

21 April 2023

via email: mike.roesler@orc.govt.nz

To whom it may concern,

SUBMISSION ON THE OTAGO REGIONAL COUNCIL DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2023-2024

Thank you for the opportunity to present Queenstown Lakes District Council's (QLDC) submission to the Otago Regional Council (ORC) Annual Plan 2023-2024. QLDC is also grateful for the one-week extension to the deadline for submissions.

This submission provides feedback on some of the key issues relevant to the district, such as public transport, environment and biodiversity, resilience, natural hazard management and emergency management. A common theme is the desire to continue to build a collaborative partnership with the ORC to achieve good outcomes for the district's communities.

QLDC welcomes a closer working relationship with ORC through the changing landscape of local and regional government due to central government reforms.

QLDC would like to be heard on its submission. It should be noted that due to the timeline of the process, this submission will be ratified by full Council retrospectively at its next meeting.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Yours sincerely,



Glyn Lewers
Mayor



Mike Theelen
Chief Executive

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Council recognises that the Annual Plan process focuses on key changes affecting service delivery from what is set out in the Long Term Plan. QLDC's submission therefore focuses on recommendations and opportunities based on activities where ORC and QLDC are currently collaborating. Across the board, QLDC welcomes every opportunity to partner with ORC by building on existing processes for sharing of information, use of common data and evidence and joint engagement with stakeholders.

2.0 Public transport and active travel networks

- 2.1 The provision of effective public transport continues to be a vital issue to the Queenstown Lakes District. Whilst QLDC supports the proposed adjustments by the ORC to its 2023-2024 Annual Plan to provide additional funding to develop real-time transport information and increase driver wages, QLDC recommends that a significant overhaul over and above these actions is needed in order to achieve the necessary mode shift for transport in the district.
- 2.2 This involves moving beyond the paradigm of a demand-led public transport provision, to an approach that drives behaviour change through the provision of effective, customer-centric public transport solutions that align with the needs of our communities. This will include routes that reflect travel pattern demands, significantly reduce emissions and provide affordable intercity and regional connections.
- 2.3 The current Public Transport Business Case for Queenstown needs to consciously move away from services being a lag indication of demand to becoming a lead indicator of demand. This will require earlier, and more significant investment in services but is a well-proven strategy for building demand and influencing behaviour.
- 2.4 Transport is the highest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the district, with all modes of transport accounting for 45% of gross emissions¹. The ORC needs to recognise its role in the development of a strategic programme to counter this and help target net zero carbon emissions by 2050 as per the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act. Ambitious district level emissions reduction targets have also been adopted within the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-25 (44% reduction in carbon emissions across the district by 2030) and the "Travel to a thriving future: Regenerative Tourism Plan"² (decarbonisation of the local visitor economy by 2030). The roadmap to achieving these targets is contingent on transformative investment in both public transport and active travel networks.
- 2.5 Through the QLDC Ten Year Plan, Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-25, Travel to a thriving future: Regenerative Tourism Plan and Annual Plan processes, the district's communities have communicated a strong demand for enhanced public transport across the Whakatipu basin and for the provision of public transport in the Upper Clutha to reduce emissions and enhance community connectivity.
- 2.6 On demand service provision has shown to be successful in places like Timaru. The growth of Wānaka, Albert Town, and Luggate provide the opportunity to develop and deliver a bespoke public transport service to make public transport a real choice for these communities, and we encourage ORC to lead that change.

¹ [otago-region-ghg-profile-report_v4.pdf \(orc.govt.nz\)](#)

² [Travel to a thriving future: Regenerative Tourism Plan](#)

- 2.7 QLDC is taking a lead role with trialing new shuttle service options for areas of our district that are not currently served by public transport networks. QLDC is the primary funder for an extended trial of the Wānaka and Hāwea community shuttle service that is being managed by Link Upper Clutha. This trial will test different network routes, timetable options and demand levels for a public transport service between these two communities. This project delivers upon the commitment made in section 5.3.2 of the Regional Public Transport Plan. QLDC urges ORC to dedicate resourcing to support the delivery of this project and to take ownership of the valuable data set that the project will generate. This data set will provide an important foundation for future planning of permanent public transport in the Upper Clutha.
- 2.8 QLDC notes that central government has made strong commitments to decarbonising the national public transport bus fleet. By 2025, only zero-emission public transport buses can be purchased and the full national public transport bus fleet needs to be decarbonised by 2035. QLDC encourages ORC to take an ambitious approach to investing in innovative, low-emissions public bus solutions that are fit for the alpine environment of the district. Hydrogen and electric models could offer a bold, progressive step towards emissions reduction and a clear signal of the ORC's commitment to climate action across the region.
- 2.9 QLDC will continue to work with ORC through the Grow Well Whaiora Partnership to complete and implement a mode shift plan for the district to encourage the use of public transport and active travel. Current work on the Future Development Strategy will go beyond transport and ensure there is an aligned strategic approach that meets the Government's, QLDC's, ORC's and Kāi Tahu's objectives, and results in best possible urban growth and environmental outcomes in the Queenstown Lakes, while delivering the best possible value for money for infrastructure investment.

3.0 Resilience, Natural Hazard Management and Emergency Management

- 3.1 Community resilience remains imperative in the district, given the high probability of seismic activity and the increasing risks associated with climate change. The Queenstown Lakes district is particularly vulnerable to a wide range of disruptive events which could sever major lifelines and lead to an unprecedented level of welfare demand and mass evacuation coordination. These vulnerabilities necessitate that ORC continue to increase its investment into the district's emergency preparedness.
- 3.2 A key area of resource investment is Lifelines programme management. Due to past under-resourcing there is a significant backlog of lifeline response plans that need reviewing or gaps where no plan exists. Coordination of Regional Lifelines forums, development of stakeholder networks and delivery of key capability building projects also need significant attention. Currently these responsibilities are being coordinated by a fixed-term staff member within the Emergency Management Otago team. QLDC recommends that ORC allocates budget to ensure that this important position is transitioned to a full-time equivalent role.
- 3.3 The work of the ORC Natural Hazard team and its leadership in driving forward key climate adaptation work programmes in the district is of paramount importance. The Glenorchy 'Head of the Lake' project in particular continues to be a major undertaking. QLDC looks forward to progressing the partnership between ORC, iwi, Department of Conservation and community stakeholders in the delivery of this important project. Creating and implementing pragmatic and achievable interventions that reflect both short- and long-term risk, as well as recognising the longstanding community investment and ownership of the township and locals is important. Our communities need to be

part of creating practical solutions that carefully balance risk as well as reality and provide several levels of certainty for them and other communities.

- 3.4 QLDC acknowledges the gains made in the natural hazard area such as additional ORC climate change hazards staff, and requests that ORC progress robust data and mapping work as a priority, to ensure evidence-based decision making in relation to resilience, natural hazards, and emergency management. Recent amendments to the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 relating to Land Information Management reports (LIM) have brought to forefront the legal requirement for a single source of truth that is accurate and accessible for the community.

4.0 Environment and biodiversity

- 4.1 Biodiversity and biosecurity are critical to environmental sustainability and improvement. They play a crucial role in the sequestration of carbon to offset climate warming by preventing ingress of unwanted diseases and pests, and by promoting development of indigenous vegetation communities. QLDC recommends that ORC further invests in the biodiversity and biosecurity of the district and in particular, dedicate funding and resource to key actions in the QLDC Climate and Biodiversity Plan in this area. The conservation and biodiversity sector in the district (both funded and volunteer-driven) is high-functioning and well-respected. QLDC encourages ORC to consider increasing the available funding to these groups in order to accelerate ORC's outcomes in the district.
- 4.2 QLDC supports the increase in ORC capacity in the 2023-2024 Annual Plan towards implementing the regional pest plan and operations plan. QLDC has done a significant amount of work in this space, such as extensive rabbit-proof fencing of Council land, in line with ORC best practice guidelines. QLDC recommends that ORC pursue site-led pest programmes for feral goat control in the Whakatipu Basin, such as the high biodiversity Ben Lomond area.
- 4.3 The new National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land (NPS-HPL) ensures the availability of New Zealand's most favourable soils for food and fibre production, now and for future generations. QLDC requests that ORC confirms adequate funding to progress mapping for the NPS-HPL is completed at pace, in order to inform the management of this non-renewable resource.

5.0 Future Development Strategy

- 5.1 QLDC is pleased to partner alongside ORC on the QLDC Spatial Plan Implementation, the new Future Development Strategy and other future partnerships such as the new Spatial Planning and Natural and Built Environments legislation. Continuing to develop a strong partnership approach is important, as is ensuring that policy directions are matched with funding and work programmes and achieve strategic goals and outcomes. In particular, public transport, hazard mitigation, and water management play a significant role in the ability of communities to achieve their development aspirations. The continued ability of ORC to support the process with staff, resources and funding, and action is critical for mutual success in these areas.

6.0 Regional climate mitigation coordination

- 6.1 QLDC welcomes every opportunity to partner with ORC in relation to climate action and to build on the work that is already underway. Efforts to collaborate in the development

of a consistent approach to data and emissions measurement are already in progress.

6.2 QLDC recommends that ORC ensure sufficient funding and resources are provided through the 2023-2024 Annual Plan to continue to increase its role in regional coordination on climate action, develop a regional climate change strategy, and deliver sufficient climate action that aligns with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees.