

16 October 2025

██████████
C/- ██████████
Sent via email to ██████████

LG25-0277 - Appointment of Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal Negotiator

Dear ██████████,

REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL INFORMATION – PARTIAL RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information held by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). On 18 September 2025 you requested the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA):

1. Can QLDC please provide the following information about the appointment of the Otago Central Lakes Regional [OCLR] Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator:
 - a. How were candidates decided?
 - b. Who nominated Mr [Conor] English (and other candidates)?
 - c. How many were short-listed (if that was part of the process)?
 - d. Were interviews conducted? If so, by whom and when?
 - e. Were any conflicts declared?
 - f. Who decided to appoint Mr [Conor] English?
2. Please release all communications, including email and text, between the [OCLR] Committee (together) or members (separately) [of OCLR deal] and Mr [Conor] English and his nominator(s), from the time he was put forth as a candidate to the time he was appointed.
3. Please also release details of Mr [Conor] English's pay arrangements - including an hourly/daily rate, and his expected full-time equivalent working hours/week/month.

QLDC RESPONSE

Partial release of information

In response to your request, we consulted with both the QLDC Strategy and Policy Team and the QLDC Knowledge Management Team.

1. Can QLDC please provide the following information about the appointment of the Otago Central Lakes Regional [OCLR] Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator:
 - a. How were candidates decided?
 - c. How many were short-listed (if that was part of the process)?

The Chair of Otago Regional Council (ORC) and the Mayors of Central Otago District Council (CODC) and Queenstown Lakes District Council held informal discussions regarding the appointment to the role of OCLR Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator. Through these discussions, five potential candidates were considered, and a consensus was reached that Conor English was the most suitable candidate for the position. This outcome was subsequently communicated to the Chief Executives of each council.

d. Were interviews conducted? If so, by whom and when?

The Chief Executives of the three partner councils — CODC, ORC, QLDC — interviewed Mr English on 1 August 2025.

e. Were any conflicts declared?

No conflicts-of-interest were identified or declared by any parties involved in the appointment of the OCLR Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator.

f. Who decided to appoint Mr [Conor] English?

Following the interview conducted on 1 August 2025, Mr English's appointment was confirmed via a contract with QLDC.

2. Please release all communications, including email and text, between the [OCLR] Committee (together) or members (separately) [of the OCLR deal] and Mr [Conor] English and his nominator(s), from the time he was put forth as a candidate to the time he was appointed [for the OCLR Deal Negotiator position].

A search of our email archives was carried out for relevant correspondence dated on or after 2 January 2025 until 18 September 2025. This search focused on emails containing the phrase 'Conor English,' sent to or received from either email address 'lyal.cocks@qldc.govt.nz' or 'glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz'.

Following a review of the search results and the content of the emails, and after removing duplicates, [two emails](#) were identified as within the scope of your request.

Additionally, QLDC has consulted externally with CODC and ORC, and both have indicated that there are no communications between their elected members and Conor English.

Please note that the enclosed link will expire on 14 November 2025, 4:25 PM (UTC+12:00) Auckland, Wellington.

Decision to refuse information

1. Can QLDC please provide the following information about the appointment of the Otago Central Lakes Regional [OCLR] Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator:
b. Who nominated Mr [Conor] English (and other candidates)?

We have good reason under section 17(e) of the LGOIMA for withholding the information requested. We consider it is necessary to withhold the requested information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 17(e) – that the document alleged to contain the information requested does not exist or, despite reasonable efforts to locate it, cannot be found.

Section 17(e) of the LGOIMA clarifies that a local authority is not required to provide information that does not exist or cannot be found despite reasonable efforts. This ensures that the absence of information is not due to negligence but reflects its genuine non-existence.

We understand your interest in this documentation and have made reasonable efforts to locate the information requested. However, as the discussions regarding the appointment to the role of OCLR Deal Negotiation Committee Negotiator were undertaken informally, there is no record of who nominated Mr English.

As a local authority, we are committed to fulfilling our obligation to provide access to information that we hold. However, pursuant to Section 17(e) of the LGOIMA, we are unable to release information that either does not exist or cannot be found despite our reasonable efforts.

Decision to withhold information

3. Please also release details of Mr [Conor] English's pay arrangements - including an hourly/daily rate, and his expected full-time equivalent working hours/week/month.

We have good reason under section 7(2)(b)(ii) and section 7(2)(h) of the LGOIMA for withholding the information requested. We consider it is necessary to withhold the requested information on the basis of the following grounds:

- Section 7(2)(b) - the withholding of the information is necessary to protect information where the making available of the information—
(ii) would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.
- Section 7(2)(h) - the withholding of the information is necessary to—
enable any local authority holding the information to carry out, without prejudice or disadvantage, commercial activities.

Section 7(2)(b)(ii) of the LGOIMA is designed to safeguard information whose release could unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of natural persons or entities involved. This provision acknowledges the importance of protecting sensitive commercial data, which is vital for maintaining competitive advantages and fostering a healthy business environment.

The need to preserve the commercial interests of the entity involved outweighs any public interest in transparency regarding this information. Therefore, withholding the requested details is essential to protect the integrity of commercial operations and encourage ongoing business confidence.

Section 7(2)(h) of the LGOIMA is designed to protect the ability of local authorities to carry out commercial activities without facing prejudice or disadvantage. This provision allows for the withholding of information that could potentially harm the competitive position of a local authority or affect its ability to conduct its commercial operations effectively. The purpose of this provision is to balance transparency with the need to ensure that local authorities can manage their commercial activities in a fair and undisturbed manner.

In this case, the withheld information pertains to commercial activities that, if disclosed, could give an unfair advantage to competitors or disrupt the authority's ability to negotiate or engage in commercial dealings. The withholding of this information ensures that the local authority can continue its activities without the risk of harm or disadvantage.

Therefore, the need to protect the local authority's commercial activities outweighs the public interest in the information being made available. The information is withheld to prevent any prejudice or disadvantage to the local authority's ability to carry out its business effectively.

Public interest considerations

In assessing whether to withhold information, QLDC carefully evaluates the public interest—particularly whether disclosure would enhance transparency, accountability, or informed public engagement. This assessment includes weighing those benefits against the potential harm that could result from releasing the information.

QLDC acknowledges the public interest in ensuring transparency and accountability among local authority members and officials and supports the principles of good governance. We remain committed to releasing information wherever appropriate. However, in this instance, disclosure would be likely to unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of the individual or organisation concerned and could adversely affect QLDC's ability to carry out its own commercial activities without disadvantage. The potential harm to both parties outweighs the benefits of public disclosure.

Accordingly, QLDC has determined that sections 7(2)(b)(ii) and 7(2)(h) of the LGOIMA apply. These provisions permit the withholding of information where release would unreasonably prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or is the subject of the information, and where it is necessary to protect the Council's ability to undertake commercial activities without disadvantage. After careful consideration, QLDC has concluded that no overriding public interest exists that would justify disclosure in this case.

Right to review the above decision

Note that you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about this process is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please contact Naell.Crosby-Roe@qldc.govt.nz (Director Democracy Services).

We trust that the above information satisfactorily answers your request.

Kind regards,



Democracy Services Team
Corporate Services | Queenstown Lakes District Council
P: +64 3 441 0499
E: informationrequest@qldc.govt.nz

From: "Conor English SE Communications" <conor@silvereye.co.nz>
Sent: Thu, 17 Apr 2025 15:12:18 +1300
To: "glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz" <glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz>
Cc: "Jo Coughlan" <jo@silvereyecomms.co.nz>
Subject: Follow up from call regional deals

Hi Glyn.

I tried calling but you are tied up. Good to chat re the regional deals and Central Otago Region. As discussed, happy to undertake this role. I mentioned a potential conflict, however after discussion it is not an issue.

Appreciate its all-new territory, but to whom would I report to?

What are the expectations from the councils of this role?

We would need to put a contract in place with Silvereye and get agreement on terms etc. Do we work with you on this?

I am very excited about being involved in this important project for the south!

I'm in the office this afternoon so give me a call if that's easier. Enjoy every day!

Conor



Conor English

Director

M +64 274 410 786

Level 3, 85 The Terrace, Te Aro, Wellington 6011, New Zealand



"Lets change the world together"



From: "Conor English SE Communications" <conor@silvereye.co.nz>
Sent: Thu, 10 Jul 2025 10:42:46 +1300
To: "glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz" <glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz>
Cc: "Jo Coughlan" <jo@silvereyecomms.co.nz>
Subject: RE: Govt announcement

Hi Glyn, it would be good to touch base and discuss where things are at. Is there a time today that suits for a quick call?

Enjoy every day!
Conor

From: Conor English SE Communications
Sent: Friday, 4 July 2025 7:46 am
To: glyn.lewers@qldc.govt.nz
Cc: Jo Coughlan <jo@silvereyecomms.co.nz>
Subject: Govt announcement

Hi Glyn, just arrived back from NYC this morning . I see the Government has made their announcement

<https://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/city-and-regional-deals-unlock-growth>

What are the next steps?

Enjoy every day!
Conor