

**QLDC Council**  
**11 August 2022****Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [3]****Department: Community Services****Title | Taitara: Proposed transfer of administration of Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and carpark, from the Department of Conservation to Queenstown Lakes District Council****PURPOSE OF THE REPORT | TE TAKE MŌ TE PŪRONGO**

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- 1 The purpose of this report is to seek Council agreement that Council Officers formally apply to the Department of Conservation to transfer the administration of the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve, from Department of Conservation (DOC) to Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) and the Scenic Reserve be vested in QLDC.

**RECOMMENDATION | NGĀ TŪTOHUNGA**

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That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Agree** that Council Officers formally make an application to the Department of Conservation and its Minister, to become the administering body under the Reserves Act 1977 for the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and associated carpark (freehold land) being legally described as:
  - a) Lot 2 Deposited Plan 21892, Section 40 Block IV Lower Wanaka Survey District, and Section 58 Block XIV Lower Wanaka Survey District.
  - b) Lot 1 Deposited Plan 302955
3. **Confirm** that Council Officers may use the Reserves Act 1977 delegation of an Administering Body, and other delegations as required, to formally engage with the Department of Conservation and undertake actions necessary to seek Reserves Act Consent to transfer the identified Mount Iron Scenic Reserves.

Prepared by:

Briana Pringle  
Parks and Open Spaces  
Planning Manager  
21/07/2022

Reviewed and Authorised by:

Meaghan Millar  
Acting Community Services  
General Manager  
21/07/2022

## CONTEXT | HORPOAKI

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- 2 Mount Iron is an iconic landmark in the Upper Clutha. Approximately 2km from the Wānaka town centre, it offers panoramic views of Wānaka and its surrounds, and is one of the most popular walking tracks in the Upper Clutha with over 150,000 visitors heading up to the summit of Mount Iron each year.
- 3 In December 2021, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) reached an agreement with Allenby Farms to purchase nearly 100ha of freehold land around Mount Iron and Little Mount Iron.
- 4 Council has until 8 November 2022 to gain all necessary consents and undertake actions to facilitate the purchase of the Mount Iron and Little Mount Iron areas from Allenby Farms. This includes a resource consent for vegetation clearance, installation of a safety fence between private and public land and classification of the land as Recreation Reserve.
- 5 The Department of Conservation (DOC) currently administers an area of over 52.8 hectares of Scenic Reserve on Mount Iron which is immediately adjacent to the recently purchased land.
- 6 The Scenic Reserve is 52.3815 hectares in area and is identified in ATTACHMENT A of this report.
- 7 There is also an adjacent freehold carpark of 0.4116 hectares in area, identified in ATTACHMENT A of this report.
- 8 DOC have an easement over the lower portion of Allenby Farms site for public to access the trail.
- 9 Initial discussions with DOC have identified a potential opportunity for the administration of the Scenic Reserve area and freehold carpark to be transferred to QLDC, so all of the Mount Iron public land is cohesively managed by one organisation. DOC's preference is that Mount Iron is administered by QLDC as the reserve is now surrounded by urban development, and their focus as an organisation is areas of high conservation value that's typically outside the greater urban area.
- 10 Both the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and the recently purchased Mount Iron land are a highly valued part of the Upper Clutha's and wider Queenstown Lakes District's open space network. Mount Iron has high recreation, landscape and ecological values and Council has the ability to manage this land to protect and enhance these values. There is also a community desire for council to manage this asset.
- 11 The newly acquired Council land and the DOC Scenic Reserve are currently zoned as Rural General under the PDP and are classified as an Outstanding Natural Feature. In time Council may choose to rezone as Open Space and Recreation Zone and/or designate for Recreation Purposes.

## ANALYSIS AND ADVICE | TATĀRITANGA ME NGĀ TOHUTOHU

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- 12 Council Officers have undertaken due diligence to understand the implications and risks to council for administering the DOC reserve and the trail within the easement. This scoping of costs for maintenance and capital works included:
- a. Assessment of informal and existing trails
  - b. Fall from height
  - c. Stormwater
  - d. Rockfall hazards
  - e. Structures
  - f. Carpark
- 13 The Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and carpark are both heavily used for recreation, requiring a reasonable level of maintenance and improvements. The land is subject to wildfire risk, rockfall hazards and pest animals. However, these risks and pests are also present on the recently acquired council land and will have to be managed.
- 14 The benefits to Council for becoming the administrator and having the reserve vested within Council are that QLDC will be able to issue reserve permits, develop structures, and approve a Reserve Management Plan. This will particularly be the case once the recently acquired land is classified as reserve under the reserves act – all parcels of public land will be able to be managed under a single framework by one organisation.
- 15 The disadvantages to Council administering the Scenic Reserve and the Carpark is that QLDC will become responsible for additional infrastructure maintenance, fire risk, rockfall and other hazards.
- 16 The immediate requirements for the administrator for this land are:
- a. Assessment of informal and existing trails**

17 There are approximately 7km of formal trails and 3.5 km of informal trails traversing Mount Iron. It is assumed that the 3.5km of informal trails could be adopted and maintained within the future QLDC trail network.

18 On steep sections there is considerable erosion and stormwater damage due to inadequate water tables, blocked or inadequate culverts and poor track shape. These will need upgrading.
  - b. Fall from Height**

19 The Standards New Zealand handbook 8630:2004 Tracks and outdoor visitor structures provides specifications for those responsible for designing, constructing, maintaining, and/or managing tracks and outdoor visitor structures.

20 The assessment used by QLDC for calculating the fall height is documented in SNZ HB 8630:2004 Tracks and outdoor visitor structures.

21 Fall from height standards require upgrades to existing barriers and the installation of new structures in some locations to protect trail users.

#### **c. Stormwater**

22 The trails over Mount Iron appear to have had no significant stormwater maintenance completed on them for some time.

23 Stormwater runoff from the trails should not adversely affect surrounding properties. Work is required to repair existing culverts and cut-off drains, which will reduce sediment runoff.

#### **d. Rockfall hazards**

24 Geological and Nuclear Sciences (GNS) 2020 risk assessment methodology has three risk classifications, which can be derived from the preliminary/screening assessment and, are as follows:

1. Class 1 – No further risk analysis required
2. Class 2 – Basic level of risk analysis required.
3. Class 3 – Urgent action is required.

25 A rockfall risk assessment methodology has been applied to the site and some sections of the track were considered as having either a Class 1 or Class 2 hazard for an individual track user.

26 The Class 1 sections require no further action.

27 The Class 2 section requires hazard signage to mitigate the risk. This area also requires monitoring every two years and immediately following a significant seismic event.

#### **e. Structures**

28 The structures on the Mount Iron track have been compared to the QLDC trail design standards and Specifications and NZS Tracks and Outdoor Visitor Structures. The structures were also assessed with regard to building standards.

29 Most structures complied with some minor improvements required. All structures should be inspected by a competent person every two years and a competent structural engineer should inspect the structures every six years.

## f. Carpark

30 The carpark was significantly upgraded in size between 2018 and 2019. The carpark is currently in an unsealed state and is the primary parking location of users of the Mount Iron Track. The carpark has capacity for approximately 70 passenger vehicles.

31 The pavement surface is in good condition, and no maintenance has been required on the carpark since construction. It has been assessed that in its current state basic maintenance activities will be required every year, for example potholes repairs, corrugations, or rut repairs.

32 Council officers will continue to work with DOC to determine if there are any future resources available to contribute to any of the improvements.

## 33 Next Steps

a. Council will make a formal application to DOC to become the administering body.

b. DOC may publicly notify the application under the Reserves Act.

34 The above steps may take up to 24 months which is why it is considered prudent to commence this process so that once the Sale and Purchase Agreement is completed work is already underway to manage the public land under a single organisation.

35 The recently purchased land is currently freehold. Council officers will report back to Council when this land is to be classified as reserve under the Reserves Act. The carpark may also be classified as reserve at this time.

36 Option 1 Agree that Council Officers apply to DOC to become the administrator and vest the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve within QLDC.

### *Advantages:*

37 QLDC will become the administering body for the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and adjacent carpark.

38 Councillors in the Upper Clutha Area are aware of the proposal and are supportive of the potential benefits to the community that would arise with council as the administering body.

39 Council administers a number of significant sites in the Upper Clutha area for the public, in accordance with the requirements of the Reserves Act 1977. The inclusion of an additional area of reserve to be managed under Council's existing practices and resources, subject to due diligence, is logical.

### *Disadvantages:*

40 The maintenance and management of the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and the carpark will transfer from DOC to QLDC, which will require both operational and capital investment.

- 41 The site has known hazards such as wildfire risk and rockfall, which will need to be managed.
- 42 The site has ongoing rabbit and pest control issues.
- 43 Option 2 Do not seek to transfer the vesting of Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and carpark from DOC to Council to administer on behalf of the public.

*Advantages:*

- 44 Council will not have to maintain/manage the reserves at a cost to the ratepayer.

*Disadvantages:*

- 45 DOC may prefer to direct its resources to other areas with greater conservation benefits, and management of the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve and carpark may not be to a standard that protects and enhances the reserve values for the community.
- 46 Public confusion could exist for who is responsible for the heavily used recreation and reserve areas, as both DOC and QLDC will be administering different parts of Mount Iron.
- 47 Cost and management efficiencies for managing the public land under one administering body will not be realised.
- 48 This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter.

## CONSULTATION PROCESS | HĀTEPE MATAPAKI:

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### SIGNIFICANCE AND ENGAGEMENT | TE WHAKAMAHI I KĀ WHAKAARO HIRAKA

- 49 This matter is of medium significance, as determined by the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy because the decision being sought is to make an application the Minister of Conservation to be the administering body for the land but the potential outcome does involve a high level of community interest for the public and users of Mount Iron.
- 50 The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are the residents/ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes District community, and visitors to, and users of, the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve in Wanaka.
- 51 On approval of the due diligence process, Council Officers will work alongside DOC and the Otago Conservation Board exploring the requirements to meet the statutory land transfer outcomes.

### MĀORI CONSULTATION | IWI RŪNANGA

- 52 Council Officers have informed Aukaha and Te Ao Marama of the recent purchase of the Allenby Farms parcels of Mount Iron and the proposed land transfer from DOC.

53 Council Officers will work alongside Aukaha and Te Ao Marama QLDC will formally notify and request approval from the Rūnaka via Aukaha and Te Ao Marama on the final recommendation.

### **RISK AND MITIGATIONS | NGĀ RARU TŪPONO ME NGĀ WHAKAMAURUTANGA**

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54 This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK00009 within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a High inherent risk rating.

55 The approval of the recommended option will support the Council by allowing us to retain the risk at its current level. This shall be achieved by acquiring a rich and diverse open space for the community which is an objective in the Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS | NGĀ RITENGA Ā-PŪTEA**

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56 The due diligence and scoping assessments have provided the following annual maintenance cost required to maintain and preserve the trail across the DOC and Allenby Farms site in its current state:

- Annual Maintenance cost (based on QLDC current maintenance contract rates) - \$35,000

57 The scoping assessments determined the capital works required on the DOC site and trail to address the stormwater, structure and fall from height improvements:

- Capital Cost to address noted improvements - \$132,000

58 There is a capital budget of \$535,900 in year 1 and 2 of the QLDC Long Term Plan to upgrade the Official DOC 5,159m track from a grade 3 - 4 to a grade 1 - 2 network. This budget is also to be used for signage across the entire Mount Iron site

59 There is an annual operational budget of \$61,000 in the Long Term Plan for track maintenance, pest control, and noxious weed removal for the entire Mount Iron site. Additional to this there is a one-off operational expenditure budget of \$54,000 for noxious weed removal.

60 Any additional improvements or development will need to be considered in future Long Term Plans.

### **COUNCIL EFFECTS AND VIEWS | NGĀ WHAKAAWEAWE ME NGĀ TIROHANGA A TE KAUNIHERA**

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61 The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- The Reserves Act 1977
- Significance and Engagement Policy, 2021
- Parks and Open Space Strategy 2021

- Vesting of Roads and Reserves Policy
- Proposed and Operative District Plan

62 The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policies.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 2002 PURPOSE PROVISIONS | TE WHAKATURETURE 2002 O TE KĀWANATAKA Ā-KĀIKA**

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63 The recommended option:

64 Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. It will help meet the current and future needs of communities by administering an area of valued Scenic Reserve for the community and to contribute to open space needs. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act

65 Can be implemented through current funding under Annual Plan; and future Ten Year Plans.

66 Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and

67 Would not alter significantly the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

**ATTACHMENTS | NGĀ TĀPIRIHANGA**

A	Mount Iron Scenic Reserve
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