

### 5.3.9.3 Deep Cove, Wilmot Pass and West Arm

#### Rationale

West Arm, Wilmot Pass and Deep Cove are arguably the most visited areas of Fiordland National Park outside of Milford Sound / Piopiotahi and Milford Road. In 2003 there were approximately 70,000 visitors using Wilmot Pass Road, with the majority of these visitors accessing Doubtful Sound / Patea. It is expected that visitor use in this area will continue to grow. The challenge facing the Department of Conservation is to ensure that the unique values of these places which are dominated by nature are retained; while providing opportunities for visitors to them.

There has been considerable support for ensuring that these places, including Doubtful Sound / Patea, do not become as busy and congested as Milford Sound / Piopiotahi. The Southland Regional Council has acknowledged this by managing commercial surface water activities at Doubtful Sound / Patea through a limiting regime. It is important that this management plan reflects this and ensures consistency with this approach where possible. Mechanisms identified in this plan for this include managing visitor flows over Wilmot Pass Road, and using zoning to manage activities at West Arm and Deep Cove.

West Arm provides a gateway for those accessing other more remote areas of Fiordland National Park such as the Dusky Track, Percy Saddle, and Doubtful Sound / Patea. It is the first landing point for those venturing off into Doubtful Sound / Patea for day visits and, to a lesser extent, overnight visitors for a variety of water based recreational and tourist activities offered, including boating, hunting, kayaking and fishing. West Arm is also a destination for those visiting the Manapōuri Power Station and others who visit by boat for day trips.

It is a place where there has been, and still is, significant industrial activity associated with the Manapōuri power station. Significant efforts are being made to restore this site to its natural state.

There are limited facilities at West Arm including two wharves, a boat ramp, a hut, a visitor centre, buildings associated with the power station and some tourist facilities. It is recognised that the site is untidy at present (2006) and not reflective of national park values. The provisions of this plan will address this matter and ensure that the site becomes one that is dominated by nature.

Wilmot Pass Road was established to provide important access to Deep Cove for the Manapōuri Power Station development and its ongoing use is required for access to Deep Cove for operational requirements and emergency response activities. It has also enabled access to Deep Cove for a variety of other purposes including relatively easy access to Doubtful Sound / Patea for recreation and tourist activities. It has also

enabled the development of the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust centre. The road provides a magnificent opportunity for immersion into the wildness that Fiordland has to offer – massive mountains and incredible views of rivers and the sea.

The Wilmot Pass Road is part of Fiordland National Park and is not legal road. The Department of Conservation is therefore able to manage vehicle access across the road. The road will be managed for three purposes – as a destination in its own right; for access to Doubtful Sound / Patea for maintenance and operational needs associated with the Manapōuri Power Station; and as an essential access to Doubtful Sound / Patea. To ensure these three opportunities co-exist the management plan outlines a process for providing an uncrowded visitor experience and efficient visitor flows along the road. It is acknowledged that a number of the mechanisms outlined in the plan (such as ensuring 15-minute gaps between movements) will require, at least initially, the willingness of users to implement options for making them work.

As the road is part of Fiordland National Park, the Department of Conservation exercises the right to manage activities on it including decisions as to how the road is maintained. To assist with the maintenance of the road, appropriate fees will be sought from all users to ensure the road is maintained to the standard required for its existing level of use. The Wilmot Pass Road User Group has been established to ensure users are actively involved in the management of the road. It is expected that this group will be used as an avenue to ensure the objectives of this plan, in relation to the road are met.

It is important to note the sealing of the road will not be an option in the life of this plan because to do so would be inappropriate relative to the surrounding recreation opportunity setting.

Deep Cove is a busy transit node at particular times of the day and the year. There is a small fishing fleet, a series of jetties, mostly associated with the tourist industry, the Meridian Energy Limited wharf, national park management and buildings associated with the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust centre. There are vehicle movements associated with recreation, eco-tourism, scenic tourism, fishing and the power station operations. The outlet for the tailrace associated with the Manapōuri power station is located at Deep Cove. Even though these activities occur at Deep Cove, it retains a contained feeling, which is dominated by nature.

There are a number of challenges for managing space at Deep Cove to protect its special values; and for ensuring that the opportunities offered at the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust centre are not compromised by commercial operators.

The Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust centre seeks to provide education programmes in a backcountry setting largely free of commercial tourism and significant recreation interests. Some

adventure or eco-tourism operators are seeking to provide small parties of their own clients with a quality experience in a remote setting, without encountering large numbers of other visitors and with few of the comforts of modern life. In contrast to this, other concessionaires are providing a more leisurely experience for relatively large numbers of visitors in modern and comfortable coaches and launches.

To provide for these differing uses and to maintain the quality of the experiences sought, the site requires careful management. Strict controls will be imposed on where parking can occur. The range of activities and facility provisions will be limited to what is there at present (2006).

One exception to this is the consideration of options for the location of a new public jetty. It is acknowledged that the Meridian Energy Limited wharf does offer some opportunity for this now, but it is limited in its usability in its present form to large boats. Placement of this new facility would need careful consideration to ensure the objectives outlined in this plan for Deep Cove are met.

The construction of the second tailrace tunnel between West Arm and Deep Cove by Meridian Energy Limited caused some impact on the area. However, the adverse effects will be temporary and short-term. All buildings and structures associated with the construction have been removed and the land re-vegetated after completion of the work.

The fishing industry is acknowledged as a legitimate user of the area, but, as with other types of use, facilities at Deep Cove should be limited to those essential for the transfer of catch. Onshore accommodation, storage or processing facilities are considered inappropriate.

The area below mean high water spring of Doubtful Sound / Patea is administered by Southland Regional Council under the Resource Management Act and the Southland Regional Coastal Plan. The Department of Conservation does have an advocacy role in ensuring sustainable management of the fiords and consistency between national park management and management of the adjoining waters. In broad terms, the Department of Conservation's advocacy position will be based on maintaining a relatively remote visitor experience on the fiord. This will be characterised by the number of visitors and other vessels encountered generally being far less than might be encountered on Milford Sound / Piopiotahi, but more than in the more remote southern fiords. Some parts of the fiord (Bradshaw, Crooked Arm, and First Arm) should be managed for even lower use levels, while opportunities for non-motorised zones in the more remote areas should also be considered. The need for firm, explicit limits to control the level of surface water activity on the fiord is recognised.

The frontcountry visitor settings of Deep Cove, Wilmot Pass Road and West Arm largely adjoin the Doubtful Sound Remote visitor setting. The

Deep Cove Frontcountry visitor setting is defined as commencing at the Meridian Wharf and including the Deep Cove Outdoor Education lease area and that part of the road between the wharf and the Deep Cove Outdoor Education hostel from 10 metres west of the centre line of the road and down to the mean high water mark of Deep Cove. The Doubtful Sound Remote visitor setting exists beyond this frontcountry setting.

The West Arm Frontcountry visitor setting is defined as all that land defined as Sections 1 and 2 on Survey Office Plan Number SO 12304 together with all that land shown on SO 12304 on the true left of the Spey River that is not included in Sections 1 and 2.

The Wilmot Pass Road Frontcountry visitor setting is defined as being a corridor 10 metres either side of the centreline of the Wilmot Pass Road between the Deep Cove Frontcountry Visitor Setting and West Arm Frontcountry visitor setting. Changes to the road alignment may be required for road maintenance purposes and the Wilmot Pass Road Frontcountry visitor setting will follow these changes, with the maximum width of the frontcountry visitor setting being 10 metres either side of the road centreline at any point in time.

## Objectives

1. To retain the dominance of the natural environment at West Arm, Wilmot Pass Road and Deep Cove in accordance with national park values and it's remote visitor setting.
2. To recognise that West Arm, Wilmot Pass Road and Deep Cove are intricately linked in providing a unique visitor experience in Fiordland National Park.
3. To ensure that any development at West Arm, Wilmot Pass or Deep Cove is assessed and managed to address the effects on this intricately linked relationship.
4. To manage West Arm as a gateway to the remote recreation opportunities within and adjoining Fiordland National Park. Key attributes defining West Arm include:
  - a) A place which offers limited facilities in an environment dominated by nature;
  - b) A transit area for those using Fiordland National Park and surrounding coastal environments;
  - c) A well defined and confined area for hydroelectric energy production;
  - d) An area representing tomorrow's history in terms of energy exploration and human endeavours; and

- e) An area where extensive restoration has taken place to restore the natural environment.
5. To manage Wilmot Pass Road to ensure its key attributes are protected. Key attributes defining Wilmot Pass Road include:
- a) A narrow, unsealed, but safe road surrounded by spectacular mountains and native forest;
  - b) A destination for immersion into the wilds of Fiordland which also provides key viewing opportunities of the mountains and sea in the world renowned Doubtful Sound / Patea;
  - c) A place that is mainly unaffected by traffic movements and is quiet for large parts of the day;
  - d) An access route through to Deep Cove for users of Doubtful Sound / Patea, which is managed to ensure the destination values are protected.
6. To manage Deep Cove predominantly as a remote transit point for accessing Doubtful Sound / Patea, while protecting the following key attributes:
- a) A small confined place dominated by nature with very restricted opportunities for facility provision;
  - b) A place where the impacts of traffic movements are minimised so as to protect the relatively quiet, unspoilt nature of Deep Cove;
  - c) A place where a high quality backcountry experience for children participating in outdoor and environmental education programmes at the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust centre can occur and not be affected by the transitory activities occurring at Deep Cove; and
  - d) A place where a small fishing fleet is located.
7. To encourage the various stakeholders at West Arm/Deep Cove and Doubtful Sound / Patea to maintain ongoing liaison in relation to management issues at these places.

### **Implementation**

- 1. All vehicles operating at West Arm, Deep Cove and Wilmot Pass will display a valid Wilmot Pass Road User permit granted by the Department of Conservation. No vehicles are permitted in these areas without such a permit. All permit holders will be required to pay a fee and this will pay for the ongoing maintenance of this road.

2. Encourage and assist with the formation of an active liaison group that will provide direction for on-going management issues at West Arm/Deep Cove and Doubtful Sound / Patea.
3. May investigate options for assigning the responsibility for the management of Wilmot Pass Road to another agent through a concession or a management agreement. This would need to provide for the continued right of access for permitted road users and be in accordance with the provisions of this management plan.
4. Monitor visitor use and its effects at these places. In particular to focus monitoring on:
  - a) User perceptions;
  - b) User expectations;
  - c) User conflicts; and
  - d) Infrastructure capacity (e.g. sewage)

This information will provide direction on managing visitor flows; particularly at Wilmot Pass Road and Deep Cove (refer to section 5.16).

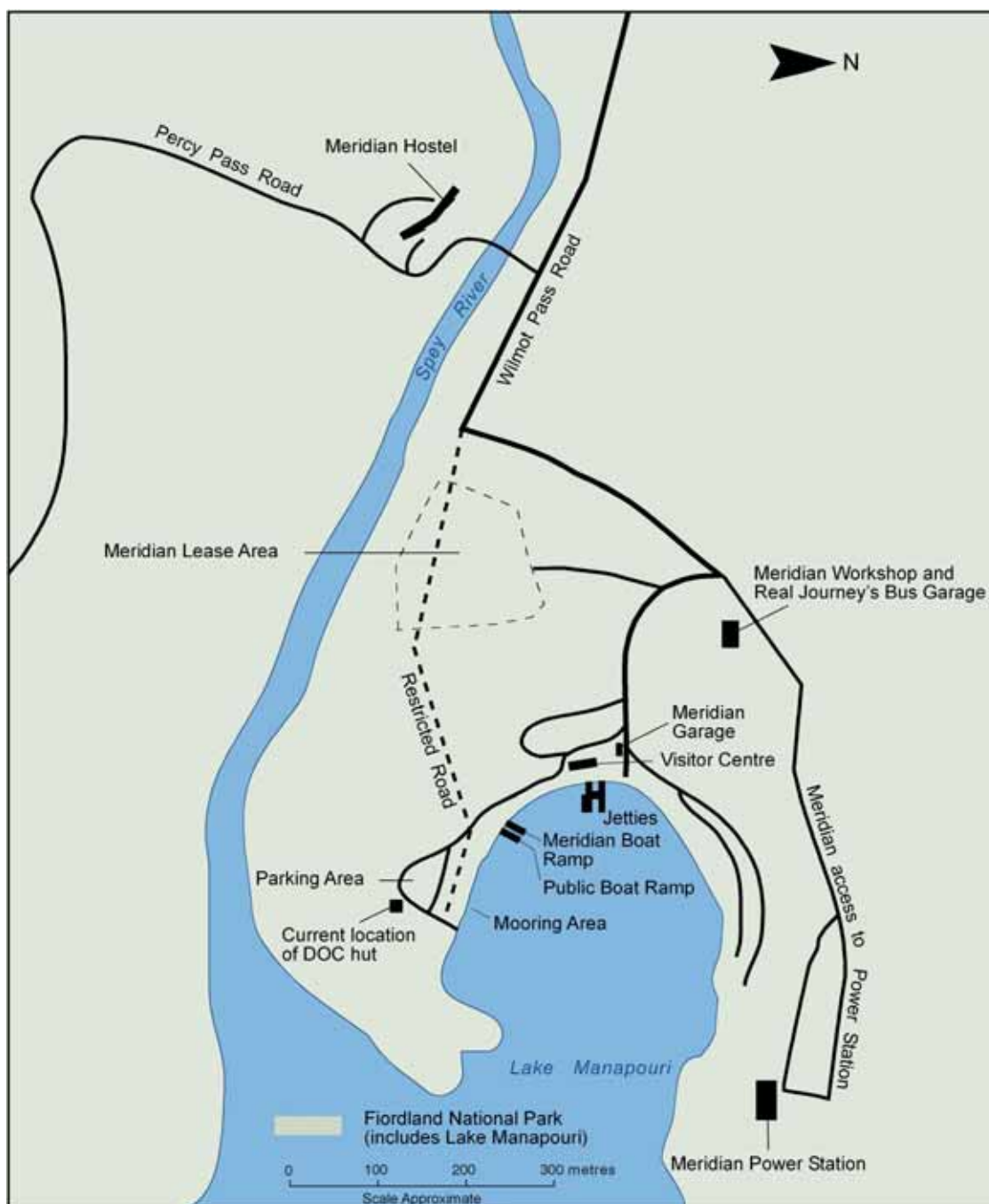
### **West Arm**

5. Public accommodation opportunities at West Arm will be managed as follows:
  - a) Restricted to the West Arm Hut which will be managed as a Maintain By Community facility (refer to section 5.8). The West Arm Hut may be relocated within the West Arm area to improve its amenity value; and
  - b) No commercial opportunities for accommodation will be permitted.
6. All existing facilities should be maintained and managed to meet the key attributes identified for West Arm in Objective 3 of this section. These facilities are identified on Map 11. Any approved alterations and extensions to existing facilities should be within the existing footprint.
7. Activities undertaken in the existing facilities should be limited to those associated with hydroelectric power generation, site management and those associated with the transitory nature of the place. There should be no retail activities located at West Arm.
8. No further facility development at West Arm should be permitted (except relocation and minor modifications)

associated with the West Arm Hut; new track development in accordance with Implementation 13; a new boat ramp in accordance with Implementation 11; and any works associated with car parking in accordance with Implementation 14).

9. Investigate options for rationalising the roading network at West Arm to provide a more effective flow of traffic around the site, whilst recognising most of the sealed roading network at West Arm is the property of Meridian Energy Limited.
10. There should only be two jetties at West Arm. These will be positioned in the location of the existing facilities as identified on Map 11. One of these facilities will be available for public access.
11. Two boat ramp facilities should be provided for at West Arm and managed as ‘Maintain by Community’ facilities. One of these facilities will be specifically for use by Meridian Energy Limited for work associated with the power station and the other will be for the purpose of public access. The location for these facilities is identified on Map 11.
12. Continue to provide an opportunity for a Visitor Centre at West Arm managed as a ‘Maintain By Community’ option (refer section 5.8). The Department of Conservation will encourage and assist with regularly updating the interpretation facilities at this visitor centre.
13. Encourage community interest in developing a short walk in the West Arm location which will offer interpretation of the values/history at West Arm; while providing an easy walking opportunity for day visitors at the site. An application would need to demonstrate and meet the following conditions:
  - a) Provide a full assessment of effects;
  - b) Meet the Department of Conservation’s standards for short walks; and
  - c) Provide for non-exclusive use.
14. Parking of vehicles and trailers at West Arm, (other than vehicles parked in concessionaire-owned facilities), will be limited to 70 spaces (a space is defined as one vehicle, with the trailer being considered a second space). These will be restricted to the areas identified on Map 11. Only Wilmot Pass Road permit holders will be permitted to park at West Arm. Each permit holder will be allocated specified spaces.

MAP 11. WEST ARM



15. No concessions should be granted for mechanised vehicle access on the Percy Saddle Road (excluding those vehicles used for line and road maintenance). Refer to section 5.7 in relation to other uses on Percy Saddle.
16. Continue to recognise the activities that are permitted to occur through the Manapōuri-Te Anau Development Act 1963 (refer to section 6.5) and provided through the associated lease that is defined as the areas referred to as sections 1 & 2 being Part Fiordland National Park (West

Arm-Lake Manapōuri) Plan Number SO 12304 Southland Survey District.

17. The use of facilities permitted through the Manapōuri-Te Anau Development Act 1963 (MTADA) by those not associated with MTADA permitted activities will require a concession.

### **Wilmot Pass Road**

18. Manage the Wilmot Pass Road unless a separate agent is appointed to do so in accordance with Implementation 3. An appropriate speed limit will also be established for this road.
19. Establish and provide support for the Wilmot Pass Road User Group. This group will comprise representatives of the users of the road and will advise on management issues associated with this road.
20. The following matters should be provided for when approving applications for permits or concessions to use Wilmot Pass Road:
  - a) Vehicle movements should be 15 minutes apart so as to ensure key attributes of the road are protected. For coach traffic (a passenger vehicle of over 30 seats) a movement can comprise up to three vehicles;
  - b) Permit or concession holders should be charged a fee for all vehicle movements granted regardless of whether they are used;
  - c) Regular commercial activity (i.e. those activities that are associated with commercial surface water activities as defined in the relevant Southland Regional Coastal Plan<sup>5</sup>) should be confined to defined peak periods occurring at specified times of the day. These times should be in accordance with existing peak flow movements in the morning, early afternoon and late afternoon-early evening as of December 2005;
  - d) Use of the Wilmot Pass Road viewing area should be restricted to two vehicles at any one time;
  - e) Concessionaires and other road users should share vehicle resources and movements across Wilmot Pass Road where practicable;

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<sup>5</sup> This sentence will be revised should the Regional Coastal Plan be approved prior to review of Fiordland National Park by the New Zealand Conservation Authority

- f) Where practicable, the back loading of passengers over Wilmot Pass Road; and
  - g) Boats should only be towed by private vehicles owned by that Wilmot Road User Permit holder.
21. Further restrictions on commercial and recreational use over Wilmot Pass Road may be introduced if monitoring of congestion at Deep Cove reveals a need. The level of overcrowding and congestion at Deep Cove is defined as being unacceptable when designated parking areas are full on more than ten days in any year (refer to Implementation 30 for the management of car parking spaces available at Deep Cove).
22. If the management mechanisms of implementations 20 and 21 become fully allocated: or congestion occurs then the following will be required:
- a) No new road user permits or concessions will be issued (other than renewals by existing permit holders where they have complied with the terms of their permit or concession);
  - b) Non-regular users will be required to use the road outside of peak periods;
  - c) Further restrictions may be imposed on regular users as to the times of the day vehicles can use Wilmot Pass Road and park at Deep Cove; and
  - d) Permits or concessions may be reviewed, declined or revoked.
23. To implement points 20-22 bylaws may be sought.
24. Consider applications for Maintain by Community opportunities for two short walks on the Wilmot Pass Road. Applicants will be required to (but will not be limited to):
- a) Provide a full assessment of effects;
  - b) Meet the Department of Conservation's standards for short walks; and
  - c) Provide for non-exclusive use.

### **Deep Cove**

25. To provide continued opportunity for the Deep Cove Outdoor Education Trust (DCOET) centre through a concession. This will be the only site where

accommodation facilities are permitted at Deep Cove. The primary purpose of the Centre is to provide an education centre for school children.

26. The DCOET centre may provide accommodation and associated research facilities for research in Doubtful Sound / Patea. The centre may also, via its concession, provide backpacker-style accommodation within existing capacity to visitors, but only to the extent that it does not compromise its primary purpose as an education centre for school children. This will only occur during school holidays or when there are no school bookings. Increases in the hostel accommodation capacity will only be permitted where it is required for school visits. Use of the marine research facility should be made available on a non-exclusive and equitable basis. Other proposed developments within the hostel lease area will be assessed in terms of their effects and their necessity in meeting the hostel's primary purpose. Commercial ventures other than backpackers' and research accommodation will not be permitted.
27. Concessionaires or their staff will not be accommodated at Deep Cove, except DCOET staff and other essential people (as agreed to by the Department of Conservation) associated with offering safety support for the Hostel. Other infrastructure supporting concessionaire operations including garages, storage sheds and other buildings will not be permitted at Deep Cove, although the development of a land-based sewage facility for the treatment of all land-based sewage at Deep Cove and for the discharge of limited sewage from vessels may be desirable in Deep Cove.
28. Camping facilities will not be provided at Deep Cove.
29. Foot tracks in and around Deep Cove will be maintained to the Department of Conservation's standards for tramping tracks (refer to section 5.8).
30. Parking in the area between Brasell Point and the Meridian Energy Limited wharf will be restricted to the designated sites shown on maps 12A, 12B and 12C (i.e. near the Meridian Energy Limited wharf and the beach). Only Wilmot Pass Road permit holders will be permitted to park at Deep Cove. Parking outside of these areas will be allowed only by the owners of wharves, who will be restricted to a maximum of two vehicles (but not coaches) parked immediately adjacent to their wharf access path; and parking used by the DCOET.

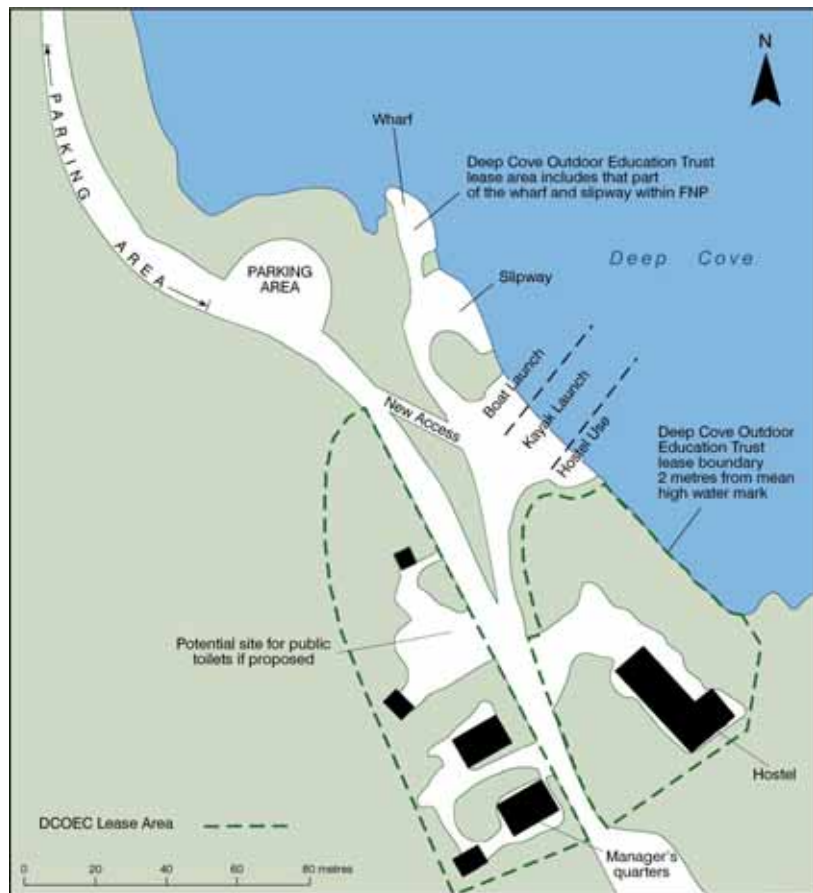
31. Investigate options for a further 40 parking spaces in an area at the tailrace. These parking spaces will be administered in accordance with the provisions of Implementation 30. Development of this opportunity will be in agreement with Meridian Energy Limited.
32. Investigate the possibility for the provision of public toilets at Deep Cove. No public facilities other than toilets should be provided.
33. The launching of boats and kayaks will be provided for at the site identified on Map 12B. Allowance for the existing slipway will be provided, however it will not be managed by the Department of Conservation, and is managed by Meridian Energy Limited (2006).

**MAP 12A. DEEP COVE (PART 1 - OVERVIEW)**



34. Helicopter landings in the Deep Cove area should be restricted to the Meridian Energy Limited wharf when this is otherwise unoccupied (use levels are addressed in section 5.5). Coach parking on the wharf will have priority (see Map 12C). Landings may also be considered at a designated site at the gravel pit at the tailrace with the agreement of Meridian Energy Limited (refer to section 5.5).
35. Require concessions for wharf and jetty structures which are presently (2006) located within (attached to) Fiordland National Park at Deep Cove. Consideration of extensions to these facilities should meet the criteria identified in Implementation 36. Transfer of passengers should only be permitted where adequate parking off the carriageway of the road is available adjoining the jetty/wharf site.

MAP 12B. DEEP COVE (PART 2)



MAP 12C. DEEP COVE (PART 3)



36. Work with the users of Deep Cove and Southland Regional Council to determine an appropriate location for a public jetty/wharf at Deep Cove. This facility will not be provided by the Department of Conservation. Such a facility should only be authorised in the area between the existing slip-way and the Meridian Energy Limited wharf (including the western end). The following matters should be taken into consideration:
  - a) Preference should be given to sites of existing jetties and wharves;
  - b) Capacity for the site to adequately provide for vehicle and people movement without causing traffic concerns on Wilmot Pass Road (at the Deep Cove end) and at the Deep Cove Hostel; and
  - c) The ability of the site to assimilate adverse effects on the natural character of the Deep Cove setting.
37. Negotiations with Meridian Energy Limited and users of their wharf will proceed with a view to having this facility managed as a public wharf for the transfer of passengers and cargo for larger sized vessels. A large vessel is considered one that can safely use this structure.
38. No further jetty or wharf facilities should be permitted at Deep Cove where attached to Fiordland National Park (except in relation to Implementation 36).
39. Advocate to Southland Regional Council that no new wharf or jetty facilities be permitted at Deep Cove (except in relation to Implementation 36).
40. Enable the on-going use of Deep Cove by the small fishing fleet operating out of this area. There should be no storage of equipment associated with this activity at Deep Cove.
41. Advocate for the retention of relatively remote recreation opportunities on the waters of Doubtful Sound / Patea. It is acknowledged that at present the Southland Regional Coastal Plan contains a management regime for managing commercial vessel use in Doubtful Sound / Patea. The provisions of this section of the Fiordland National Park Management Plan are reflective of this management regime. Advocate the following matters through any Southland Regional Coastal Plan changes and through resource consent processes:
  - a) Maintain a level of surface water activity on the whole of Doubtful Sound / Patea that is significantly less than Milford Sound / Piopiotahi and reflects the zoning of the adjacent Fiordland National Park;

- b) Within the Sound maintain some areas such as parts of Hall Arm, Crooked Arm, First Arm and Bradshaw Sound that have no or extremely low levels of commercial use and/or no motorised use (also see section 5.6);
- c) Seek that a carrying capacity be determined for thoroughfare access through Doubtful Sound / Patea and for the use of Deep Cove that reflects national park values in Fiordland National Park;
- d) Ensure that boating activities and the access they provide to the islands of Doubtful Sound / Patea do not adversely affect the biodiversity and recreation values on these islands (refer to section 4.8);
- e) That all commercial surface water activities in Doubtful Sound / Patea, including cruise ships, do not adversely affect the significant dolphin pods in this fiord; and
- f) That mooring and anchoring activities/facilities within Doubtful Sound / Patea be consistent with the natural character setting of this fiord.