

Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board

15 March 2023

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [4]

Department: Community Services

Title | Taitara : Request to remove Council Trees from Wānaka Golf Course

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

1. The purpose of this report is to consider a request to remove and replace trees on Reserve Land in the Wānaka Golf Course in Wānaka.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

2. That Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board:
 1. **Note** the contents of this report.
 2. **Note** that the following request was considered per the QLDC Tree Policy 2022, including replacing any removed tree with two trees.
 3. **Approve** the request by Wānaka Golf Club to remove approximately 70 trees of mixed wilding and exotic species within their lease area on Wānaka Golf Course Recreation Reserve, Wānaka.
 4. **Require** that all necessary resource consents, including earthworks and any other relevant variations are obtained by the Wānaka Golf Club for the Reservoir Project prior to the removal of any trees.

Prepared by:



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13 March 2023

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Kenneth Bailey
Title: Community Services General Manager
15 March 2023

Context | Horopaki

3. Council has received the following a request from the Wānaka Golf Club to remove approximately 70 trees within their lease area, to enable the construction of two reservoirs on the golf course to store water for irrigation purposes.
4. The applications have been processed in accordance with the QLDC Tree Policy 2022. The application has assessed against the policy and subsequently supported by the Council's Arboricultural Officer and Parks Manager.
5. The application does not include Protected Trees under QLDC's District Plan, trees listed for potential protection in the Proposed District Plan, or Notable Trees from the NZ Tree Register.

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

6. 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.
7. The following relevant tree removal policy guidelines were considered when assessing the applications:
 - 4.4. *Trees that are posing an unacceptable safety risk to the public and cannot be mitigated through pruning or other engineering solutions will be removed as per the tree replacement Policy 1.13.*
 - 4.7. *Council approval for tree removal to facilitate projects on Council land will consider the value of the project to the community, including public health and/or the local environment, in conjunction with the benefits of retaining existing trees compared with their loss and proposed replacement planting.*
 - 4.10. *Healthy and structurally sound trees may be removed to manage or prevent the spread of pests and diseases. This includes the removal of pest trees where they are deemed a threat to indigenous flora and fauna and non-pest species.*
 - 4.11. *Wilding noxious or pest trees may be strategically removed where they are determined to be a threat as a pest species or cause a nuisance in a particular location, to manage or prevent the spread of pests and diseases. This includes the removal or poisoning of pest trees. Requirement for replacement planting will be determined by any amenity values the trees provided.*
 - 4.13. *QLDC will not remove trees for the following reasons:*
 - *To minimise obstruction of views*
 - *To minimise obstruction of commercial or advertising signage*
 - *To reduce leaf or fruit litter and other debris*
 - *To reduce shading*
 - *For contributing to allergenic or irritant responses*
 - *When the risk posed by the tree meets the requirements of the Tree Risk Management.*

4.18. Other - Requests for removal of tree(s) due to other issues will only be approved under exceptional circumstances and will be required to meet all the criteria below:

- The issue caused by the tree has a significant effect on the applicant's day to day living
- The tree is the sole cause of the issue
- The issue is not able to be mitigated through general maintenance by the applicant (e.g., clearing gutters of leaves)
- The issue caused by the tree cannot be mitigated by pruning
- No reasonable engineering solution can mitigate the issue caused by the tree.

Wanaka Golf Course

8. The Wānaka Golf Club (WGC) plan to construct two reservoirs on the golf course, to store water for irrigation purposes. The proposed location for the reservoirs is on the Back 9 hole of the golf course, to the northeast of the intersection of Ballantyne Road and Golf Course Road. The land where the reservoirs will be built is within the Wānaka Golf Course, which is classified as a recreation reserve. The WGC has a lease agreement with the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) for this land.
9. The construction of the two storage reservoirs would enable the WGC to meet its forward irrigation requirements without the need for additional water sources. This would provide a more sustainable solution for the golf course's water needs.
10. The WGC has applied for permission to remove 65 mature trees from the leased reserve. A full breakdown of trees is as follows in table 1.

Tree Species	Type	Number of Trees	Size
Douglas fir - <i>Pseudotsuga menziesii</i>	Wilding/Exotic	32	10-15m
Silver Birch - <i>Betula pendula</i>	Exotic	2	8-10m
Pin Oak - <i>Quercus palustris</i>	Exotic	3	4-12m
Norway Maple - <i>Acer platanoides</i>	Exotic	1	6m
European Larch - <i>Larix decidua</i>	Wilding/Exotic	17	10-12m
Lebanese cedar - <i>Cedrus Libani</i>	Exotic	1	11m
Spanish Fir - <i>Abies pinsapo</i>	Exotic	7	10-15m
Lawson cypress - <i>Chamaecyparis lawsoniana</i>	Exotic	2	8-12m

Table 1

11. The trees that will be removed are located in the area shown in Figure 1, while the proposed reservoirs will be built in the area shown in Figure 2.

12. Douglas fir and European larch are classified as noxious wilding conifers. They have shallow roots that can damage turf quality, consume excessive water as mature trees, and can be hazardous in high winds due to their tendency to throw branches. The removal application includes a total of 49 wilding conifers.



Figure 3: Douglas fir



Figure 4: European larch

13. All remaining tree species are exotic and not native to the local environment. However, they provide a range of benefits to the environment and community, such as aesthetics, shade, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration, and soil conservation.
14. The WGC has provided a tree replacement plan that they are committed to upholding in accordance with the two-for-one Tree Policy. The majority of trees, namely native species, will be planted onto the Golf Course Reserve (Attachment A), and QLDC has offered to support planting locations in nearby reserves if required.
15. QLDC's Let's Talk page invited feedback from the public on the tree removals at the Wānaka Golf Course from 22nd February to the 13th March 2023. The page was also shared on QLDC social media.
16. Council received 33 submissions on the tree removals. The Community were asked to comment on the removals and the responses are summarised as followed (Attachment B):

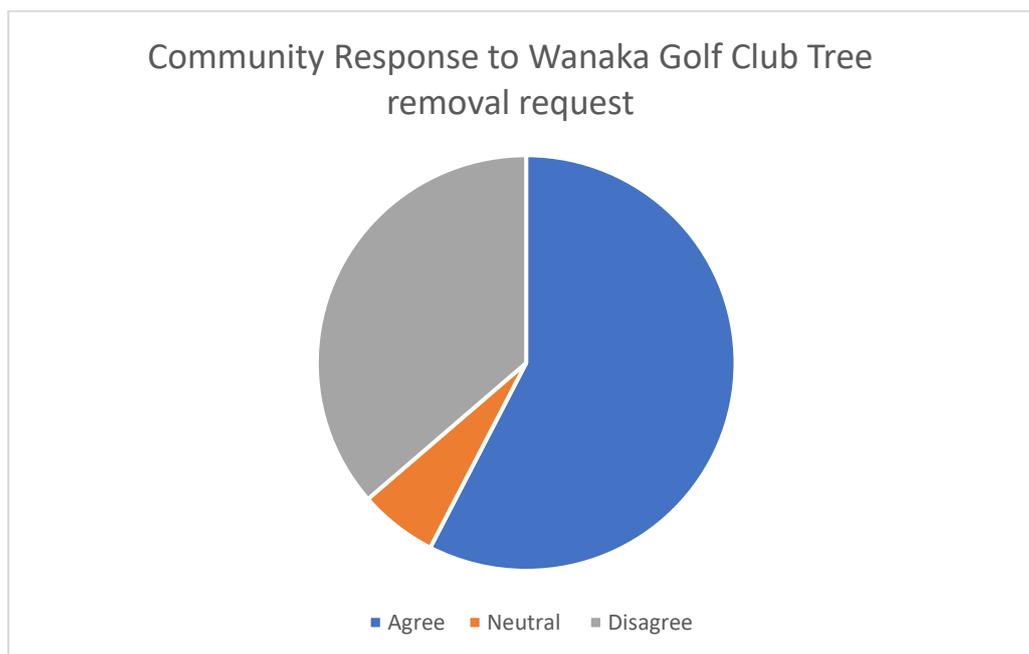


Figure 5: Community response to WGC tree removals

In Support key submission points:

- Implementation of the replanting plan is important,
- Support replacement of more suitable species such as natives.
- Many of the trees are wildings, support for removing wildings and exotics Protection of irrigation water for the golf course, and reducing water demand from external sources.
- Water reservoir will reduce demand on other water supplies and will improve water usage.
- Support replacement with a larger number of trees.
- Planting 140 replacement trees will offset carbon emissions.
- tree removal allows for the construction of critical infrastructure
- Support golf club and development of the facility

In Opposition key submission points:

- The trees should remain – they provide amenity, shade, habitat, carbon sequestration and are good for well being
- Don't remove large mature trees, replacement trees will take many years mature.
- Construction of a Golf Course Reservoir is not a good reason to remove trees
- Protect the 70 trees
- Is there an alternative that would involve less removal of biodiversity and habitat?

17. 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:

18. **Option 1** Approve WGC tree application.

Advantages:

- The construction of water storage reservoirs can enable the WGC to meet its irrigation requirements without the need for additional water sources.
- Wilding Conifers, which are an invasive pest species, will be removed reducing the seed source, and improving biodiversity.
- Native trees will replace removed trees on a two-for-one basis (WGC replanting plan Attachment A).

Disadvantages:

- Loss of higher-valued mature amenity trees and impact on local wildlife habitats.
- The tree canopy and carbon reduction will be reduced at the reserve, until such time as mature trees can re-establish.
- A loss of carbon reduction in the interim although long term the carbon reduction will potentially double when new plantings reach maturity.
- Temporary minor loss of visual amenity.

19. **Option 2** decline the application.

Advantages:

- The natural environment can be preserved, and wildlife habitats can be protected.
- Retention of mature amenity value trees, canopy cover and greater carbon sequestration.
- No immediate reduction in the carbon sink associated with established trees.

Disadvantages:

- Wilding conifers may continue to have a negative impact on the ecosystem and be a continued seed source.
- WGC will be dissatisfied that their application is declined and the project to establish a reservoir will be put on hold until an alternative solution is identified.
- The WGC may need to seek additional water sources to meet their irrigation requirements, which could have a negative impact on the environment and longer-term sustainability goals.
- Native replanting may not be at the same scale as that if removals were approved.
- Ongoing seed source of wilding pest tree species.
- Missed opportunity to improve local biodiversity by planting suitable replacement trees.

20. This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because wilding conifers will be removed and native tree planting numbers will double over time.

Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

21. This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy because it involves a high level of community interest (trees).
22. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter the residents/ratepayers of the Wānaka and Upper Clutha community, visitors to Wānaka and members of the Wānaka Golf Club.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

23. This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK00009 within the QLDC Risk Register. Current and future development needs of the community (including environmental protection), as documented in the Councils risk register. This risk has been assessed as having a low inherent risk rating.
24. The approval of the recommended option will support the Council by allowing us to retain the risk at its current level.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

25. There will be no financial impact to the annual or Long Term Plans. The removal, clean up and revegetation is to be funded by the Wānaka Golf Course.

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

26. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered::

- 'Deafening Dawn Chorus' Vision Beyond 2050: <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/vision-beyond-2050/>
- QLDC Tree Policy 2022
- QLDC Climate & Biodiversity Action Plan 2022
- Otago Regional Council Pest Management Plan 2019
- Parks and Open Space Strategy 2021
- Otago Regional Council Pest Management Plan 2019
- Wildlife Act 1953
- Wanaka Golf Course Reserve Management Plan

Refer to online documents here: <http://www.qldc.govt.nz/policies>

27. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named Tree Policy 2022.
28. This matter is not included in the Ten Year Plan/Annual Plan and there is no expenditure required.

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

29. 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. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act;
30. The recommended option:
- Can be implemented through current funding under the Ten Year Plan and Annual Plan;
 - Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
 - 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.
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