

**QLDC Council
28 July 2016**

Report for Agenda Item: 7

Department: Property and Infrastructure

Cycle trails linking Queenstown Lakes to Central Otago District

Purpose

The purpose of this report is for Council to consider accepting responsibilities for the management of new cycle trails linking Queenstown Lakes to the Central Otago District.

Recommendation

That Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Agree** to be the controlling authority for the private land easements in the Queenstown Lakes District required to form the Wanaka – Luggate and Kawarau Gorge trails;
3. **Agree** to assist with the branding and marketing of the trail network;
4. **Agree** in principle to maintain the new sections of the Wanaka – Luggate and Kawarau Gorge trails, that don't already have existing maintenance agreements for three years, at \$1,000 per km per annum from the time each section is opened. Final agreement is subject to the following conditions:
 - a) At the end of the three years the Council has no obligation to continue maintenance;
 - b) The Chief Executive approving detailed engineering designs for trail sections requiring engineering input;
 - c) All parts of the trail not requiring engineering input being developed and maintained to Grade 1 or 2 standard as per the QLDC Cycle Trails and Tracks Design Standards and Specifications;
 - d) NZTA approval for all works proposed in proximity to the highway;
 - e) That geotechnical engineering and structural engineering assessment reports are provided for all sections requiring engineering input;
 - f) Engineers and contractors producer statements are provided following the implementation of all trail sections requiring engineering input;

- g) That all resource and buildings consents, as necessary, are obtained for the implementation of the trails, and development is in accordance with those consents; and
- h) That Queenstown Lakes District Council maintenance is for routine vegetation and surface maintenance only and does not include any maintenance related to trail or associated structure failures.

5. **Delegate** to the Chief Executive the final agreement to maintain the trails.

Prepared by:



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21/07/2016

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Mike Theelen
Chief Executive

21/07/2016

Background

- 1 The Government, along with the Central Lakes Trust and the Otago Community Trust, has announced that they will collectively contribute \$26.3m to link existing trails between Queenstown Lakes and Central Otago districts subject to the Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Steering Group (Steering Group) providing more information to Government. It is understood from the Steering Group that this information includes a Government request for a letter from the two District Councils outlining their support of the initiative, what each council is prepared to do to support this project and each council's position on maintenance.
- 2 The Steering Group has advised that \$1.5m of the \$26.3m is to be used as an emergency fund throughout the 5 year construction period for trail failures. If this hasn't been used, it is the understanding of the Steering Group (to be confirmed) that the interest will be spent on future maintenance.
- 3 The Central Otago District Council (CODC) has made a commitment to provide \$100k per annum for general trail maintenance within their district and has also offered to manage the funds for the development of the trails on behalf of the Steering Group. It is not considered by the Steering Group that this maintenance budget will be sufficient to cover the maintenance of all sections of trails included in the network to be developed.
- 4 The two parts of the trail that fall into QLDC's area are from the end of the Gibbston River Trail at the Gibbston Back Road down to Roaring Meg (approximately 14.5km), and from Wanaka through to Luggate (approximately 30 – 35km, the majority of which is currently maintained by others, mostly by the Department of Conservation (DoC)).

- 5 The Steering Group considers with support from CODC and QLDC that the Government could eventually take over the maintenance of the parts of the Queenstown and Wanaka trails that will form this network as well as the trails in Central Otago District Council's authority.
- 6 The Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Steering Group has requested the following:
 - QLDC agrees to be the controlling authority for the private land easements in QLDC's area.
 - QLDC offers assistance with branding and will market the trail network through their channels as appropriate
 - Agree to maintain the new sections of trails that don't already have existing agreements with DoC for three years at \$1,000 per kms from the time each section is opened.

Comment

- 7 The Steering Group has provided a Feasibility Study (the study) for the Kawarau Gorge Trail. The section of trail between the Gibbston River Trail and Roaring Megs (approximately 14.5km) through the Kawarau Gorge is the highest risk section of trail in QLDC's area in terms of potential trail failure, and could potentially incur the most maintenance cost. In particular, the study annotates the following parts of the Trail that require engineering input:
 - Construction of three bridges at Roaring Meg, two crossing the Kawarau River on either side of the bluffs, and the other on the true left bank of the Kawarau to cross the Roaring Meg Stream or Kirtle Burn.
 - A bridge crossing the Kawarau River in the vicinity of the Waitiri Rapids and the Old Dairy sheds.
 - Construction of a cantilevered platform around the Nevis Buff along with protective fencing for rock fall protection.
 - A clip-on crossing structure on Victoria Bridge.
 - Retaining structures and earthworks, including blasting of rock and significant fill.
- 8 There is little engineering assessment or design of these required structures included in the study. It is understood that the Steering Group will seek further engineering inputs as the funding becomes available. The funding availability is dependent on the Council's support.
- 9 It is considered that the Kawarau Gorge Trail and the Wanaka – Luggate Trail will be valuable assets to the District's communities and its visitors, and will have tourism benefits.

10 However, it is also considered that the Kawarau Gorge Trail in particular carries risk in its ability to be developed, and if developed carries potential risk of failure and/or high maintenance costs. In these respects it is recommended that the Council agree in principle to maintain the new sections of trails that don't already have existing agreements with DoC for three years at \$1,000 per km per annum from the time each section is opened with, at this point, a number of key provisions. These as outlined above are largely to ensure that the engineering works and maintenance costs associated with these structures are well understood and addressed by all parties prior to the Council finalising any commitment. Accordingly the following pre-conditions are attached to Council's funding and maintenance commitment:

- a) At the end of the three years the Council has no obligation to continue maintenance;
- b) The Chief Executive approving detailed engineering designs for trail sections requiring engineering input;
- c) All parts of the trail not requiring engineering input being developed and maintained to Grade 1 or 2 standard as per the QLDC Cycle Trails and Tracks Design Standards and Specifications;
- d) NZTA approval for all works proposed in proximity to the highway;
- e) That geotechnical engineering and structural engineering assessment reports are provided for all sections requiring engineering input;
- f) Engineers and contractors producer statements are provided following the implementation of all trail sections requiring engineering input;
- g) That all resource and buildings consents, as necessary, are obtained for the implementation of the trails, and development is in accordance with those consents; and
- h) That QLDC maintenance is for routine vegetation and surface maintenance only and does not include any maintenance related to trail or associated structure failures.

Options

Option 1 Accept the recommendation

Advantages:

11 There is assurance for the Steering Group that QLDC will be the controlling authority for the private easements and that the trails will be maintained for three years. This support will assist the progress of the development of the trail network.

Disadvantages:

- 12 Budget is required to maintain the tracks after completion, and to assist with branding and marketing of the trails.
- 13 There is an increased responsibility for QLDC in being the controlling authority for the private easements.

Option 2 Accept part of the recommendation or accept the recommendation with different conditions.

Advantages:

- 14 The Steering Group will have some assurance of QLDC support for the project.
- 15 It is possible that less cost is required to maintain the trails.
- 16 It is possible that there is less responsibility in being the controlling authority for the private easements.

Disadvantages:

- 17 The Steering Group will not receive the level of assurance it has requested, which could delay the progress of the track network's development.
- 18 Agreeing the maintenance with different conditions could create higher costs for QLDC.

Option 3 Decline the recommendation

Advantages:

- 19 No cost is required to maintain the trails.
- 20 There is no responsibility in being the controlling authority for the private easements.

Disadvantages:

- 21 There is no assurance for the Steering Group that QLDC will be the controlling authority for the private easements and that the trails will be maintained for three years.
- 22 The trails may not be developed and therefore will not add to, the recreational benefits experienced by the community and visitors.
- 23 This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because the trails will add to the recreational benefits experienced by the community and visitors and there is an acceptable level of responsibility in maintaining and managing the trails.

Significance and Engagement

24 This matter is of low significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy because due to the extent that the matters being considered impact on the environment of the Queenstown Lakes District and the extent to which organisations in the community are affected by the decision.

Risk

25 This matter related to the operational risk OR002 and OR010b. OR002 relates to an increase in expenditure and OR010b relates to damage or loss to third party asset or property as documented in the Council's risk register. The risk is classed as moderate.

26 This matter relates to the OR002 risk because maintaining the trails will increase Council's expenditure on maintenance.

27 The OR010b risk is due to the fact that the trails are a risk of being damaged due to inadequate design, exposure to environmental factors, and from inappropriate use.

Financial Implications

28 As the development of the trails is expected to take at least two years, budget to maintain the trails will be identified in the next Long Term Plan. It is expected that approximately \$18,000 per year is required for three years for the maintenance. An additional budget to assist with branding and marketing will need to be identified. Further discussion with the Trust will be required to confirm the budget for any future level marketing support.

Council Policies, Strategies and Bylaws

29 The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:

- Significance and Engagement Policy – this decision is considered of low significance.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions

30 The recommended option:

- Will help meet the current and future needs of communities for good-quality local infrastructure, local public services, and performance of regulatory functions in a way that is most cost-effective for households and businesses by enhancing a reserve area and providing history on a notable historic Local who provided service to the community.
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies.

Consultation: Community Views and Preferences

31 The Steering Group has undertaken consultation including with landowners in the Queenstown Lakes District whose land includes the proposed private easements.

The trail network has received funding from the Government, the Central Lakes Trust and the Otago Community Trust. The trails have the support of key stakeholders including the Queenstown Trails Trust and the Upper Clutha Tracks Trust.