

**Full Council**

**7 May 2026**

**Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [1]**

**Department: Corporate Services**

**Title | Taitara: Wānaka Airport – Delivery Approach for New Master Plan (Implementation of Scenario 3)**

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

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To seek Council approval of a recommended option for delivery of a new Wānaka Airport Master Plan that gives effect to Scenario 3 (Egis Report<sup>1</sup>), as adopted by Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) on 19 March 2026, and to confirm associated governance, procurement and reporting arrangements.

**Executive Summary | Whakarāpopototaka Matua**

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On 19 March 2026, Council adopted Scenario 3 for the future of Wānaka Airport and directed staff to report back with options for delivering a new Master Plan. The Egis Report, undertaken by independent aeronautical experts, has informed the recommended delivery approach.

Egis recommends that airport master planning be led by an entity with embedded aviation planning capability and strong integration with airport operations and regulatory programmes. Officers therefore recommend that Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) be engaged to act as programme manager for delivery of the Master Plan, leveraging its operational expertise, systems and experience, while Council retains full strategic oversight and decision-making authority as asset owner.

Under this approach, QLDC would remain the contracting party for specialist aviation planning and technical consultants, with QAC managing the procurement process, day-to-day coordination, technical integration and delivery of the Master Plan programme on Council's behalf. This model provides QLDC with clear contractual control, approval authority and ownership of outputs, while enabling delivery to be led by specialist aviation expertise.

The Master Plan scope would be expressly confined to giving effect to Scenario 3, with the Egis Report treated as foundational to the work programme. Approval of the final Master Plan would remain a decision of Council.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/your-council/council-meetings/19-march-2026-full-council-meeting/> Wānaka Airport Future Review – Community Engagement Results and Recommendations

If agreed, delivery would be governed through a discrete, purpose-specific agreement between QLDC and QAC, implemented by the Chief Executive within a defined scope, budget envelope and governance framework. This would include clear conflict-of-interest and probity measures, potential for independent technical peer review as appropriate, and defined community and Council engagement throughout the process.

Council will be a key stakeholder as Wānaka Airport owner, meaning that Council will be consulted in the development of the Master Plan (including a workshop with the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board (WUCCB) on the draft Master Plan). It will also support the community engagement element (feedback will be sought on the draft Master Plan). Council approval is sought to authorise implementation of the recommended delivery option.

The recommended delivery approach emphasises incremental progress and multiple engagement touchpoints to support community trust and ensure alignment with Council's adopted direction over time.

It is noted that any decision of Council in relation to the operational role of QAC as outlined in this report will be subject to consideration by the QAC Board of Directors.

#### Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

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That the Council:

1. **Agree** that Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) will act as programme manager for the development of a Wānaka Airport Master Plan to deliver Scenario 3 (Egis Report), including managing the procurement process and day-to-day delivery of specialist aviation planning inputs, with the Council retaining:
  - a. direct contractual relationships with specialist consultants;
  - b. strategic oversight and approval authority; and
  - c. final decision-making on the Master Plan;
2. **Note** that the recommended option will be governed by a discrete, purpose-specific, end to end agreement between Council and QAC; and
3. **Delegate** authority for the Chief Executive to execute and implement the agreement referred to in recommendation 2, provided that the agreement:
  - a. is limited to the procurement and management of specialist aviation planning and technical consultants to deliver the Wānaka Airport Master Plan expressly within the confines of Scenario 3, at the agreed cost of Council;
  - b. treats the Egis Report as foundational to the scope of the work;

- c. includes probity and conflict-of-interest management measures, including possibility of independent technical peer review;
- d. confirms that approval of the final Master Plan will be a decision of Council;
- e. is explicit in the expectation that the draft Master Plan will be subject to further community feedback;
- f. acknowledges that Project Pure and the QLDC Spatial Plan/District Plan will need to be considered in the development of the Master Plan;
- g. acknowledges that the draft Master Plan will be the subject of a workshop with the Council and the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board; and
- h. acknowledges that the Wānaka Airport Liaison Group will have oversight of the community feedback, the engagement with Airport users and input to the draft Master Plan (minimum of two consultant sessions) in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

**Prepared by:**



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21 April 2026

**Reviewed and Authorised by:**



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21 April 2026

## Context | Horopaki

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1. On 19 March 2026, QLDC adopted Scenario 3 as the preferred future operating scenario for Wānaka Airport. This scenario retains the airport's general aviation focus while enabling limited scheduled turboprop services using aircraft with up to 30 seats. Officers were subsequently directed to report back on an appropriate delivery model for a new Master Plan that gives effect to this decision.
2. The Egis Wānaka Airport Future Review provides independent technical and engagement-based advice relevant to the delivery of a new Master Plan. Egis recommends that airport master planning be led by an organisation with appropriate aviation planning capability and confirms that the current management structure can deliver a Master Plan aligned with Scenario 3, if governance, transparency and community trust considerations are actively addressed throughout the process.
3. Submissions to the Wānaka Airport Future Review also raised wider regional aviation and network considerations, including the relationship between Wānaka and Queenstown airports; however, these matters sit outside the scope of Scenario 3 and this delivery decision, and would require a separate, Council-directed process if considered in the future.
4. Across all delivery approaches considered, several common risks were identified, including perceptions of independence and potential conflict of interest, integration with operational and regulatory work programmes (notably the Part 139 certification process), stakeholder confidence and transparency, and programme resourcing and delivery risk. Under the recommended approach, these risks can be effectively managed through a clear and robust governance and assurance framework.
5. QLDC and QAC are parties to a Management Services Agreement (MSA) under which QAC manages the day-to-day operation of Wānaka Airport. The MSA covers operational management, regulatory compliance, financial management and reporting, and commercial and community interface functions, and establishes the Wānaka Airport Liaison Committee to support governance and strategic alignment. Preparation of an airport Master Plan is expressly excluded from the scope of services under the MSA. As a result, any Master Plan work managed by QAC must be authorised through a separate, Council-approved delivery arrangement. Under the recommended approach, this authority would be provided through a stand-alone, purpose-specific, end to end agreement that does not vary or extend the existing MSA.
6. Rather than being engaged on the basis of Council ownership, QAC's role in the recommended delivery approach reflects its function as the incumbent airport operator, with established aviation systems, safety management capability and regulatory experience directly relevant to the preparation of an operationally deliverable Master Plan. Council's governance role as asset owner is exercised through approval of scope, assumptions, engagement approach and final outputs, rather than through reliance on ownership interests.

7. Delivery of the Master Plan would be governed by a separate, purpose-specific, end to end agreement, providing clarity of mandate and avoiding any extension or modification of the existing MSA. Council retains all approval and decision-making authority, including approval of scope, key assumptions, engagement approach, draft outputs, and the final Master Plan. No material changes to scope, assumptions, sequencing or interpretation of Scenario 3 may occur without explicit Council approval. The Wānaka Airport Liaison Committee would provide ongoing governance oversight, supported by defined reporting requirements and governance checkpoints for information, assurance and strategic oversight.
8. Independent technical peer review can be applied at key stages of the Master Plan to provide assurance on methodology, assumptions and outputs, and probity and conflict-of-interest management protocols would be established at the outset and applied throughout the programme. Regular reporting to Council would ensure transparency on progress, risks and emerging issues.
9. Taken together, these measures enable the benefits of embedded aviation planning capability and strong integration with airport operations and regulatory requirements to be realised, while appropriately addressing the governance, independence and transparency considerations identified through the Egis review and community engagement.
10. Delivery of the Master Plan is intended to proceed incrementally, with Council approvals required at defined stages, rather than as a single, linear process. This enables refinement of scope, assumptions and options in response to community and stakeholder feedback over time.

#### Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

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11. 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. The options were developed and considered with reference to the following key criteria:
  - alignment with Council’s adopted Scenario 3;
  - availability of specialist aviation planning capability;
  - integration with airport operations and the Part 139 certification programme;
  - governance, probity and transparency;
  - delivery risk and time to mobilise; and
  - internal resourcing implications for Council.
12. Cost, affordability and delivery efficiency considerations informed the development and consideration of all options, particularly in relation to mobilisation speed, interface complexity, internal resourcing requirements and programme overhead. Detailed cost certainty will be

confirmed through programme establishment, but options that leverage existing aviation capability and established delivery systems are expected to reduce delivery risk and overall programme cost.

13. Option 1 - QAC managed Master Plan delivery (Recommended)

Under this option, Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC) would manage and coordinate delivery of the Master Plan as programme manager for Council under a separate, purpose specific agreement. QAC would support engagement of required specialist aviation planning and technical sub consultants, while QLDC retains all approval and decision-making authority, including approval of scope, key assumptions, engagement approach, draft outputs, and the final Master Plan.

This option enables master planning to be developed in close alignment with live airport operations, safety systems and the Part 139 certification programme, reducing the risk of misalignment or subsequent rework.

It avoids the need to recreate aviation-specific programme management capability within Council or through additional external structures, improving efficiency and mobilisation speed without altering Council's role as decision-maker.

*Advantages:*

- Strong alignment with the Egis recommendation that airport master planning be led by an organisation with embedded aviation planning capability and experience.
- Direct integration with day-to-day airport operations, regulatory compliance obligations and the Part 139 certification programme, reducing interface risk and duplication.
- Continuity of technical data, operational knowledge and institutional understanding of Wānaka Airport constraints, assumptions and historic decisions.
- Efficient mobilisation compared with other options, as QAC has existing systems, processes and supplier relationships in place.
- Ability to apply a staged, gateway-based master planning approach that is consistent with methodologies used successfully at other airports.
- Reduced internal resourcing and coordination requirements on Council officers.
- Clear accountability for programme delivery through a single managing entity, subject to Council approved governance and reporting arrangements.
- More efficient use of existing organisational capability and systems, reducing programme overhead and cost escalation risk.

*Disadvantages:*

- Perceived lack of independence, reflecting concerns raised through the Egis community engagement regarding QAC's operational and commercial interests raised by some stakeholders through Egis engagement.
- Risk that stakeholder confidence could be undermined if governance, probity and transparency measures are not clearly articulated and actively applied. This risk is mitigated by Council holding consultant contracts and retaining direct approval rights.
- Potential for public misunderstanding if the distinction between operational management and strategic decision making is not clearly communicated.

14. Option 2 - Independent Specialist Lead (QLDC as client)

Under this option, QLDC would procure an independent aviation master planning firm as Lead Consultant. QAC would participate as the airport operator and technical stakeholder, with QLDC managing the contract and approvals.

Council does not currently hold the specialist aeronautical planning and airport operations capability required to manage the technical integration of a live operating aerodrome, regulatory change programme and master planning process concurrently.

*Advantages:*

- Strong perceived and actual independence from airport operations and commercial interests.
- Clear separation between planning advice and operational delivery.
- May increase confidence for some stakeholders who place a high value on visible independence.

*Disadvantages:*

- Council does not have the technical aeronautical expertise to manage the technical and operation aspects of an airport Master Plan. This would create an unacceptable risk.
- Weaker integration with airport operations and the Part 139 certification programme, increasing the risk of misalignment or rework.
- Additional interface management required between the lead consultant, QAC and Council.
- Longer mobilisation timeframes due to procurement lead in and contract establishment.

- Greater internal resourcing requirements on Council to manage technical complexity and multiple interfaces.
- Less consistent with Egis advice emphasising the importance of embedded aviation capability and operational integration.

15. Option 3 - Hybrid (Independent Lead with QAC as Programme Integrator)

Under this option, an independent Master Plan Lead would be appointed to manage planning, analysis and engagement, with QAC acting as Programme Integrator to ensure alignment with operations, safety and certification requirements.

As with Option 2, the burden of coordination and technical arbitration would fall disproportionately on Council, increasing delivery risk and governance overhead.

*Advantages:*

- Balances perceived independence with access to QAC's technical knowledge and operational experience.
- Responds partially to community concerns identified through the Egis engagement.
- Allows an independent firm to lead engagement and option development while retaining operational oversight.

*Disadvantages:*

- Council does not have the technical aeronautical expertise to manage the technical and operation aspects of an airport Master Plan. This would create an unacceptable risk.
- Higher governance and coordination complexity, with increased risk of blurred accountability.
- Greater programme management overhead for Council.
- Likely duplication of effort or inefficiencies between lead consultant and programme integrator.
- Higher overall cost compared to a single lead model.

16. Option 4 - QLDC led (In-house client team with external specialists)

Under this option, QLDC would lead and coordinate delivery of the Master Plan directly, procuring all specialist aviation and technical inputs, with QAC participating as an operational stakeholder.

*Advantages:*

- Maximum direct Council control over scope, sequencing and engagement.
- Clear independence from airport operations.
- Strong visibility of Council leadership in the planning process.

*Disadvantages:*

- Council does not have the technical aeronautical expertise to manage the technical and operation aspects of an airport Master Plan. This would create an unacceptable risk.
- Significant additional internal resourcing required to manage a complex aviation planning programme.
- Higher delivery risk if specialist aviation capability is not consistently embedded.
- Increased coordination and interface risk with ongoing operations and certification activities.
- Less efficient mobilisation compared to other options.

**17. Option 5 - External Airport Operator Led Delivery (Expressions of Interest)**

Under this option, Council would seek expressions of interest (EOI) from alternative airport operators to manage the development of a Wānaka Airport Master Plan supporting Council as asset owner and decision-maker. A selected operator would be contracted for the limited purpose of assisting procurement and managing specialist aviation planning expertise to prepare a Master Plan consistent with Council's adopted Scenario 3, with QAC participating as the incumbent operator and technical stakeholder.

This option is premised on testing whether an external airport operator could provide aviation master planning capability with a greater perceived degree of independence from current operations, while still delivering a technically robust and Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) compliant outcome.

This option introduces material commercial and operational sensitivities, including the exposure of detailed operational, safety and commercial information to third-party airport operators who may have competing interests.

It also weakens integration with existing operational and certification work programmes, increasing the risk of duplication, misalignment and delay.

*Advantages:*

- High perceived independence from the current airport operator, which may respond to some community concerns raised through the Egis engagement regarding neutrality and commercial influence.
- Access to aviation planning and operational experience held by other airport operators, potentially offering alternative perspectives on master planning approaches.
- Clear separation between current airport operations and master planning delivery.

*Disadvantages:*

- Significant mobilisation risk and delay, as external operators would require time to develop local understanding, establish data access arrangements, and become familiar with Wānaka Airport's physical, regulatory, environmental and community context.
- Weak integration with day-to-day airport operations and the Part 139 certification programme, increasing interface risk, duplication of effort and the likelihood of misalignment or rework.
- Introduction of unnecessary complexity through a three-party delivery arrangement (Council, external operator and QAC), with increased governance, coordination and accountability challenges.
- Potential commercial sensitivities and conflicts of interest, as airport operators commonly compete for airline services, strategic positioning and investment, requiring extensive probity management.
- Higher programme cost due to duplication of management layers, onboarding effort, and the need for additional assurance and oversight mechanisms.
- Limited practical benefit over other options, given that QAC already operates Wānaka Airport under a Council-approved mandate and holds the relevant operational knowledge and data required for efficient master planning.
- Inconsistent with the Egis recommendation, which emphasises the importance of embedded operational knowledge and close integration with existing airport management to deliver a scenario-appropriate Master Plan.
- No realistic pathway to improve delivery confidence, as the external operator would still rely heavily on QAC input for operational, safety, certification and historical context.

18. Overall, while this option provides a high level of perceived independence, it introduces substantial delivery, cost and governance risks, with limited corresponding benefit. It is not considered a viable or proportionate delivery approach for a Master Plan that must closely align with current operations, regulatory requirements and Council's adopted Scenario 3.
19. This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because it most closely aligns with the Egis advice, offers the strongest integration with operational and regulatory workstreams, reduces delivery risk, and enables timely mobilisation. With the governance and assurance measures outlined above, Council can retain full strategic control while enabling efficient delivery of the Master Plan.
20. Approval of this report enables implementation of the recommended approach without the need for further Council decisions, subject to ongoing reporting and Council approval of the final Master Plan.
21. Notwithstanding this, Council approval remains required for the final Wānaka Airport Master Plan itself, and for any material departure from Council's adopted Scenario 3 or the approved scope of the Master Plan programme.

#### Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

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

22. This matter is of high significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy 2024 because of the level of community interest, potential economic and social implications, and the strategic importance of Wānaka Airport as a district asset, however noting that the outcome of creating a new Master Plan is mandatory under CAA qualifying status.
23. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are residents/ratepayers of the Queenstown Lakes district community, general aviation operators and commercial airport users; community and business groups; CAA, civil defence and emergency services with an interest in airport-based capability; and airspace/recreation users.
24. The Master Plan will include a structured engagement programme consistent with the Significance and Engagement Policy 2024.

#### Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

25. The scope will include engagement with iwi and rūnaka as part of early design and strategy formation during the Master Plan development.

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

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26. This matter relates to the Regulatory/Legal/Compliance risk category. It is associated with RISK10006 Ineffective planning for property and infrastructure within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a high residual risk rating.
27. The approval of the recommended option will allow Council to implement additional controls for this risk. This will be achieved by implementing the externally led master planning process in alignment with ongoing Part 139 compliance activities and community expectations i.e. Scenario 3.
28. Given QAC's operational role at Wānaka Airport, robust conflict-of-interest and probity mechanisms will be established at the outset and applied throughout the programme. Independent technical peer review can be applied at defined gateways to provide assurance on methodology, assumptions, and alignment with Scenario 3, and to reinforce public confidence in the process.
29. Key risks include perceptions of independence, interface with certification activities and programme resourcing. These will be mitigated through independent peer review, probity measures, defined governance arrangements and governance checkpoints for assurance and oversight.
30. There is a risk that the master planning process, or subsequent establishment of an airport operator, could progress in a way that is not consistent with the views and preferences expressed by the community through the Wānaka Airport Future Review and ongoing engagement.
31. This risk will be mitigated through a staged master planning approach, with defined gateways, multiple community and Council touchpoints, and explicit decision points retained by Council. This will enable incremental testing of assumptions, transparency of trade-offs, and trust-building with the community across the life of the programme, rather than reliance on a single consultation event.
32. Any perceived risk associated with QAC managing aspects of Master Plan delivery is mitigated through Council-held consultant contracts, defined approval gateways, probity protocols and Council retention of all strategic and final decision-making authority. The recommended delivery model is designed to separate programme management function from decision authority, rather than rely on ownership alignment.

### Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

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33. Council approval of this report authorises the expenditure required to deliver the Wānaka Airport Master Plan within the approved scope and budget envelope. Costs relate to specialist aviation planning, technical inputs, programme management and engagement.

34. QAC will assist with procurement and delivery as programme manager for Council, under delegation from the Chief Executive and in accordance with the approved delivery agreement. Expenditure will be managed within the agreed budget envelope, with Council oversight provided through regular reporting.
35. Council's engagement of QAC as programme manager constitutes a direct procurement based on functional capability and operational integration. This is considered justified based on QAC's unique technical capability, operational role and lack of credible alternative providers with equivalent institutional knowledge. Procurement documentation and approvals will be completed in accordance with QLDC's Procurement Policy.
36. No further Council approvals are required to implement the recommended Master Plan delivery approach. The Master Plan delivery will be governed by a separate agreement and will not amend the Management Services Agreement. Council's statutory responsibilities remain unchanged

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

37. The recommended option aligns with Vision Beyond 2050, district wide climate objectives, and long-term community wellbeing goals. It does not conflict with existing policies and is consistent with the Long Term Plan's commitment to community led airport decision-making.

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

38. 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. Scenario 3 promotes the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the community by providing proportionate connectivity, supporting local businesses, strengthening emergency resilience, and respecting Wānaka's natural environment and character. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.
39. 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.