

Organisational Excellence Committee

28 April 2026

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [5]

Department: Corporate Services

Title | Taitara: Communications & Engagement Update

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on communications and engagement activity over January to April 2026 and a forward look at upcoming activities.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

That the Organisational Excellence Committee:

1. **Note** the contents of this report.

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7 April 2026

Reviewed and Authorised by:



Name: Meaghan Miller

Title: Corporate Services General Manager
9 April 2026

Context | Horopaki

1. Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) is required by legislation and under its Significance and Engagement Policy to communicate, consult, and engage with the local communities across the district, stakeholders, interested parties or parties affected by and visitors to Queenstown Lakes. QLDC also chooses to engage when not required to ensure that the community has an opportunity to have a say on matters that they care about and value.
2. QLDC adopts a multi-channel approach to all communications, consultation, and engagement activities with a view to ensuring all activities are appropriately tailored, timely, and targeted.
3. Consultation and engagement activities are planned following sector best practice and the IAP2¹ frameworks and methodologies.

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

4. No options are presented, as this report is for noting only, to keep the Committee informed.

Social Media summary

5. QLDC employs three core social media channels; Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn.
6. Facebook continues to be Council's highest-reach digital channel for community updates and is achieving consistent growth (high level analytics below). Short-form video and posts sharing local images perform best overall, along with targeted posts to local community groups.
7. Instagram and LinkedIn are also showing strong growth in reach and engagement. Both channels provide good opportunities to engage with some harder to reach audiences, such as younger people and busy professionals.
8. Statistics for 1 January 2026 - 30 March 2026:

Channel	Reach (<i>how many people saw our posts</i>)	Interactions (<i>likes/comments/clicks/shares</i>)	New followers
Facebook	1,705,245	12,184	889
Instagram	37,803	885	204
LinkedIn	90,629	1,992	502

9. The top three Facebook posts for 1 January 2026 - 30 March 2026:

- a. Boat recovered by QLDC Harbourmaster (258,573 views)

¹ <https://engagementinstitute.org.au/>

- b. Mount Aspiring Road closure due to flood (137,889 views)
- c. Skippers Bridge engineering report (116,413 views)

Website

- 10. The website is considered the single source of truth on all Council related information and is an important digital channel.
- 11. A full website content audit is currently underway to map out and recommend improvements to content and navigation. Higher level website analytics are completed monthly. From 1 January 2026 to present, the top five most viewed web pages were:
 - a. Parking (17,621 views)
 - b. Gym & Group Fitness (16,505 views)
 - c. Alpine Aqualand (11,654 views)
 - d. Rubbish & Recycling Collection (11,445 views)
 - e. Spatial Data Maps (10,445 views)

Website improvements

- 12. A series of website improvements have been recently completed or are underway:
- 13. **Accessibility enhancements** were completed across the main Council website in December 2025. These improvements ensure the site meets the AA level of the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2. WCAG defines how to make web content more accessible to people with a wide range of disabilities, including visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive, language, learning, and neurological disabilities. Previously Council complied with WCAG 2.1 standards. Specific enhancements include:
 - Updating typography site-wide to offer a cleaner and more modern feel.
 - Reducing excessive white space to help improve navigation when scrolling.
 - Tidying up the website footer and improving how icons are presented in this location.
 - Design adjustments to the side navigation panel on level two pages.
 - Navigation and overall design improvements for mobile device users, enhancing mobile useability tenfold.

14. An **AI chatbot** will be ‘soft launched’ at the end of April to support users to more efficiently access the vast amount of content published on the Council website. The chatbot operates within the confines of the QLDC website, so only produces answers relevant to the site.
15. The chatbot persona is a Nevis Skink, named Scout. The Nevis Skink is native to both the Whakatipu Basin and Upper Clutha. The Nevis Skink can be identified by the dark stripe along their back, black or rich-brown colouration on upper surfaces, mustard-yellow belly and thick, pale, cream or yellowish stripes.
16. Scoping is underway to **enhance the public notices** section of the website to ensure this information is easier to access and more visible. Further **navigation enhancements** will also soon be scoped. These will be guided by the ongoing website content audit and best practice guidance.

Let’s Talk website

17. Let’s Talk visits remain steady from 1 January to present, which is traditionally a quiet period for consultation and engagement projects.

- Total visits (across all projects): 51,208

18. Some project specific statistics are included in the consultation and engagement update below.

Consultation and engagement

19. Consultation and engagement projects in progress or complete from 1 January to present include:

Project	Status / stats	Type of process	Next steps
Fernhill Playground upgrade	Complete. 59 feedback surveys completed. 456 Let’s Talk page views.	Informal engagement Onsite signage installed at the playground, with a QR code linking to the survey. Worked closely with Community Association who supported by sharing the survey across their networks.	Feedback to be used to develop a concept design for the playground, which will be presented to the Fernhill community in due course.
Long Term Plan 2027-2037 pre engagement	Ongoing. 2,364 Let’s Talk page views resulted in 756	Informal engagement Utilised online ‘ideas’ board based around 4	Further planning required for next steps

	<p>ideas contributed across four topics</p> <p>Early themes were developed following a pre-engagement process over Dec 25-Feb 26. Themes were communicated back to the community via the draft Annual Plan consultation process in April.</p>	<p>simple questions on how Council invests. This was promoted via Let's Talk Korero Mai, Posters with QR codes, paid social media, direct emails to stakeholder and community databases and at Summerdaze events during January.</p>	
Kawarau Riverside Reserve Management Plan	<p>Submissions closed 30 March 2026.</p> <p>917 Let's Talk page views.</p> <p>21 submissions received.</p> <p>82% support for the plan</p>	<p>Formal consultation under Reserves Act 1977.</p> <p>Flyer drop to residents near the reserves. Onsite signage at 5 x entry points to the reserve with QR codes linking to the survey.</p> <p>2 x onsite drop in sessions.</p> <p>Other promotional activity included social media, targeted stakeholder emails, school newsletters etc.</p>	<p>Submissions hearing scheduled for 22 April.</p>
Draft Annual Plan 2026-2027	<p>Submissions close 24 April.</p> <p>2,000 Let's Talk page views</p> <p>49 submissions received</p> <p>(at time of writing)</p>	<p>Formal consultation under Local Government Act 2002.</p> <p>Consultation document and supporting information distributed to Council offices, libraries, recreation centres and</p>	<p>Annual Plan Submission hearings scheduled for May 2026.</p>

		<p>promoted widely across all Council channels, plus paid print advertising and radio.</p> <p>3 x in person drop-in sessions (Arrowtown,)</p>	
Speed Management Plan	<p>Open for submissions until 10 May.</p> <p>1,700 Let's Talk page views</p> <p>162 submissions received</p> <p>(at time of writing)</p>	<p>Consultation in line with Setting of Speeds Rule 2024.</p> <p>Widely promoted across all Council channels, plus paid print advertising and radio.</p>	<p>Submissions to be collated and presented to the Council, along with any recommended changes to the Speed Management Plan.</p>
Land Development and Subdivision Code of Practice	<p>Feedback open. Closing date not specified.</p> <p>528 Let's Talk page views</p> <p>1 submission received</p> <p>(at time of writing)</p>	<p>Informal engagement</p> <p>Targeted stakeholder emails to development community.</p>	<p>Feedback will be used to inform changes to the Code of Practice. Formal consultation is expected late 2026.</p>
Peter Fraser Park Playground upgrade	<p>Feedback closed 12 April</p> <p>176 Let's Talk page views</p> <p>74 feedback surveys completed</p>	<p>Early informal engagement</p> <p>Onsite signage with QR code, linking to survey. This got good uptake at the 'Domain Daze' event held onsite on 8 March.</p> <p>Worked closely with Community Association to utilise their networks.</p>	<p>Feedback will be used to help shape a concept design for a new playground, which will be tested again with the Lake community.</p>

What's coming up:

20. Communications and Engagement Planning is underway for the following:

Project	Approach / timing
Comprehensive Parking Management Plans	Engagement expected to start later in 2026.
Civic Administration Building location	Engagement expected to start in May.
W naka Structure Plan	Scoping options for a more participatory method of engagement to support development of the structure plan.
Frankton Structure Plan	Early stakeholder engagement underway, public consultation expected in October 2026.
Dog Control Bylaw	Special consultative procedure expected later in 2026.
Shotover Wastewater Treatment Plant	Opportunities for next steps being scoped following the Council resolution on 19 March.
Lynch Block future options	Education to commence asap, with wider community engagement expected later in 2026.
Activities in Public Places / Lakefront Trading	Early stakeholder engagement to commence asap, with wider community consultation expected later in 2026.
Local Approved Products Policy	Special consultative procedure required to revoke current policy.
Freedom Camping Bylaw Amendment	Special consultative procedure expected to start in August.
Water Services Council Controlled Organisation	Stakeholder and staff engagement, and public facing communications is ongoing and directly managed by the Establishment Programme.
Disability Policy review	Early stakeholder engagement to commence asap, with wider community consultation expected later in 2026.
Sunshine Bay Reserve - Draft Development Plan	Engagement expected to start in May 2026.
Playground Strategy	Engagement expected to start in July 2026.

Significance and Engagement Policy update

21. The Significance and Engagement Policy is being reviewed as part of developing the Long Term Plan 2027-2037. Early recommended improvements include:

- Updating strategic assets and references to Council Controlled Organisations (CCO) to reflect the establishment of a Water Services CCO.
- Updating guidance for staff to assess significance.

- More specifically identifying how and when we engage iwi.
- Building in more guidance for engaging with those who may be harder to reach.
- Addressing some minor repetition.

Further direction on the review will be sought from elected members at an upcoming Councillor Long Term Plan workshop in May.

Media spend

22. Council’s approach to procurement for media spend is to prioritise publications that are included within the All of Government (AoG) media spend contract. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) has undertaken a competitive procurement process and established AoG contracts that cover the majority of the media market. This allows QLDC to take advantage of discounted rates for its media spend. The current AoG contract ends on 30 June 2026 and Council is reviewing its media spend arrangements ahead of the 2026-2027 financial year.

23. The table below sets out QLDC’s spending with different media publications over the last two full financial years, separated by publication and amount spent. This covers a broad range of advertising, including statutory public notices, marketing of sport and recreation facilities and programmes and discretionary advertising of Council services, updates, projects or consultation/engagement opportunities.

Publication	Financial Year 2023/24 (NZD, excluding GST)	Financial Year 2024/25 (NZD, excluding GST)
Allied Press Limited (Otago Daily Times, Mountain)	170,662.37	221,190.48
Lakes Weekly Bulletin	35,508.00	36,831.00
The Loop Arrowtown	\$795.00	974.00
Schistrock Media Limited	6,243.00	9,181.00
Stuff Limited Previously Fairfax New Zealand Limited	14,198.99	23,973.81
NZME Publishing Limited	31,111.29	28,386.58
Mediaworks Radio Limited	34,455.28	42,134.35
Mediaworks trading as Mediaworks Outdoor Limited (includes bus back advertising)	11,680.00	2,740.00
The following portion relates to statutory public notices		
	91,116.88	144,607

Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

24. This matter is of low significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy 2024 because it is an operational matter and does not directly affect Council's level of service to the community.
25. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are residents and ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes District.
26. Consultation on the operational update is not required.

Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

27. Consultation with iwi on the operational update is not required.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

28. This matter relates to the Strategic/Political/Reputation risk category. It is associated with RISK10020 Ineffective communication within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a moderate residual risk rating.
29. The compliance with the Significance and Engagement Policy and relevant legislation and sector best practice is intended to support effective community and stakeholder communications and engagement to mitigate that risk.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

30. There are no financial implications as this paper is for noting only and budgets are approved through the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan processes.

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

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

- Significance and Engagement Policy

32. This matter is included as an operational activity in the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan.

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

33. 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. Effective communication and clear, consistent consultation and engagement practices enable residents and ratepayers to stay well informed and able to participate in decisions that impact their local communities.

32. The recommended option:

- Can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan; and
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies.