

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

MINUTE 14 OF THE COMMISSION

TIMETABLE DIRECTION FOR THE COUNCIL’S FORMAL RIGHT OF REPLY

8 SEPTEMBER 2026

Introduction

1. The Queenstown Lakes District Council (the Council) has appointed a Hearing Panel, which comprises Commissioners Peter Kensington, Richard Blakey and Quentin Smith (the Hearing Panel / Commission), to hear all submissions and, after it has heard the submissions, to make recommendations on the Variation to the Proposed District Plan: Upper Clutha Landscape Schedules, as to whether to accept or reject the submissions received and any amendments to the provisions of the Schedules. The Council is then required to decide whether to accept or reject the Hearing Panel’s recommendations.
2. In facilitating the hearing process, the Council has passed delegated authority to the Hearing Panel to make determinations regarding any procedural matters that arise.

Hearing adjournment

3. The Commission convened a hearing of the Variation from 1-3 September 2026 which was attended by representatives from the Council and Submitters. The Commission extends thanks to all participants for their conduct at the hearing and for providing clear articulation of relevant issues for consideration.
4. Following hearing from all Submitters, the process was adjourned on 3 September 2026 to allow time for the provision of supplementary evidence and submissions in response to questions of clarification that were sought by the Commission during the hearing. This requested information has now been provided.
5. The next step in the process is for the Council to provide a formal right of reply to the evidence and submissions provided by Submitters during the hearing. This is not an opportunity for the Council to provide new evidence. Counsel for the Council indicated that a two-three week period would likely be a sufficient timeframe for this step. The Hearing Panel agrees and confirms this in the direction below.
6. For the record, while the Commission originally indicated that it may seek further legal advice via counsel representing the Council and Submitters on pending legislative updates related to the imminent reform of the Resource Management Act 1991, such advice is now not considered necessary. This is because it is understood that the third reading of the Planning Bill and the Natural Environment Bill will occur during the week starting 14 September, with royal assent likely to be received swiftly after. While there may be some minor changes to the final legislation, these are not anticipated to be material for this Variation. If however there are relevant changes, the Commission could issue further directions seeking advice, including from counsel for represented parties.
7. The Commission expects that the Council’s reply is to include a response to the relevant issues raised by Submitters, such as: how *The Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan* might impact some of the schedules; and, importantly, responding to the fundamental issue that is being raised by Submitters to this Variation. That being the manner by which the proposed Rural Character Landscape Schedules (as non-Priority Areas), are provided for within the current statutory framework of the Proposed District Plan, noting that no related amendments to Chapter 3 are being advanced as part of the Variation.

8. In addition, it would be helpful for the Council to include commentary around whether the original Section 32 analysis and reporting which supported the Variation remains valid; particularly in the context of any subsequent relevant updates to the Regional Policy Statement (RPS) and as a result of the various consent orders for the Priority Area appeals which have occurred subsequent to the original Section 32 report. The reply should also address the relevance of *highly productive land* (in the context of the related NPS¹) and *highly valued landscapes* (in the context of the policy intent signalled through the RPS).
9. The Commission also invites supplementary evidence from Ms Gilbert to confirm (but not introduce as new evidence) expert advice around the term 'modestly scaled' which experts for Submitters consider to be problematic and difficult to quantify with any certainty. In addition, the Commission suggests that the supplementary evidence from Ms Gilbert address the matter raised by Mr Espie around how *Te Tangi a te Manu* recommends the assessment of landscape capacity and redundancy should be approached.

Direction

10. The Hearing Panel directs that the Council's reply be provided in writing to the Hearing Administrator by **12.00pm on Wednesday 30 September 2026** to allow for this information to be posted to the hearing webpage by the close of business that day. Following a review of this reply, the Hearing Panel will advise all parties whether the hearing is formally closed, or if further information is required before doing so.
11. Should any party have any queries in relation to this Minute or require any clarification in relation to the process for this hearing, please contact the Hearings Administrator by email at dp.hearings@qldc.govt.nz.



Peter Kensington

For the Commission

8 September 2026

¹ National Policy Statement for Highly Productive Land 2022 (Amended December 2025)