

### Full Council

31 July 2025

#### Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [6]

**Department:** Strategy & Policy

**Title | Taitara:** Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 for adoption

#### Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

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The purpose of this report is to present the revised Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 (CBP) for adoption (Attachment A).

The CBP is an important and high-profile plan for Council and the community, and actions are funded through the budgets within the 2024-2034 Long Term Plan.

#### Recommendation | Kā Tūtohu

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That the Council:

1. **Note** the contents of this report; and
2. **Adopt** the Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028.

**Prepared by:**



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**Title:** Resilience and Climate  
Action Manager  
8 July 2025

**Prepared by:**



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8 July 2025

**Reviewed and Authorised  
by:**



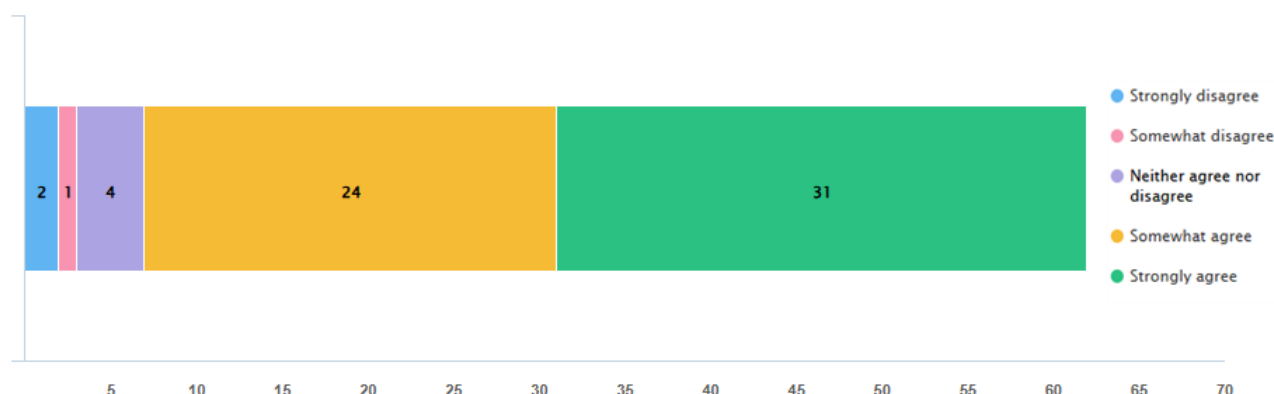
**Name:** Michelle Morss  
**Title:** General Manager –  
Strategy & Policy  
8 July 2025

### Context | Horopaki

1. On 27 June 2019 Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) declared a climate and ecological emergency in response to the significant risks of climate change and biodiversity loss in the district. In the same meeting, Council also approved the release of its first Climate Action Plan 2019-2022 to coordinate actions in response to the dual emergencies.
2. On 30 June 2022, Council approved the adoption of its second Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025. This plan recognised the importance of integrating climate action with biodiversity protection and regeneration. The close-out report outlining what was achieved through the 2022-2025 plan was made available through the Audit Finance & Risk Committee meeting on 8 July 2025.
3. On 29 May 2025, Council approved the draft Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 for release for public feedback. The CBP 2025-2028 has a theme of “Accelerating Transformation through Partnerships” and was developed in partnership with Kāi Tahu, the Climate Reference Group, and local partner organisations. It places Te Taiao (the natural environment) at the core of action planning and also includes a new outcome area for the local energy system. This reflects the scale of the challenges and opportunities in transforming the district’s power supply to be more resilient, renewable, and responsive to the shifting needs of our community.

### FEEDBACK RECEIVED ON THE CBP 2025-2028

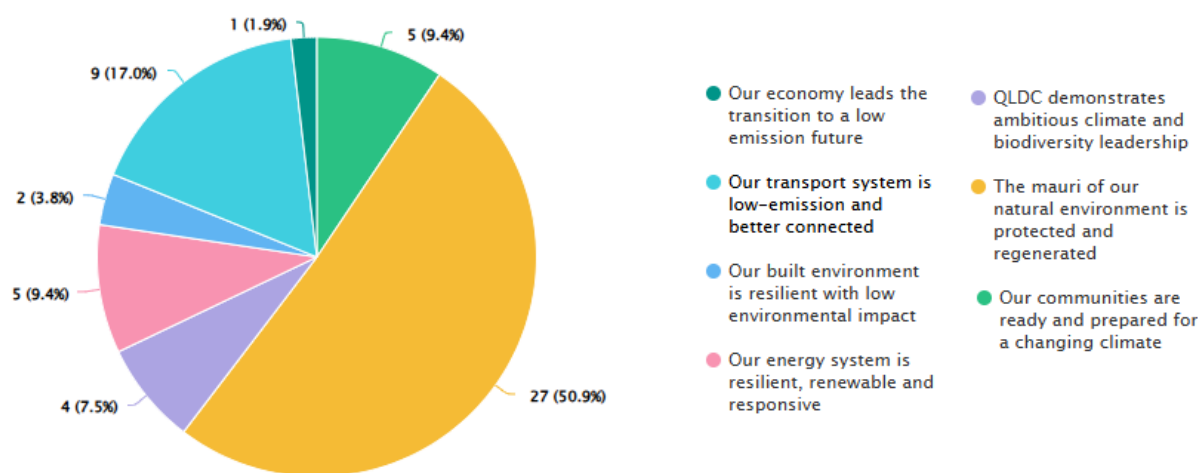
4. There were 67 survey responses received through the Let’s Talk site, with 30 written submissions also received.
5. Seventy-three percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Council should commit to ambitious climate and biodiversity leadership, and 82% agreed or strongly agreed with the theme of “accelerating transformation through partnerships” with these results shown below. A number of survey and written responses provided further information on additional potential partners that QLDC could work with.



6. Feedback on the overall structure and content of the CBP was overwhelmingly positive from submitters. Otago Regional Council provided support for the plan, noting it as an “exemplary and positive example for Otago” and highlighted the importance of “aligning our efforts to achieve

climate and biodiversity outcomes that benefit the district, the region, and New Zealand as a whole”.

7. Whilst a number of respondents provided recommendations for improving the structure and content of the plan, only four respondents were outrightly opposed to QLDC’s commitment to climate and biodiversity action and the use of ratepayer funding to develop and deliver the plan.
8. Respondents were asked to identify which outcome area they thought had the highest priority, with the results as follows:



9. Key themes that were identified in survey responses and submissions were:
  - Cat management, with more action needed to protect biodiversity, but a variety of different views over how this should be achieved.
  - Strengthening transport actions and inclusive transition.
  - Better links to urban planning mechanisms, and restricting growth in the district.
  - Reference to waste reduction, diversion and circular economy initiatives from the Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (WMMP).
  - Wilding conifer control, both for and against.
  - Weed and pest control.
  - Landscape/catchment scale approach to biodiversity protection and regeneration, with recommendations for specific planting initiatives.
  - Incentives for better building, including improving rental stock.
  - The length of the plan, and number of actions, but also more detail requested by some submitters on timelines, budgets and reporting of plan delivery.
  - Strengthened indicators framework with specific targets against a baseline.
  - Recommendations for other partners to be included.
  - Some suggestions as to how to improve communication and information sharing about QLDC’s climate and biodiversity work programme were also provided.

## **CHANGES TO THE DRAFT CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY PLAN 2025-2028**

10. In addition to minor grammatical or typographical corrections, and updating indicative budgets, the changes listed below were made in response to submissions. Changes were not made where feedback related to matters outside of Council's control or influence, recommendations were inconsistent with QLDC's Strategic Framework, matters are addressed under a separate Council plan (e.g. Spatial Plan, Waste Management and Minimisation Plan), or changes would restrict QLDC's ability to deliver the outcomes of the plan should circumstances change (e.g. too specific or narrow).
11. QLDC also acknowledges that there is a significant amount of climate and biodiversity work being undertaken by the community and other organisations. However, only a selection of examples that are currently supported by Council have been included in the CBP.
12. The following changes were made to the front of the plan.
  - Addition of the Mayor's, Climate Reference Group's and Kāi Tahu statements followed by artwork and messages from tamariki across the district.
  - Moving the information on QLDC's partnership with Kāi Tahu to follow their statement.
13. The following changes were made to the 'Introduction':
  - Simplifying the partnerships page and added reference to deliberative democracy practices under 'Local Partnerships'. This was added in response to the Climate Reference Group's submission (Attachment B).
  - Updating the diagram under 'Weaving our knowledge together'.
  - Simplifying the Strategic Framework alignment pages with updated text and diagrams, to provide greater clarity.
  - Adding cross references to organic waste and construction waste actions in the WMMP, and more information on the Welcoming Plan 2024-2027.
14. The following changes were made to 'Our strategic action plan':
  - Simplifying the circular diagram and the explanatory text.
  - Providing a summary diagram of the plan with the seven outcome areas and actions under each to provide an easy snapshot of the whole plan.
15. **Outcome 1:** *The mauri of our natural environment is protected and regenerated*
  - Incorporating project vision statements in 1.1 and 1.2 into the action. These statements have been developed with key partners and are not specific to QLDC.
  - Rewording action 1.6 and providing information under progress to date.
  - Including stoats in the predator list of action 1.7 and a new key initiative to support the expansion of predator control and biodiversity monitoring
  - 1.9 Cat Management: Whilst there was significant feedback on cat management to protect biodiversity, there were a variety of different views on how to achieve this. The action was reworded slightly but left sufficiently broad to allow staff to work through a process to appropriately identify the most effective and practical solutions for our district.

**16. Outcome 2:** *QLDC demonstrates ambitious climate and biodiversity leadership*

- Referencing green financing as part of action 2.2 ‘Embedding climate and biodiversity into Council decision-making’ and removing action 2.8 ‘Green financing opportunities’.
- New action: ‘Protecting indigenous biodiversity through planning policy’. This action builds on the work undertaken as part of the District Plan Review to protect Significant Natural Areas and other areas with high indigenous biodiversity values. It also prepares Council to respond to proposed amendments in national direction, such as revisions to the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity.

**17. Outcome 3:** *Our communities are ready and prepared for a changing climate*

- Adding Whakatipu Wilding Control Group as a partner under action 3.5.

**18. Outcome 4:** *Our energy system is resilient, renewable and responsive*

- Linking to the Queenstown Electrification Accelerator webpage ([www.qea.nz](http://www.qea.nz)) in action 4.3.
- Combining and rewording actions 4.4 and 4.5 in response to recent changes in national direction regarding infrastructure and development, including the proposed amendments to the National Policy Statement for Renewable Electricity Generation (NPS-REG).

**19. Outcome 5:** *Our built environment is resilient with low environmental impact*

- Adding reference to investigating how other Councils across New Zealand have incentivised green building standards under the key initiative ‘Scaling best practices’ in action 5.4.
- Updating action 5.6 to improve clarity and intent to promote responsible water usage.
- Rewording of the ‘Integrated catchment planning’ initiative under action 5.8 and reference to WAI Wānaka’s community catchment plan.

**20. Outcome 6:** *Our transport system is low-emission and better integrated*

- Rewording of the micromobility initiative under action 6.1 to better reflect the current programme status.
- Renaming action 6.2 to highlight the connection to active travel.
- Including a new key initiative under action 6.6 to highlight Queenstown Airport Corporation’s leadership in using sustainable construction practices whilst enhancing resilience of one of the district’s most significant infrastructure assets.

**21. Outcome 7:** *Our economy leads to the transition to a low emission future*

- Updating action 7.5 based on feedback from WAO Better Events Collective and including them as a listed partner.

22. Whilst more detail on the scope of actions, timelines and investment was also requested by some submitters, care was taken to ensure actions remained sufficiently broad to still enable delivery on the outcomes of the plan, should circumstances change within the next three years (e.g. due to national direction, legislative requirements or funding commitment). Some actions are also in the early stages of development and will be more fully developed over the three years of the

plan. A table of actions was included at the back of the plan to give an overarching view of all actions, timeframes and indicative budgets.

23. Collection of robust data and development of district-wide indicators for measuring progress is something that a number of partners and QLDC have been addressing during the current Climate & Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025. We will continue to work with partners to refine the indicators framework to measure progress and track success of the plan.

### Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

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24. This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002.

25. Option 1 Council does not adopt the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028.

#### *Advantages:*

- There are no obvious advantages

#### *Disadvantages:*

- There is a reputational risk for Council if it does not progress a plan to take action related to its declaration of a climate and ecological emergency.
- It does not align with significant support for the plan received during the public feedback process, or outcomes the community has identified through Vision Beyond 2050.
- Council will be unable to continue to support or progress climate and biodiversity action already underway within the district.
- The district will be inadequately prepared for the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, or the opportunities associated with transformational change.

26. Option 2 Council adopts the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028.

#### *Advantages:*

- QLDC can accelerate climate and biodiversity action with partner organisations.
- It is aligned with significant support for the plan received during the public feedback process, and outcomes the community has identified through Vision Beyond 2050.
- Council can continue to support or progress climate and biodiversity action already underway within the district.



- The district will be better prepared for the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, and to take advantage of the opportunities associated with transformational change.

#### *Disadvantages:*

- There are no perceived disadvantages to adopting the plan

27. This report recommends **Option 2** for addressing the matter because it delivers the best climate and biodiversity outcomes for the district. It aligns Council action with its declaration of a climate and ecological emergency, and provides a robust and strategic plan for Council, its partners, and the community to work towards over the next three years.

### Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

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#### Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

28. This matter is of low significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy 2024. It is consistent with existing policy and strategy including the current CBP 2022-25, QLDC's strategic framework, and Vision Beyond 2050. It does not impact on objectives in the Financial Strategy, Long Term Plan or Annual Plan. While the CBP 2025-2028 is of importance to the District and there is community interest due to the impact on current and future wellbeing, it does not meet the criteria for having a significant impact on decisions in these areas.
29. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are residents/ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes district community, Council staff, community partners and stakeholders.
30. The Council has engaged with all internal directorates within QLDC and individual teams (strategic growth, planning policy, transport, waste minimisation, parks, community partnerships, property, economic futures, infrastructure, sport and venues, libraries, governance, finance and policy), Elected Members, the Climate Reference Group and other external partners and stakeholders in preparing the draft CBP 2025-2028.
31. The Council has concluded its public engagement process, with the feedback period closing on the 27 June. Where appropriate, feedback received has been considered and incorporated into the final version of the CBP 2025-2028.

#### Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

32. The Council has partnered with rūnaka representatives during development of the CBP 2025-2028 and has regular engagement with representatives from Aukaha and Te Ao Marama through the Climate Reference Group.

### Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

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33. This matter relates to the Environmental risk category. It is associated with RISK10012 Ineffective mitigation response to the declared climate and ecological emergency within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a high residual risk rating. Approval of the recommended option will allow Council to implement additional controls for this risk. This will be achieved through the 51 actions within the CBP 2025-2028 which together give a broad risk control response for emissions reduction, climate change adaptation and biodiversity protection and restoration. Effective implementation of these risk controls is supported through the advisory oversight of the Climate Reference Group and the governance of the Audit, Finance & Risk Committee.

### Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

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34. There are no variances to operational budgets or resource implications to consider at this time.

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

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

- Vision Beyond 2050<sup>1</sup>: the outcomes of zero carbon communities, disaster-defying resilience and a deafening dawn chorus.
- 2024-2034 Long Term Plan: climate and biodiversity action as a priority in the district.
- 2024-2054 30-year Infrastructure Strategy: infrastructure resilience.
- Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan
- Queenstown Lakes District Plan
- Waste Management and Minimisation Plan (2025 draft)
- Regenerative Tourism Plan: Travel to a Thriving Future
- Economic Diversification Plan: New Pathways to a Thriving Future
- Queenstown Lakes District Welcoming Plan 2024-2027
- The QLDC Disability Policy

36. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policies.

37. This matter is included in the Long Term Plan/Annual Plan.

### Legal Considerations and Statutory Responsibilities | Ka Ture Whaiwhakaaro me kā Takohaka Waeture

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38. The Council has statutory responsibilities under the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Act 2019 as a reporting organisation.

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<sup>1</sup> [Our Vision and Mission - QLDC](#)



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

39. Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. The CBP 2025-28 plays a central role in delivering upon this purpose through its focus on environmental stewardship, community resilience and intergenerational equity. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.

40. The recommended option:

- Can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

### Attachments | Kā Tāpirihaka

A	Final Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028
B	QLDC Climate Reference Group Submission on the 2025-2028 Climate and Biodiversity Plan, 25 June 2025

*Attachment A is circulated separately.*

QLDC Climate Reference Group  
Submission on the 2025-2028 Climate and Biodiversity Plan  
25 June 2025

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe

Thank you for this opportunity to submit to the 2025-2028 Climate and Biodiversity Plan. As the district's independent Climate Reference Group (CRG) our role is to provide the Queenstown Lakes District Council with expert advice in areas relating to Climate and Biodiversity. We note that while we are council supported and work very closely with the Resilience and Climate Action Team, we are an independent advisory group and our submission on the Climate and Biodiversity Plan comes from our place of independent advisory for the benefit of the district as a whole.

As we move into an era of the third Climate and Biodiversity Plan for the Queenstown Lakes District, we note the significant evolution from its beginnings as a plan written largely in response to the 2019 declaration of a Climate Emergency and a focus almost exclusively on emissions reduction to the second plan which acknowledged that climate change and biodiversity are fully interconnected, to today where a more maturing ecosystem of community partners have grown and developed allowing for a wider range of roles and responses for QLDC to support the district as a whole.

### Creation of the Plan

The CRG played a significant role in the creation of this plan over an extended period through several iterations of the plan. We wish to acknowledge our appreciation of the Resilience and Climate Action Team's openness to work so collaboratively with us on the plan's development. At the outset, we reviewed the previous plan giving feedback on our perceptions of what had worked and what had not, as well as at a structural level what we felt was missing from the previous plans. This led to six focus areas we found were critical to the next plan:

1. There needed to be **coherence** across all of QLDC's strategies and an understanding of where the CBP sits among them. There appeared to be many strategies that had overlaps with each other's work but no way to connect them to each other across functional units, budgets, much less outcomes. The Strategy and Reform Manager took on this recommendation and an internal exercise was undertaken within QLDC which helped to highlight a number of key areas within QLDC that has strengthened not only this plan but also the WMMP, Spatial Plan and Destination Management Plan and their relationship to the CBP.
2. We felt a **Te Ao Māori approach** to Biodiversity and our response to Climate Change was essential. We were supported in this work by our Kāi Tahu member Dr. Lyn Carter, and QLDC's Kaiarahi Rautaki – Māori Strategy and Partnerships manager, who provided significant support to the whole of the CRG in helping us to frame the plan in a far more aligned way than previous plans have been.

3. The identified core of the plan, “The mauri of our natural environment is protected and regenerated” speaks to a **collective goal to care for all and is inherently intergenerational**. We were especially interested in a greater focus on working with our district’s youth. All of this is both aspirational and immediately actionable.
4. As Biodiversity and Climate Change are **inherently both complex and relational** we encouraged the team to focus on expressing the complexity through far more relational expressions (as evidenced by the images on pages 10 and 11) to help our community understand the interconnected and interwoven nature of all of the aspects of this plan.
5. With a focus on relationality as one of our core pathways to a better future, we strongly encouraged the plan to be developed along lines of highlighting projects and relationships showing QLDC’s commitments to support ongoing work, initiate new work, its levels and types of support, and clear alignment with Kāi Tahu values. The plan’s stated theme of **accelerating transformation through partnership** well evidences this commitment to a transparent approach to sharing with the community the role QLDC sets out to support through this plan.
6. Ensuring that there was a robust **Indicators Framework** to show how progress would be tracked and reported.

Following the distillation of the core concepts and structure of the plan we continued to support the team throughout the year reading drafts and giving feedback all along the way.

We are deeply appreciative of how responsive they were to our feedback, recommendations, addressing critical concerns, and their capacity to take information we sent from other plans and sources we had seen and thought might be of assistance in thinking about ours and continue to make adjustments as they no doubt will in response to the feedback the plan receives during the consultation period. We have felt heard and well utilized throughout the entire process.

## Comments and recommendations

As we have played a foundational role in the design of the plan itself, we will not comment on it in depth, other than to say that we support its approach in looking for coherence across QLDC plans, de-siloing the core areas, recognizing the intergenerational need to protect and regenerate the mauri of te taiao and all who live within it, and in building a plan that focuses on partnership and is clear on its reporting framework.

We were pleased to see the new additions to the focus areas of the plan with the emphasis on **Energy** as its own outcome arena. In the last five years the subject of energy has become a critical one in this district and with supporting work amplified by the **Destination Management Plan** to accelerate decarbonisation, especially through electrification, this becomes one of the cornerstones to reaching our emissions goals. We also note that while **Waste Minimisation** was a highlight in the previous CBP, the

coherence exercise suggested that with the new WMMP arriving in tandem with the CBP that the district's ambitions are best expressed there with full support from the CBP but not as amplified within it.

In the previous plan, **Biodiversity** was the last category of the six and had few concrete outcomes. Much has changed in the last few years, and we are delighted to see intergenerational projects like Project Tohu and Waiwhaakata Lake Hayes restoration demonstrating the power of partnership to help restore the mauri of the whenua evidenced so clearly. We also are glad to see the subject of cat management coming more strongly into the district's biodiversity focus along with continued support for the mahi of the thousands of volunteers in the district who are doing the 'boots on the ground' work that this plan envisions for the future.

We encourage QLDC to embrace action 2.2 **Embedding Climate and Biodiversity Into Council Decision-making** in every way. The recent **Community Insights Survey** report speaks deeply to the community's concerns in this space where trust levels are low following our many water related issues of the last 3 years. In that report the community's view on Council's responsiveness with regard to climate change was that only 18% of respondents were satisfied with the steps being taken to prepare for and adapt to the effect of climate change. The report further noted that "There is negative perceptions regarding waste management, recycling options, and greenwaste and food waste disposal options. Several respondents questioned the Council's sincerity or competence in climate-related matters, citing dishonesty or inaction on key issues." This is clearly a community clarion call where QLDC needs to embrace at all levels not just the idea of the CBP but to embed it into the practices, decision-making and budgeting of the organization.

The complexities of our water, transport, infrastructure, and housing are not going to get easier in the next few years as the Central Government's approved Fast-track developments will add further pressures to the system, so we continue to support all that local government can do in its limited sphere of influence to work collaboratively with Regional Council, to raise concerns with Central Government and remind our elected officials at all levels of our district's critical role in New Zealand's global brand and reputation, and to show climate leadership in doing all that it can to future proof for the livability of this region well into the future. These are all significant challenges and the plan's theme of accelerating transformation through partnership is something that needs to be embedded into QLDC's psyche in all that it does. That is true ambitious leadership.

To that end, our one key recommendation that is currently absent from the plan is for QLDC to support a Deliberative Democracy process around the subject of climate change or related topics that are key issues for the future of the district. There are many ways to approach this and a number of members of the CRG have expertise in this area and offer our support to aid in the development of the use of Deliberative Democracy/Citizen's Assembly or Citizen's Jury approaches to some of our most critical issues. It is very important at this moment in time that the community have a vehicle to


engage in the complexity of these climate change issues and also, and crucially, to have a voice. Especially when public perception as voiced in the Community Insights Survey puts the current trust level of trust in our Mayor and Elected Officials at 17% with the greatest concerns voiced around lack of representation, biased decision-making, and poor communication. Partnership is all about trust and Deliberative Democracy offers an excellent suite of tools to demonstrate trust in the intelligence and care the community has for its own future and a willingness to innovate in seeking true solutions to the challenges all councils face in gaining true engagement with their communities.

We are pleased to see that the plan includes not only its actions, but also a clear Indicators Framework showing its progress. We recommend that future reporting on the Climate and Biodiversity Plan take place at the full Council level rather than solely at the Audit, Finance, and Risk Committee. Elected officials have previously spoken of a feeling of lack of awareness with regard to the CBP's progress and elevating it to full Council and public meetings will help to build community trust and also help to support outcome 2.2 in making the success of the plan be of greater importance to QLDC on a daily basis.

## **Conclusion**

The Climate Reference Group fully endorses the 2025-2028 Climate and Biodiversity Plan. We thank the Resilience and Climate Action Team and the wider teams who contributed to the creation of this plan. We will continue to support the work of the Queenstown Lakes District Council as it moves towards this future and we look forward to working with you to see this plan come to life.

Kā mihi nui,



Dr. Leslie Van Gelder, Chair  
On behalf of the QLDC Climate Reference Group