Queenstown Lakes District Council's (QLDC) advocacy approach 2026–2028

QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

Working together to **influence policy** and **achieve better outcomes** for the Queenstown Lakes District.



Introduction

At QLDC, advocacy means representing the interests of our community and working to influence decisions, funding, policies, and laws, to achieve better outcomes for our district.

This framework document sets out how we can work together with key stakeholders to translate effort into outcomes.

QLDC delivers a wide range of services and infrastructure that supports our growing communities and high visitor numbers. To grow well into the future, Council must work closely with central government and other agencies to ensure decisions, policies and funding support the district's long-term needs and aspirations.

To do this well, we need a clear and coordinated approach to advocacy. This document shows how we will plan, work together, and focus our efforts so we can achieve the best possible results for our community including:

- **How we determine advocacy priorities.**
- **How we will assess and prioritise advocacy that is community-driven, evidence based, and realistic.**
- **The roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders advocating.**
- **How we develop and implement effective advocacy plans.**
- **When and how we will work in partnership with stakeholders, including local government associations.**
- **How we will report and review priorities.**

This document is a resource for our Councillors, officers, community, and external partners to better understand how we advocate.

Our objectives

- To clearly explain how we assess and identify advocacy issues, opportunities, and priorities.
- To increase funding for Council programmes, services and projects that benefit our communities.
- To help influence government decisions and funding so they deliver positive outcomes for our communities, environment and local economy.
- To build trust.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is how Council represents the community and works with decision-makers to secure funding, influence policy, and achieve positive outcomes for the district. It involves raising important issues, promoting solutions, and working with government, agencies, and other organisations on matters that affect Queenstown Lakes. Effective advocacy is informed by a clear understanding of the district's challenges, opportunities, and priorities.

Why do we advocate?

We advocate to ensure the needs and aspirations of the Queenstown Lakes community are reflected in decisions that affect our district. Many decisions about funding, legislation, and policy are made outside Council's control but have a significant impact on our ability to provide infrastructure, services, and support for a growing district. Effective advocacy helps secure better policies, stronger support, and improved long-term outcomes for our communities.

How do we advocate?

Council advocates by seizing opportunities to influence decisions. The best approach depends on the issue, who is involved, and where we are within the policy development cycle. For example, technical input and officer level engagement may be most effective for shaping operational policy or regulatory settings, while political engagement or collective advocacy may be necessary where decisions that involve system issues or broad legislative change.

COUNCIL ADVOCATES IN A RANGE OF WAYS, INCLUDING:

- Building strong relationships with Ministers and decision-makers through meetings, letters, and presentations.
- Strategic engagement with Members of Parliament and others across government (i.e. ministers, shadow ministers and other parliamentarians, including crossbenchers and parliamentary committee members).
- Engaging with candidates during election periods.
- Working proactively with central government officers.
- Partnering with other councils, community organisations, and businesses where local expertise and partnerships can strengthen our voice.
- Taking part in regional and sector groups.
- Raising awareness through community campaigns.
- Making and leveraging submissions on proposals and consultations.
- Using media and communications to highlight key issues and priorities.

Strong relationships are key to successful advocacy. When combined with clear reasons for change, they make a compelling case for Council's priorities.

Roles and responsibilities

Good advocacy needs a **clear plan and shared understanding of who does what.** The policy team leads this work, but Councillors, officers, and the community all play a role in identifying priorities and speaking for what matters most.

TABLE 1: ADVOCACY ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

MAYOR AND ELECTED MEMBERS	» Agree to advocacy approach and priorities. » Spokespeople on advocacy issues (led by the Mayor). » Develop and maintain relationships with stakeholders and the community to support Council's advocacy. » Receive updates on planning and evaluation of advocacy initatives.
CE AND EXECUTIVE	» Drive advocacy priorities. » Accountable and responsible for the implementation of the advocacy priorities and actions of Council. » Owners of relationships with key government departments, stakeholders, and community groups. » Receive updates on planning and evaluation of advocacy strategies.
POLICY TEAM	» Support Executive, Mayor and Councillors in the delivery of advocacy actions. » Development of advocacy framework and priorities. » Coordinate submissions. » Organisational capacity building. » Provide advice and support on action plans. » Reporting and evaluation.
OFFICERS	» Owners of relationships with key government departments, stakeholders, and community groups. » Provide expert advice to support advocacy priorities. » Stakeholder and community management and support. » Identification and submission of potential advocacy opportunities. » Media relationship management (comms).

How can communities get involved?

Effective advocacy involves the whole community – Council, residents, visitors, and businesses.

We encourage people to share their views and help shape our priorities. Community feedback plays an important role in strengthening our advocacy and showing decision-makers what matters.

YOU CAN GET INVOLVED BY:

- **Taking part in Council consultations and surveys**
- **Sharing feedback directly with Council**
- **Joining or working with community groups**
- **Speaking with your local MP**
- **Writing to Ministers or signing petitions**
- **Attending Council Meetings**

We achieve more when our community is informed, involved, and actively supports the issues that matter.



Council's advocacy networks

Council is committed to building and maintaining strong partnerships to support effective advocacy. Working together allows Council to deliver stronger messages, access more resources, and build stronger connections with key decision-makers.

Council regularly works in partnership to advocate about shared issues, helping to amplify collective voices and ensure it is heard by government.

LOCAL:

- **Mana Whenua**
- **Organisations, businesses and community groups**

REGIONAL/SECTOR:

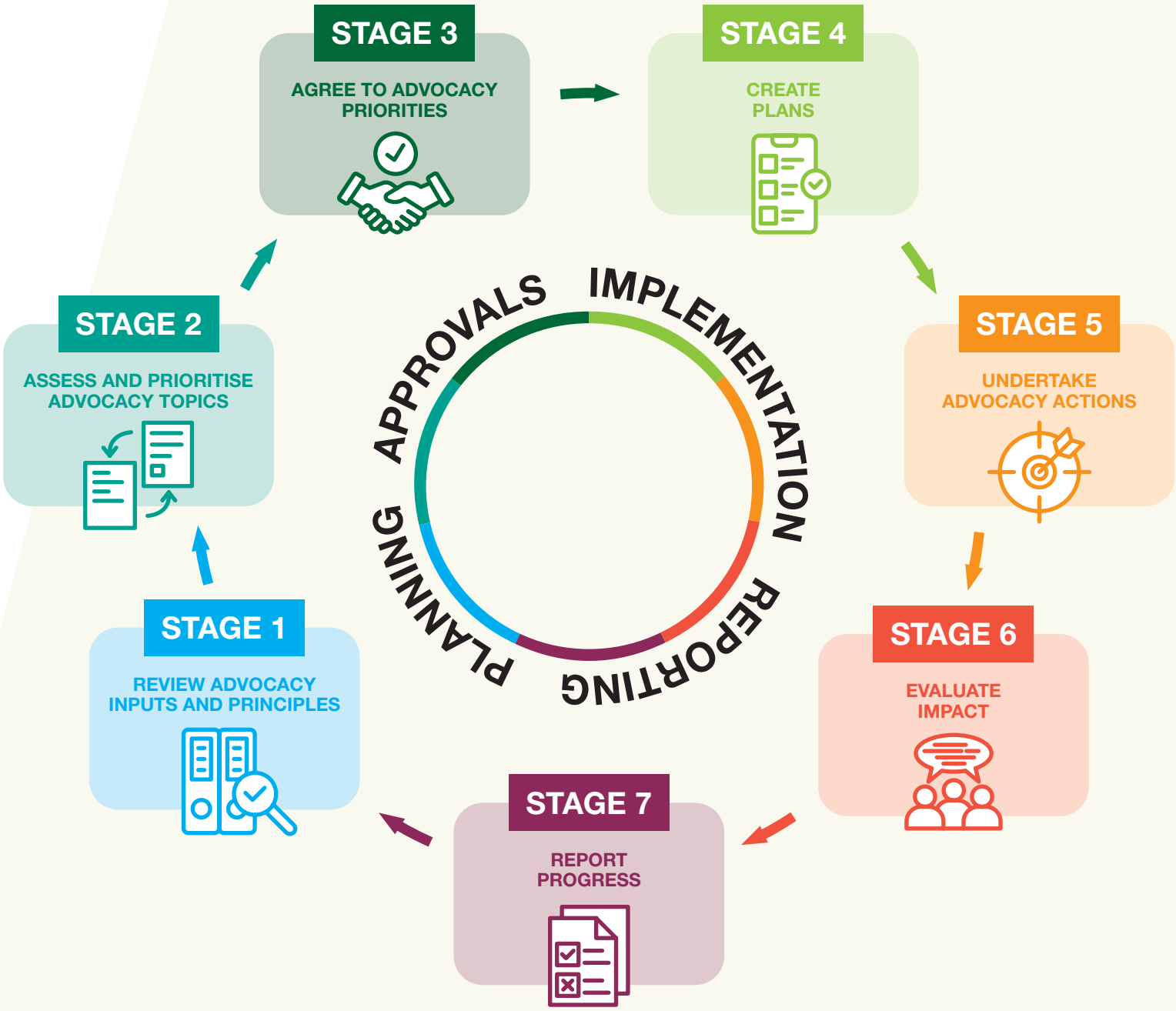
- **Taituāra (Local Government Professionals Aotearoa), Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ), New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI)**
- **Regional iwi partnerships**
- **Subject-matter working groups, forums and networks that elected members participate in include the Mayoral Forum, Otago Regional Transport Committee, Otago CDEM Group Joint Committee)**
- **Cross-council working groups that are officer-led (includes Otago Regional Economic Development Working Group, Otago Waste Network, Otago Biodiversity Forum, Otago Climate Officers' Group, Otago Strategy Managers' Group)**

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT:

- **Otago Central Lakes Regional Deal Negotiation Committee**
- **Grow Well Whaiora partnership**

Working in partnership with these organisations helps align policy priorities, strengthen the case for action, and reinforce the importance of these issues at a political level.

QLDC's triennial advocacy cycle



Explanation of stages of the cycle

STAGE 1 REVIEW ADVOCACY INPUTS AND PRINCIPLES

Our advocacy priorities are informed by a range of factors, including community feedback, existing Council strategies, and supporting evidence and data. Key inputs that shape these priorities include:

- **Central government priorities and reform programmes**
- **Timing and emerging opportunities**
- **Policy changes or identified gaps**
- **Community sentiment**
- **Council strategies, frameworks and plans**

STAGE 2 ASSESS AND PRIORITISE ADVOCACY TOPICS

Council must prioritise its advocacy efforts to ensure resources are used effectively and deliver the greatest potential impact. This stage involves assessing identified issues and opportunities to determine which advocacy topics should be progressed.

STAGE 3 AGREE TO ADVOCACY PRIORITIES

Council officers will develop a set of prioritised advocacy items for consideration and agreement by Councillors. This will be presented to Council between January and March at the start of each triennium, ensuring priorities reflect the outcomes of local government elections.

Officers will also provide an annual workshop (typically in March) to review advocacy priorities, ensure they remain fit for purpose, and report on progress against advocacy actions.

STAGE 4 CREATE PLANS

Council will develop an advocacy plan for each priority. The level of detail and tactical approach will be aligned with available resourcing and capacity.

STAGE 5 UNDERTAKE ADVOCACY ACTIONS

Council will implement advocacy action plans for each priority, tracking progress and actions as they occur.

STAGE 6 EVALUATE OUTCOMES AND MODIFY ACTION PLANS AS REQUIRED

Advocacy outcomes will be evaluated on an ongoing basis through the delivery of action plans. This includes assessing what is working well and where adjustments may be needed. Changes to the approach may be influenced by advocacy outcomes, shifts in central government policy, or changes to funding or service models, amongst other factors.

STAGE 7 REPORT PROGRESS

Regular reporting on priorities using success measures and indicators is a key component of Council's advocacy approach. Transparent reporting helps build trust and confidence in Council as an effective advocate for the community.

- **Executive receives bi-monthly updates**
- **Councillors will receive annual updates in March alongside a review of advocacy priorities.**

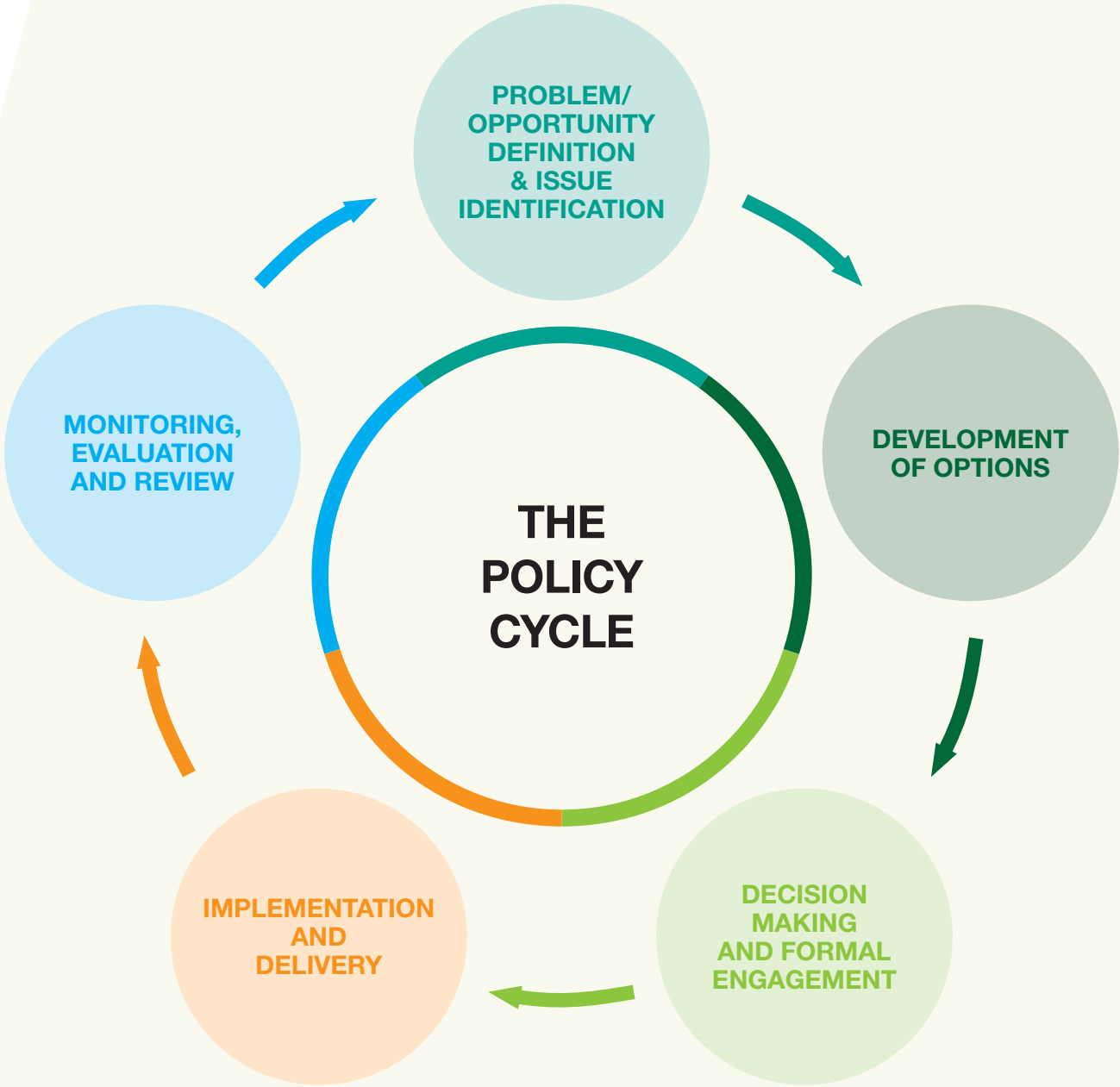
The annual report will include:

- **A summary of the previous year**
- **An overview of Council's advocacy activities, campaigns and achievements.**
- **An assessment of key barriers and any opportunities for improvement.**
- **An overview of new and emerging issues and opportunities**
- **Any recommendations for advocacy priorities for the following triennium (if applicable).**

Council will also communicate advocacy outcomes and achievements through its website, social media, news media, and Annual Reports.

How do we decide what advocacy actions should occur?

New policy and changes to existing policy all follow a similar process, that is often referred to as the policy cycle.



Both the type of proposal (i.e. technical/operational vs. strategic) as well as the stage in the policy cycle that a proposal is at informs what the best advocacy methods are to influence change. The following table links the stage in the policy cycle with what advocacy methods will generally be used.

TABLE 2: POLICY CYCLE AND PRIMARY ADVOCACY METHODS

POLICY CYCLE STAGE AND ADVOCACY PURPOSE	PRIMARY ADVOCACY METHODS	ROLES
ISSUE IDENTIFICATION: Raise awareness of an issue and establish why Council action is needed.	Evidence gathering, research, policy position papers, stakeholder engagement, media and communications, relationship-building with officials and MPs.	» **Officers** lead evidence and stakeholder engagement. » **Elected members** champion issues publicly and politically.
DEVELOPMENT OF OPTIONS: Identify options and potential proposals to influence outcomes.	Early engagement with officials, participation in working groups, technical forums, sector networks (LGNZ, Taituāra), evidence and local case studies.	» **Officers** lead technical engagement. » **Elected members** maintain and build strategic relationships and reinforce priorities.
DECISION MAKING AND FORMAL ENGAGEMENT: Secure support for preferred policy outcomes.	Formal submissions, hearings, joint advocacy through advocacy networks Engagement with Ministers, MPs and senior officials, elected member advocacy, targeted communications.	» **Officers** provide analysis, briefing material, prepare submissions and technical evidence. » **Elected members** present at hearings and advocate directly to decision-makers.
IMPLEMENTATION AND DELIVERY; MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW	Ongoing engagement with agencies, implementation working groups, operational feedback, evidence gathering to monitor implementation, sharing local insights.	» **Officers** lead and report to elected members as needed.

ATTACHMENT 1:

QLDC advocacy priorities for the triennium

QLDC's advocacy priorities were developed with Councillors through two workshops in January and February 2026 and were agreed at a Council meeting on 19 March 2026.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SYSTEM CHANGE	**REGIONAL AND SPATIAL PLANNING**	**NEW FUNDING MODELS FOR GROWTH AND INFRASTRUCTURE** (AND VALUE CAPTURE FROM TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY)
Structural, governance, funding, and service-delivery reforms to how local government operates in New Zealand.	Regional spatial planning is key to a shared, long-term direction for growth, land use, natural resources, and infrastructure that is managed effectively across the region.	Securing sustainable, and growth-responsive funding for infrastructure and services is critical to ensuring that development and the visitor economy contribute positively to growth across the district.

