and are less well integrated into the community;
- People who have a more itinerant life style may live on the island for short or long periods of time but have little interaction with the community.

Often people leave the island (temporarily or permanently) when their children reach secondary school age. Two reasons for this include parents' wish to avoid splitting the family by sending children off the island to boarding school and parents' inability to afford the cost of sending their children to boarding school.

Off-island property owners can also be characterized in similar ways. Some families have had connections with the island for many years, including across generations, and are well integrated into the local community. Others have shorter GBI histories, and may include both people who are well integrated into the local community and those that are not.

# 3. Island values

The island is valued by people on and off the island for its unique community, its natural environment, its cultural heritage, and the recreational opportunities it provides. Three attached documents provide more detail about how residents, off-island property owners and others value the island and the opportunities it provides.

**The community:** The community is valued for its diversity, independence, resourcefulness and people's care for one another. These qualities are attributed to the isolation and rural nature of the island, the ruggedness of the landscape and weather, and the need for residents to be self-sufficient (e.g., through generating their own power, collecting their own water and maintaining their own sewerage systems).

**The natural environment**: The island's natural environment is highly valued for its island status, the existing ecological values, the diversity of landscape and scenic beauty, the island's freedom from possum and its potential to be pest free.

The island's substantial size adds to its special significance. Some of the specific advantages of its size include that:
• the island is a microcosm geographically
• there is a range of animal and plant species
• large scale protection programmes are possible, providing lessons for mainland activities.

The ecological value of the island, given the diversity of landforms and flora and fauna, include a number of rare species and unique natural features. Some of the specific ecological qualities include: black petrel; brown teal (60% New Zealand's total population live in Whangapoua Estuary); spotless crake and fernbird (rare on other offshore islands); North Island kaka; banded rail and 13 species of lizard, including the rare Great Barrier chevron skink. The Kaitoke wetland area is the largest fresh water wetland in the Auckland region. Planned pest (particularly rats and feral cats) eradication programmes over the next 10 years are expected to further enhance the ecological values of the island.

**Cultural heritage**: Culture and heritage values on the island range from early Maori history, to early European economic activity and settlement, to ecological heritage values, to the strong relationships between Maori and other communities on the island. Specific heritage values include signs of:
• Ngati Rehua's association with GBI over many centuries. These include numerous archaeological sites such as pa (with defensive and habitation features), agricultural and settlement sites (with still visible terracing, storage pit depressions and deposits of food waste or 'midden'), and stone-working sites;

- previous off-shore economic activities. For instance, there are remnants of a whaling station built on Maori stone fields as well as remains of the last whaling station to be established in New Zealand (built in 1955 at Whangaparanga);
- land-based economic activities. There was mining on GBI from the 1840s. The concrete foundations of the Oreville Stamping Battery, alongside the road to Whangaparapara, show where quartz from the Te Ahumata field was crushed and treated to extract gold and silver. The recently restored 1926 Kaiarara kauri timber driving dam on the Kaiarara Stream provides an insight into early kauri-based forestry. People also talk about a timber working treadmill, including mill sites and a township site;
- early European settlement. The Harataonga Homestead (c.1906) is one of a few surviving early homesteads on the island. Nearby is a small cemetery where members of one of the early European settler families are buried;
- views, especially from coastal roads.

A number of ships have been wrecked on GBI's coastline, the most famous being the SS Wairarapa, which struck rocks in 1894 with 140 deaths. Some of the victims are buried on the island at Onepoto and Tapuwai historic reserves.

That some parts of the island remain largely unmodified is culturally and historically important.

**Recreational opportunities**: The island's natural marine and land-based environment provides many recreational opportunities, including boating, diving, fishing, bush walking and tramping, hunting and, of course, swimming and other beach activities. Features that provide recreational opportunities include the:
- clear waters, unspoiled and varied coastline and sheltered harbours and bays for boating and yachting;
- underwater topography, sheltered bays and coves, shipwrecks, underwater volcanic terrain, seaweed forests and abundant fish life for diving;
- extensive coastline for rock and boat fishing;
- range of walks, overnight accommodation and wilderness opportunities on land administered by DOC. Further track and hut development is planned.
- bush, that provides hunting (especially pig) opportunities (by permit);
- white-sand beaches (especially on the east coast), for swimming, sunbathing and surfing opportunities. In the off-peak season, the beaches are often empty.

# 4. Current trends

Important trends on the island include fluctuations in population size (with a recent decline), signs of a contracting local economy and potential loss of services, and signs of growth in the visitor industry (although overall visitor numbers are unknown) with uneven pressure on the island's infrastructure.

Population decline is a concern for some people; however this concern is not universal. Some people are worried that any decline in population will lead to contraction of the local economy, loss of services (which will further force people off the island and / or discourage new people from settling), and a stalling of infrastructure development if investment is not seen as warranted. There is wide spread recognition that any reversal of the current decline requires economic development and job creation, especially through tourism and other localised economic development.

Tourism is becoming an increasingly important part of the island's economic development. For many years, Great Barrier Island has been both a home to its resident population and a holiday destination for holiday-home owners and visitors. However, over recent years there has been a shift in the balance between residents and holiday-makers, with a diminishing resident population, an increased number of holiday-homes (both through new building and a greater number of existing homes vacant for much of the year) and an increase in the number of visitors (estimated to be somewhere around 27,000 to 30,000 per year).

Further tourism growth is predicted. Key tourism organisations are beginning to see Great Barrier as one of two crown jewels of the Hauraki Gulf (along with Waiheke Island). Both destinations, although they offer quite different experiences, draw most of their visitors from Auckland. Those coming to GBI are attracted to its more rugged and inaccessible terrain and sparsely spread population. International trends suggest that increasing numbers of visitors will look for new and unspoilt destinations like GBI.

Some see the growth as positive, if it is managed in a way that brings benefits to the island and maintains the island lifestyle. There are opportunities for GBI to become a key destination for Auckland residents and domestic and international visitors. Supporters see opportunities for the community to build on and enhance the unique qualities of the island that attract visitors. Most are interested in tourism's potential to provide jobs and, in turn, maintain or enhance population levels and services and amenities. Some also support tourism for its potential conservation-related benefits: by providing the economic justification for further conservation investment. And some point out that holiday-homes are important to the economy as their building and maintenance (including on-going work like lawn mowing) creates work.

But some local residents are ambivalent about the transformation of the island into a tourist destination. They are concerned about the impacts of increasing numbers of visitors on the GBI life style; increasing numbers of holiday-homes on the natural environment and on house prices; and increasing numbers of vacant houses on community life. They also question the value of new tourism-related employment opportunities if pay rates do not keep pace with local living costs.

## 5. Where do we want to be in the future

The main elements of a sustainable and planned future for the island include:
- a stable population base (including a sustainable demographic structure)
- infrastructure and services that meet the needs of local residents and visitors
- a viable economy and job opportunities
- a restored and pest free natural environment
- protection of Maori and Pakeha cultural heritage values
- protection of natural environment, including coastal and marine environment
- preservation of the existing community character
- availability of a range of recreational opportunities
- community-led development supported by a cooperative approach by the key agencies.

**A stable population base**: Great Barrier Island will attract people, including families, as permanent residents because the local community:
- is vibrant and diverse
- supports and values a resourceful arts and culture sector (including events)
- invests time and resources into integrated community development
- has access to a reasonable infrastructure and range of services.

The size and composition of the permanent resident population is sufficient to support the development and maintenance of reasonable services and infrastructure. That population size is estimated to be around 1,500.

**Infrastructure / services /information meets the needs of local residents and visitors**: The social services and physical infrastructure needed to underpin strategies to attract people and support and enhance local lifestyles are developed in ways that support existing population concentrations and provide for more isolated communities. Development is informed by local knowledge. Aspects include:
- an innovative education environment that includes on-island secondary schooling options, a state-of-the-art distance education system, a minimum of three primary schools, a Kohanga Reo and a range of pre-schools;

- an information network that establishes the island as an innovative IT user and provides the platform for distance learning and distance working;
- transport options that meet local and visitor needs (including air strips, defined flight routes, parking, wharf facilities, quality roading, bus services);
- a mixed system of affordable individual and collective sewerage and power systems, including renewable power generation (e.g., solar, wind farms);
- the maintenance of a high quality, affordable health system and related services that meet the needs of all user groups;
- affordable housing development, including pensioner housing.

**A viable economy and job opportunities**: The population increase and infrastructural development will both be underpinned by, and provide a further catalyst for, economic development in which tourism and the natural environment are key components. Tourism development is in scale with the social, cultural and ecological carrying capacity of the island and sympathetic to local community values. Key characteristics of sustainable economic development will include:
- the development of Great Barrier Island as a high value destination for domestic and international visitors;
- assessment of the economic value of conferring a special status on some of the island (e.g. like a world heritage area) to protect the values that residents and others prize;
- development of a range of tourism products and amenities sympathetic to the natural environment, sparse population and energy constraints (e.g., self-sufficient eco-tourism, interactive tourism, huts and tracks);
- a diversity of land use that supports and encourages a viable and sustainable economy;
- on-island processing and distribution of locally sourced foods, including fish, meat and vegetables.

**Protection of the natural environment, including the coastal and marine environment:** One step is a restored and pest free natural environment. Total pest eradication, particularly of feral cats and rats, will further enhance the benefits that the island's current possum free status gives to bush cover and the viability of some species. The pest free status will also enable the island to be marketed as a unique eco-tourism destination as pest-free islands of the size of GBI are a rarity internationally and provide research and education possibilities. Strategies to achieve this status will include:
- managing other predators, including domestic cats, dogs and rabbits;
- working towards conferring a special status on GBI as one of the largest pest free islands in world;

- maintaining working partnerships between local and central government agencies and the GBI community (or community groups) with complementary goals.

Appropriate marine protection mechanisms will be in place that protect marine values and account for life styles, recreational opportunities and heritage and cultural values.

- and the GBI community (or community groups) with complementary goals.

**Protection of heritage and cultural values**: Local and central government agencies, working with Ngati Rehua, Ngati Wai and local community groups, have committed further resources to surveying and exploration of the island, especially on land not administered by DOC, to identify cultural and / or archaeological sites. Resources are available and appropriate partnerships in place to protect these and other cultural values of the island in ways that acknowledge and protect the rights of landowners. Protection is provided so that:
- some parts of the island remain largely unmodified and waahi tapu sites are respected
- vistas are maintained (e.g. view shafts from roadsides).

**Protection of the natural environment, including the coastal and marine environment**

**heritage and cultural values**:
**Preservation of the existing community character**: The community, although considerably larger, retains the characteristics that local people and others value: independence, self-reliance, resourcefulness, diversity and optimism. Other characteristics, like 'community care for their own', are also evident.

Some other characteristics, like parochialism and non-cooperativeness, are overcome to the extent that the local community works together and with others to achieve the economic growth and infrastructural development they desire and protection of island characteristics they value.

**Availability of a range of recreational opportunities**: There is a wide range of recreational opportunities that is suitable for all age groups and abilities. These have been enhanced by further development of amenities (e.g, tracks and huts on land administered by DOC) and well managed tourism development.

# 6. Principles to guide future development

These principles are designed to protect the characteristics of the island, as identified by residents, including Ngati Rehua members, off-island property owners, government agencies and other stakeholders. They are also designed to ensure an integrated approach to development decisions is taken that accounts for social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts. The principles are listed in no particular order:

The built environment / infrastructure should be consistent with the small scale and character of existing development, enhance community values, and protect the island's unique environmental qualities. Thus, all further subdivision, housing, infrastructural and other development will be guided by principles that protect and enhance the island's natural, recreational, community, cultural and heritage values. These include ensuring that:

- individual land sub-divisions adhere to land sustainability criteria (e.g., can accommodate sewerage disposal)
- sub-divisions act as a catalyst for further development and a means to provide affordable housing
- there is a mix of new housing and other developments that includes some further concentration in existing hubs and more scattered development visually camouflaged by the bush
- ridgelines and other physical features are protected
- undisturbed coastal areas are protected
- places of high conservation and / or heritage value are conserved
- terrestrial and marine flora and fauna are conserved
- flora coverage is encouraged
- woodlots are managed on a sustainable basis
- decisions are evidence-based, and recognise the knowledge of local people and key stakeholders
- water quality is protected
- silence is protected
- environmentally sensitive building is encouraged
- energy self-sufficiency is encouraged
- communal facilities are encouraged, especially in higher density housing areas
- development contributes to small scale indigenous economic growth including retail, IT development, tourism, commercial and industrial activities, primary production (e.g., quarry, dairy, meat and fish processing).

There are some further considerations more specific to tourism development. Tourism needs to be managed if it is to provide the anticipated economic and conservation outcomes, protect the island's values and unique points of difference and provide incomes that enable people to remain on the island. Considerations for management include:

- how to brand the island. Suggested approaches include:
  - establishing a world heritage status for part of the island
  - eradicating particular pests (rats and feral cats) and conferring a special status on GBI as one of the largest pest free islands in world;
- identifying the best mix of visitors that would provide the economic benefits but protect the island's lifestyles and other values;
- identifying the ideal number of visitors and mechanisms for setting limits. Considerations include the numbers required to enable individual business profitability, support infrastructure development (especially roading), enable a mix of transport options, satisfy DOC's and others' desire to encourage visitors to experience and appreciate the natural environment, etc);
- identifying the target market, preferred options including the people of Auckland;
- deciding on the best mix of products and experiences (e.g., accommodation types and visitor activities) that provide the quality and variety expected by the targeted visitors;
- identifying opportunities for co-ordination amongst operators on and off the island (including transport operators) to provide the products and services that meet visitor expectations;
- the best approach to interpretation and information provision so that visitors are aware of the special qualities of the island, and its lifestyle, both before they reach the island and at key visitor sites;
- management of predator risk in the face of increased numbers of visitors.

## 7. Who will be involved in implementation

The role residents and landowners, including Ngati Rehua and Ngati Wai, along with local community groups will take a central role in planning for the future of the island. The groups listed will work with residents and landowners:
- the Great Barrier Island Community Board
- local tourism operators and Tourism Auckland
- local environmental groups
- the Department of Conservation
- the Auckland City Council
- the Auckland Regional Council
- professionals such as planners
- transport providers.

Partnerships between these groups, agencies and organisations are needed for Great Barrier Island to achieve a sustainable population base, economic diversification, appropriate infrastructural development and a range of services to support current lifestyles.