# WĀNAKA PERFORMING ARTS PRECINCT

# Business Case

## PHASE ONE

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Version 1.0

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# ABOUT THIS BUSINESS CASE

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This Phase One Business Case has been prepared by the Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Trust (WACT) to inform discussion and further consideration of the proposed Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct. It sets out WACT's preferred approach for assessment and refinement, not a final decision or approval to proceed.

The scope, cost estimates, financial projections, funding assumptions, land tenure and delivery arrangements are indicative and subject to further investigation, independent review, consultation and all necessary approvals. No commitment by Queenstown Lakes District Council, prospective funders or other third parties should be inferred unless expressly confirmed.

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# 1 PURPOSE

This business case is presented to the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) to set out the details of the opportunity presented by the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct (the Precinct) for the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037 and provides the Council with the information required to understand the project's scope, benefits, and requirements.

The Precinct represents a community-led, purpose-driven response to the growing need for dedicated performing arts and cultural infrastructure in Wānaka and the wider Upper Clutha. It presents an opportunity to create a vibrant, accessible and financially sustainable cultural destination that supports creativity, strengthens community connections and contributes to the district's cultural, social and economic wellbeing for generations to come.

# 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*"Creativity is social infrastructure."* — Gretchen La Roche, Chief Executive, Creative New Zealand[1]

Wānaka takes its name from a South Island variant of *wānanga*, the ancient schools of learning in which Kāi Tahu tohuka were taught whakapapa reaching back more than a hundred generations. The Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct draws its inspiration from that name. Its vision is to create a tūrangawaewae, a place to stand, shaped by this community and open to the world. It will be a place in which residents of every age and background can gather, learn, create and perform, and which welcomes the artists and visitors who give the district its character.

The Queenstown Lakes District welcomes approximately three million visitors each year, and the population of Wānaka is projected to double within a decade. The decisions Council makes during this Long-Term Plan will therefore shape the character of the town for generations. That prompts a fundamental question: what kind of place should Wānaka be in twenty, thirty and forty years?

The Precinct offers a practical answer to that question. Council is already required to provide a new library in Wānaka, and a suitable QLDC-owned site at Three Parks is available now. In addition, a community trust is prepared to raise the greater part of the cost of a performing arts centre and creative spaces alongside that library. By bringing these elements together in a single precinct, Council can deliver a core service and, for a defined additional contribution, address the district's long-standing shortage of performance, rehearsal and creative space.

The Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Trust (WACT) therefore requests that Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) include Option 2, an integrated civic and cultural precinct at Three Parks, as the preferred option in the consultation document for the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037.

### The decision

QLDC's Library Strategy, refreshed in August 2026, already identifies the need for new library provision in Wānaka. Council will therefore be investing in Wānaka's civic infrastructure during this Long-Term Plan period.

[1] Three Lakes Cultural Trust, Forum on the Future of Creativity and Culture, 11 June 2026

The question before Council is not whether to make that investment, but what it should achieve. Council may deliver a library on its own. Alternatively, for a defined additional contribution, it may place the new library at the centre of a precinct that also includes a Performing Arts Centre and a Creative and Community Pathways building. WACT proposes to fund the greater part of the cost of those two buildings from philanthropic, central government and community sources.

| | |
|---|---|
| Estimated cost to QLDC of the library, civic offices, plaza and external works | $27.87 million |
| Additional QLDC capital required to secure the full Precinct | $11.83 million |
| **Total QLDC contribution to capital, inclusive of the above** | **$39.7 million** |
| Estimated contribution to capital by WACT for the Performing Arts Centre and the Creative and Community Pathways building | $65.7 million |
| Estimated costs to be fundraised by WACT for the provisional establishment | $3.6 million |
| **Total WACT contribution, inclusive of the above** | **$69.3 million** |

*All capital figures are stated in current terms and exclude GST.*

This proposal builds on a decision Council has already made. In June 2026, QLDC resolved to include $125,000 in its 2026/27 Annual Plan, together with Council staff resources, to support WACT's feasibility work.

## Why the Precinct is needed

Wānaka has a long and active tradition of performance, theatre, festivals and music, but its infrastructure has not kept pace with its creative capability or its population. The Lake Wānaka Centre and the Wānaka Library are ageing and fall short of current technical, acoustic and accessibility standards.

In 2024, 46 of the district's 113 community groups reported that they required space. The population is projected to double within a decade. The district's economy also remains heavily dependent on visitors and has few year-round indoor cultural attractions.

At the same time, the opportunity to secure a suitable central site is diminishing. A flat, unencumbered QLDC-owned site of approximately 1.07 hectares at Three Parks is available now, adjacent to the Wānaka Recreation Centre.

## What the Precinct would deliver

The Precinct would comprise three buildings arranged around a shared public plaza:

- **Performing Arts Centre (Building A):** a 580-seat theatre, a 200-seat black box theatre and hospitality spaces.

- **Civic Building (Building B):** a public library and civic offices.
- **Creative and Community Pathways building (Building C):** four purpose-built studios, a gallery and approximately 20 affordable creative-industry spaces.

The feasibility model forecasts 240,700 visits in the first year of operation, rising to 345,600 by Year 5. The Precinct would address five of the seven infrastructure gaps identified in the Three Lakes Cultural Trust's 2026 Evidence Report. It would also give effect to *Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata*, the district's arts, culture and heritage strategy.

WACT has begun engagement with Kāi Tahu, including rūnaka and commercial entities. It will agree an engagement strategy and governance framework so that the Precinct expresses Kāi Tahu identity from design through to operation.

Community feedback has raised concerns that the Precinct could be elitist and could increase rates. The Precinct responds by designing for access in the broadest sense, through community hire rates and inclusive design, and by reducing costs through co-location, shared services and collaboration with Council.

## Options assessed

Three options were assessed.

- **Option 1, the status quo,** requires no new capital in the short term. It defers the cost rather than avoiding it, because the existing facilities would continue to deteriorate while demand increases.
- **Option 2, the integrated precinct,** requires the largest initial commitment. It is the only option that resolves the infrastructure shortfall within the term of this Long-Term Plan, and it captures the efficiencies of a single coordinated build.
  **Option 3, staged development,** would lower the initial commitment. It would, however, deliver the library last, even though the library is expected to generate 42 per cent of visits. It would also expose later stages to cost escalation and to donor and volunteer fatigue.

Option 2 is the preferred option and requests the following commitment from QLDC:

| | |
|---|---|
| Land | Lot 1 DP 471996, Three Parks, to be transferred or leased at nil consideration. The land would revert to QLDC if construction does not proceed, if the community use ends, or if the Trust ceases to exist. |
| Capital | $39.7 million in current terms. This comprises the Civic Building, the plaza and external works, and includes $11.83 million contribution towards the other Precinct buildings Escalation will be shared proportionally. |
| Operating, during establishment | $100,000 per annum plus GST, from 2027/28 to 2030/31. |
| Operating, from opening | $2.6 million per annum plus GST, CPI-indexed, from July 2031, under a binding multi-year Funding Agreement. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Total operating support within the Long-Term Plan | Approximately $16.0 million, before CPI indexation. |
| Rates impact | To be confirmed with officers. |
| Total project | $105.4 million capital in current terms ($114.0 million escalated), excluding $3.6 million in establishment costs. |

The programme provides for eight months of consultation from October 2026 to May 2027 and thirteen months of design, tendering and consenting from June 2027 to June 2028. Construction would follow over thirty months, from July 2028 to January 2031. Opening is planned for July 2031, which allows a period for commissioning and contingency after practical completion.

## Principal risks

The principal risks are financial - first is the capital campaign - WACT must raise $45.7 million from philanthropy and $20 million from central government. The philanthropic environment is currently affected by the cap on the donation tax credit, which takes effect in April 2027. Central government funding is uncertain ahead of the forthcoming general election.

The second is the Precinct's reliance on the QLDC operating grant, which would provide approximately 40 per cent of operating revenue. On the Trust's modelling, a 20 per cent reduction in the grant would place the Year 5 operating result in deficit.

WACT will manage these risks through three measures:

- a phased campaign led by early lead gifts;
- a binding Funding Agreement secured before construction is committed;
- an endowment to support operations

## Recommendation

That Council:

1. Receives the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct Business Case;
2. Includes Option 2, an integrated civic and cultural precinct at Three Parks, as the preferred option in the consultation document for the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037; and
3. Directs officers to work with WACT to confirm, and to report back by QLDC insert date on:
   - the standalone library cost comparison;
   - the rates impact;
   - the terms of the land transfer or lease; and
   - the terms of a multi-year Funding Agreement.

# 3 BACKGROUND

The Queenstown Lakes District is one of the most creatively active regions in New Zealand. Its creative industries contribute $234 million to the local economy each year and employ 5.64% of the district's workforce, which is the second-highest share in the country. Of these roles, 65.6% are highly skilled, compared with 30.1% across the wider district economy. [3] However, the district's infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth - the challenge is therefore not a lack of creative capability, but a shortage of fit-for-purpose facilities through which that capability can be realised.

This business case focuses on the role of cultural infrastructure, both hard infrastructure[2] (physical facilities) and soft infrastructure[3] (the people, organisations, systems, and partnerships that support creative activity).

Over the past seven years, the District has strengthened its soft infrastructure, laying the foundations for a high value, low carbon, and cultural economy. This community-led development, enabled by QLDC includes:

- the establishment of the Three Lakes Cultural Trust as the regional arts office in 2019;
- the opening of Te Atamira, Queenstown's first arts and cultural centre, in May 2022, providing dedicated space for creative pathways and presentation; and
- the community led development of the Queenstown Lakes Districts first arts, culture and heritage strategy, *Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata* endorsement by Council in June 2024.

In 2021, a group of inspired residents established WACT, a registered charitable trust (CC59260), supported by Patron Prue Wallis and Ambassadors Rima Te Wiata, Sir Sam Neill, Helen Clark ONZ, Sir Ian Taylor and Justine Cormack DMA. The Trust then secured funding to commission Horwath HTL to undertake a financial feasibility study for a Performing and Visual Arts and Cultural Centre, published in April 2023. The study examined event demand, venue requirements, facilities, projected activity and cashflow and ownership and management models, drawing on specialist expertise from Virginia Ross, Rawlinsons, Robbie Macrae, Tim Dowson and Greg Innes. Despite this groundwork, the proposal was not included in QLDC's 2024–2034 Ten-Year Plan, and momentum slowed.

In December 2025, encouraged by community support and the District's continued growth, WACT renewed its efforts to advance the project. New trustees Mat Doyle and Bridget White joined Michael Sidey, Mark Verbiest, Alistair King, Allan Dippie, Kirsty Hazledine, Chris Hadfield and Chair Ant Howard. The strengthened Board appointed a project team, Olivia Egerton and Nicki McDonald, to review the earlier work and scope the next steps. This renewed effort recognised both the growing need for cultural infrastructure and the significant financial and infrastructure pressures facing QLDC, including rapid

[2] 2024 Creative Waikato Creative Infrastructure Plan, https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/Waikato-Creative-Infrastructure-Plan_2024-final.pdf . List includes venues, galleries, theatres, workshops, creative spaces, community hubs, rehearsal rooms, marae and halls

[3] 2024 Creative Waikato Creative Infrastructure Plan, https://creativewaikato.co.nz/site/uploads/Waikato-Creative-Infrastructure-Plan_2024-final.pdf . List includes: artists / Creatives, Volunteer groups, community spaces, creative career support, production, capability building for creative organisations, sponsorship, in-kind contributions, bylaws and policies, investment, business partnerships, support for funding, applications, event permit applications and regulations.

population growth, fiscal constraints and ongoing local government reform. This provided the foundation for reconsidering the proposal in the context of Wānaka's evolving needs and the opportunity for a broader, integrated civic and cultural precinct.

## 3.1 A community-led partnership

The Precinct is community-led. Its purpose is to create a place that is authentic, ambitious and enduring, recognising that culture is the connective tissue of a resilient community. Supported by community investment and professional advisers, WACT's volunteer trustees have developed the proposal, in collaboration with QLDC, from a single performing arts centre into an integrated civic and cultural precinct.

The proposed partnership combines QLDC's land, civic infrastructure responsibilities and community relationships with WACT's vision, community leadership and philanthropic fundraising capability. Initial conversations with Kāi Tahu, including both rūnaka and commercial entities, have demonstrated strong alignment with the vision and a shared ambition to engage authentically to bring it to life.

Community feedback has raised concerns about elitism and about the potential impact on rates. This business case responds in two ways: it designs the Precinct for access in the broadest sense, and it seeks to reduce costs through efficiencies and collaboration. In June 2026, QLDC resolved to include $125,000 in its 2026/27 Annual Plan to support WACT's feasibility work, together with Council staff resources to progress the project.

## 3.2 The shortfall in cultural infrastructure

The shortfall in cultural infrastructure persists despite Wānaka's long and vibrant tradition of arts and cultural activity. From the early dance hall on Ruby Island to established events and organisations such as Stars in Your Eyes (now in its 32th year), the Lakes District Public Art Trust (25 years), the Festival of Colour and Aspiring Conversations (more than 20 years) and the Craigs Aspiring Art Prize (20 years) the community has demonstrated a sustained commitment to creativity and performance. More recent initiatives include At the World's Edge Festival, now in its fifth year and expanding internationally to London and Chicago, alongside Onstage Wānaka, Out&About Wānaka and Mint Charitable Trust to name a few.

Existing venues, including the Lake Wānaka Centre and the Wānaka Library, are aging, carry deferred maintenance and fall short of modern technical, acoustic and accessibility standards. As a result arts and cultural organisations operate in a fragmented environment, without adequate space to rehearse, perform or present, while touring productions increasingly bypass the district.

The QLDC *Our Community Spaces report,* December 2024 acknowledges the shortage of suitable facilities, identifying unmet demand alongside challenges relating to affordability, tenure, storage and accessibility. In 2024, 46 of the 113 groups in the District reported requiring space.[4]

[4] QLDC, *Our Community Spaces*, December 2024, https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/p1vp201b/qldc_our-community-spaces_report_jul25-v2.pdf

The Three Lakes Cultural Trust's 2026 Evidence Report (TLCT Report) identifies seven infrastructure gaps across the district: performing arts facilities; artist studios and maker spaces; rehearsal and production space; exhibition and gallery space; affordable community venues; storage and support facilities; and spaces reflecting te ao Māori and cultural diversity[5]. The proposed Precinct would address the first five directly, with the remaining two considered through its design brief and partnership with mana whenua.

### Local evidence: Wānaka Festival of Colour[6]

The Wānaka Festival of Colour provides locally grounded evidence of the economic, cultural and community contribution of performing arts activity in the Upper Clutha. The 2025 festival recorded more than 16,000 attendances across ticketed and free events, including 8,624 ticketed attendances, and reported an estimated $2.19 million in net regional economic benefit over its nine-day programme. The festival presented 84 events across 12 venues, with visitors reporting an average length of stay of 5.4 nights.

### Wānaka Festival of Colour 2025: local evidence summary

| Measure | 2025 reported evidence | Relevance to WPAP | Report pp. |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Economic benefit** | Estimated $2.19 million net regional economic benefit | Evidence of existing regional economic contribution from cultural events | 16–17 |
| **Audience demand** | More than 16,000 total attendances, including 8,624 ticketed (up 6% from 2023) | Evidence of established audience demand; attendances are not unique individuals | 16–17 |
| **Local participation** | 84% of attendees were local (as reported); 17% were first-time festival-goers | Supports the local-resident demand case, alongside visitor demand | 16–19 |
| **Visitor contribution** | Average visitor stay of 5.4 nights | Supports the link between festival programming and destination activity | 16–17 |
| **Community value** | 85% of survey respondents said the festival makes the region a better place to live; audience satisfaction 9/10 | Reported community benefit and audience experience | 16–19 |
| **Education and inclusion** | More than 2,230 students in schools programme; 28 free events; 70 Pay It Forward tickets | Evidence for youth, education and accessible community programming | 22–25 |
| **Scale and volunteering** | 84 events at 12 venues over nine days; more than 120 volunteers; more than 7,000 Community Whānau Day attendees | Demonstrates activity across different spaces and strong community participation | 14–15, 18–19, 22–25 |

[5] Three Lakes Cultural Trust, Creative and Cultural Spaces and Places Evidence Report, August 2026.
[6] Southern Lakes Arts Festival Trust, *Wānaka Festival of Colour Impact Report 2025*.

# 4 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

## 4.1 Vision and principles

Our vision is to create a tūrangawaewae, a place to stand, shaped by this community and open to the world. It is a place for the people of the region and for the artists, makers, performers and visitors who give it character. The Precinct will be a regional cultural anchor. It will bring people together, provide a platform for local creative talent, welcome world-class experiences, and honour and express Kāi Tahu identity, while strengthening community, creativity and economic resilience.

The vision is guided by five principles:

- **Engaged and aligned with mana whenua.** WACT is building a sustained relationship with mana whenua that shapes the Precinct from vision to delivery and operation, and that reflects manaakitanga, rangatiratanga and whakapapa.
- **Designed with and for the community.** The Precinct will serve people of all ages and backgrounds every day, as a venue for performance, participation, learning, services and social connection.
- **A civic heart for generations.** The Precinct will endure beyond any single generation or electoral cycle, and each generation will be able to use, care for and reshape it.
- **An anchor and a catalyst.** The Precinct will support grassroots creativity, attract visitors, activate surrounding uses and strengthen the wider District.
- **A place of belonging and mana.** The Precinct will carry local identity and meaning beyond its architecture. Great places are created through a combination of activity, accessibility, comfort, sociability and a strong sense of place.

The Precinct will bring these qualities together through high-quality, welcoming and inclusive spaces that can be accessed, used and enjoyed by people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities, including those with physical, sensory or cognitive disabilities. It will provide opportunities to play, gather and connect beyond programmed events, with an outdoor plaza and pedestrian-friendly public spaces that reflect the landscape and identity of the region. Complementary activities will bring life to the Precinct throughout the day and evening, while its design will allow it to evolve with the changing needs of the community over time.

*"Lets champion creativity as a strategic asset. Let's champion investment that matches the value being created"* - Jaenine Parkinson, Chief Executive, Museums Aotearoa[7]

## 4.2 Policy context

Cultural spaces are civic and democratic infrastructure. As third places (the spaces beyond home and work where people gather and build community) have eroded, so have opportunities for connection and belonging. Cultural spaces bring those encounters back. They strengthen the social fabric and, like a confluence of rivers, produce outcomes richer than any single stream could carry alone.

[7] Source: Speech at Super Local, Local Government New Zealand Conference, https://www.lgnzconference.co.nz/programme

National policy increasingly emphasises three things: regional access to arts and culture, partnership between central government, local government and communities, and scrutiny of the cost-effectiveness of council investment. Key developments since August 2025 include:

- **Amplify: A Creative and Cultural Strategy for New Zealand 2025–2030** (Manatū Taonga, August 2025)[8] sets 2030 targets of at least $22 billion in sector contribution, a 10% increase in engagement and 5,000 additional sector workers. Metropolitan audiences alone cannot meet the engagement target.
- **Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa** (Creative New Zealand, March 2026) emphasises regional partnerships, with national funding acting as a catalyst for local commitment.
- **The Tourism Policy Statement** (June 2026) aims to double the 2023 value of tourism exports by 2034, though it commits no funding.
- **The Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Act 2026** removes the four well-beings from the purpose of local government. It also names libraries, museums, and community and recreational facilities as core services.

The Precinct gives effect to five Amplify actions and positions QLDC to become a regional partner under Tū Mai Rā, Toi Aotearoa.

At district level, QLDC has spent more than a decade building a strategic framework for cultural and community infrastructure. The 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy 2024–2054 prioritises integrated, multipurpose community hubs, with provision for performing arts, visual arts and mana whenua heritage storytelling. The Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan identifies future growth areas and the infrastructure to support them, including at Three Parks. Other district strategies reinforce these:

- Vision Beyond 2050
- the Community Facility Strategy 2021–2031
- the Economic Diversification Plan
- Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata, the district's arts, culture and heritage strategy, which Council endorsed in 2024

Together, national and district policy provide a strong foundation for the Precinct.

The TLCT Report[9] confirms both the need and the urgency. It finds that growth, rising costs and demand are straining the district's creative and cultural infrastructure, and that performing arts facilities are a documented gap. The creative industries contribute, $234 million, to the district's economy and offer a credible pathway to diversify beyond the visitor economy. A lack of workspace and production infrastructure is holding them back. Participation is growing: in 2025, 66% of residents took part in, performed at or attended a district event.[10] The report also warns that the chance to secure a suitable central site is shrinking, so timely decisions on land use and cultural infrastructure are essential.

## 4.3 Parity and access

The 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy places cultural, artistic and sporting participation side by side, yet the provision of arts and cultural facilities in Wānaka does not currently reflect this balance. QLDC has invested substantially in indoor sport and recreation, recognising the importance of year-round opportunities for community participation. QLDC has budgeted $21.3 million in annual operating

expenditure for active and passive recreation in 2026/27, alongside $81.1 million in planned capital investment across four major sport and recreation projects in its Long Term Plan, demonstrating the significant financial priority given to sport and recreation infrastructure[8]. A comparable commitment to indoor creative and cultural recreation would help create a more balanced portfolio of community and recreational facilities across the district.

## 4.4 A changing community

People have historically moved to the district for outdoor pursuits and tourism, and its social life is still closely tied to the mountains and lakes. As the region has grown and matured, its population has changed and so have residents' recreational needs. Not all residents can readily participate in outdoor activities, including a growing number of older residents, people living with disabilities, injury or illness, and those for whom the cost is prohibitive. Demand for creative recreation is also rising: national participation in creative spaces grew from approximately 11,000 people in 2019 to approximately 40,000 by 2024[9]. Creative participation offers additional opportunities for expression, connection and belonging, accessible to people across a wide range of ages, abilities and incomes.

### Strategic Opportunity: Wānaka Library

The Queenstown Lakes District Library Strategy 2020–2031 was refreshed in August 2026, recognising the growing demands on library services and the need for more flexible, accessible and inclusive facilities. The strategy identifies two options for Wānaka: a new 2,400–2,500 $m^2$ district library hub replacing the existing township library, or a smaller 1,550 $m^2$ library at Three Parks, retaining and refurbishing the existing 580 $m^2$ facility. Both options respond to significant projected population growth and the evolving role of libraries as centres for learning, digital literacy, community activities and social connection.

The proposed Precinct presents an opportunity to integrate future library provision with complementary civic and cultural facilities. Co-location would enable shared meeting rooms, flexible community spaces and other facilities, potentially improving space efficiency, accessibility and community engagement while creating a more vibrant, connected destination.

4.5 Cultural infrastructure: planned and recently opened

The Precinct is not the first proposal for significant cultural infrastructure in the district. QLDC has long held a vision for a cultural and civic heart in central Queenstown with several proposals for performing arts facilities considered over time. Most recently this has been Project Manawa where QLDC explored a joint venture with Ngāi Tahu Property to construct a consolidated Civic Administration Building (CAB) for over 600 council staff alongside land exchanges and a broader cultural precinct, with approximately $2.1million invested in planning and development work. Following public consultation in late 2023, Council resolved in April 2024 not to proceed with the joint venture at that time. The proposed Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct takes a different approach, placing culture at the heart of community-led civic development. It presents an opportunity to progress on its own merits and timeline while informing future district infrastructure planning.

[8] QLDC Annual Plan 2026-2027, https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/pobeufnf/qldcannual-plan_2026-2027-adopted.pdf
[9] Three Lakes Cultural Trust, Creative and Cultural Spaces and Places Evidence Report, August 2026.

Two recent developments also bear on the proposal. Te Atamira, Queenstown's first arts and cultural centre opened in May 2022 with 22 spaces supporting pathways and presentation of arts and culture. Its establishment and development was through private philanthropy, trusts business support and community fundraising, with QLDC holding the headlease and contributing to operational costs. In 2024–2025, it received 102,119 visits demonstrating strong use cultural infrastructure and the potential for a partnership model involving Council and the community. It occupies adapted commercial premises with high-quality acoustic and technical facilities.

A second recent development is Te Puna Mahara, the Cromwell Memorial Events Centre, 55 kilometres from Wānaka, which opened on 18 July 2026 at a reported cost of $45.8 million. It is a community and events centre which includes a flexible 400-seat auditorium, conference and meeting spaces, a cinema, Te Huika Wai Cromwell Museum and gallery facilities, a dance studio and hospitality spaces. It is marketed principally to the conference sector and does not include a public library or creative industry workspaces or studios. As a Central Otago District Council facility, it cannot adequately meet the regular community needs of Upper Clutha residents and arts organisations, or provide the local infrastructure required to support touring productions in Wānaka.

The Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct would therefore complement Te Puna Mahara, with the two facilities providing opportunities to establish a more viable regional circuit for touring productions. The Precinct's operating model must nevertheless treat Te Puna Mahara as a competitor for conferences, functions and some touring events.

# 5 ECONOMIC CASE

*"...Together, we can build a stronger, more connected district that supports the wellbeing and aspirations of all who call it home ..."* - Kenneth Bailey[10]

The Economic Case assesses three options. Option 1, the status quo, requires no new capital and limits QLDC's commitment to existing maintenance and renewals. It carries the lowest short-term cost but the highest long-term cost, and it does not address the problem. Option 2, an integrated civic precinct delivered in partnership with WACT. Option 3, a master-planned development staged over time, delivers the same components in stages, with a smaller QLDC operating contribution during Stage 1. It requires the lowest initial commitment, but it carries the risk of a higher total cost due to cost escalation and volunteer and community fatigue.

Option 2 is the preferred option and presents the best value. It offers the highest net community benefit of the three options, provides the best fit with the Council's obligations, and is the only option that resolves the infrastructure shortfall within the term of the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037. WACT's contribution will be raised through philanthropic and external funding sources, including private donors, government, trusts and foundations, and community fundraising.

[10]



*Figure 1: Proposed space concept only, RTA Studio*



*Figure 2: Proposed space concept only, RTA Studio*

A review of QLDC's proposed 2027–2037 capital budgets present a significant opportunity for Council to work with WACT on this purpose-driven, community-led project and explore innovative solutions. Options could include consolidating library and other community facilities, such as play areas in central Wānaka, to improve connectivity and accessibility while creating additional opportunities for shared spaces, activities and programming. Through coordinated procurement, alignment of existing capital budgets and co-location of facilities, there is also potential to save millions of dollars while delivering improved community outcomes.

There are five critical success factors these include:

- Strategic alignment with several strategies, see ***4. Strategic Context***
- Value for money – achieves highest community net benefit per ratepayer dollar, through external capital leverage and co-location
- Affordability – capital and operating costs fit within the LTP 2027-2037 with manageable rates impact, backed by a binding Funding Agreement
- Achievability – WACT proposes to raise its share and deliver it with QLDC and WACT coordinating three buildings as one precinct
- Community and cultural outcomes – Resolves the districts performing arts and creative space shortfall within the LTP Term, creates a place to celebrate Kāi Tahu narratives and builds creative pathways.

Option 2 is the preferred option and presents the best value. It offers the highest net community benefit of the three options, provides the best fit with the Council's obligations, and is the only option that resolves the infrastructure shortfall within the term of the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037. WACT's contribution will be raised through philanthropic and external funding sources, including private donors, government, trusts and foundations, and community fundraising.

| Option 1: Status quo | |
|---|---|
| **Description** | QLDC continues to rely on the existing facilities across the Upper Clutha, and makes no new investment in dedicated creative, cultural or civic space in Wānaka during the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037.<br>The existing facilities carry deferred maintenance, offer no security of tenure, and provide no space for growth. Demand continues to rise while the supply of fit-for-purpose space declines. Costs are carried as rising maintenance and operating inefficiencies rather than investment in improved facilities. |
| **Advantages** | • No new community facilities require funding under the 2027-2037 Long-Term Plan.<br>• No additional operating expenditure or rates impact arises from new facilities in the short term.<br>• Council retains the flexibility to revisit the decision in a future Long-Term Plan. |
| **Disadvantages** | • The facilities remain well short of industry standards and cannot meet community needs.<br>• The option is inconsistent with current strategies: *Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata, the Economic Diversification Plan* and *Vision Beyond 2050*.<br>• The opportunity for partnership, particularly philanthropic funding is lost representing an opportunity cost of approximately $69,327,500 in external funding and between 240,000 and 350,000 Precinct visits annually.<br>• The district continues to lack space dedicated to its cultural heritage, including that of Kāi Tahu and of its migrant communities.<br>• The shortage of space in which to learn, rehearse and perform worsens as the population grows.<br>• Organisations remain dispersed, with limited collaboration, no coordinated capacity building and continued financial fragility.<br>• Professional production capability remains weak.<br>• Escalation in construction and land costs means that a later solution is likely to cost more in real terms. |
| **Cost implications** | New capital investment: Nil<br>Annual renewals expenditure:<br>• Wānaka Library: $30,000–$40,000 per annum<br>• Lake Wānaka Centre: $60,000–$70,000 per annum<br>QLDC advised on 28 August 2026 that these figures relate to operating expenditure only. They exclude structural or layout changes, which would be capital items. Both buildings date from the 1990s and early 2000s, and QLDC notes that they may not be operationally efficient for current requirements.<br>Deferred maintenance liability: To be confirmed by QLDC. |
| **Rates impact** | No additional immediate rates impact from new capital investment, subject to QLDC confirmation. |
| **Economic Assessment** | Option 1 avoids new capital investment, but it carries escalating maintenance, operating inefficiencies and the opportunity cost of unrealised social, cultural and economic value. |

| **Option 2: Integrated civic precinct, delivered in partnership**<br>***Preferred option – see Appendix 3 for 3D Architectural context by RTA Studio*** | |
|---|---|
| **Description** | The preferred option proposed is the Precinct. Informed by community consultation[1], collaboration with QLDC, policy review and inspiration drawn from several existing facilities.<br>WACT working with QLDC, would develop an integrated civic precinct of three buildings arranged around a shared public plaza. The option co-locates Council services with creative, cultural and community spaces with each drawing visitors to the other throughout the year.<br>**Building A: Performing Arts Centre**<br>A 580-seat contemporary and proscenium theatre, a 200-seat black box theatre, hospitality, retail and back-of-house areas<br>**Building B: Civic Building + Public Plaza**<br>A public library and civic offices<br>**Building C: Community Pathways Space**<br>Four large studios ranging from 90 to 160m2, each designed for a specific purpose, for example, dance, theatre/performance, visual arts and multipurpose use, a 240 m² exhibition gallery and 20 creative industry offices.<br>The detailed engagement and design process will be informed by engagement with Kāi Tahu and specialist practitioners.<br>The evolution from a single venue to an integrated precinct allows for a layered and more resilient operating model. The Precinct can balance community access and commercial viability, through three modes of operation. For more detail see **8.2 Operational model.** |
| **Advantages** | • The option supports the Council's obligation under section 101(1) of the *Local Government Act 2002* to manage its finances in a manner that promotes the current and future interests of the community.<br>• This option gives effect to *Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata* by embedding cultural infrastructure in district planning. It is also consistent with the *Tourism Policy Statement*(June 2026), the *Destination Management Plan* and the *Economic Development Strategy*.<br>• Provides long-term structural investment in cultural and civic infrastructure to support the district's growing population and future needs.<br>• Council capital leverages substantial philanthropic and external funding for the two Trust-led buildings.<br>• Co-location offers opportunities to reduced whole-of-life cost per square metre through shared foyers, back-of-house areas, parking, services and facility management.<br>• Affordable tenancies enable creative enterprises to remain and grow in the district.<br>• Programmes build artistic pathways and professional practice on the district's established strengths in performance, music and dance.<br>• Dedicated space enables Kāi Tahu to present toi Māori and to offer opportunities to learn about it.<br>• The district's diverse cultural communities gain a place in which to share their stories and heritage.<br>• Increased visitation and dwell time support local hospitality, retail and the night-time economy. |

| | |
|---|---|
| | • The partnership with a community-led Trust provides an established platform for delivery and a model capable of responding to future growth.<br>• Provides a new fit-for-purpose venue with two performance spaces, addressing the limitations of existing facilities that are turning work away.<br>• The feasibility model forecasts 240,700 visits in Year 1 of operation, rising to 345,600 by Year 5.<br>• Provides an opportunity to explore the integration or rationalisation of other QLDC owned assets and community facilities. |
| **Disadvantages** | • Largest upfront capital requirement of the three options.<br>• Requires additional operating expenditure in the Long-Term Plan, with a potential rates impact.<br>• Ongoing viability depends on sufficient utilisation, effective programming and sound governance.<br>• The Council and the Trust must coordinate the development of the three adjacent buildings as a unified project, which adds delivery complexity.<br>• The civic building and the external works (plaza, service yard and carpark) sit outside the Trust's ownership and operating responsibilities, but the Trust remains dependent on them. Access, servicing, parking, event use of the plaza and any shared building services will require a formal agreement with QLDC.<br>• The size and configuration of the spaces may not accommodate the needs of every community group. |
| **Cost implications** | **Total capital project:** Circa $105,427,500<br>**WACT** contribution: Circa $69,327,500, (incl. establishment costs $3.6million).<br>**QLDC**<br>Land designated and allocated at nil cost. *Input required from QLDC.*<br>Capital contribution: Circa $39.7 million towards Building B (library and civic offices) and the external works are assumed to be funded, owned and operated by QLDC and sit outside the Trust's financial statements. Including a contribution to the community space developments in Building C.<br>Operating contribution: $2.6 million per annum plus GST from July 2031, CPI-indexed. |
| **Rates impact** | *Input required by QLDC* |
| **Economic Assessment** | Option 2 requires the greatest upfront investment.<br>That investment is offset by the efficiencies of co-location, the leverage of external funding and the widest spread of social, cultural and economic returns.<br>The principal risk includes the scale of the philanthropic and external funding campaign. |

| **Option 3: Master-planned development, staged over time** | |
|---|---|
| **Description** | QLDC commits the site and a masterplan now, and capital is raised and committed to one asset at a time. The masterplan protects the site and provides for a coordinated design.<br>The Community Pathways Space building is delivered first. It relieves the immediate shortage of space in which to learn and rehearse at a more manageable funding scale, establishes the |

| | |
|---|---|
| | operating entity, and generates income and utilisation data that could reduce the risk of the later stages. |
| **Advantages** | • The initial commitment in this Long-Term Plan is the lowest: land, a masterplan and a contribution to Stage 1.<br>• The full vision is planned and costed at the outset, reducing the risk of costly retrofitting as subsequent stages are developed. Please note, later stages remain exposed to potentially significant cost escalation, depending on a range of factors.<br>• Each stage is tested through its own business case and Long-Term Plan consultation, helping to manage financial risk to ratepayers.<br>• Stage 1 builds the operator's capability and track record, and its utilisation data informs the sizing of the Performing Arts Centre.<br>• The Council can respond to growth, funding and demand as they develop.<br>• A committed site and masterplan give funders confidence in the full vision. |
| **Disadvantages** | • The district waits longest for a performing arts venue and for the civic and library benefits.<br>• Prolonged delivery may lead to volunteer and donor fatigue particularly among supporters who cannot see progress toward the full vision.<br>• Escalation on deferred stages increases the total cost of the Precinct.<br>• The library, which generates 42% of forecast Year 1 visits, is delivered last, weakening the operating economics of the earlier stages.<br>• A standalone Creative and Community Pathways space requires its own foyer, amenities and servicing, forgoes the efficiencies of an integrated build.<br>• Repeated mobilisation and construction on an operating site add cost and disruption to operations<br>• Future Councils may re-scope, reprioritise or defer stages.<br>• Performing arts groups remain in substandard facilities until Stage 2. |
| **Cost implications** | **WACT**<br>• Masterplan and costing, estimated $250,000<br>• Capital: Is unable to be confirmed due to a range of factors including lack of visibility on starting date, unknown escalation costs on timeframes and capital components to fund and then the cost of operating and the impact on operating of the staged development.<br>**QLDC**<br>• Land designated and allocated at nil cost - *Input required by QLDC*<br>• As above, this is unknown, potential impact to be confirmed from QLDC will be: a Stage one operating contribution, potential capital commitment within the 2027-2028 Long-Term Plan and total ten-year cost to QLDC dependent on inclusions. |
| **Rates impact** | *Input required by QLDC* |
| **Economic Assessment** | The financial implications of options 3 cannot be reliably qualified at this stage without further definition of the staging programme to inform the financial modelling. |

# 6 COMMERCIAL CASE

International experience shows that the most resilient cultural infrastructure rests on three levers: secure ownership or long-term secure tenure; blended finance supported by investment-ready organisations and specialist intermediaries; and early partnerships with developers including local government. These partnerships can use covenants, leases and value-capture mechanisms to convert private development into enduring public benefit. Land capable of supporting major community infrastructure is finite. As the region continues to grow, the opportunity to secure the right location, at the right scale, will only become harder and more expensive. If that opportunity is not taken now, it may simply not be available to the next generation.

## 6.1 Site

Site selection is one of the most consequential decisions for this project. The proposed site reflects a deliberate consideration of view of the future Wānaka's future growth, with projections indicating that its population could double in the next decade[11].Thriving civic precincts are a defining feature of cohesive, well-connected towns and cities throughout the world. Since the forum of ancient Rome, the civic square has anchored community life as a place for gathering, connection and recreation, and serves as an expression of local identity and belonging. For more detail see ***4. Strategic Context.***

Therefore, a location at the heart of the community, adjacent to retail, recreation and housing, is critical to the precinct's success. Sports fields, by contrast, require large areas of land and function well in residential neighbourhoods or within school grounds; a performing arts precinct depends on centrality, visibility and the everyday activity that surrounds it. The experience of other fast-growing places, including Rolleston, Ōtautahi Christchurch and more recently Whakatū Nelson, shows that retrofitting such facilities, or acquiring land at a later stage can be costly and may attract legal challenges. Wānaka has the opportunity to avoid that outcome by securing the right site now.




*Figure 3: Proposed preferred option, area 1.07 hectares*

[11] QLDC Growth Projections, https://www.qldc.govt.nz/community/population-and-demand

QLDC-owned land Lot 1, DP471996 off Sir Tim Wallis Drive, adjacent to the Wānaka Recreation Centre, is the preferred site. It is a flat greenfield site of approximately 1.07 hectares at Three Parks, with open views of the surrounding landscape and is close to community recreation venues, cinemas, retail, supermarkets, hospitality and retirement villages under construction. The provision of this land at nil cost by QLDC is fundamental to both Precinct development options.

A summary of the five sites reviewed, for more information please see ***Appendix 5: Site review***

| Site | Finding |
|---|---|
| **Three Parks** | Preferred. The site is flat, unencumbered, centrally located and close to complementary amenities. |
| **Lake Wānaka Centre** | Not preferred. The review identified potentially significant seismic costs and a complex build arising from the topography. The land is fee simple, but its future is subject to the Long-Term Plan process because of its designation as a Site of Significance. |
| **Eely Point** | Not preferred. The site has merit, but presents challenges of servicing, amenity and development within an established reserve. |
| **Lismore Park** | Not preferred, for the same reasons as Eely Point. |
| **Golf Course** | Deprioritised. The land is held in trust as a recreation reserve. |

## 6.2 Land ownership

Outlined below are two main options either a transfer of land to WACT or a lease arrangement. options to consider and these need to be discussed with QLDC. The first option is to transfer the land to WACT as a freehold title at nil consideration, with the land dedicated to supporting arts, culture and creative activities for the long-term benefit of the Wānaka and Upper Clutha community. Ownership would provide the Trust with greater security to raise funding, attract philanthropic investment and develop and operate a permanent arts and cultural facility.

The transfer would include appropriate safeguards for Council, including a requirement for the land to revert to QLDC at nil consideration if substantial construction has not commenced within an agreed number of years after the transfer, or if the property permanently ceases to be used for its intended community purpose. Importantly, should WACT be wound up, dissolved or otherwise cease to exist, the land, together with all buildings and permanent improvements, would also revert to QLDC at nil consideration. These obligations would be secured through appropriate registered instruments, potentially including an encumbrance or land covenant in favour of Council, supported by an enforceable transfer agreement. The arrangements could also provide for an extension of the construction period by mutual written agreement.

A nil-cost transfer would represent a significant contribution by QLDC towards the delivery of a permanent community asset, rather than a commercial disposal of land. There is clear precedent for this approach. In November 2017, Christchurch City Council approved the gifting of land at 33–35 London Street to the Lyttelton Historical Museum Society to enable the development of a new museum.

Closer to home, QLDC gifted land to the Queenstown Lakes Community Housing Trust in 2022 for the Tewa Banks affordable housing development in Arrowtown.

QLDC's own arrangements with the Housing Trust also provide a useful precedent for protecting Council's contribution. A Council report dated 7 March 2019 expressly contemplated land reverting to Council should the Housing Trust wind up, secured through an encumbrance registered against the title. More recently, QLDC replaced an encumbrance affecting the Tewa Banks development with a registered covenant that protected the intended affordable housing use while enabling the Trust to secure development finance.

These examples demonstrate how councils can support community infrastructure through the transfer of land ownership while retaining appropriate protections over its future use. The proposed WACT arrangement would follow similar principles, enabling WACT, a charitable organisation to secure external funding and deliver a lasting community facility while protecting Council's contribution and preserving the land's long-term community purpose.

As Building B is proposed to be managed and operated by QLDC, two tenure options are available following construction: the site could be subdivided so that QLDC retains freehold ownership of the land and building, or, if subdivision is not achievable, QLDC could occupy Building B under a long-term peppercorn lease.

A second option available to Council could be to lease the land to WACT on a long-term or perpetual basis, at nil or nominal rental. Recognising for any lease over 35 years a subdivision would need to occur in accordance with section 218 of the Resource Management Act. At the time of writing there are some uncertainties surrounding the future legal status of the land, particularly whether it will be classified as reserve. In any event the proposed 1.07-hectare site would need be subdivided to create a separate fee simple title, free from any reserve classification or associated restrictions. This would allow Council to retain ownership of the land while granting WACT a long-term lease, potentially with perpetual or multiple rights of renewal, providing the security necessary to fund, develop and operate the facility.

The lease could provide similar protections to those proposed under a freehold transfer, including the right for Council to terminate the arrangement and take ownership of the buildings and permanent improvements, without compensation, should WACT cease operating or the property permanently cease to be used for its agreed community purpose.

The process would depend on the legal status of the land. If it remains Council-owned freehold, consultation under section 138 of the Local Government Act 2002 may be required. If the land is formally classified as reserve, Council may need to consider revoking that status under section 24 of the Reserves Act 1977, or potentially exchanging the reserve for other suitable land under section 15. Both processes generally involve public notification, consideration of objections and further statutory approvals. Noting that these processes would need to be followed regardless of which option the Council resolved to support.

## 6.3 Access and connectivity

The proposed Three Parks location benefits from Wānaka's existing and expanding network of walking and cycling pathways. Shared routes provide connections from the town centre towards Three Parks, while links via Ballantyne Road, Anderson Road and Mount Iron extend the network towards Albert Town and surrounding residential areas. The completed 4.5 km Schools to Pool active travel route connects Holy Family School, Wānaka Primary School and Mount Aspiring College with the Wānaka Recreation Centre at Three Parks, creating a valuable cross-town link for students, families and other users.

The network is expected to be strengthened through improvements associated with the recently consented Mt Iron Junction housing development near the SH6/SH84 intersection. Proposed walking and cycling upgrades, including lighting, will improve connections between the development, Albert Town and the existing network, supporting access towards Three Parks. The precise scope and timing of these works will be subject to implementation of the consent conditions.

The absence of an established regular public bus service is a limitation shared by all five sites assessed. However, Otago Regional Council has endorsed a business case to progress a proposed two-year Wānaka–Upper Clutha bus trial connecting Wānaka, Albert Town, Three Parks and Lake Hāwea. Subject to funding and further approvals, this could provide an additional transport option for Precinct users.

As Three Parks and surrounding residential neighbourhoods develop, integration with the Recreation Centre, nearby schools, active travel routes and potential future public transport will further improve the precinct's accessibility and support its role as an integrated cultural and civic destination. Safe pedestrian crossings, cycle access and bicycle parking should therefore be incorporated into detailed site planning.

**Shared parking.** Peak Precinct demand is expected to fall primarily in the evenings and at weekends. Subject to agreements with adjoining businesses, shared parking arrangements at Three Parks could reduce dedicated on-site parking requirements and release more land for public space.

**Structured parking.** If decked or basement parking is preferred at a later stage, the associated floor area and construction costs would need to be explicitly included in the capital cost plan.

**Outdoor events.** The outdoor performance forecourt should be serviced from the Building A scene dock, allowing outdoor events to use existing loading and production infrastructure rather than requiring duplicate facilities.

## 6.4 Risk

As a not-for-profit charitable trust, WACT carries significant responsibility in establishing, constructing and operating a performing arts precinct for the Wānaka community. Risks arise at every stage. During establishment, the key risks relate to demand, land tenure, consenting, and securing sufficient and timely funding. During construction, the focus shifts to cost escalation, contractor performance, programme delays, cash flow and health and safety obligations. Once operational, the Trust must manage long-term financial sustainability, venue utilisation, asset renewal, staffing and the balance between community access and commercial use. Across all phases, the Trust must maintain strong governance, meet its fiduciary and legal obligations, protect its reputation, and maintain the trust of its community, funders and partners.

The following risk matrix identifies the principal risks across each phase, assesses their likelihood and potential impact, and sets out the proposed mitigations to manage them. It is intended as a living tool, to be reviewed regularly by the Board and updated as the project moves through key decision points, so that risk is actively managed rather than simply recorded.

| Risk | Likelihood | Impact | Mitigation |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Stage 1: Establishment** | | | |
| Philanthropic fundraising falls short | Medium | High | Engage donors beyond established networks including national and international outreach and next-generation donors. Explore opportunities associated with Government initiatives such as the Active Investor Plus Visa programme. |
| QLDC declines or delays a formal commitment | Medium | High | Frame the proposal within the Council's statutory obligations and seek to embed it in the Long-Term Plan cycle. |
| The site is unavailable or constrained | Medium | High | Assess several sites and engage the QLDC property team early. |
| Kāi Tahu partnership is not formalised | Low to medium | High | Initiate and deepen the partnership early, and seek to formalise appropriate governance arrangements. |
| Public opposition to the civic office component, as occurred with Project Manawa | Medium | Low | Lead with the cultural and library purpose of the Precinct, and consult early on the civic offices. |
| **Stage 2: Construction** | | | |
| Construction costs escalate | Medium to high | High | Include contingency in estimates, engage contractors early and retain the ability to build in stages. |
| Competing development demands on Wānaka infrastructure | High | Medium | Align the Precinct with the Spatial Plan and the Three Parks programme, and sequence it with enabling infrastructure. |
| **Stage 3: Operation** | | | |
| The Precinct runs an operating deficit | Medium | High | Diversify revenue, embed the QLDC operating contribution in a formal agreement, and seek expressions of interest from anchor tenants. |
| Te Puna Mahara competes for conferences, functions and touring events | Medium | Low | Differentiate the Precinct as a purpose-built performing arts venue and pursue a shared touring circuit with Cromwell and Queenstown. |
| The Lake Wānaka Centre continues to operate at its | Medium | Medium | Agree complementary roles with QLDC before opening, such as repositioning the Lake Wānaka Centre for community, rehearsal and smaller-scale |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| current level, splitting audiences, hirers and Council investment | | | events, and coordinate bookings and pricing across both venues. |
| **Across all stages** | | | |
| Community momentum is lost or volunteers experience fatigue | Medium | Medium | Maintain visible community milestones and communicate them clearly at each stage. Share the workload across a broader volunteer base, and plan for paid roles as the project moves into construction and operation. |

## 6.5 Procurement

The proposed approach to procurement will be guided by QLDC's procurement policies and principles to ensure consistency, transparency and value for money.

At this early stage of the project, the detailed procurement strategy and delivery model have yet to be determined. These will be developed in consultation with QLDC as the project progresses, including consideration of whether WACT should manage construction of the Precinct to achieve efficiencies in cost, coordination and delivery timelines.

To achieve the level of design quality and usability that the vision requires, WACT proposes to lead the overall design process in collaboration with QLDC. Working together in this way would allow both parties to balance the community's vision for the Precinct with the requirements of functional community facilities. It would also ensure that the final design reflects shared priorities and benefits from QLDC's ongoing feedback and engagement. Design costs would be apportioned across the Precinct's buildings and spaces in line with the proposed capital contributions. For more detail see **Section 8.3 Delivery.**

Further detail on the proposed delivery programme is provided in ***Section 8: Management Case*.**

# 7 FINANCIAL CASE

We recognise the pressures already facing the community, including rates, the cost of living, ageing facilities, and significant infrastructure demands. The Precinct does not seek to compete with those priorities. It seeks to work alongside the people responsible for them, so that an important long-term opportunity is not lost while immediate pressures are managed.

The Precinct proposes an innovative funding model for the district because its cost is shared. QLDC would provide the land, fund the civic and library building that falls within its core services and make a defined operating contribution. WACT would raise the majority of the capital from central government, philanthropy and the community and would operate the Precinct with the aim of breaking even. Against the significant capital investment already proposed in the Long-Term Plan 2027–2037, this shared funding approach offers an opportunity to deliver the Precinct while reducing the capital investment required from QLDC.

## Summary of options

Each option is described in full in ***Section 5. Economic Case.*** It should be noted that Option 3 carries significant risk due to uncertainty around future development phases, combined with cost escalation, which has been the single largest driver of capital cost variance in New Zealand cultural projects over the last decade.

| Option | Delivery | Capital estimate | Operating income sources | Renewals | Ten-year cost and revenue |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Status quo** | QLDC maintains the existing venues, with no upgrade planned | Nil | Venue hire and QLDC operating support | Maintenance, together with the costs that hirers bear to achieve an acceptable standard of delivery<br>Renewals, Wānaka Library, $30,000-$40,000<br>Renewals, Lake Wānaka Centre, $60,000-$70,000 | *Input required by QLDC* |
| **Integrated civic precinct (preferred)** | WACT and QLDC | Total circa $105,427,500<br>WACT circa $69,327,500 (incl. establishment costs $3.6 million)<br>QLDC circa $39.7 million | Venue hire, commercial leases, box office, patrons' programme, retail, endowment returns and QLDC operating support | Figures for Buildings A and C<br>Renewals reserve (cash set aside): $620,071 per year in Years 1–8 and $559,925 per year in Years 9–10.<br>Planned renewals expenditure: an average of $335,500 per year. | Ten-year figures<br>Revenue $80,599,846<br>Expenditure $74,452,364 |
| **Staged development** | WACT and QLDC | Starting point would be circa $105,427,500 before escalation<br>Expected Q4 2026–Q4 2029 Business case through construction mid-point 8,530,000 | As for Option 2, phased by stage | *Input required by QLDC* | *Input required by QLDC* |

## 7.1 Capital programme

### 7.1.1 Basis of the cost estimate

The capital estimates are based on a cost plan prepared by Rawlinsons in October 2026.

The cashflow forecasting and subsequent escalation provision are based on the following assumptions: 8 months for consultation (October 2026 to May 2027), 13 months for design, tendering and consent (June 2027 to June 2028 inclusive), 30 months for construction (July 2028 to January 2031). Note that through the business case the estimated opening date July 2031 taking into consideration a number of factors.

The following should be noted:

- The working capital sheets include costs for the establishment of the project and the fundraising campaign of $3.6million expected over four years. These costs are acknowledged but are not included in the Rawlinsons construction costs.
- The contingency, comprising the Design and Estimating Contingency of $3,983,000 and the Project Contingency of $7,490,000 are assumptions.
- Importance Level 3: based on Rawlinsons' prior experience, Buildings A and B may require enhanced structural capacity and restraint. Subject to confirmation a 5% provision has been allowed for this, equivalent to approximately $3.2 million.
- Professional fees represent 11.9% of the total budget which is a risk given the technical expertise required for Building A – the Performing Arts Centre. An increase to 16% would be an additional circa $3.6million.
- Development contributions are listed at circa $1 million. This remains a largely unknown quantum and is a discussion point with QLDC given the collaborative nature of the project.
- An endowment is not presented in the capital programme but anticipated, **see 7.1.6 . Fundraising Strategy** Principal exclusions include: all figures exclude GST, no fit-out for the hospitality spaces, and additional unknown cost implications due to geopolitical instability is excluded.

### 7.1.2 Breakdown of capital costs

| Item | Description | Total ($) |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Construction** | |
| | Site Preparation / Demolition | 210,000 |
| | Building A: Performing Arts Centre (580-seat theatre, black box) | 33,967,500 |
| | Building B: Civic & Community Building (library, offices) | 14,280,000 |
| | Building C: Community Pathways Space | 12,000,000 |
| | Outdoor Performance, Gathering and Activity Spaces | 1,690,000 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Services and Carparking | 860,000 |
| | Technical and Specialist Works | 4,050,000 |
| | Site-Specific Costs | 1,600,000 |
| | Construction Subtotal | 68,657,500 |
| **2** | **Preliminary and General Costs** | |
| | Contractor's site facilities and management | 6,870,000 |
| **3** | **Margin** | |
| | Contractor's off-site overheads and profit | 4,150,000 |
| **4** | **TOTAL CONSTRUCTION COST** | **79,677,500** |
| **5** | **Contingencies, FF&E, Professional Fees, etc.** | |
| | Design & Estimating Contingency (5%) | 3,983,000 |
| | Fixtures, Fittings & Equipment ("FF&E") (4% of construction) | 3,190,000 |
| | Professional Fees and Consenting Costs | 10,080,000 |
| | Project Contingency | 7,490,000 |
| | Development Contributions | 1,000,000 |
| | ESTIMATE TOTAL – CURRENT | 105,427,500 |
| **6** | **Escalation** | |
| | 4Q26–4Q29: Business case through to construction mid-point | 8,530,000 |
| | **ESTIMATE TOTAL – ESCALATED** | **113,957,500** |

### 7.1.3 Aligning funding with purpose

The three-building approach allows each funding source to be matched to the purpose, ownership and community benefit of each component. QLDC would fund the Civic Building and plaza, which deliver core services under the *Local Government (System Improvements) Amendment Act 2026*. WACT would raise the funding for the Performing Arts Centre and the Community Pathways Space, which are aligned to philanthropic, community and central government support.

This blended model has a recent Aotearoa New Zealand precedent, Hamilton City Council contributed $25 million of the $80 million cost of the Waikato Regional Theatre, which is less than one-third of the total. The balance came from regional government, a community trust, central government funds,

lottery grants, philanthropy and sponsorship[12]. It should be noted that the central government landscape continues to change and with the upcoming election the status of several government funds remain unclear.

### 7.1.4 Capital funding plan

The capital fundraising strategy is based on a diversified funding model, with the following indicative contributions for Building A and C, these include:

| Funding source | Indicative share | Indicative amount | Prospects and status |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Central government** | 24.6% | $20,000,000 | International Visitor Levy and or Regional Infrastructure Fund and or the Regional Deal |
| **Queenstown Lakes District Council** | 14.6% | $11,835,900 | Long-Term Plan 2027–2037, Capex<br>Please note: this is included in the $39.7 million and does not include Building B: Civic Building + Public Plaza |
| **Philanthropy** | 56.3% | $45,677,500 | Lead donors, naming rights, trusts and foundations |
| **Community and other sources** | 4.5% | $3,650,000 | Community campaign, events and other sources |
| **Total** | **100%** | **$81,163,400** | |

This is a substantial capital campaign in philanthropic terms with other projects like Te Manawataki o Te Papa, Tauranga or Canterbury Museum redevelopment, Christchurch or Waikato Regional Theatre, Hamilton funded by ratepayers or Central Government with smaller private donors and community campaigns. The Queenstown Lakes district's unusually high density of high-net-worth individuals makes a target of this scale conceivable here in a way it would not be elsewhere in the country, but it is not a routine ask. We are therefore working carefully through the validity of each area of philanthropic funding sources. Several contributing figures have already been qualified with funders, including the Central Lakes Trust and Otago Community Trust. We are yet to confirm specific investment with Wānaka Asset Sales Reserve (WASR) and Central Government.

The fundraising committee is now in place and has begun shaping campaign collateral, meeting prospects to test the overall figure and understand whether it is achievable at this time. One challenge to be acknowledged is that in the Budget 2026 a cap on the donation tax credit was introduced and will take effect in April 2027. Currently there is significant lobbying by the philanthropic sector to understand what mechanisms will replace this or whether it will stay in place. In the coming months, WACT will continue to undertake due diligence to confirm that the target can be met before any formal commitments are made.

[12] Hamilton City Council, "Retractable Seats Set To Unlock More Revenue For Waikato Regional Theatre," media release, *Scoop*, 30 May 2025, https://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/AK2505/S00945.htm.

### 7.1.5. Engagement with central government

WACT has engaged with central government through the local Member of Parliament for Waitaki, Miles Anderson. Letters have been sent to Hon Shane Jones and Hon Chris Bishop to build awareness of the Precinct and to make the case for its inclusion in future stages of the Regional Deal, or any successor to the Regional Infrastructure Fund. Letters have also been sent to Hon Louise Upston and Hon Paul Goldsmith in respect of future investment decisions on the International Visitor Levy. The letters are reproduced in ***Appendix 6.***

### 7.1.6 Fundraising strategy

The capital campaign will be delivered in phases. At this stage, the Fundraising Subcommittee has been established and has held initial meetings to shape the narrative, brainstorm and refine approach, work on the campaign timeline and outline funding sources. The following approach is being planned:

- **Leadership and cultivation phase.** Secure lead gifts and naming rights for the principal venues before the public campaign begins.
- **Trusts, foundations and government.** Submit applications to trusts, foundations and central government funds in line with their funding rounds. We have subscribed to Strategic Grants and have been successful with three establishment grants to date.
- **Public campaign.** Engage the wider community through events, dinners and community fundraising.
- **Investor engagement.** Work with accountants and lawyers to identify investors who may support the Precinct, including applicants under the Active Investor Plus Visa and other mechanisms.
- **Endowment.** Establish an endowment fund during the capital campaign to support long-term operations. A circa $4-8 million endowment that will generate investment returns to support the operational model.

We expect the establishment fundraising campaign to require an investment of $1,200,000 which includes the case for support, prospect research, events and stewardship.7.1.7. Levers to reduce capital cost

At the next stage of development there are several levers available to reduce the capital requirement and/or improve value for money. These include:

- **Building configuration:** Co-locating facilities to enable shared common spaces and amenities and modelling the function and flexibility of spaces to provide a great user experience and operational efficiency, while ensuring building management services – cleaning, security, etc are streamlined and accessible.
- **Environmental design:** Designing for passive energy including heating and cooling, lighting, etc. can reduce plant size and long-term operating costs.
- **Flexible theatre design:** Designing the 580-seat theatre for maximum use with two configurations either a contemporary or a traditional proscenium configuration. The contemporary format creates greater intimacy between performers and audiences, and suits music, comedy, cabaret and drama. The proscenium format provides the conventional relationship between stage and audience when production requires it. The design replaces a full

fly tower with reduced fly capability, a grid and static winch systems. This approach reflects the likely needs of local and touring productions, and reduces technical complexity, operating requirements, maintenance and cost.

- **Land:** The sale of other QLDC-owned land and assets, or the acquisition of additional land for commercial sale could be options to provide a capital contribution to the Precinct, subject to Council's consideration and approval.
- **Refine Plaza design:** Undertake a value engineering review of the Plaza to identify cost savings that maintain its design intent, functionality and long-term value

## 7.2 Operating budget

### 7.2.1 Demand and operating model

Demand for performance space in Wānaka exceeds current supply with total hours up 9.9% over the last three years. The Lake Wānaka Centre is already functioning as a performance venue, with performances, festivals and concerts accounting for 42% of all hours. However, the venue lacks acoustic separation, so it cannot hold more than one event at a time without significant noise interference. The proposed fit-for-purpose spaces would therefore provide largely new capacity and accommodate users currently being turned away. What remains largely unknown is the opportunity of demand for conferences, incentives and events, given that the principal existing options are limited to Edgewater-Lake Wānaka with capacity for 140 delegates and Rippon with capacity for up to 350 delegates.

The operating model in this section refers to operations once the Precinct has completed construction and is open. Currently this is proposed to be July 2031 and is subject to change.

The operating model  was inspired by the example of The Piano, Ōtautahi Christchurch, which operates without annual operating grants. The Precinct model is much larger given that it serves an entire district and therefore accommodates a significant number of additional services and components. It must also balance an inherent tension between the scale of the facility and the cost of keeping its programmes accessible to everyone. Additional programme and operating support will be sought from foundations and trusts, from philanthropy, including private donors and corporate sponsorship, and from government. The intention is to reach a break-even position, with any deficits during the establishment phase met through philanthropic support.

### 7.2.2 Revenue streams

| Category | Source | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| **Commercial leases** | Creative industry offices and resident organisations | Tenants will be engaged at design and establishment phase. |
| **Venue hire** | Theatre (580 seats), black box theatre (200 seats) and four studios, at commercial and community rates | Core baseline revenue. |
| **Box office** | Ticket sales under the presenting and receiving model | Dependent on programming volume and seat yield. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Membership** | Individual, family and corporate programmes | Builds audience loyalty and reduces transaction costs. |
| **Patrons' programme and naming rights** | Individual and corporate patrons, together with naming rights for the principal venues | A significant, time-bound commitment that requires a philanthropy strategy. |
| **Retail** | Merchandise and local art and craft, sold on site and online | Activates the foyer and provides secondary income. |
| **Interest and returns** | Endowment fund | Established during the capital campaign. |
| **Workshops and education** | After-school, holiday and adult programmes | Combines community access with revenue and supports arts pathways. |
| **Shared services (potential)** | Administrative support for resident arts organisations | Modest income that builds sector capacity. |
| **Programme grants** | Annual funding rounds of Creative New Zealand, Manatū Taonga Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Te Puni Kōkiri and the Ministry of Social Development | Contestable, and dependent on programme content. |
| **QLDC operating contribution** | Annual grant under a funding agreement | Essential to long-term viability and must be formally committed in the Long-Term Plan. |

### 7.2.3 Provisional Establishment operating budget, Years 1–5

The provisional establishment, before construction, is proposed to begin from the QLDC financial year 1 July, noting that WACT financial year is from 1 April. At this stage we estimate the funds for the establishment phase to be approximately $3,600,000 which will include: capital campaign fundraising costs for collateral, events, stewardship of $1,200,000 pre-opening and establishment costs of $1,400,000 for the team recruited ahead of opening to manage the establishment, construction (outside of the construction scope and opening and a provisional operating reserve of $1,000,000. We have requested a contribution from QLDC at $100,000 per year during this phase which would be the first four years of this Ten Year Plan 2027-2037.

### 7.2.4 Key assumptions

**Fees and charges:** these have been informed by current fee schedules for community and commercial use. Please note these are draft, working numbers:

- **Main house (580 seats):** proposed commercial and touring $3,000/day; community and local $700/day; corporate and conference $5,200/day; rehearsal, bump-in and bump-out $900/day; technical recharge $820/hire day (assumes about 80% recovery).
- **Black box (200 seats):** venue hire $500/day; development and rehearsal $420/day; technical recharge $380/day.
- **Studios and meeting rooms:** $35–45/hour.

- **Ticketing:** An inside charge and booking fee of $3.60/ticket; commission on third-party box office of $0.85/ticket.

**Utilisation:** Activity ramps up to maturity over five years: 70% in Year 1, 84% in Year 2, 93% in Year 3, 98% in Year 4 and 100% from Year 5. Real volume growth of 0.5% p.a. applies from Year 5. The main theatre has 196 occupied days a year at maturity, about 54% of 365 days. That is 37.6% in Year 1, 54.0% in Year 5 and 55.3% in Year 10.

- **Black box:** 191 occupied days a year at maturity, about 52% of 365 days.
- **Studios:** about 758 hours per room per year, against 814 hours currently achieved in the Armstrong Room.
- **Music and acoustic rooms (10 rooms x 12m2):** $106 per room per week, let to itinerant music tutors.
- The demand has been modelled on the Lake Wānaka Centre data, where seasonality dictates that sustained annual utilisation much above 55% is unlikely to be achievable. January carries under 3% of annual hours, and September to November accounts for 31%. This may change over time with audience development and focused programming like Summer Schools.

**QLDC contribution to annual operating budget** The QLDC annual operating grant of $2.6 million would begin once establishment is complete and the buildings open, which is currently anticipated in July 2031. The grant would be indexed to CPI only. It represents 41.5% of total operating revenue in Year 1 post construction, July 2031, falling to 35.3% by Year 5 and 34.9% by Year 10, July 2041.

**Staffing:** The proposed model provides for 21.4 permanent FTE. The gross floor area of Buildings A and C is 5,963 $m^2$. There is an opportunity to phase the onboarding of staff in line with the opening of the facilities and the delivery of programming. Casual staff will support the house, bar, technical crew, and front-of-house during peak seasons.

**Carpark:** Currently the carpark sits within Building B. However, this should be discussed during the design phase to determine whether there is an opportunity to earn revenue from some or all parking spaces.

### 7.2.5 Sensitivity analysis

| Variable | Base case | Downside case | Effect on net position | Mitigation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Utilisation and hire income** | $854,696 | $726,492 (–15%) | –$128,204 | Deliver through prototypes and grow programming organically. |
| **Box office and touring** | $593,581 | $504,544 (–15%) | –$27,636*<br>**this number takes into consideration production costs* | Secure touring partnerships and a programme of quarterly performances. |
| **Staff costs** | $3,214,391 | $3,407,254 (+6%) | –$192,863 | Attract suitable staff to the region and build local capability. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Commercial lease occupancy** | $381,056 | $323,897 (–15%) | –$57,159 | Seek expressions of interest from anchor tenants before construction. |
| **Philanthropic and sponsorship income** | $1,149,621 | $862,216 (–25%) | –$247,169*<br>**This number takes into consideration fundraising cost that falls with income* | Secure multi-year commitments and grow the endowment. |
| **Combined** | | | **–$653,031** | |

## 7.3 Long-term financial sustainability

On the base case, the Precinct meets the cash-flow test of solvency: it can pay its debts as they fall due in every year of the ten-year projection. The margin is very thin, however, and the result depends on assumptions the Trust does not control.

The precinct's long-term sustainability is supported by the following factors:

- **Positive operating result.** The Precinct records an operating surplus before depreciation in every year of the projection. The surplus rises from $272,000 in Year 1 to $721,000 in Year 10, and totals $6.15 million over ten years.
- **No debt.** Borrowing is not an option for this project. It is nevertheless noted that the operation carries no financing costs, so all operating surpluses are available to the Precinct.
- **Growing self-reliance.** Over the first decade, self-generated revenue rises from 34 per cent of income in Year 1 to 41 per cent in Year 10, which is within the range typical of New Zealand multi-artform venues. Over the same period, public funding falls from 53 per cent to 45 per cent of income.
- **Manageable reliance on philanthropy.** Operating philanthropy represents about 13 per cent of income. This is below the level at which donor fatigue becomes a material risk.
- **Commercial revenue with limited risk.** The in-house bar is the Precinct's highest-margin activity. The café is licensed to an independent operator, which provides rental and turnover income while reducing hospitality trading risk from the Trust.
- **Appropriately scaled staffing.** The Precinct is staffed at the scale its operations require from opening, rather than operating with minimal staffing at the outset. Payroll represents approximately 43 per cent of operating costs, at the lower end of the range for comparable venues.
- **Broad community use.** The Precinct is designed for activity beyond the performance programme. The gallery, café and learning programmes operate independently of the performance calendar. Together with the performances and library visits, they are projected to attract approximately 240,000 to 350,000 visits per year.

### Matters requiring careful management

- **The QLDC operating grant.** The grant is the Precinct's most significant dependency. A 20 per cent reduction would place the Year 5 operating result in deficit, so a multi-year funding agreement should be secured through the Long-Term Plan before construction is committed.
- **Early-year liquidity.** Operating cash falls to approximately $147,000 in Years 3 and 4, which is less than one month of operating costs. A larger opening reserve or other liquidity support arrangements should be considered.
- **Asset renewals.** The renewals reserve is funded at 20 per cent of depreciation, leaving $24.3 million of depreciation unfunded by Year 10. The Board should adopt a renewals policy that progressively increases the funding rate.
- **Accounting deficit.** After depreciation, the Precinct records an annual deficit of approximately $2.1 million to $2.8 million. This is consistent with gifted civic infrastructure, but it should be clearly disclosed to funders and QLDC.
- **Fixed cost base.** Approximately 85 per cent of operating costs are fixed, which limits the Trust's ability to reduce costs if activity falls below projections.
- **Staff costs.** Payroll is the most sensitive cost line, and a 10 per cent increase would reduce the operating result by approximately $321,000. Wage pressure in the Queenstown Lakes labour market should be anticipated.
- **Audience assumptions.** Main-house attendance is assumed at 57 per cent of capacity. This assumption should be validated through market testing as the project progresses.
- **Philanthropy after the capital campaign.** Annual giving is expected to take four to five years to mature. It will depend on the same donor base that funds the capital campaign.
- **External cost pressures.** Energy and insurance costs, and Council rates of $210,000 a year, are largely outside the Trust's control. A charitable rates remission should be sought from QLDC.

## 8 MANAGEMENT CASE

This management case sets out how the project will be governed, resourced and delivered to realise its intended benefits. It draws on international evidence that the critical preconditions for success are a board fit for the future state, clear change management, sufficient internal and external capability, and stewardship that extends well beyond construction into long-term operation. WACT proposes to govern and operate the Precinct as a charitable trust, supported by a formal QLDC funding commitment.

Under its Trust Deed, WACT's purpose is to establish and operate a Centre that serves as an operational base for developing and enhancing the performing arts for Wānaka District residents and visitors. To achieve this, the Trust is empowered to assess feasibility and options; secure land by purchase, lease or other tenure; obtain the necessary consents; raise funding through grants, donations and borrowing; contract for the Centre's construction, fit-out and management; set admission and usage fees to cover operating costs and future enhancements; and host workshops, tuition, lectures and artist residencies.

The initial feasibility study by Horwath HTL (April 2023) identified a core operational tension between community access aspirations and the commercial revenue required to cover operating costs. It recommended a *Receiving House* or *Presenting House* model as the pragmatic resolution. The evolution of the 2023 concept, from a single performing arts centre to an integrated Precinct,

meaningfully changes this equation. Where the single-building model forced a binary choice between community and commercial priorities, a well-designed Precinct can resolve that tension by building dedicated community-access spaces alongside commercially oriented venues, distributing both purpose and risk across multiple spaces, tenants and partners.

This greater flexibility and potential financial resilience do, however, demand a more sophisticated governance and management structure than a single charitable trust operating a single venue, given the need to balance community, cultural, and commercial objectives across multiple spaces, likely multiple tenants or partners, and public land over the long term.

## 8.1 Governance model

WACT's goal is to achieve long-term sustainability with limited risk while remaining true to our vision. Three commitments underpin the assessment of governance models: ensuring WACT's philanthropic credibility and fundraising identity; securing a formal and durable funding relationship with QLDC; and engaging authentically with Kāi Tahu, not as a consultative obligation but as a genuine governance partner.

Five governance and operating models were considered. Two were discounted:

- Council Controlled Organisation: QLDC would establish an organisation to own and operate the Precinct, with WACT in an advisory capacity. This was due to the potential difficulty of delivering the artistic vision, maintaining philanthropic fundraising and exposure to political changes.
- Charitable company: While this model offers corporate governance rigour and the opportunity for constitutional iwi partnership it is the most complex to establish. Directors carry personal liability, mitigated by insurance, and the structure is less familiar to community donors.

The three governance options are presented here:

| **Governance option 1: Charitable Trust with Professional Management Company** | |
|---|---|
| **Summary** | A purpose-built charitable trust (either WACT evolved or a newly established entity) holds ownership or a long-term ground lease over the precinct. The trust board sets strategy, holds the asset and manages funder relationships. Day-to-day operations across the precinct are contracted to a professional venue/precinct management company under a Management Services Agreement. |
| **Strengths** | Maximum focus on venue utilisation and revenue generation<br>Place-making, economic activation, creative industry development that aligns with QLDC's wider strategies i.e. *Spatial Plan, Economic diversification, Te Muka Toi, Te Muka Tākata*, etc<br>Aligns with the Charities Act 2005 and enables the entity to maintain Charities Register status, which is important for philanthropic fundraising and certain grant eligibility<br>Anchor tenancy strategy whereby organisations would anchor the Precinct and on specific terms, for example, the role of food and beverage as an independent precinct activator rather than just an event service<br>Positive urban development that supports growth of creative industries and additional economic development outcomes |

| | |
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| | Clear separation of governance and operations – trust retains strategic asset control, philanthropic eligibility maintained; management can be replaced if performance lags without disrupting the ownership structure. |
| **Weaknesses** | Asset lifecycle costs would increase with a larger footprint<br>Potential for a tension within the management contract - a commercial operator will push toward revenue-maximising use, while the trust's obligations are broader to include the community and access<br>Contract design and ongoing oversight require governance capability. |
| **Opportunities** | To continue to raise philanthropic funds<br>QLDC could be more compelled to contribute to achieve key strategic priorities<br>Shared infrastructure and a greater diversity of revenue-generating uses mean the ratio of costs to revenue could actually improve<br>Trust Board would need a skills base that includes expertise in property, commercial tenancy, cultural programming, hospitality, and community engagement<br>The management contract would specify KPIs around utilisation, community access hours, programming diversity, and financial performance.<br>Community access obligations can be embedded in the contract rather than left to goodwill<br>Operational flexibility. |
| **Threats** | Annual operating funding with Council at arm's length<br>Wānaka's smaller ratepayer base<br>Community access is dependent on being clearly articulated in the management contract. |

| **Governance option 2: Charitable Trust – Existing Governance Model (*current Status Quo*)**<br>**Preferred option** | |
|---|---|
| **Summary** | The charitable trust owns or holds the Precinct and directly manages the principal performance venue(s), while other Precinct spaces are occupied by anchor cultural tenants under formal lease or licence agreements. Anchor tenants might include a community arts organisation, a youth arts programme, a creative industry businesses and/or a hospitality operator.<br>The anchor tenancy trust model is operationally sound, but it must be paired from the outset with a formal, contractually binding funding commitment from QLDC. |
| **Strengths** | The Trust's established governance has community standing and diverse skill set<br>Proposed revenue diversity from the tenancy mix itself aligned with a clear vision for the whole Precinct, supported by well-drafted agreements<br>Precinct development is built collectively. The Trust is not responsible for activating every space. This distributes operational risks and limits the impact of failure of any one component<br>The Trust management team can focus on coordination rather than directly managing every Precinct activity<br>Flexibility to evolve tenant mix over time – lease and licences have defined terms allowing for transitions. |

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| **Weaknesses** | Requires careful lease drafting<br>Risk of Precinct fragmentation without clear communications and regular engagement to avoid friction and tension<br>Trust management team is required to coordinate rather than be strategic. |
| **Opportunities** | Coordination of shared services such as – security, cleaning, marketing through agreement(s) for example, with marketing a 'levy' type mechanism in leases to promote and manage brand<br>Community access is embedded through the leases<br>Operational flexibility is high<br>Hospitality is an independent precinct activator – generating foot traffic and activated public realm<br>Attracting Creative NZ residency and development funding, Note: Funding is currently limited relative to demand at present. |
| **Threats** | A trust operating a precinct without a formal, contractually embedded Council funding obligation is entirely dependent on Council's goodwill in each successive Long Term Plan cycle.<br>Cautionary tale about The Arts Centre Te Matatiki Toi Ora, Christchurch which did not require operational funding during its rebuild but has struggled to re-secure operational funding at the required level. |

| **Governance option 3: Joint Venture** | |
|---|---|
| **Summary** | WACT, or a successor trust, and QLDC establish a joint venture governance entity, with both parties represented on the governing board. The land is owned or held by Council (potentially via a long-term ground lease to the entity), while the built assets and operations sit within the joint entity. This is sometimes structured as a 'Partnership Trust' with a formal Heads of Agreement between the parties setting out capital contributions, governance rights, and funding obligations.<br>A joint venture involves Council and the community trust *sharing* responsibility and control through a purpose-built entity that neither party owns outright. Both parties have skin in the game, and neither can act without the other's agreement on major decisions. |
| **Strengths** | Combines the philanthropic credibility established by the community trust with the financial security of Council backing; shares governance risk<br>WACT retains a meaningful governance role and its fundraising identity<br>Council is unlikely to walk away from an asset in which it has formal governance rights, while Council's investment is protected by its board representation and reporting rights. |
| **Weaknesses** | The model requires careful drafting under the LGA to ensure Council's obligations are properly authorised, and under the Charities Act if charitable status is sought<br>Governance complexity - requires clear dispute resolution mechanisms and decision-making protocols<br>WACT trustees need to be willing to share control. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Opportunities** | WACT has deep community credibility and fundraising relationships that Council does not have. QLDC's long-term financial commitment is essential to viability - the joint venture model better reflects the actual interdependence of the two parties<br>A formal Funding Agreement with QLDC specifying an annual operating contribution, capital contribution and lifecycle cost funding over a defined term, ideally aligned to Council's Long-Term Plan cycle i.e. three-year tranches within a 30-year horizon<br>Opportunity to attract professional venue operators<br>Development of the precinct supports wider urban development opportunities. |
| **Threats** | Risk of governance deadlock if trust and Council priorities diverge<br>Requires sustained political will from Council across electoral cycles. |

On the basis of this review, the preferred approach is to retain the existing charitable Trust governance model i.e. status quo. This takes into consideration that the Trust, established in 2021, has trustees with diverse backgrounds spanning arts and cultural leadership, governance, business, finance, architecture, property development and community organisations. The Trust meets regularly and within its charitable purpose, can establish an operational management structure responsible for the day-to-day Precinct operations embedding community access, shared services, and Precinct-wide identity obligations across individual spaces.

This structure positions the Precinct to access the full range of funding opportunity from philanthropic sources, local government and central government funding, attract professional operational expertise and honour its obligations to the Wānaka community over the long term.

## 8.2 Operational model

A provisional budget has identified operating expenses of approximately $5.99 million in Year 1, July 2031 following the Precinct's opening, increasing to $7.42 million in Year 5 and $8.57 million in Year 10 (2041). These figures exclude GST and are stated before depreciation. The evolution from a single venue to an integrated precinct allows a layered and more resilient operating model. The Precinct can serve community access and commercial viability together, through three modes of operation.

- Presenting and receiving house. The main auditorium programmes and hosts national touring productions, festivals and high-profile events.
- Venue for hire. The black box theatre, studios and outdoor areas are available at community rates, which ensures broad access.
- Incubation and production house. Residency facilities and creative workspaces attract visiting companies and may in time support a resident local company.

Under this Governance option 2, the WACT hold and operates the performing arts and creative components of the Precinct (Buildings A and C). The Trust directly manages the 580-seat theatre, the 200-seat black box, the gallery and associated hospitality and back-of-house areas, retaining control over the Precinct's core cultural offer and its principal revenue streams. Its diversified income base includes WACT programming and venue hire. The remaining studios are available for hire at community

and commercial rates, while creative industry office spaces are occupied by anchor tenants under formal leases or licences of defined terms.

The proposed management team will include 18 fulltime and five part-time roles, supported by three casual staffing pools covering front of house, ushers and bar staff, technical crew and learning tutors and facilitators. The team's responsibilities will range from customer service and curation to strategic planning, advocacy and fundraising.

Building B and the plaza are delivered and held by QLDC and sit outside the Trust's operating model.

The principal strength of this model lies in its diversity and shared responsibility. The tenancy mix generates income from multiple sources, guided by a clear vision for the whole precinct and supported by well-drafted agreements. Because the Trust is not solely responsible for activating every space, operational risk is distributed, and the failure of any single component does not compromise the precinct as a whole.

The model is not without weaknesses. Its principal vulnerability, reliance on discretionary Council support, is addressed directly by making a long-term, contractually binding Funding Agreement a condition of the model from the outset and further it depends on careful drafting of leases and licences, including access, service charge and brand obligations. Without clear communication and regular engagement between the Trust and its tenants, the precinct risks fragmentation and friction between occupants.

The Precinct's greatest risk is financial, so the anchor tenancy model must be paired from the outset with a binding, fixed-term Funding Agreement with QLDC, embedded in the Long Term Plan, securing $100,000 per annum from 2027/28 to 2030/31 and $2.6 million per annum, CPI-indexed, from July 2031 (excluding GST).

## 8.3 Delivery

The project establishment programme covers July 2026 to December 2027 and is structured around six phases: Engage, Establish, Validate, Advocate, Mobilise and Activate. The programme encompasses governance and operating model development, QLDC alignment, site acquisition, financial feasibility, masterplanning and design, stakeholder and Kāi Tahu engagement, community consultation, fundraising and project mobilisation.

Key milestones include progressing the project through QLDC's 2027–2037 Long-Term Plan process, confirming the site and funding pathway, advancing the design, and establishing the partnerships and resources required for delivery.

The detailed Establishment Timeline, including workstreams, responsibilities and milestones, is provided in **Appendix 7 WACT Establishment Timeline**

Kāi Tahu engagement is critical to delivery. Following progression of the business case, WACT is engaging with Kāi Tahu to establish an engagement strategy and governance framework. This will clarify the roles of rūnaka, organisations undertaking the work and other specialist contributors, providing a structured approach to developing the cultural narrative and informing the Precinct's design and delivery. The detailed cultural narrative will be developed through this process once the preferred site is confirmed, rather than being predetermined at this stage.

# APPENDICES

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| 1 | Stakeholder engagement |
| 2 | Precedents that inform the Precinct |
| 3 | Architectural concept |
| 4 | Site review |
| 5 | Letters from Miles Anderson |

## Appendix 1: Stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder and community engagement is central to the development of the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct, ensuring the project is informed by community aspirations, sector expertise and the needs of potential users.

Building on the extensive consultation undertaken by Horwath HTL in 2023, the renewed engagement programme includes stakeholder meetings, a detailed potential usage questionnaire and facilitated workshops planned for November 2026. These activities, alongside wider community engagement and communications, will help refine the precinct vision, test facility and operating requirements, identify opportunities and challenges, and build broader community participation and support.

### 1.1 Previous Horwath HTL research and stakeholder consultation (2023)

#### Overview of Consultation

As part of the Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Centre Feasibility Study, completed in April 2023, Horwath HTL undertook an extensive programme of community, stakeholder and industry consultation to establish the need for, and potential scope of, a new arts and culture facility in Wānaka.

The consultation included:

- **Three local workshops**, involving 21 participants representing performing arts, visual arts, crafts and other creative disciplines.
- **23 stakeholder interviews**, conducted by telephone or video with local arts and cultural organisations, festival organisers, education providers, tourism representatives and other interested parties.
- **A public survey**, attracting 95 responses following invitations to 100 individuals, distribution through 27 local arts groups and promotion through the Wānaka App.
- **National industry consultation**, including performing arts companies, touring promoters, orchestras and professional venue representatives to assess potential demand and technical requirements.

- **Initial consultation with Kāi Tahu Whānui**, establishing the importance of ongoing engagement and meaningful cultural involvement in the project's development.

A detailed list of workshop participants and stakeholders consulted is included in Appendix A1 of the original feasibility study.

### Key Findings

The consultation identified strong interest in developing a purpose-built arts and cultural facility in Wānaka, alongside a number of recurring needs, opportunities and considerations:

- **Existing facility limitations:** Insufficient audience capacity, poor acoustics, inadequate technical and backstage facilities, and limited flexibility were identified as significant constraints on local performances and the ability to attract touring productions.
- **Broader cultural and community opportunities:** Participants identified a need for exhibition galleries, rehearsal and creative studios, education spaces and opportunities for artistic collaboration, alongside spaces for community gathering and engagement.
- **Regional cultural destination:** The potential to attract national touring productions, expand festivals, support artist residencies and strengthen Wānaka's reputation as an arts and cultural destination was widely recognised.
- **Accessibility and sustainability:** Affordable access for local artists and community organisations, effective venue management and long-term financial sustainability were recurring priorities.
- **Scale and complementarity:** Stakeholders emphasised the importance of providing fit-for-purpose facilities without duplicating existing regional venues, overbuilding or attempting to accommodate every activity within a single compromised space.
- **Cultural partnership:** Engagement with Kāi Tahu Whānui highlighted the importance of an ongoing relationship and opportunities to meaningfully reflect mana whenua heritage, identity and creative expression.

The public survey recorded 99% support for a new arts and culture centre among its 95 respondents, with 84% expressing strong support. These results indicate strong support within the surveyed group, rather than representing a statistically representative measure of wider community opinion.

### Relevance to the Current Precinct Proposal

The 2023 consultation provides an important foundation for the current Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct proposal, establishing both the limitations of existing facilities and aspirations for expanded cultural infrastructure.

Of particular relevance, the earlier consultation identified opportunities extending beyond a traditional performance venue, including creative studios, exhibition spaces, arts-related commercial tenancies, education, collaboration and community gathering. These themes are reflected in the broader integrated precinct approach now being developed.

The 2023 study informed the initial facilities concept and feasibility work, while the subsequent move towards an integrated precinct approach also reflects the need for a more diversified and sustainable operating model.

The current 2026 engagement programme builds on this earlier work through renewed stakeholder discussions, a detailed potential usage questionnaire and facilitated workshops. These activities will test current and future requirements, refine the proposed facilities and operating assumptions, and broaden participation as the project progresses.

While the 2023 study focused on a proposed Arts and Culture Centre rather than the integrated precinct now envisaged, its consultation findings remain valuable historical evidence of community needs and aspirations.

**Source:** Horwath HTL, Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Centre Feasibility Study, 6 April 2023. Sections 2.2–2.5, 3.3 and Appendix A1.

## 1.2. Stakeholder meetings – 2026

External stakeholder discussions and briefings. Please note, QLDC and internal WACT engagement excluded.

| Date | Stakeholder / Organisation | Purpose of engagement |
|---|---|---|
| 20 February 2026 | Virginia Ross – Theatre Architect | Expertise in performing arts venue planning and feasibility. Contributed to original Howarth HTL report 2023 |
| March 2026 | MPs Miles Anderson and Joseph Mooney | Project introduction and discussion of potential government support |
| 25 March 2026 | Festival of Colour; Wānaka Arts Society; OnStage Wānaka; Nina Hermanns; David Baker; Central Point Dance | Six insight interviews exploring the needs and aspirations of local arts organisations |
| 27 March 2026 | Trevor Scott – Wānaka Arts Centre | Existing arts facilities and future opportunities |
| 26 May 2026 | Cara Paterson – Creative New Zealand | National arts funding and sector expertise |
| 8 June 2026 | Kāi Tahu rūnaka and commercial representatives | Cultural engagement and partnership opportunities |
| 20 July 2026 | MINT Charitable Trust / MINT Collective | Community inclusion and potential precinct use |
| 24 July 2026 | Mat Woods – Destination Queenstown Lake Wānaka Tourism | Tourism and regional destination opportunities |
| 27 July 2026 | Gretchen La Roche – Creative New Zealand | National arts funding and sector expertise |
| 27 July 2026 | Bronwyn Biji – The Piano, Christchurch | Specialist venue development and operating model |
| 28 July 2026 | Daz Coppins – Festival of Colour | Sector engagement and programming perspectives |
| 4 August 2026 | Brett Ellison – Kāi Tahu | Precinct vision, cultural relationships and opportunities for collaboration |
| 7 August 2026 | Simon Kong – Ngaio Marsh Theatre | Lessons from theatre development, operational design and safety |
| 17 August 2026 | Wānaka Arts Society | Arts sector needs and future facilities |

| Date | Stakeholder / Organisation | Purpose of engagement |
|---|---|---|
| 18 August 2026 | Sally Angus – early donor | Project interest and potential introductions, including Rotary |
| 20 August 2026 | Oliver Harcus – Out & About Wānaka | Local performing arts needs and wider engagement |
| 24 August 2026 | Virginia Ross – Theatre Architect | Specialist input on theatre design and proscenium concept |
| 25 August 2026 | Gus Sharp – Theatre Operations Specialist | Theatre configuration, flexibility and operating considerations |
| 27 August 2026 | Gisella Carr – Cultural Sector Adviser | Cultural infrastructure, community demand, partnerships and guiding principles |
| 1 September 2026 | Wānaka Bridge Club | Potential community use of precinct spaces |
| 2 September 2026 | Robbie Macrae – Theatre Consultant | Previous feasibility assumptions, audience demand and theatre configuration |
| 9 September 2026 | MP Miles Anderson | Project update, followed by a formal report for circulation to relevant ministers |
| 12 September 2026 | Three Lakes Cultural Trust – Board | Project briefing and precinct vision |
| 30 September 2026 | Hayley Fisher and Bridget White – Warren and Mahoney | Advice on proposed Insight workshops including their approach, structure and engagement objectives |
| 15 October 2026 | Te Ari Prendegast and Bridget White – Warren and Mahoney | Advice on Kāi Tahu engagement strategy, governance arrangements, timing and cultural considerations for future design |

## 1.3. Potential Usage Questionnaire 2026 – in progress

The following questionnaire has been developed in Microsoft Forms to gather information from potential users of the precinct. It is reproduced here in a condensed format for inclusion in the business case, with the original questions and response options retained.

WĀNAKA PERFORMING ARTS PRECINCT

### Potential Usage Questionnaire

*2026 | Reproduction of Microsoft Forms questionnaire*

The Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct is a proposed project to create a home for the arts in the Upper Clutha, Queenstown Lakes District. More information is available at wpap.nz.

We are gathering more detailed information from groups and organisations we have spoken with about how they might realistically use the proposed precinct. This will help us understand demand for the proposed core spaces:

500-seat theatre • 200-seat black box • An Art gallery • Four workshop studios (approximately 90–150m$^2$ each), with fit-outs for dance, theatre and performance, visual arts, and multipurpose use • Creative industry offices (10–40m$^2$)

Your answers feed directly into the feasibility operating model for the precinct. It will inform: how much space is needed, when it will be busy, what it will cost to run, and what it would be reasonable to charge.

Please answer based on the level of use your group could realistically sustain rather than a best-case scenario. The questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete. Responses will be reported in aggregate.

*** Required**

## About the Group

**1. Group name ***

Response: _____

**2. Contact name ***

Response: _____

**3. Contact email ***

Response: _____

**4. Approximately how many members or regular participants does your group currently have? ***

Response: _____

**5. Which best describes your group? ***

☐ Incorporated society ☐ Registered charity ☐ Trust ☐ Informal group ☐ Business ☐ Other

**6. Does your group currently use a facility elsewhere that is comparable to the proposed Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**7. What facility or facilities does your group currently use?**

Response: _____

**8. Approximately how many members or regular participants do you expect your group to have in five year? ***

Response: _____

**9. What is the main reason for that expected change?**

Response: _____

## How often would your group use the facility?

**10. How often would your group typically use the facility? ***

*If your use varies depending on the production or project, please answer the following questions based on a typical or recent production and provide your best estimate.*

☐ More than once a week ☐ About once a week ☐ 1-3 times a month ☐ Several times a year ☐ Annual / project based / seasonal use ☐ Other

**11. Approximately how long would a typical booking or period of use last, including setup and pack-down?**

*Please base your answer on a typical or recent booking or production. For project-based use, include the full period required for setup, rehearsals, performances and pack-down*

Response: _____

**12. Morning bookings - which days would your group realistically use the facility?**

☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday

**13. Afternoon bookings - which days would your group realistically use the facility?**

☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday

**14. Evening bookings - which days would your group realistically use the facility?**

☐ Monday ☐ Tuesday ☐ Wednesday ☐ Thursday ☐ Friday ☐ Saturday ☐ Sunday

**15. Approximately how many people would typically attend a session? ***

Response: _____

**16. Approximately what is the smallest number of people you would expect at a session? ***

Response: _____

**17. Approximately what is the largest number of people you would expect at a session? ***

Response: _____

**18. Is your group's use of the facility year-round or seasonal? ***

☐ Seasonal ☐ Year-round ☐ Term time only ☐ Unsure

**19. If seasonal, which months would your group realistically use the facility.**

☐ January ☐ February ☐ March ☐ April ☐ May ☐ June ☐ July ☐ August ☐ September ☐ October ☐ November ☐ December

**20. What spaces and equipment does your group require? Tick one option for each item. Please be honest about what is truly essential - everything marked essential has to be funded. ***

| | Essential | Nice to have | Not required |
|---|---|---|---|
| Large hall / open floor space | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Meeting room (up to 20 people) | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Kitchen or servery | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Lockable storage | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Tables and Chairs | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Sound system / microphones | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Projector or screen | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Wi-Fi / internet | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Stage or performance area | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Changing rooms / showers | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Workshop space for making, creating and working with a range of materials | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**21. Is there any other spaces or equipment your group would require?**

Response: _____

**22. Does your group require support from operator staff? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No

**23. What support would your group need from operator staff? Staffed support may be charged at a higher rate than self-service, so please tick accordingly.**

| | We need this | Only if no extra charge |
|---|---|---|
| Setup and pack-down of furniture | ○ | ○ |
| Cleaning after our session | ○ | ○ |
| Supervision / duty manager on site | ○ | ○ |
| Technical support (sound, AV) | ○ | ○ |
| Front of house / reception / ticketing | ○ | ○ |

**24. Does your group have compliance, accessibility or licensing requirements? Tick one option per line ***

| | Yes | No | Unsure |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wheelchair access / accessible toilets | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Hearing loop | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Alcohol license | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Food perparation / food safety | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Working with children requirements | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Storage of hazardous or bulky equipment | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**25. Are there any other compliance, accessibility or licensing requirements we should be aware of?**

Response: _____

**26. What does your group currently pay to hire or use a facility for your activities? Please enter the amount you pay per hour per session (NZ$)**

Response: _____

**27. What does that price include?**

☐ Power ☐ Cleaning ☐ Storage ☐ Staff support ☐ Nothing extra ☐ Other

**28. What is the most your group could sustainably pay per session (NZ$)?**

Response: _____

**29. What is the most your group could sustainably pay per Year (NZ$)?**

Response: _____

**30. Would your group be willing to sign a booking agreement for a set number of hours each year? ***

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

**31. Approximately how many hours per year could your group commit to?**

Response: _____

**32. Who in your group would be authorised to commit to a booking agreement? Please provide their name and role.**

Response: _____

**33. Could your group contribute in kind to the facility? Select all that apply. ***

☐ Volunteer hours ☐ Equipment we own ☐ Maintenance or working bees ☐ Fundraising or grants ☐ No

**34. If applicable, please estimate the value or number of hours your group could contribute per year**

Response: _____

**35. What would stop your group using the facility? Select up to three.**

☐ Price increase ☐ Available times did not suit us ☐ The space or equipment did not meet our needs ☐ Travel distance and parking ☐ Our members declined ☐ None of the above - we would use it regardless ☐ Other

**36. If price is a factor, at what per-session price would your group stop using the facility (NZ$)?**

Response: _____

**37. If this facility did not proceed, where would your group go instead? ***

Response: _____

## 1.4. Planned Stakeholder Workshops – November 2026

Three facilitated stakeholder workshops are scheduled for early November 2026, comprising two Insight Workshops and one Arts and Community User Group Workshop.

The workshops are designed to bring together a diverse range of perspectives to test and refine the precinct vision, explore opportunities and challenges, better understand community and user needs, and identify opportunities for collaboration and support.

### Insight Workshops (2)

**Format:** Two curated, two-hour workshops, each involving approximately seven invited participants and two WACT trustees.

**Purpose:** To bring together deliberately mixed perspectives and experiences, rather than grouping participants within their usual sectors or silos. The workshops will encourage fresh thinking, challenge assumptions, explore the wider potential of the precinct and help shape a shared vision for its future.

**Participants are drawn from:**

- Creative thinkers and businesses, including design, architecture, film and other creative industries
- Artists and practitioners across visual arts, music, theatre and performance
- Tourism, destination management, cultural organisations and festival representatives
- Kāi Tahu representatives
- Social service providers and community organisations
- Economic development interests

**Key discussion themes:**

- Vision and ambition – what success could look like for the precinct
- Community and users – who the precinct should serve and whose needs may be overlooked
- Opportunities and challenges – what excites participants, what concerns them and what may be missing
- Practical considerations – funding, timing, delivery and other constraints
- Collaboration and commitment – opportunities for organisations and individuals to contribute

### Arts and Community User Group Workshop (1)

**Format:** A 90-minute facilitated workshop with representatives of local arts, cultural and community user organisations, supported by a pre-workshop survey.

**Purpose:** To build on conversations already undertaken with a number of these organisations, better understand their current and future requirements, and test the proposed facilities and spaces against practical needs.

**Key discussion themes:**

- Aspirations for the precinct and what success would mean for users
- Proposed facilities, spaces and their suitability for different activities
- Operational and practical requirements, including opportunities for shared use
- Key constraints, concerns and gaps in the current concept
- Priorities and improvements to inform further planning

**Workshop Approach and Outcomes**

The workshops will use facilitated, interactive discussions to encourage creative thinking, challenge assumptions and gather a broad range of perspectives.

Feedback will be documented and consolidated to inform the refinement of the precinct vision, facilities planning, operating model and subsequent stages of project development.

The workshops will also strengthen stakeholder relationships, identify opportunities for collaboration and help build a wider network of community support and advocacy for the precinct.

## 1.4. Wider community engagement programme

The stakeholder meetings, questionnaire and planned November workshops form part of a broader engagement programme designed to build awareness, encourage participation and ensure the precinct is shaped by the aspirations and needs of the wider community.

## 1.5. Media and Stakeholder Communications

An initial media release was distributed to local and regional media outlets on 5 October 2026, providing an update on the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct, the progress being made and the growing need for cultural infrastructure in the Upper Clutha. Coverage included an article published on the Wānaka App on 7 October, Growing momentum for Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct.

On 9 October 2026, an email update was distributed via Mailchimp to approximately 250 stakeholders, including community organisations, arts and cultural groups and project supporters. This forms part of the ongoing communications programme to keep stakeholders informed, build awareness and encourage wider engagement as the project progresses.

## 1.6. Website and Vision Document

The dedicated project website, wpap.nz, was launched in August 2026, providing a central source of information about the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct, its vision, progress and opportunities for community involvement and support. The website was developed by Brown Bread, a specialist communications and creative agency.

Building on this work, a dedicated *Vision for the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct* document has been developed and is currently being professionally designed by Brown Bread. It brings together the precinct vision, proposed facilities, community benefits and opportunities for participation and support in an accessible, visual format.

Once completed, the Vision Document will be an important resource for engaging stakeholders, community organisations, prospective supporters and funders, helping communicate the opportunity, build understanding and encourage wider involvement as the project progresses.

## 1.7. Festival of Colour – April 2027 (Proposed)

Plans are progressing with the Wānaka Festival of Colour to host a free public panel discussion at the Crystal Palace on 5 or 6 April 2027. The session would bring together leading arts and cultural experts to explore the role of creativity, cultural infrastructure and placemaking in building vibrant communities.

It will also provide an opportunity to update the community on the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct, generate enthusiasm and invite wider participation in shaping its future.

## 1.8. Ongoing Community Engagement

A key priority is to create different opportunities for people to contribute, ensuring engagement extends beyond established organisations, existing networks and the most vocal members of the community.

As the project progresses, further engagement activities will be developed to gather diverse perspectives and encourage wider community participation.

**Potential activities include:**

- Informal café-style conversations and community group sessions
- Open community forums and public discussions
- Online feedback and opportunities for people to share ideas, concerns and aspirations
- Public events and discussions exploring the role of cultural and civic spaces in community life
- Continued engagement with individuals and organisations already involved, while reaching further into their wider networks

The engagement programme will evolve alongside the precinct's development, including opportunities for community input through QLDC's 2027–2037 Long Term Plan consultation process.

# Appendix 2: Inspiration to inform Precinct

The following examples, while varying considerably in scale and context, have helped inform the vision for the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct. Each illustrates different aspects of successful cultural infrastructure, from community connection and economic development to financial sustainability and delivery.

## 2.1. HOTA (Home of the Arts) – Gold Coast, Australia

**Website:** https://hota.com.au/

**Summary:** A major cultural precinct combining theatres, galleries, outdoor performance spaces, parkland, dining and community activities. It demonstrates how integrating arts, recreation and public spaces can create a vibrant cultural destination that attracts visitors and encourages year-round community engagement.

**Alignment:** Integrated precinct planning, destination appeal and year-round activation extending well beyond ticketed performances.

## 2.2. Te Ara Ātea, Rolleston, New Zealand

**Website:** https://www.selwynlibraries.co.nz/your-libraries/te-ara-atea

**Summary:** A contemporary library and community hub that challenges traditional perceptions of a library by creating flexible, multipurpose spaces for learning, cultural engagement and community connection. It demonstrates how thoughtful, integrated design can transform a traditional public facility into a vibrant community destination that encourages collaboration and everyday use.

**Alignment:** Community hub, flexible spaces that maximise community value, and the importance of early integrated planning to deliver cost-effective, adaptable facilities.

### 2.3. Corban Estate Arts Centre, Auckland New Zealand

**Website:** https://ceac.org.nz/

**Summary:** A community-focused arts centre combining artist studios, exhibitions, workshops, education programmes, performance spaces and a café within a heritage setting. It demonstrates how accessible, shared creative spaces can foster community participation, artistic development and everyday social connection.

**Alignment:** Accessible community facilities, creative development spaces and informal gathering places that support participation, collaboration and connection.

### 2.4. Kaapelitehdas (Cable Factory) – Helsinki, Finland

**Website:** https://www.kaapeli.com/en/our-organization/cable-factory

**Summary:** A former industrial complex transformed into a major cultural precinct housing creative businesses, artist studios, performance and exhibition spaces and cultural organisations. Its mixed-use model demonstrates how bringing creative production, cultural participation and commercial activity together can support a thriving creative economy.

**Alignment:** Local government vision and leadership in creating an ecosystem that supports the arts and creative industries, demonstrating their potential to stimulate economic growth, employment and wider urban regeneration.

### 2.5. The Piano, Christchurch, New Zealand

**Website:** https://thepiano.nz/

**Summary:** A purpose-built arts venue featuring a 325-seat concert hall with exceptional acoustics, supported by smaller performance, rehearsal, workshop and meeting spaces and commercial office accommodation. It demonstrates the viability of a mid-sized specialist venue supporting a diverse programme of cultural and commercial events.

**Alignment:** Revenue diversification through performance, venue hire and commercial tenancies helping support the long-term financial sustainability of cultural facilities.

### 2.6. BNZ Theatre (Waikato Regional Theatre), Kirikiriroa Hamilton, New Zealand

**Website:** https://www.bnztheatre.co.nz/

**Summary:** A new 1,300-seat regional performing arts venue owned by the Waikato Regional Property Trust opened 19 January 2026. It was developed with significant local government, central government and philanthropic funding, and professionally operated by Live Nation. It demonstrates how partnerships between community trusts, government and professional operators can deliver and sustain major regional cultural infrastructure.

**Alignment:** Community-led, trust ownership, local government investment and ongoing support, and professional venue management to deliver a major regional cultural asset.

### 2.7. Lessons for the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct

Collectively, these examples demonstrate that successful cultural infrastructure extends well beyond the provision of performance spaces. Through thoughtful design, diverse uses, community accessibility, creative industry development and sustainable operating partnerships, cultural precincts can become enduring community assets that also contribute to wider economic vitality.

These principles underpin the vision for the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct: a place to gather, perform, learn, create and connect, delivering lasting cultural, social and economic benefits for the Upper Clutha.

## Appendix 3: Architectural Concept






# Appendix 4: Site review

| | |
|---|---|
| Subject | Site Request – Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct |
| To | Ken Bailey, GM - Community Services |
| For | Roger Davidson, Property Director<br>Marie Day, Community Partnerships Manager<br>Christina Hitchcock Property Advisory |
| From | Olivia Egerton, Project Director, Lake Wānaka Arts and Cultural Trust |
| Date | 28 July 2026 |

## INTRODUCTION

With the adoption of the Annual Plan, 25 June 2026, QLDC was given the mandate to work with the Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Trust on the feasibility and establishment of the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct. the Precinct is an integrated development and gathering space for our growing community with arts and culture at its heart.

The following site review was initially presented to QLDC on 23 March 2026 as part of a larger feasibility scope. It assesses five Council-owned sites in Wānaka for their suitability to accommodate a

performing arts centre precinct development, evaluating each against criteria including planning flexibility, legal constraints, public access requirements and process complexity.

The review sits within the context of the QLDC 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy 2024–2054, which identifies a shift toward strategically placed, integrated, multipurpose community hubs and specifically calls out creativity and culture - including performing arts, visual arts and mana whenua heritage storytelling - as a priority purpose for future community investment.

Site selection is one of the most consequential decisions in this project. The right site will shape construction cost, public accessibility, urban activation, heritage and cultural context, and the proposed long-term relationship with QLDC.

## DISCUSSION

From an initial longlist of eleven sites identified by previous WACT Trustees, this review focused on five: the Golf Course which is noted but deprioritised given its trust-for-recreation-reserve constraints.

| Site | Zoning | Legal Title | Key Constraint | Arts Facility |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Lakes Wanaka Centre | Town Centre | Fee Simple | Strategic Asset + Seismic upgrade | Possible |
| Eely Point | Informal Recreation | Recreation Reserve | Ngāi Tahu + Reserves Act | Possible |
| Lismore Park | Informal Recreation | Recreation Reserve | Reserves Act | Possible |
| Three Parks | Community Purposes | Fee Simple | Land swap risk | Strong |
| Golf Course | Community Purposes | In Trust Recreation Reserve | Ngāi Tahu + Trust + LGA/Reserves Act | Poor |



*Figure 1: Site locations reviewed in site analysis*

Of the remaining four - Eely Point and Lismore Park, though not without merit, present challenges around services, amenity and the complexity of developing within an established reserve. The Lake Wānaka Centre review uncovered potentially significant and costly seismic challenges, and a complex

build due to topography. While the site is fee simple, any decisions regarding its future are subject to the Ten-Year Plan process, given its designation as Site of Significance.




*Figure 2: Proposed preferred option, area 1.07 hectares*

The strongest contender is QLDC owned land at Three Parks which is a flat greenfield site of about 1.07 hectares, closely located to key amenities – other community recreation venues, movie theatres, retail, supermarkets, food and beverage, retirement villages under construction, etc. It has 360 views to the inspiring local landscape and is situated in the heart of Wānaka.

Our review assessed the five Council-owned sites against criteria including planning flexibility, legal constraints, public access, requirements and process complexity.

They have been reviewed within the context of the *QLDC 30-Year Infrastructure Strategy 2024–2054*, which identifies strategically placed, integrated, multipurpose community hubs as the preferred investment direction and specifically calls out performing arts, visual arts and mana whenua heritage storytelling as priority purposes.

It should be noted that the absence of public transport in Wānaka is a limitation common to all sites.

## ACTION

WACT requests immediate consideration of the site at 83 Ballantyne Road, Three Lakes, Wanaka (Lot 1 DP 484179 and Lot 1 DP 471996) for the establishment and development for the Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct.

We suggest the next step to be a meeting in person before 10 August 2026, due to the required budget deadlines for the Ten-Year Plan.

## SITE REVIEWS

**LISMORE PARK**

Lismore Park is a viable option with a simpler legal pathway than Eely Point. However, the Reserves Act occupation right framework and mandatory public notification remain. The reserve classification would constrain fully commercial programming. Lismore Park would suit a

| | |
|---|---|
| community-focused, publicly accessible performing arts model more than a commercially driven venue. | |
| Address | Lismore Park, Wanaka |
| Legal description | Lot 1 DP 484179 and Lot 1 DP 471996 |
| Record of title | Gazette Notice 1981 p1934 |
| Registered owner | Queenstown-Lakes District Council |
| Purpose | Recreation Reserve |
| District plan zoning | Informal Recreation |
| Overall suitability | Feasible with conditions |
| Advantages | Located adjacent to Mount Aspiring College.<br>Arts facility explicitly contemplated in Informal Recreation zone.<br>Established park setting with existing community amenity - positive public association.<br>Ancillary commercial activity (café, merchandise, ticketing) permitted. |
| Disadvantages | Reserve classification limits purely commercial programming of performances.<br>Discretionary resource consent required - uncertain outcome.<br>Reserves Act public notification required - community opposition expected.<br>Occupation right (not freehold) limits long-term tenure security for development investment.<br>Informal Recreation zoning less directly aligned with major performing arts infrastructure than Town Centre zone. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Te Whare Tapere o Wānaka \| Lake Wānaka Centre (89 Ardmore Street) \| Wanaka Town Centre Zone**<br><br>89 Ardmore Street (Te Whare Tapere o Wanaka \| Lake Wanaka Centre) remains a strong site for the Wanaka Performing Arts Centre. The town centre zoning, fee simple title, and strong planning policy alignment are unrivalled across all five sites. However, two material constraints must be addressed upfront – named Strategic Asset and unknown seismic capacity. Should this site be a strong contender a geotechnical assessment should be commissioned immediately and the preferred development scenario embedded in the next Long Term Plan cycle. | |
| Address | 89 Ardmore Street, Wanaka |
| Legal description | Lot 2 DP 25900 |
| Record of title | OT17D/1199 |
| Registered owner | Queenstown-Lakes District Council |

| | |
|---|---|
| Purpose | Fee Simple |
| District plan zoning | Wānaka Town Centre |
| Overall suitability | Strong contender conditions regarding seismic review and |
| Advantages | Central town centre location - maximum accessibility for residents and visitors.<br><br>Offering fee simple ownership - no Reserves Act overlay.<br><br>Town Centre zoning and the most permissive planning environment.<br><br>Wanaka Town Centre zone supports the full range of cultural, entertainment, commercial and visitor activities. A performing arts centre fits squarely within zone objectives.<br><br>Building already in use as community hall and performing arts centre.<br><br>Night-time economy provisions support evening performances without unduly restrictive noise controls.<br><br>Residential and visitor accommodation above ground floor level permitted - potential for mixed-use development model.<br><br>Existing key infrastructure to site. |
| Disadvantages | Te Whare Tapere o Wanaka, Lake Wānaka Centre is explicitly named in QLDC Significance & Engagement Policy 2024 (Appendix 2). Any long-term lease, change of service level, or disposal must be provided for in the Long-Term Plan and subject to a full Special Consultative Procedure under s83 LGA 2002. This adds 12–36+ months to development timelines and cannot be bypassed.<br><br>The existing building's estimated seismic capacity of 45–50% NBS (Holmes Consulting Group ISA, 2014) falls below the 67% Change of Use threshold required under s115 of the Building Act, meaning a structural upgrade programme is required.<br><br>Site is in a potential landslide zone - detailed geotechnical assessment required. Unknown is the cost to develop on the site with significant water feature running through the site in addition to a wide-ranging gradient at several points on the site.<br><br>Any long-term lease (> 6 months) restricting public access also triggers s138 LGA consultation, in addition to the Strategic Asset SCP process.<br><br>Town centre land value - opportunity cost considerations for Council in long-term lease or disposal scenarios. |

| |
|---|
| **THREE PARKS / QLDC Land (83 Ballantyne Road)**<br><br>Three Parks continues to grow retail, residential and recreation, supporting a vibrant and growing community with proximity to the Wānaka CBD and Lakefront.Three Parks/Ballantyne Road is feasible in principle under the Community Purposes zone. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Address | 83 Ballantyne Road, Three Lakes, Wanaka |
| Legal description | Lot 1 DP 484179 and Lot 1 DP 471996 |
| Record of title | 689150 |
| Registered owner | Queenstown-Lakes District Council |
| Purpose | Fee Simple |
| District plan zoning | Community Purposes |
| Overall suitability | A desired, flat site with great views and closely located to other recreation facilities. |
| Advantages | Flat site with 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains.<br>Good access to Wānaka CBD and lakefront.<br>Fee simple title provides ownership flexibility.<br>Three Parks is a growing residential area - proximity to future community demand and complementary amenities in good proximity.<br>Located in the Community Purposes Zone which supports libraries, halls, recreation centres and community buildings - a performing arts centre broadly aligns but may require consent.<br>Fee simple title, but s138 LGA community consultation required for any disposal/lease > 6 months.<br>No Reserves Act constraints apply. Standard public access expectations apply as per LGA framework. |
| Disadvantages | Community Purposes zone accommodates community buildings but is not optimally designed for major cultural infrastructure - rezoning or resource consent may be needed.<br>May be competition for QLDC land in this location. |

**EELY POINT**

Eely Point offers a compelling lakeside setting and the Informal Recreation zoning explicitly contemplating arts facility use. However, the combination of the Ngāi Tahu right of first refusal obligations and the mandatory Reserves Act public notification process introduces meaningful legal and process risks. This site is viable but will require a robust community consultation strategy.

| | |
|---|---|
| Address | Eely Point Reserve, Wānaka |
| Legal description | Section 29 and Section 1543R Block XIV Lower Wānaka Survey District |
| Record of title | OT7B/497 |
| Registered owner | Queenstown-Lakes District Council |

| | |
|---|---|
| Purpose | Held in Trust for Recreation Purposes (Gazette Notice 1983 p2499) |
| District plan zoning | Informal Recreation |
| Overall suitability | Feasible with Conditions |
| Advantages | Planning flexibility - Informal Recreation zone supports small-scale community uses and commercial recreation activities ancillary to the reserve purpose.<br><br>Scenic lakeside setting - strong public amenities and visitor attraction potential.<br><br>Visually high public profile location consistent with creating landmark, iconic site.<br><br>Arts facility suitability - explicitly contemplated in the Informal Recreation zone. However, requires discretionary resource consent and public notification under the Reserves Act. Ancillary commercial activities (café, retail and ticketing) permitted to support the facility<br><br>Public access requirement - any occupation right requires the facility to be publicly accessible and not operating as a purely commercial facility. |
| Disadvantages | Much loved, iconic natural landscape for the people of Wānaka - envisage significant community opposition to it being developed.<br><br>Potential additional legal constraint - Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 Part 9 applies - right of first refusal to Ngāi Tahu must be considered for any disposition or occupation arrangements.<br><br>Requires discretionary resource consent, outcome not guaranteed with Reserves Act public notification and Ngāi Tahu consultation. Multi-step, time-intensive process.<br><br>Reserve classification limits purely commercial programming.<br><br>Unknown critical infrastructure. |

**WĀNAKA GOLF COURSE**

The Golf Course is the least feasible site for a performing arts centre. The combination of the in-trust recreation reserve purpose, Ngāi Tahu obligations, Community Purposes zoning, and s138 LGA consultation requirements creates the most complex and uncertain pathway of any of the five sites. This site should not be prioritised unless all other options have been exhausted and a long-term strategic repurposing of the golf course land is contemplated.

| | |
|---|---|
| Address | Wānaka Golf Course, Wanaka |
| Legal description | Lot 1 DP 11284 and Part Section 11 Block XLIX and Section 12 Block XLIX Town of Wanaka |
| Record of title | 57838 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Registered owner | Queenstown-Lakes District Council |
| Purpose | In Trust for Recreation Reserve |
| District plan zoning | Community Purposes |
| Overall suitability | Low Feasibility, Highest Constraints |
| Advantages | Large site area if golf course use is ever discontinued - potential for future repurposing.<br>Existing/established infrastructure (access, parking, services) may be an asset. |
| Disadvantages | Community Purposes zone accommodates community buildings, but the site is held in trust as a recreation reserve - a performing arts centre would represent a significant departure from intended purpose.<br>Trust for Recreation Reserve status, s138 LGA consultation, and Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 all apply. Multiple overlapping legal constraints.<br>Trust purpose as a recreation reserve is fundamentally misaligned with a performing arts centre. Significant legal change required before development could proceed.<br>Recreation reserve trust purpose mandates public access and recreation use. Commercial cultural venue use would require trust purpose to be changed.<br>Complex process i.e. Requires Ngāi Tahu engagement, s138 LGA consultation, potential trust purpose change and Community Purposes zone resource consent.<br>Community opposition to repurposing an active recreation facility would be expected. |

## DEFINITIONS

**Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998**

Part 9 of the Kāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 applies to Eely Point and the Golf Course, granting Ngai Tahu a right of first refusal in relation to certain disposals. Early engagement with Kāi Tahu (through Aukaha / Te Ao Marama) is essential for both sites and should occur before public consultation processes are commenced. Kāi Tahu engagement is also separately required under the QLDC S&E Policy for all significant decisions.

**Reserves Act 1977**

Eely Point, Lismore Park and the Golf Course are all subject to the Reserves Act 1977. Any occupation right requires compliance with the reserve classification. Arts facilities are contemplated in the Informal Recreation classification (Eely Point, Lismore Park) but require discretionary resource consent and public notification. The reserve purpose of the Golf Course makes it the most constrained.

**Local Government Act 2002 — Section 138**

Section 138 of the LGA 2002 requires community consultation before Council disposes of or grants a lease of more than 6 months over land that qualifies as a 'park' — broadly defined as land acquired or used principally for community, recreational, environmental, cultural or spiritual purposes. This applies to the Lakes Wanaka Centre, Three Parks, and the Golf Course. For the Lakes Wanaka Centre this operates in addition to (not instead of) the Strategic Asset Special Consultative Procedure.

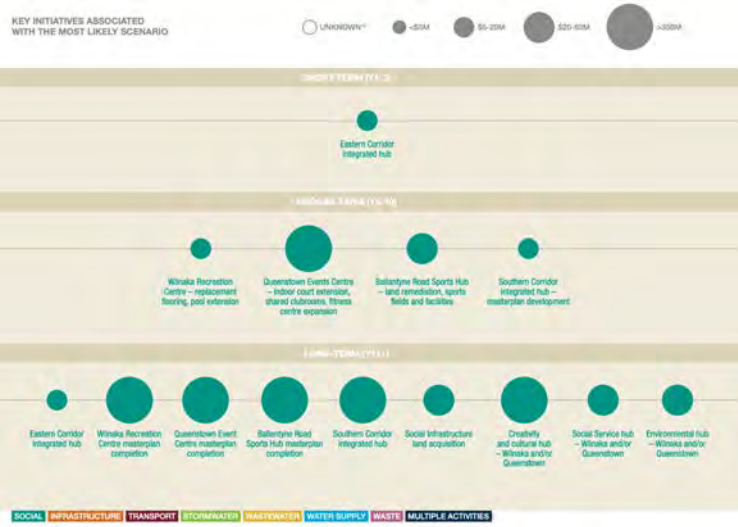
## District Plan Zoning

The Wanaka Town Centre zone (Lakes Wanaka Centre) provides the most permissive planning environment for a performing arts centre. The Informal Recreation zone (Eely Point, Lismore Park) explicitly contemplates arts facilities but requires discretionary consent. The Community Purposes zone (Three Parks, Golf Course) accommodates community buildings but is less directly aligned with major cultural infrastructure.

## 30 Year Infrastructure – Strategic Framework on a page




## Key initiatives in Long Term Plan 2024-2034



# Appendix 5: Miles Anderson Letters of Support

Letters of support dated 28 September 2026 from Miles Anderson MP for Waitaki, addressed to relevant ministers regarding potential future funding opportunities through the International Visitors Levy and Regional Infrastructure Fund.

National

28 September 2026

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
Via email: L.Upston@Ministers.govt.nz

Hon Paul Goldsmith
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage
Via email: P.Goldsmith@Ministers.govt.nz

Dear Ministers,

**Letter of support: Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct concept**

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct being advanced by the Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Charitable Trust.

At this stage, I wish to place this project on your radar for future International Visitor Levy (IVL) funding consideration. While I understand current IVL allocations are committed, this proposal aligns strongly with the intent of investing in infrastructure that supports New Zealand's visitor economy. A precinct of this scale could attract major events, touring productions and international performers to the Upper Clutha, generating economic benefits and strengthening Wānaka's appeal as a year-round destination.

The project responds to the significant growth occurring across Wānaka and the Upper Clutha and seeks to deliver a long-term cultural and civic asset for the community. Importantly, it is not reliant on Government funding alone. The Trust has developed a model that combines community investment, philanthropy, grants and donations, along with projected sustainable revenue streams generated through a multi-use precinct approach.

What particularly stands out is the project's emphasis on long-term financial viability. The integrated nature of the proposed precinct, bringing together performing arts, community and civic functions, demonstrates a practical approach to ensuring the facility remains sustainable. While ambitious, the proposal is being progressed responsibly, with considerable work already undertaken on governance, site selection, feasibility, business planning and stakeholder engagement.

I encourage Government to remain engaged as the project develops and to consider opportunities for support as appropriate. I believe this initiative has the potential to deliver lasting cultural, social and economic benefits for the Upper Clutha and wider region.

Yours sincerely,

**Miles Anderson MP**

**Parliament Office** Parliament Buildings, Wellington 6160 • miles.anderson@parliament.govt.nz
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**Wānaka** 12/31 Dunmore Street, Wānaka 9305 • 03 443 4820 • waitaki.mp@parliament.govt.nz

**Miles Anderson** MP for Waitaki



28 September 2026

Hon Shane Jones
Minister for Regional Development
Via email: S.Jones@ministers.govt.nz

Hon Chris Bishop
Minister for Infrastructure
Via email: C.Bishop@ministers.govt.nz

Dear Ministers,

**Letter of Support: Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct**

I am writing to express my support for the proposed Wānaka Performing Arts Precinct being advanced by the Lake Wānaka Arts and Culture Charitable Trust (WACT). The project represents a significant opportunity to deliver long-term civic and community infrastructure for one of New Zealand's fastest-growing regions.

While I acknowledge the current Regional Infrastructure Fund allocation is fully committed, I encourage Government to keep this project in mind for future funding opportunities.

This is a well-developed proposal supported by considerable work on governance, feasibility, site selection and business planning. Importantly, it has been designed with long-term financial sustainability in mind, combining community, civic and cultural functions to create an enduring and financially resilient asset.

Importantly, this should be viewed as more than an arts facility. The precinct presents an opportunity to create a genuine civic hub for Wānaka, integrating local government, community and cultural functions in a single location. At a time when Queenstown Lakes District Council's Wānaka offices largely operate from temporary facilities, this model offers an alternative to developing a large, single-purpose council facility. A Council tenancy within a broader precinct could help unlock value from existing public assets through future redevelopment or disposal, while creating a more efficient and enduring piece of civic infrastructure that delivers benefits well beyond the arts sector.

The project also provides an opportunity to plan ahead of growth pressures and avoid many of the infrastructure challenges that have emerged over the hill in Queenstown's town centre. A purpose-built civic and cultural precinct in a growth area would help future-proof Wānaka's development while creating a destination that enhances the region's appeal for both residents and visitors.

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**Miles Anderson** MP for Waitaki



In many respects, this proposal reflects the collaborative intent behind the imminent Regional Deal framework, bringing together community leadership, philanthropy, local government and potential central government support around a shared vision for the future. I believe it is the type of strategic regional infrastructure project that merits consideration as future investment priorities are developed.

I encourage you to remain engaged with the project as it progresses and to consider future opportunities for Government support.

Yours sincerely,

**Miles Anderson MP**

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**Miles Anderson** MP for Waitaki

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