

WINTON

FTAA-2508-1093 AYRBURN SCREEN HUB

STATEMENT BY CHRIS MEEHAN

1. My name is Christopher Scott Meehan. I am the CEO of Winton and am involved in providing investment, strategy and management advice in respect of projects undertaken by Winton. Waterfall Park Developments Limited (**WPDL**) is a subsidiary of Winton, and is the development company established to undertake the purchase and development of Ayrburn Farm and Waterfall Park.
2. I am responsible for advising WPDL about consenting, development, marketing and sales strategy, and other aspects of development projects undertaken by WPDL and other companies within the larger development entity known as Winton Partners (**Winton**).
3. I am a Director of WPDL and am authorised by WPDL to provide this statement on its behalf. I also have a personal interest in the financial outcome of the project.
4. I have an Associate Diploma in Business (Property Valuation) from Sydney Technical and Further Education College. That early academic qualification was partly responsible for my subsequent interest in property and property development.
5. I have been involved in different aspects of property development for over 30 years. In 1999 I established Belle Property in Sydney, Australia. Belle is a property marketing and real estate agency company which specialises in premium real estate services.
6. In 2009 I formed Winton. Winton is a New Zealand owned land developer of note, which has been involved in over 40 medium to large scale land development projects throughout New Zealand and Australia.
7. Approximately ten years ago WPDL purchased the adjoining Ayrburn Farm and Waterfall Park properties. At that time, the only buildings on those properties were some dilapidated historic farm buildings on Ayrburn Farm and a derelict A-frame house on Waterfall Park. Development of those properties over the past ten years has resulted in the modern Ayrburn hospitality precinct now enjoyed by many local customers and visitors to the Queenstown Lakes District and current employer of around 230 people.
8. A District Plan zoning process relating to Ayrburn Farm has resulted in WPDL owning two areas within Ayrburn Farm which are zoned as Residential Activity Area (**RAA**), one located on the southern side of Ayr Avenue near the intersection with Arrowtown-Lake Hayes Road and the other (within the application site) located further to the west in the centre of Ayrburn Farm. WPDL has recently obtained non-notified subdivision and land use consent for development of the smaller, eastern RAA into three rural living lots, which are currently under construction. WPDL anticipated a similar outcome (although four lots rather than three) for the larger western RAA because that RAA is serviced for subdivision and development into four lots and is

otherwise virtually identical to the smaller, eastern RAA. However, the passing of the FTAA, and discussions with people in the film industry, have resulted in WPDL pursuing this alternative Ayrburn Screen Hub development project.

9. Every land developer faces a series of risks when considering whether to proceed with a development project. Those risks can be general to the development industry, such as the time taken to consent and then construct projects, escalations in development costs over what can be a lengthy development period, economic conditions within New Zealand and the wider world in relation to matters such as interest rates, and unexpected challenges out of left field such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Then there are risks specific to a project, such as physical development factors, availability of infrastructure, the local construction employment market and the market for sale of whatever the project is delivering to the market. Development cannot proceed unless there is an assessment of those risks and a judgment that the benefits of the project justify the risks.
10. There is a suggestion that the proposed accommodation be limited to use by studio related personnel. The Ayrburn Screen Hub project is a significant development project. Development costs are likely to be in the order of \$200 million to \$250 million, about a third of which relates to the studio component (the balance two thirds relating to the accommodation). I am responsible to WPDL and Winton for assessing risk. The film production industry is clearly a volatile industry with unpredictable high points and low points. Limiting the accommodation to use by studio related personnel would expose the project to that volatility and would run the risk of periods (which could be considerable) with accommodation units sitting empty. That is not a risk WPDL is willing to take. I would be very surprised if any developer would take that risk. It is of no surprise to me that the Silverlight Studios project in Wanaka, which is subject to a requirement that use of onsite accommodation be limited to studio related personnel, has not proceeded and is apparently not likely to proceed. It is my firm understanding, having spoken directly to the new owners of the Silverlight Studios land, that any plans there for a film studio on that site have been abandoned and they are pursuing a luxury residential development centred around two golf courses.
11. I make no apology for WPDL seeking consent for visitor accommodation use of the accommodation units when they are not required for studio related personnel. Every current indication is that the tourism industry within New Zealand generally, and within the Queenstown Lakes District in particular, will continue to grow. The application site is an excellent location for visitor accommodation for a range of reasons. I can see a great deal of harmony in having a high-quality condensed accommodation activity (both crew and visitor) within a stone's throw but not within the fabric of the Arrowtown township. This will alleviate the pressure on the residential rental market and increase visitation and spend to Arrowtown businesses from both crew and visitors. I have little doubt that visitor accommodation in this location will contribute to the use of the accommodation units at times when they are not required for studio related personnel.
12. The inclusion of visitor accommodation as a fallback mitigates and cross subsidises the operation of the studios. This diversification of revenue is key to creating the possibility for this project to be developed and to succeed. Without that visitor accommodation component there is simply no chance of the project proceeding.

13. When large internationally funded film productions come to town for their location shoots, such as the ones we saw in 2025 Heart of the Beast, War Machine and East of Eden, they have large crews putting a measurable strain on our existing visitor accommodation. For example, *“during Brad Pitt’s Heart of the Beast production near Glenorchy in early 2025, Queenstown saw hotel rates hit record highs, with consultancy Horwath HTL attributing a significant 22-25% of the accommodation premium directly to film-related activity during peak production¹”*. The inclusion of crew accommodation as part of the offering will alleviate no-vacancy barriers for visitors specifically in relation to surge strain created large scale productions.
14. I have difficulty understanding why anyone would want the accommodation units to be built and then to sit empty when not required for studio related personnel, when they could be occupied by visitors. The visitor industry is central to Queenstown’s economy. Provided the film studio activity has priority booking rights for the accommodation units, which is proposed, it simply does not make sense to not use those accommodation units when they are not required for studio related purposes.
15. It has been suggested that WPDL should have in place completed MOU’s or contracts, for use of the film studios, to establish a need which justifies approval being granted. That suggestion does not reflect the real world. It will take 4-5 years to construct and complete the Screen Hub development and all related works. While WPDL would like to have such commitments before committing to construction of the project, it would defy commercial reality to expect that any film production company would be willing or able to make such financial commitments 4-5 years in advance.
16. I disagree with suggestions that the benefits are overstated and would argue that they are understated when factoring in the indirect benefits in relation tourism and national and cultural branding that the film industry creates². The acknowledgement of value in these sectors is demonstrated by the New Zealand Government choosing to offer subsidies to eligible (large scale international) productions at a rate of 25% of the total costs of production by way of cash rebate. The Olsberg report, appended to the report of Dave Gibson (ONZM), shows that every rebate dollar spent returns over six dollars to the NZ economy by way of indirect benefits. It is clear New Zealand wants to grow the industry, especially in regard to larger scale internationally funded productions - which are exactly the type of productions the Screen Hub will enable. Letters from industry organisations confirm that to grow the industry we need to invest in screen infrastructure.
17. I am fully aware of landscape related concerns about development in this area. WPDL explored the possibility of all of the Screen Hub development being within the RAA which is zoned for development. However, the studio buildings are required by film production companies to be up to 15m high to accommodate their intended use and would have been very prominent if located within the RAA. Landscape considerations have resulted in the studio buildings being located just outside the RAA, nestled into the base of Christine’s Hill where they will have the least visual impact.

¹ [NZ Film’s BILLION-Dollar Tourism Impact: A Deep Dive — Hospo HR](#)

² For example, look at the tourism uplift for New Zealand created by films such as Lord of the Rings, Avatar, Wolverine and Mission Impossible [NZ Film’s BILLION-Dollar Tourism Impact: A Deep Dive — Hospo HR](#)

18. Development of the RAA into four rural living lots would generate a nice profit for WPDL and would enable four rural lifestyle houses to be enjoyed by four private families. However, there would be no long term benefits to the local community or the wider public. The Screen Hub project will be at WPDL's risk and will deliver significant long term environmental and economic benefits to the local community and the wider public, including those harder to quantify indirect benefits like tourism and national identity and the promotion of the region as a place to do business. These outcomes seem to me to be a much better use of this valuable land resource.



Christopher Scott Meehan

21 January 2026