

Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022 – 2025 Close-out Report



Our Climate and Biodiversity Plan has 3 goals

THESE GOALS ALIGN WITH OUR COUNCIL'S VISION BEYOND 2050 OUTCOMES

1. Biodiversity

The mauri (life force or essence) of our ecosystems is protected and restored. Indigenous biodiversity is regenerated.



Deafening dawn chorus

2. Adaption

Queenstown Lakes is a place that is ready and prepared to adapt to a changing climate.



Disaster defying resilience

3. Mitigation

Our district reduces its greenhouse gas emissions by 44% by 2030* and achieves net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.



Zero carbon communities

TO REACH OUR GOALS WE HAVE SIX OUTCOMES

1

Leadership

QLDC demonstrates ambitious climate and biodiversity leadership

Climate action is in our organisational DNA

We provide a springboard for district-wide climate and biodiversity action

We have our own house in order

We enable and accelerate community behaviour change

We are committed to zero waste

24 actions

2

Transport

Our transport system is low-emission and better connected

Our transport network is low-emission

We work together to change the way we travel

10 actions

3

Built

Our built environment is low-emission and resilient

We lead the way with low carbon infrastructure and buildings

Our infrastructure is resilient to the changing climate

Our water resources are resilient and managed responsibly

10 actions

4

Communities

Our communities are low-emission and climate resilient

We support the development of thriving, climate resilient communities

We grow a resilient and low carbon local food system

We accelerate community-led action

12 actions

5

Business

Low-emission businesses thrive

Our tourism system is regenerative by 2030

We support businesses to transition to a low emission future

5 actions

6

Environment

A flourishing natural environment

We integrate native regeneration and carbon removal

We increase the impact of our local conservation organisations

9 actions

Our plan is informed by the national Emissions Reduction Plan, the draft National Adaptation Plan, and Te Mana o te Taiao Aotearoa New Zealand Biodiversity Strategy 2020.

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Introduction: Three Years of Progress

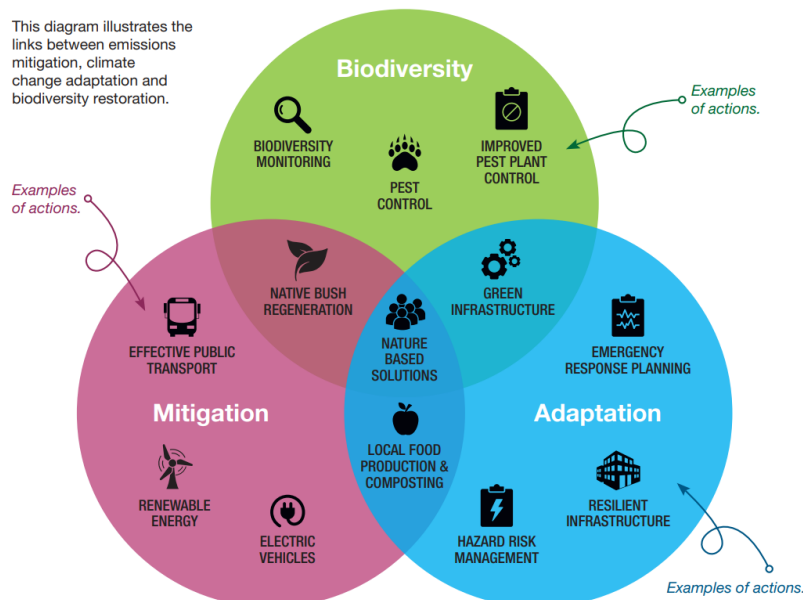
In 2019, Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) declared a climate and ecological emergency and launched its first Climate Action Plan 2019-2022. This plan set the foundation for Council's response and focused on an ambitious range of actions across five outcome areas. In July 2022 Council adopted the second **Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025 (CBP)**¹. This plan acknowledged that climate action needs to be fully integrated with biodiversity protection and ecosystem regeneration to address the dual climate and ecological emergencies. This focus on biodiversity and climate action was a bold step at the time, but we are pleased that it's now recognised as the best practice approach to responding to climate change².

Fast-forward to June 2025, and we have plenty of reasons to celebrate! This report looks back at our collective achievements over the past three years, highlighting key projects, success metrics, and the positive impact on our environment and community.

Crucially, our partnership with mana whenua has deepened over the past three years. **Kāi Tahu** representatives are involved in the Climate Reference Group and the Grow Well | Whaiora Spatial Plan partnership, ensuring that the principles of kaitiakitaka and mātauraka Kāi Tahu are embedded into our strategic planning.

Our intergenerational commitment has also strengthened. We have worked with schools across the district who have embraced climate education, with students leading tree plantings and zero waste challenges. Many of our tamariki and rakatahi have become climate champions in their own right, contributing art and ideas to the next Climate & Biodiversity Plan.

It's a *big thank you* to everyone involved – and a glimpse of how these efforts will carry on in the **2025–2028 Plan**.



¹ <https://climateaction.qldc.govt.nz/media/r4vngkhn/5a-climate-and-biodiversity-plan-2022-25.pdf>

² Biodiversity and Climate Change – Scientific outcome of the IPBES-IPCC co-sponsored workshop-
<https://zenodo.org/record/5101125>

CBP Highlights 2022–2025:

Over the past three years, QLDC and our partners have made substantial progress across all six outcome areas of the Climate & Biodiversity Plan. Here's a snapshot of what we've collectively achieved:



**81 actions: 95% actioned-
19 fully completed, 58 in
progress**



**Achieved Toitū
carbonreduce certification**



**Funding locked in for LPG
conversion at Council
aquatics centres-**



**51% increase in public
transport patronage**



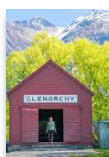
**Funded Community
Networks/Link Upper
Clutha Community shuttle
trials**



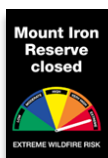
**Over 140,000 km cycled
during the 2025 Aotearoa
Bike Challenge**



**Supported launch of 17
Community Resilience
Groups**



**Supported the Head of the
Lake Natural Hazards
Adaptation Strategy**



**Implemented QLDC
Wildfire Risk Reduction
Programme**



**Supported WAO to launch
the Southern Lakes Kai
Collective**



**\$200,000 boost in climate &
biodiversity related
community funding**



**Launched Destination
Management Plan "Travel
to a Thriving Future"**



**Launched Project Tohu with
80,000 natives planted in
first year**



**Supported development of
Waiwhakaata Lake Hayes
Strategy**



**Supported Southern Lakes
Sanctuary with landscape
scale biodiversity projects**



**Supported Lightfoot
Initiative with programmes
including Aotearoa Bike
Challenge, Activ8, GoGo
ebike, One bike**



**Supported 36+ community
conservation groups across
the district**

OUTCOME ONE:

QLDC demonstrates ambitious climate and biodiversity leadership



We have our own house in order- Emissions Reporting

In July 2023, QLDC achieved **Toitū carbonreduce certification (action 1.1b)**, demonstrating its commitment to measuring, reporting, and reducing operational greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Independent auditing and verification of the 2018–2019 baseline year, as well as subsequent emissions through to 2023–2024, have been completed, with re-certification successfully achieved in 2024 and 2025. We have locked in the commitment to retain this annual certification in the organisational KPIs so this will be reported on each year in the Annual Report.



To retain the certification, we must continue to make progress towards our GHG emission reduction targets. These targets were finalised in the [Organisation Emissions Reduction Plan \(action 1.14\)](#) which was presented to Audit, Finance and Risk Committee in September 2023. This plan outlines potential pathways for QLDC to reduce its scope 1 and 2 emissions by 44% by 2030, relative to the 2019 baseline.

Key emission reduction projects include the replacement of the LPG boilers at council’s aquatic centres (**action 1.16**). Following community consultation through the 2024–2034 Long Term Plan process, clean energy upgrades for the Arrowtown Pool, Alpine Aqualand, and Wānaka Pool have been scheduled for delivery between 2025 and 2027.

QLDC is also reducing fleet emissions by transitioning to electric vehicles. This shift is generating both emissions reductions and operational cost savings. In recognition of this initiative, our fleet team received the **“Sustainable Journeys” award in 2023** for leadership in low-emissions transport.



Embedding climate & biodiversity into the DNA of the organisation

Over the past three years, Queenstown Lakes District Council has been working hard to make climate action and biodiversity protection part of everything we do. From the way we plan major infrastructure to how we write policy, purchase goods, and even commute to work, we are working to ensure that climate and the environment are at the centre of our decision-making.

A major milestone came with the **embodied carbon assessment** of our 2021–2031 Long Term Plan (**action 1.5**), which gave us a clear picture of how our major capital investments could impact the climate. This work set the stage for **Project Taiao**, a council-wide change management programme that evaluated how climate and biodiversity are factored into QLDC’s key internal processes (**actions 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 1.10, 1.15, 1.17, 1.19**). Guided by sustainability experts, Project Taiao mapped QLDC’s current practices against international best practice and identified opportunities for improvement. This work has laid the groundwork for actions that are in the draft 2025–2028 Climate & Biodiversity Plan.

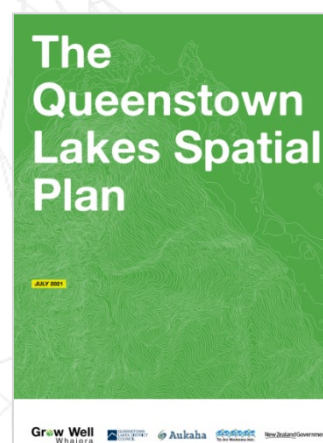
Our staff are also driving the change. Staff commuting surveys (**action 1.18**) and updates to our **Workplace Travel Plan** are helping us understand and reduce emissions from everyday travel. Staff-led initiatives through our internal **Rauhi group** (**action 1.4**) have also helped spark behaviour change, promote wellbeing, and make sustainability something that feels real and actionable for everyone. This was exemplified by QLDC coming first in the 500–1999 staff category in the 2025 Aotearoa Bike Challenge. QLDC worked with the Lightfoot Initiative to ensure that our district topped the leader board in this amazing national competition.

Strategic Planning



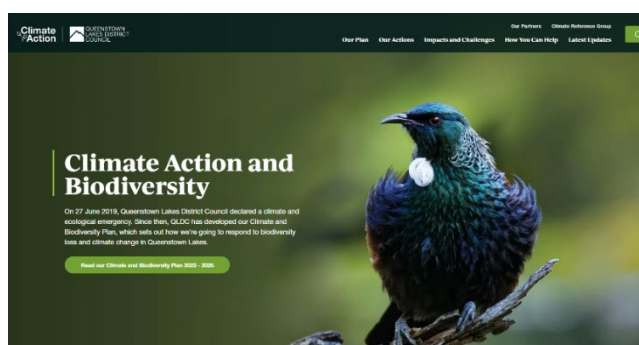
We’re already seeing the benefits of this shift. A prime example is how climate and environmental considerations were key drivers in the development of our **2024-2034 Long Term Year Plan** and **30-Year Infrastructure Strategy**. These plans now include “social” and “natural” infrastructure and prioritise resilience, climate adaptation and low environmental impact in the infrastructure decision-making process.

At the same time, the **Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan**, developed through the **Grow Well Whaiora Partnership** (**action 1.8**) is guiding how and where our communities grow. It’s helping to shape a future where compact, well-connected neighbourhoods reduce car reliance and carbon emissions, while protecting biodiversity, natural corridors, and hazard-prone areas. Nature-based infrastructure is fast becoming the norm, not the exception.



New Climate Action Website

The launch of the new **Climate & Biodiversity website (action 1.22)** <https://climateaction.qldc.govt.nz/> has significantly strengthened how we communicate with our community. It provides a central hub for regular updates, insights, and success stories from across the district. The site features action progress updates, key reports, and project highlights, while also showcasing our partnerships with Kāi Tahu, local organisations, and the independent Climate Reference Group.



Council Partnerships

Over the past three years there has been a significant effort dedicated to building strong partnership relationships with a wide range of local organisations (**action 1.1d**) including WAO, Wastebusters, WAI Wānaka, Lightfoot Initiative, Sustainable Queenstown, Te Tapu o Tāne, Mana Tāhuna, Southern Lakes Sanctuary, Whakatipu Reforestation Trust, Te Kākano, Whakatipu Wilding Conifer Control, and Whakatipu Wildlife Trust. Together, we're advancing climate action, restoring biodiversity, and building community resilience across the district.

In 2024, Council reinforced its commitment by allocating an **additional \$200,000 from the Climate & Biodiversity budget** to the QLDC Community Fund. This funding is helping to strengthen the impact of our partners' on-the-ground mahi supporting local initiatives that are essential to delivering the district's climate mitigation, adaptation, and ecological restoration goals (**actions 1.20, 1.21, 1.23, 1.24**).

Climate Governance

Climate action is now firmly embedded in QLDC's governance framework, with oversight and accountability mechanisms operating at both operational and strategic levels. Climate change has been formally recognised as a top-tier Organisational Risk, ensuring that it is treated with the same level of importance as other critical risks to Council operations and community wellbeing.

As part of this, QLDC reports quarterly on progress against the Climate & Biodiversity Plan to the **Audit, Finance & Risk Committee**. This Committee plays a vital role in providing independent oversight of Council's financial management, strategic risk, and long-term planning. Regular reporting on climate risk and emissions performance helps to embed climate accountability into Council's core decision-making processes and ensures alignment with best practice in public sector governance.

Climate Reference Group

Strategic direction and independent advice are also provided by the **Queenstown Lakes Climate Reference Group (CRG)**, a panel of local experts, community leaders, and Kāi Tahu representatives. The CRG brings together deep knowledge across sectors such as climate science, energy, infrastructure, biodiversity, sustainable finance, and Te Ao Māori. Established in 2020, the group provides independent advice to Council ensure that our efforts remain ambitious, inclusive, and grounded in both science and community values. Their guidance has helped shape key elements of the Climate & Biodiversity Plan and ensures that our approach remains future-focused and responsive to the unique needs of our district.



One of our CRG members, Dr. Jim Salinger, was named New Zealander of the Year in 2024 for his lifetime of climate science leadership – Go Jim!

OUTCOME TWO:

Our transport system is low-emission and better connected

Public Transport

While public transport is funded and controlled by the Otago Regional Council, we have worked hard to advocate and support improvements to local services (**action 2.1**). In 2023/2024 public transport use for Queenstown skyrocketed with a **51% jump in patronage** compared to the previous year. That's hundreds of thousands more passenger trips, taking cars off the road, easing congestion, and helping to cut emissions.



In the Upper Clutha, we teamed up with **Community Networks/LINK Upper Clutha** to pilot a shuttle bus trial³ for our Wānaka and Hāwea communities (**action 2.1e**). Supported by funding from the QLDC Climate and Biodiversity Plan, the trials tested affordable public transport service options for locals across a range of routes

and timetables. The community response was enthusiastic – riders loved the cheaper, greener commute, with their feedback helping to build the case for more future investment.

Thanks to this collective effort and strong community advocacy, ORC has now committed to funding a Public Transport Business Case for Upper Clutha. This is a major step toward securing a reliable, low-emissions transport network for our Upper Clutha communities one that reflects local needs and supports the district's climate goals.

³ <https://www.communitylink.nz/shuttle-trial>

Active Transport

Our district has always been active, but over the past three years we have seen a groundswell of momentum towards active transport, thanks in large part to the efforts of local organisations like the **Lightfoot Initiative**, **WAO** and **Queenstown Trails Trust**.

Lightfoot has helped remove everyday barriers to walking and biking through hands-on, inclusive community programmes. Their OneBike initiative has rehomed over 140 bikes, making cycling more accessible for families and individuals across the district. They've delivered tailored training for migrant women, seniors, and young learners, and made e-mobility more accessible through their GoGo Electro library, which loans out e-cargo and commuter bikes.



They also lead the coordination of the **2025 Aotearoa Bike Challenge** with funding from the Climate and Biodiversity Plan. This amazing annual event in February inspired hundreds of locals and businesses to jump on their bikes, supported by pop-up repair stations, coffee pitstops, and a social media campaign that reached over 20,000 people.

2025 Aotearoa Bike Challenge

- **Community Engagement:** Over 1,500 local riders participated, collectively cycling more than 140,000 km and making over 11,000 trips- a remarkable 82% increase from 2023.
- **Environmental Impact:** The district's efforts led to a reduction of approximately 7.2 tonnes of CO₂ emissions.

Queenstown Trails Trust has continued to be a driving force in expanding and maintaining the district's world-class trail network. With a strong focus on connectivity, the Trust has helped create safe, scenic, and accessible routes that link neighbourhoods, schools, town centres, and recreation hubs. Their work not only supports active commuting but also promotes tourism and community wellbeing. Recent projects, including links to the Wharehuanui Trail, Gorge Road corridor, and Arrowtown–Arthur's Point route, are making it easier than ever for residents and visitors to choose walking or biking as a regular mode of transport.

Complementing these efforts in Wānaka, the **WAO** team have led a range of programmes and initiatives to empowered residents with the knowledge, confidence, and tools to reduce their transport emissions. Their programme has featured workshops, surveys, community activations, and local champions to help community make the change.

Collectively these initiatives, along with many more locally lead projects and events, are helping to shift our transport culture, encouraging healthier, more affordable, and low-carbon ways of moving around our district. We even saw e-scooters hit the streets, as QLDC partnered with micro-mobility company **Beam** on a trial of shared e-scooters, giving people yet another fun, zero-emission way to get around town.

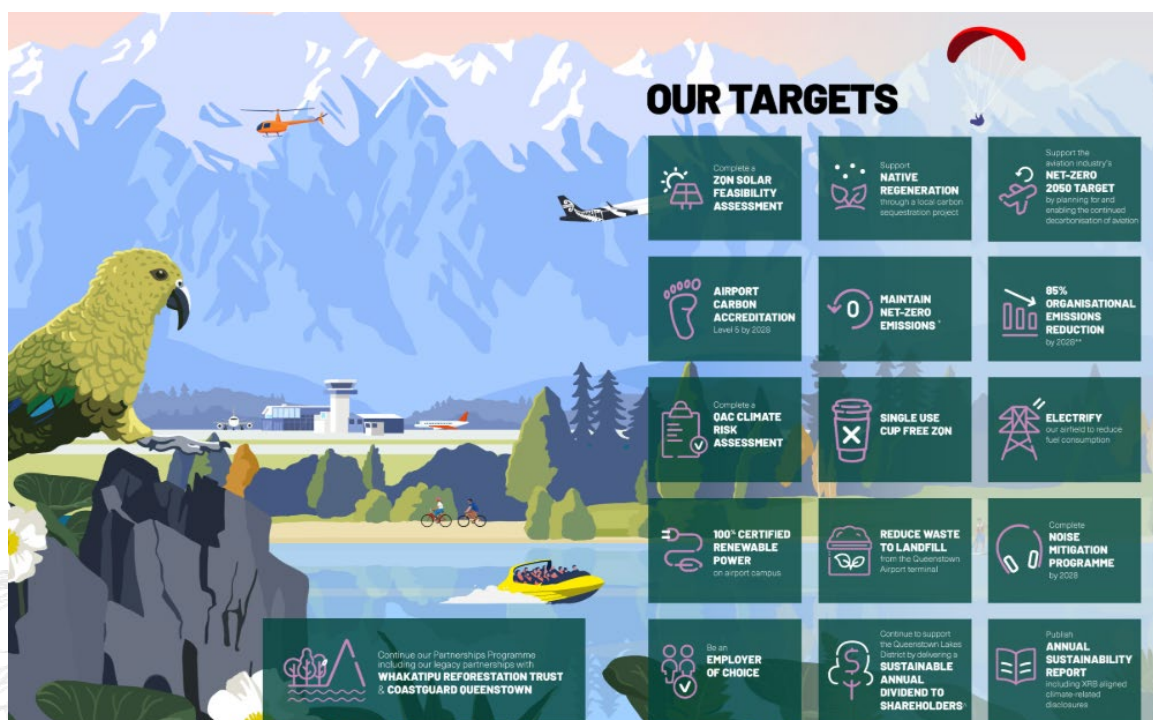
Aviation

Aviation emissions are a complex and often contentious part of the climate conversation, but Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) is showing that meaningful change is possible, leading by example through bold action and a commitment to sustainability.

Through its response to the climate action requirements in the QLDC Statement of Intent (**action 2.6**) QAC has developed a **Sustainability Strategy** and made significant progress in reducing its operational emissions while embedding sustainability into its long-term planning. This includes transitioning to 100% renewable electricity, installation of EV charging infrastructure, significant upgrades to waste management systems, and a transition to LED airfield lighting, which has reduced energy consumption. These efforts have contributed to a 71% reduction in operational emissions (Scope 1 and 2) since 2019, a figure that positions QAC as one of New Zealand's most climate-forward airports.

In recognition of this progress, QAC achieved **Level 4+ Airport Carbon Accreditation** in 2024⁴ one of the highest levels of international recognition for airport decarbonisation. This accreditation reflects alignment with the Paris Agreement and a verified commitment to absolute emissions reductions.

The airport's Sustainability Strategy also sets out ambitious targets to reach net-zero operational emissions by 2030, aligning with the district's broader climate goals for the visitor economy. QAC is not only addressing its own carbon footprint but also working with airlines, ground handlers, and fuel suppliers to support sector-wide decarbonisation, including preparation for low-emission aircraft and sustainable aviation fuel.



⁴ <https://www.airportcarbonaccreditation.org/fr/queenstown-airport-joins-airport-carbon-accreditation-directly-at-level-4-transition/>



Over the past three years, QLDC has made strong progress embedding climate mitigation and resilience into the design, construction, and management of infrastructure, buildings, and water systems. These efforts reflect a shift toward lower-carbon decision-making, energy efficiency, climate-responsive planning, and sustainable water use.

Resilient low-emission Infrastructure

A key milestone in QLDC's efforts to reduce infrastructure-related emissions was the completion of a detailed carbon baseline assessment for the 2021–2031 capital works programme (**action 1.5a**). This analysis revealed the scale of embodied carbon emissions within Council's capital works programme and provided insights into new approaches for infrastructure design and construction.

In parallel, Council has advanced efforts to embed resilience into its infrastructure strategies. Climate adaptation and emissions reduction have been prioritised in both the 2024–2034 Long Term Plan and the 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy (**actions 1.5b and 1.15**). These strategic documents reflect QLDC's commitment to making long-lived infrastructure investments that are fit for future climate conditions.



QLDC has also strengthened its working relationship with the **Otago Regional Council Natural Hazards team**, forming a collaborative partnership to co-develop a regionally consistent framework for climate risk assessment and adaptation planning (**action 3.8**). This work is laying the foundation for more unified hazard identification, prioritisation, and response across Otago that will support improved climate adaptation planning for infrastructure.

Green Buildings

QLDC has taken proactive steps to champion sustainable building design by partnering with the **New Zealand Green Building Council (NZGBC)** and supporting the **Superhome Movement** as part of its commitment under **action 3.4**. Through this collaboration, QLDC has contributed to the update of the Superhome Design Guide which promote best-practice standards for designing energy-efficient, healthy, and climate-resilient homes.

These resources advocate for design features such as passive solar orientation, high insulation and ventilation standards, efficient heating and cooling systems, and the use of low-emission, locally sourced building materials. By supporting the development and public availability of these guides, QLDC is helping to empower homeowners, builders, and designers across the district to reduce emissions, lower energy costs, and deliver warmer, healthier homes that are fit for a changing climate.

In addition, Council has actively advocated for and contributed to national discussions on enhancing building regulations to address climate change and improve energy efficiency. These efforts align with QLDC's commitment to fostering sustainable development and reducing greenhouse gas emissions within the district.

Local Energy System

QLDC has taken important steps to help future-proof the district's electricity system. Under **action 3.3**, Council has worked alongside **Transpower, Aurora Energy, and Powernet** to forecast future electricity demand and support planning for long-term infrastructure investment.

This collaborative work has contributed to the announcement of a major joint investment to expand electricity capacity in the Whakatipu Basin, a key step toward enabling wider electrification of transport and heating across the district. Council is also supporting the development of a Regional Electricity Development Plan, which will guide investment decisions and resilience planning through to 2050.

Through our partnership with **Rewiring Aotearoa**, and supported by the **Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal**, we are working to improve access to affordable home energy upgrades and solar installations across households and small businesses. These efforts are aligned with our broader objectives under **action 4.3**, which aims to promote community-led initiatives and energy sector partnerships to implement resilient, affordable, and sustainable energy solutions.



Together with our partners, we are also exploring flexible demand management tools, such as managed EV charging, battery storage, and time-of-use pricing to help reduce peak electricity demand during high-demand periods (**action 3.3**). This has involved partnering with Ara Ake to run the Queenstown Flexibility Challenge workshop, which brought together key electricity sector stakeholders to identify local solutions for smarter grid management.

A photograph of a woman with long blonde hair and a young boy walking through a forest. The woman is wearing a dark blue puffer jacket and jeans, and the boy is wearing a green jacket. They are both smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is filled with trees and foliage.

OUTCOME FOUR:

Our communities are low emission and climate resilient

Community Partnerships

One of the greatest strengths of the 2022–2025 Climate & Biodiversity Plan has been the groundswell of community-led action. From the early days of youth and community groups filling the Council chambers with calls for meaningful change, it was clear that this work would need to be shared, supported, and sustained together. Over the past three years, Council has collaborated with dozens of local organisations, schools, and passionate residents to bring the plan to life not just through consultation, but through co-delivery. Each of our three-yearly action plans has been co-designed with community input, and many of the most impactful projects have been delivered in partnership with those leading the mahi in their own backyards.

Community Grant Funding

To back this momentum, QLDC expanded access to climate and biodiversity funding through the **Community Fund** (Action 1.21). In 2024 alone, over **\$200,000** was allocated to local projects making a measurable impact across the district⁵. Examples include:

- **Te Tapu o Tāne** received support a case study on the rehabilitation of **Waiwhakaata (Lake Hayes)** assessing ecological, cultural, and economic outcomes.
- The **Tucker Beach Wildlife Trust** secured funding to restore and protect the lower Shotover River's blue-green corridor.
- **Mana Tāhuna Charitable Trust** received operational funding to expand its environmental restoration and community engagement programmes.
- **Te Kākano Aotearoa Trust** continued its work running a native plant nursery for community propagation, strengthening biodiversity at the grassroots.

These initiatives are a direct reflection of **actions 4.12 & 6.9**, which focus on funding community-led projects that respond to climate change.

Community Resilience

Strong progress has been made over the past three years to strengthen community emergency preparedness (**action 4.4 & 4.5**). In partnership with **Emergency Management Otago**, seventeen Community Resilience Groups (CRGs) have been established across the district. These groups are vital to local resilience, acting as the first line of community support during disruptive events like storms, floods, or earthquakes.

⁵ <https://climateaction.qldc.govt.nz/climate-biodiversity-boost-for-community-funding/>

Over \$45,000 in funding was provided by QLDC and the **Central Lakes Trust** for the purchase of emergency hub equipment, including solar eco-flow batteries, generators, lighting, whiteboards, first aid kits, and VHF radios. Tailored training has also been delivered to each group, covering hub setup, radio operations, and community response planning. Together, these actions have laid the foundations for a well-connected, community-led emergency response network that is better equipped to manage climate-related risks and disruptions.



Community Adaptation projects

A significant level of work has been undertaken under **action 4.6** to support community adaptation initiatives to address climate-related hazards, particularly in the Head of Lake Whakatipu area and in locations that are exposed to wildfire risk.

In collaboration with the ORC Natural Hazards team, QLDC supported the development of the **Head of Lake Whakatipu Natural Hazards Adaptation Strategy**. This strategy, informed by over five years of technical investigations and community engagement, aims to enhance resilience in areas like Glenorchy and Kinloch, which are susceptible to flooding, landslides, and earthquakes. QLDC's involvement included providing technical input and participating in community consultation sessions to ensure the strategy reflects local needs and priorities.



QLDC has implemented a **Wildfire Risk Reduction Programme** across council reserves. This includes conducting wildfire threat analyses to identify high-risk areas, developing reserve closure plans during periods of extreme fire danger, and installing environmental monitoring sensors in locations such as Ben Lomond and Mount Iron. These measures aim to mitigate wildfire risks and enhance community preparedness.



Through these initiatives, QLDC demonstrates a commitment to supporting communities in adapting to climate change impacts, enhancing resilience, and safeguarding the well-being of residents in vulnerable areas.

Food Resilience

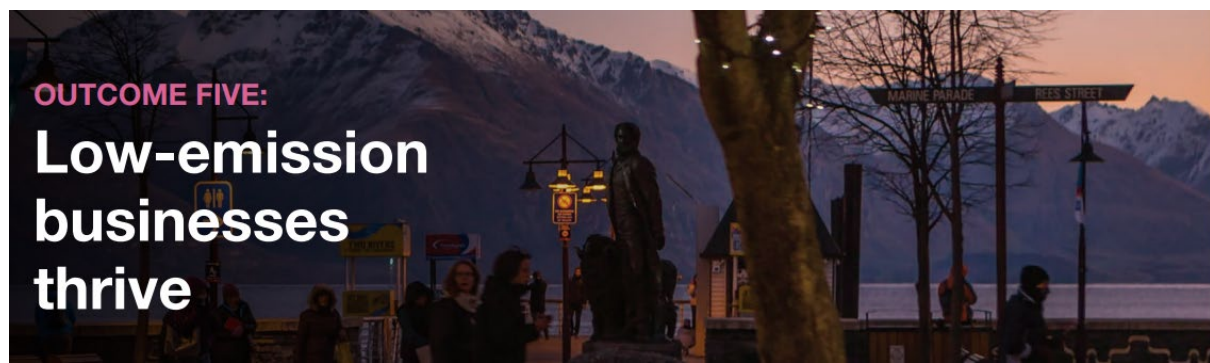
Growing a resilient, equitable, and low-carbon food system has also been a key priority for the Climate & Biodiversity Plan (**action 4.7 & 4.8**). In partnership with **WAO Aotearoa**, QLDC funded the first two phases of a district-wide **Food Resilience Project**, which brought together growers, producers, food rescuers, educators, mana whenua, and community organisations to reimagine how food can nourish both people and planet.

One of the major outcomes of this work was the creation of the **Southern Lakes Kai Collective** a cross-sector network of food champions collaborating to identify vulnerabilities and design practical, community-led solutions. The initiative has revealed our dependence on imported food and highlighted opportunities to:

- Increase local growing capacity,
- Reduce food waste,
- Strengthen social cohesion through shared kai initiatives.

Organisations such as **KiwiHarvest, Mana Tāhuna, Grow Wānaka, Queenstown Community Gardens, Community Networks, Baskets of Blessings**, and others have played pivotal roles in shaping this vision and taking action on the ground.





Our local businesses and tourism organisations are playing a critical role in advancing a low-emissions, climate-resilient economy. Through ambitious plans and innovative on-the-ground initiatives, they are helping to demonstrate that economic vitality and environmental responsibility can go hand in hand.

Regenerative Tourism

A cornerstone of this transformation is the **Travel to a Thriving Future Destination Management Plan (action 5.1 & 5.2)**, developed in partnership with **Destination Queenstown, Lake Wānaka Tourism**, and QLDC. This strategy sets a bold vision: to build a carbon-zero visitor economy by 2030. Regenerative tourism lies at the heart of this vision — an approach that actively restores ecosystems, supports vibrant local communities, and decarbonises every aspect of the visitor experience.

The Destination Management Plan is a deliverable of the Grow Well Whaiora partnership and aligns with QLDC's long-term goals for climate adaptation, emissions reduction, and community wellbeing.

Sustainable Events

Events are a major driver of the local economy and play a key role in reflecting the values of the host location. To help support the shift towards more sustainable event practices (**action 5.5**), QLDC launched the ***Event Waste and Emissions Reduction Guide and Toolkit***⁶, providing practical resources for event organisers to minimise waste and greenhouse gas emissions. This toolkit includes templates, checklists, and guidance on sustainable practices, helping events of all sizes to align with the district's environmental goals.

Additionally, QLDC has been working closely with local businesses to promote sustainability. Efforts include delivering energy efficiency assessments, offering waste reduction workshops, and providing consultations on water-saving practices (**action 5.4**). These initiatives aim to assist businesses in reducing their environmental impact while also improving operational efficiency.

Collectively, these actions are fostering a business environment in Queenstown Lakes that not only thrives economically but also contributes positively to the planet, setting a precedent for sustainable development in the region.

⁶ <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/community/event-planning-and-venues/event-waste-and-emissions-reduction-guide-and-toolkit/>

OUTCOME SIX:

A flourishing natural environment

Perhaps the most inspiring progress under the 2022–2025 Climate & Biodiversity Plan has come from the momentum behind restoring our natural ecosystems and responding to the ecological emergency. The last three years have seen a surge in biodiversity regeneration projects (**action 6.2**), earning Queenstown Lakes recognition as a national leader in community-led environmental action.

Project Tohu

A standout initiative is **Project Tohu (action 6.6a)**, a landmark reforestation project underway on the slopes of Coronet Peak. Led in partnership with **Te Tapu o Tāne, Citycare and E3 Scientific** this large-scale regeneration project is transforming a retired pine plantation into a vibrant native forest ecosystem. Over the next five years, more than 500,000 eco-sourced native trees, shrubs, and grasses will be planted across 200 hectares. The first 80,000 were planted in autumn 2025, marking a major milestone in one of Aotearoa’s most ambitious ecological restoration efforts.



Blue Green Network

Another transformational project is the **Blue-Green Network Plan (action 6.5)**, which reimagines how we integrate waterways, wetlands, green corridors, and urban development. This framework sets a new standard for infrastructure that supports both community wellbeing and ecological health, while building resilience to climate change. Developed in partnership with the Grow Well Whaiora team and supported by key stakeholder engagement, the plan is scheduled to launch in 2025 and guide how natural infrastructure is protected and enhanced across the district.

Waiwhakaata (Lake Hayes) Strategy

Another major project is the **Waiwhakaata (Lake Hayes) Strategy**. Led by **Kāi Tahu** in collaboration with **ORC, DOC, Friends of Lake Hayes** and **QLDC**. The strategy has been crafted with a vision to uphold the mana of the name, Waiwhakaata, so our actions are reflected in the waters. This beloved lake has suffered from poor water quality, but the new plan outlines a path to revive it through wetland restoration, catchment planting, and community mahi. The final strategy is due for Council endorsement in 2025, setting the stage for collaborative action in the next plan period.



Community Led Conservation

Across the district, our local conservation organisations and community groups are delivering an amazing range of projects and integrated work programmes to achieve landscape-scale biodiversity outcomes (**action 6.2**).

At the Head of Lake Whakatipu, residents celebrated two incredible milestones in 2024–2025: the area’s designation as an official **Tāhuna Glenorchy Dark Sky Sanctuary**, and the return of takahē to the Rees and Greenstone Valleys. This reintroduction, led by Ngāi Tahu and DOC in collaboration with local leaseholders and Southern Lakes Sanctuary, symbolises the return of lost taonga to these mountain valleys.



Meanwhile, predator control networks have flourished: over 70 neighbourhood trapping groups are now active thanks to the support of **Whakatipu Wildlife Trust, Predator Free Wānaka**, and the **Southern Lakes Sanctuary**. These groups are crucial to the return of kea, kākā, and korimako to landscapes long dominated by introduced predators.

Local wilding pine removal efforts led by the **Whakatipu and Upper Clutha Wilding Control Groups** are also restoring landscapes, improving water security and reducing fire risk. Their work supports both scenic and ecological recovery, ridge by ridge.

Community nurseries and regeneration projects led by **Whakatipu Reforestation Trust** and **Te Kākano** in Wānaka have produced and planted tens of thousands of native seedlings, grown locally to suit each ecological niche. These nurseries anchor a growing network of volunteer planting projects that are strengthening the ecology of our district.

Together, these projects reflect the power of partnership, community action, and long-term investment in nature. Congratulations to everyone for this epic mahi!

Looking Ahead: 2025–2028 and Beyond

The conclusion of the 2022–2025 Climate & Biodiversity Plan marks not an end, but another key milestone in our district’s ongoing journey toward a low-emissions, climate-resilient future.

Over the past three years, we’ve shown what’s possible when Council, community, and iwi come together with a shared sense of purpose. Together, we’ve reduced emissions, strengthened resilience, restored ecosystems, and sparked a wave of collective climate action.

The next phase - the **2025–2028 Climate & Biodiversity Plan** - builds on this strong foundation. It introduces new priorities, fresh partnerships, and practical pathways for everyone in our district to play a role in the work ahead. This is a living plan, a call to action for continued leadership and collaboration at every level.

To every community member, partner organisation, and Council staff member who contributed to the mahi so far: thank you. Your passion, persistence, and shared vision have made a real difference. If we overlooked mentioning you in this short report- we are sorry- but your efforts are deeply appreciated.

As we look ahead, it’s essential that we carry this momentum forward. The challenges of climate change and biodiversity loss remain immense, but so too does our commitment to act. By continuing to work together in partnership, **Queenstown Lakes will remain a unique place, an inspiring future – He wāhi tūhāhā, he ā mua whakaohoho – for generations to come.**

