

**QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL – PROPOSED DISTRICT PLAN
UPPER CLUTHA LANDSCAPE SCHEDULES VARIATION**

MINUTE 9 OF THE COMMISSION

RESPONSE TO EMAIL DATED 6 JULY 2026 RECEIVED FROM MR BEN TROTTER

13 JULY 2026

Introduction

1. The Queenstown Lakes District Council (the Council) has appointed a Hearing Panel, which comprises Commissioners Peter Kensington, Richard Blakey and Quentin Smith (the Hearing Panel / Commission), to hear all submissions and, after it has heard the submissions, to make recommendations on the Variation to the Proposed District Plan: Upper Clutha Landscape Schedules, as to whether to accept or reject the submissions received and any amendments to the provisions of the Schedules. The Council is then required to decide whether to accept or reject the Hearing Panel's recommendations.

Email dated 6 July 2026 from Ben Trotter responding to Minute 7

2. The Hearing Panel received an email dated 6 July 2026 from Ben Trotter, on behalf of the submission from Black Peak Farming (OS 28), responding to Minute 7 of the Commission which set out directions for expert conferencing. The email from Mr Trotter stated:

"I wish to express my concern from a farmer perspective regarding the increasing burden that this process is placing on almost every farmer in the district. Respectfully, it is beyond belief the costs, energy and time being spent on these schedules for what is likely to become irrelevant when the 2025 planning bill is brought forward.

While I appreciate the commission's desire to ensure a robust evidential process, the continual expansion of expert conferencing, technical reports and associated procedural requirements is requiring landowners to commit substantial amounts of time, legal costs, energy and financial resources simply to understand and respond to the proposed variation. For many submitters, these costs are becoming disproportionate to the issues at stake.

There is a growing perception amongst affected landowners that the process is becoming unnecessarily complex and expensive. Many are having to commission multiple specialist reports and engage planning, landscape and other technical experts at significant cost merely to participate meaningfully in the hearing process. This creates a barrier to participation and risks disadvantaging those without the financial means to engage extensive expert advice.

Natural justice should include ensuring that ordinary landowners can effectively participate in the process without facing excessive costs or procedural complexity. At present, it feels as though the process is moving well beyond what many would consider reasonable.

I ask that the Commission remain mindful of the cumulative costs being imposed on submitters and seek opportunities, wherever possible, to simplify the process and focus expert evidence or better yet – withdraw the upper Clutha landscape schedules variation recognising that this entire process has become a pull on resources or farmers which could otherwise be spent on meaningfully enhancing our environment and businesses through investment in other areas which add value to the wider community."

Response

3. The Hearing Panel acknowledges receipt of and thanks Mr Trotter for his email.
4. The Hearing Panel does not hold delegation to withdraw the variation, or to halt the hearing process without receiving specific instruction to do so from the Council. The Hearing Panel also notes that the process currently being followed for this hearing, is the same as that which was set out in the Commission's original Minute 2 of June last year.
5. The Hearing Panel's most recent direction regarding expert conferencing (Minute 7) could result in matters of contention being agreed or narrowed and thereby potentially require less hearing time. The Hearing Panel also signals that, while expert evidence and legal submissions can strengthen submissions, the process being followed provides for lay submitters to attend the hearing and present submissions, without such legal or expert support. Indeed, the Hearing Panel welcomes such attendance.
6. The Hearing Panel assures submitters that consideration of all relevant issues that are presented to us during the hearing process, including through expert and lay evidence, will be considered as part of the Commission's deliberations and to ultimately inform recommendations to the Council.
7. Should any party have any queries in relation to this Minute or require any clarification in relation to the process for this hearing, please contact the Hearings Administrator by email at dp.hearings@qldc.govt.nz.



Peter Kensington

For the Commission

13 July 2026