

Community & Services Committee

22 February 2024

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [1]

Department: Community Services

Title | Taitara: Adoption of the Tree Policy 2023

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

The purpose of this report is to recommend for adoption the Queenstown Lakes District Council Tree Policy 2023.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

That the Community & Services Committee:

1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Recommend to Council** that the Tree Policy 2023, **ATTACHMENT A**, be adopted.

Prepared by:



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Title: Parks and Reserves Planner
25 January 2024

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Ken Bailey
Title: General Manager, Community Services
29 January 2024

Context | Horopaki

1. The Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) Tree Policy 2022 (the Policy) was adopted at the 11 August 2022 Council meeting, with a resolution to undertake a review of the Policy and report back to the Community & Services Committee in 12 months' time. This was due to the high level of public interest around how the Policy would be implemented.
2. The purpose of the Tree Policy is to ensure existing trees, tree spaces, canopy cover and succession planting meet the needs of the community, can provide for growth, and continue to be protected and enhanced.
3. Staff commenced the review after the Tree Policy 2022 had been in place for 7 months to determine how it was working, as required when the Policy was adopted. Public interest in trees

is high and the Tree Policy has been successful in helping QLDC manage trees to meet community aspirations and provide guidance to ensure appropriate trees are planted in the appropriate places.

Key changes from the Tree Policy 2022

4. Clearer policies on development, construction, and activities around trees under a new 'Protection' section. The Tree Policy now provides more detail on working within tree root zones and directing when a Protection Management Plan (TPMP) is required.
5. Flexibility to use other tree valuation processes alongside the Standard Tree Evaluation Method (STEM). The Tree Policy now allows for Council to adopt more widely used, accessible, and modern tree valuation methods to help identify the required financial compensation for the loss or removal of trees unable to meet the replacement policies.
6. More detail around what the 2-for-1 tree replacement means and what it is trying to achieve, i.e. the planting of a minimum of two new trees for every tree removed, with the projected canopy cover replacing what is lost within 20 years. The Tree Policy now provides better direction on where and when mitigation planting is required.
7. The Tree Policy now states that any wilding, noxious and pest plant species that were self-seeded are excluded and do not apply to the Policy.

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

8. In September 2023, a report was taken to the Community & Services Committee to present the revised Tree Policy, outlining the areas in which the Policy has been effective, as well as the challenges experienced by Parks Officers in implementing the tree works applications under the Policy. The draft Tree Policy 2023 was made publicly available for feedback following approval at this meeting.
9. The draft Tree Policy 2023 was published on QLDC's Let's Talk engagement platform and social media channels for four weeks, closing 27 October 2023. There were 15 submissions via the online survey and email. The feedback was collated and informed the final Tree Policy 2023.
10. A summary of the public feedback is included as **ATTACHMENT B**. The key changes resulting from the feedback are:
 - A more detailed definition of a 'significant tree' to ensure it is clear under what circumstances a proposed tree removal will require public consultation;
 - A definition on the public consultation required for significant tree removal requests;
 - More detail on the activity of topping trees and why it is prohibited; and

- Although not part of the Tree Policy, the Application for Tree Works has been reviewed and updated alongside the Policy to reflect the changes. This is a live document and is available on the QLDC website.

11. This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002.

12. Option 1 Recommend the Tree Policy 2023 for adoption with the recommended changes.

Advantages:

- Once adopted, the district will have a more relevant, user-friendly policy that will ensure that existing public trees and new tree plantings meet the needs of the community and will continue to be cared for and enhanced.
- The Tree Policy 2023 will ensure improved protection and management of QLDC trees.

Disadvantages:

- Some people may not be supportive of the proposed changes.
- Tree scenarios may arise that are not covered within the 2023 Tree Policy. The Policy can be reviewed more regularly to account for the speed of growth, climate change, and biodiversity requirements in the district.

13. Option 2 Do not recommend the Tree Policy 2023 for adoption.

Advantages:

- Members of the public that do not support the changes to the existing policy will be satisfied.

Disadvantages:

- The current Tree Policy will remain active, cumbersome, and ambiguous.

14. This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter as it will ensure a clearer policy direction for the protection and management of QLDC trees for both Council staff and the public. In adopting the new Tree Policy 2023, the Tree Policy 2022 will automatically be revoked.

[Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki](#)

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

15. This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the [Council's Significance and Engagement Policy 2021](#) because it involves a high level of community interest.

16. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are the residents/ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes District community and visitors to the district.
17. The Council has consulted with the public over a one-month period. There were 15 submissions via the online survey and email. The feedback was collated and informed the final Tree Policy 2023.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

18. This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK10005 Ineffective planning for community services or facilities within the [QLDC Risk Register](#). This risk has been assessed as having a moderate residual risk rating.
19. The approval of the recommended option will allow Council to avoid the risk. This will be achieved by providing a current and relevant Policy that provides clear guidance for how tree decisions will be made.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

20. There will be no immediate impacts to the Annual or Long Term Plans.

Council Effects and Views | Kā Whakaaweawe me kā Tirohaka a te Kaunihera

21. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:
 - Reference alignment with and consideration of the principles of the Vision Beyond 2050: [Our Vision and Mission - QLDC](#)
 - Reserves Act 1977
 - QLDC Vision Beyond 2050
 - QLDC Tree Policy 2022
 - QLDC Climate & Biodiversity Plan 2022
 - Local Government Act 2002
 - Parks & Open Spaces Strategy 2021
22. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policies.
23. This matter is not included in the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan and will not have any impact on it. There is a risk of increased public and internal project costs due to requiring more accurate tree survey data and minimum replacement planting, which may be offset by the quality of the outcomes. There may be internal process time and communication efficiencies due to requiring information via the 'Application for Tree Works' form.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions | Te Whakatureture 2002 o te Kāwanataka ā-Kiaka

24. 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 because it provides support for a community activity. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.

25. The recommended option:

- Can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not significantly alter 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 | Kā Tāpirihaka

A	Tree Policy 2023
B	Summary of public feedback