

Introduction

During April 2026, the Council consulted on the draft Annual Plan 2026-2027.

This Annual Plan represents Year 3 of the Long Term Plan 2024-2034 (LTP), which was adopted in October 2024 after a lot of community input.

The Annual Plan provides an update on progress to deliver year 2 of the LTP, a summary of what's changed since the LTP was adopted, an overview of the challenging context councils across Aotearoa New Zealand are facing, and a budget for the year.

Over the month-long consultation process, the community was asked for formal submissions on proposed changes to user fees and charges, funding for priority projects identified by the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board and our progress

to develop the Long Term Plan 2027-2037. Submissions were also invited on any aspect of the draft Annual Plan.

Council received 422 submissions with 47 people taking the opportunity to speak directly to elected members at public hearings in Queenstown and Wānaka during May. Elected Members also connected with many more members of the community through in-person events and community meetings throughout April, ensuring a broad range of voices were heard.

Engagement levels were particularly high in Hāwea and Luggate, which together accounted for around 73% of all submissions.

Across all submissions, several common themes emerged. Residents highlighted the challenges of affordability and rising cost-of-living pressures, with many expressing concern about the cumulative effect of ongoing rates increases. There was also a clear call for Council to prioritise essential infrastructure and core services, improve transparency around how rates are allocated and spent, and ensure that the costs of growth are shared in a fair and equitable way.

This document outlines the key decisions made as part of the submission process.

Thank you for taking part.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to be part of the Annual Plan consultation. We received a strong response from our community, with many people sharing detailed feedback and perspectives. Elected members have listened closely to the feedback received during this process and have used it to help shape the final Annual Plan.

Summary of decisions

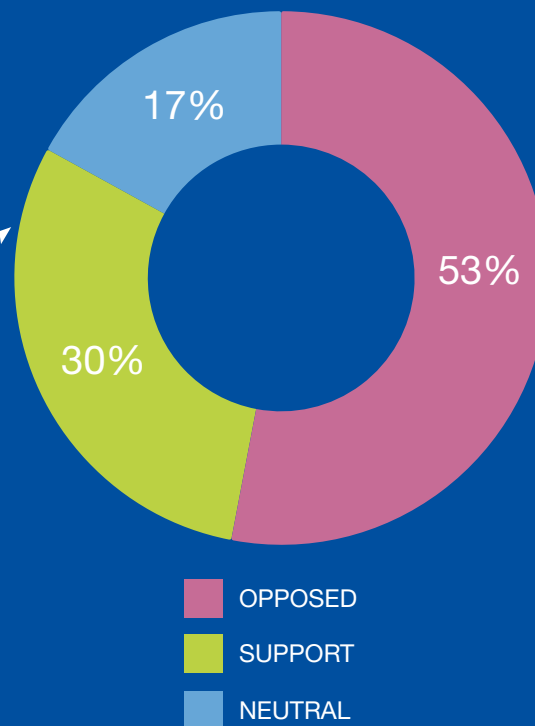
Proposed changes to user fees and charges.

There were 236 responses to proposed changes to user fees and charges. Of these 53% opposed the proposal, 30% were in support and 17% were neutral. 157 comments were received, with many not specifically opposing the proposed fees but focusing more on broader affordability concerns, including cumulative rates increases and cost-of-living pressures.

Following consultation and deliberation, elected members approved the changes to user fees and charges without change from the initial proposal.

Updated user fees and charges will apply from 1 July 2026 (or the date specified) and can be found at

qldc.govt.nz/user-fees-and-charges



Our progress to develop the Long Term Plan 2027-2037.

During the consultation process Council checked in with the community on progress made to develop a draft Long Term Plan 2027-2037. There were 91 responses received with feedback highlighting strong interest in how Council balances future investment with affordability.

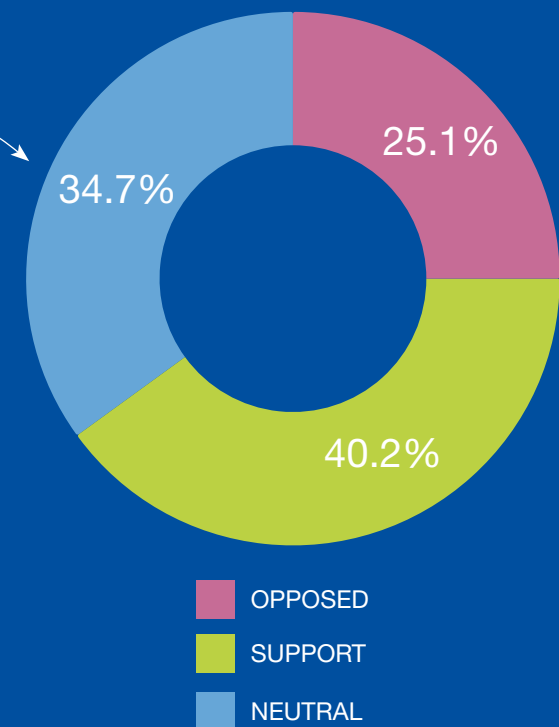
Overall, feedback reinforced community expectations that the Long Term Plan clearly demonstrates affordability, transparency, and a fair distribution of costs and benefits across communities.

No formal decision was required on this topic, instead, feedback will be used as work continues to develop a draft Long Term Plan 2027-2037.

Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board priority projects

There were 219 responses to the proposal to bring forward funding or allocate resourcing to priority projects recommended by the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board. Of these, 25.1% opposed the proposal, 34.7% were neutral and 40.2% were supportive.

Feedback reflected a range of views. Some submitters supported progressing projects identified at a local level, particularly those related to essential infrastructure, active transport, and public transport. Others emphasised that, given current financial pressures, non-essential or discretionary projects should be deferred, with greater emphasis placed on core services and growth-related infrastructure. A recurring theme was the need for clear prioritisation and appropriate timing, alongside assurance that investment delivers equitable benefits across communities.



| Following consultation and deliberation, elected members approved prioritisation of funding or allocation of staff resourcing to progress planning for several projects, including: |
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| Full-sized multi-use Artificial Turf in Wānaka (\$700k capex, \$100k opex) |
| Wānaka Lakefront Development Plan Stage 4 (\$150k capex in 2026-2027, \$430k capex in 2027-2028) |
| Lower Helwick Street Redevelopment (\$500k capex) |
| Stage 4 Pathway (\$1M capex) |
| Roy's Bay Jetty, Shared Path Network and safety improvements |
| Wānaka Arts Centre, including \$125k funding to progress feasibility work |

Other changes

Rates impact

In response to wide-ranging community feedback, the proposed average district-wide rates increase of 11.7% has been reduced to an average of 9.9%. This reflects a clear commitment to balancing the need for continued investment in essential services and infrastructure with reducing financial pressure on ratepayers where possible.

The decrease has been achieved through reductions in the capital programme, operational savings, reducing depreciation funding and higher than expected growth, meaning rates can be applied across a higher number of properties.

Approximately 73% of submissions were received from the Hāwea and Luggate communities and Council has responded directly to this feedback by revisiting and adjusting proposed increases in both areas.

In Luggate, the median rates increase for properties with wastewater services has been reduced to 13.3% from 28.3%. This has been achieved through deferring \$100k of wastewater funding to a later year.

In Lake Hāwea, the median rates increase for properties with wastewater services has decreased from 18.2% to 12.5%. This has been achieved by reducing the wastewater loan principal repayment from \$350k to \$100k, bringing it in line with the 2025-2026 level. Additionally, depreciation funding has been adjusted from 50% to 40%, reducing costs by \$63k.

Changes to the Capital Expenditure Programme

The capital expenditure programme for 2026-2027 has been closely reviewed. This has resulted in a \$30M reduction in capital expenditure and a \$425k reduction for operational expenditure. More details on this can be found in the full Annual Plan document

[📄 qldc.govt.nz/annual-plans](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/annual-plans)

Freedom Camping Ambassador Programme

The Freedom Camping Ambassador programme will not be funded by Council in 2026-2027. This represents a budget reduction of \$350k.

The ambassador programme has been funded over the past three years, helping campers understand and follow local freedom camping rules while enjoying the Queenstown Lakes District sustainably. Key operational aspects of the programme, including education, environmental stewardship, and response to community requests for service will now be split between the Council's enforcement and parks teams.

Water Services Council Controlled Organisation

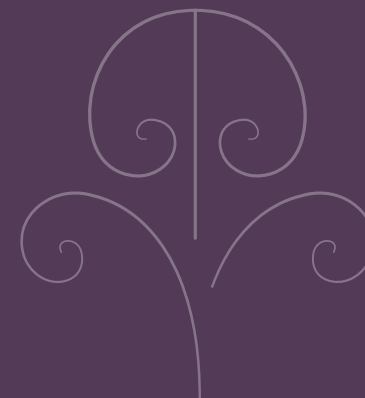
Interest costs of \$142k associated with the establishment of the Water Services CCO has been incorporated in the Annual Plan 2026-2027.

Development Contributions Policy

The Development Contributions (DC) Policy has been updated for 2026-2027 and will be reviewed in full as part of the Long Term Plan 2027-2037 process.

The updates for 2026-2027 account for annual inflation/indexation of 3.8% in line with the Producers Price Index (PPI) Outputs for Construction provided by Statistics New Zealand. It also factors in the government's 'granny flat consent exemption', which came into effect this year, allowing homeowners to build small standalone dwellings without full building consent, if specific conditions are met. Ahead of the full DC Policy review in the LTP 2027-2037, the LGA provides transitional arrangements allowing councils to charge development contributions for granny flats to support additional demand on local infrastructure.

No further changes were recommended to the Development Contribution Policy following the consultation process. The policy can be read in full at [📄 qldc.govt.nz/policies](https://qldc.govt.nz/policies)



Read the Annual Plan online at
[📄 qldc.govt.nz/annual-plans](https://qldc.govt.nz/annual-plans)

