Destination Management Plan Progress Report 2025-2026

FY25-26 (1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026)



Queenstown NEW ZEALAND Wānaka QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL

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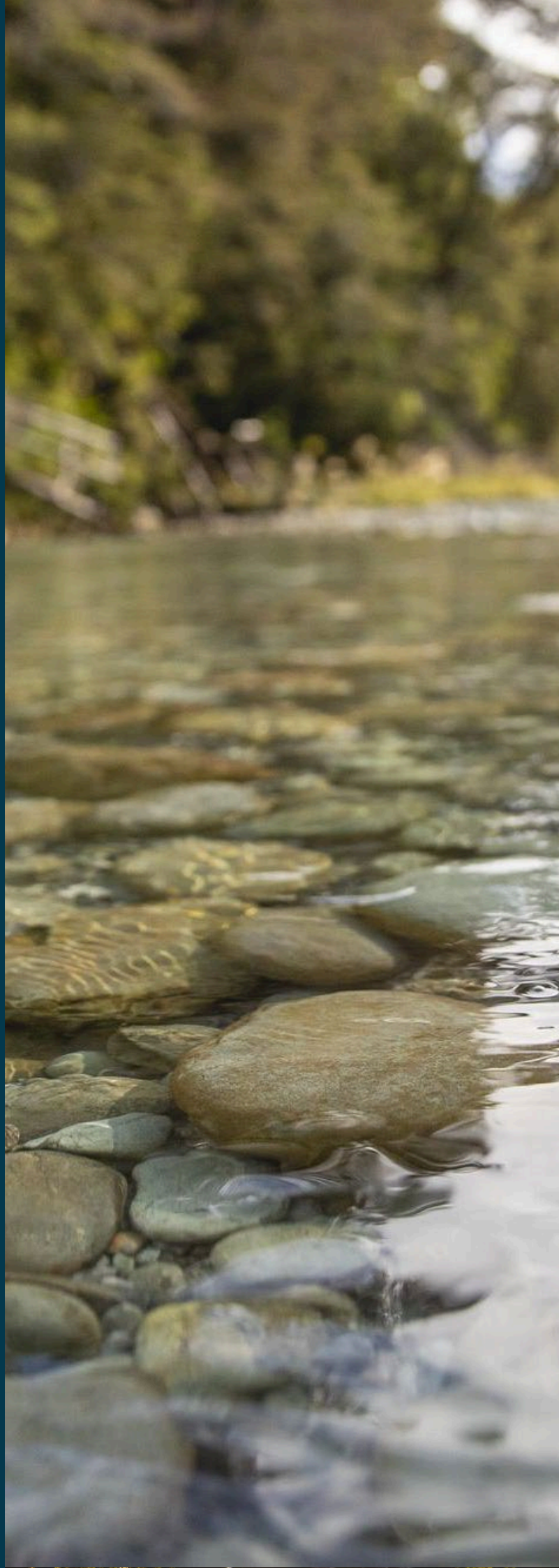
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Introduction

DMP Development

The tourism industry of Queenstown Lakes has much to be proud of. The region is known for strong economic performance and has seen incredible change over the last century. There is no doubt that the combination of majestic natural landscapes and a world-class tourism system has underpinned this success.

Despite this success, the region's tourism industry faces significant, interrelated challenges driven by local, national and global factors. Over the course of three years (2020 – 2023), communities, businesses, and organisations across the district, came together to express their perspectives on how the visitor economy impacts local wellbeing, the environment and the economy in Queenstown Lakes. The region's destination management plan, Travel to a Thriving Future, was borne from this collaboration.

In February 2023 the DMP was unanimously endorsed by Councillors and implementation commenced.

Partners

The DMP's implementation is overseen by the district's Regional Tourism Organisations (RTOs), Destination Queenstown (DQ) and Lake Wānaka Tourism (LWT), in partnership with Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC), with engagement from Kāi Tahu, the Department of Conservation and other key stakeholders.

DMP Refresh

Now in its fourth year, the DMP will be refreshed by DQ, LWT and QLDC to ensure it remains current and fit for purpose. The refresh provides an opportunity to update language and framing, so the plan continues to align with both destination management priorities and the evolving direction of tourism in the region, nationally and globally. Clear expectations will be set early about the scope of the update, reinforcing that this is a focused refinement rather than a full redevelopment..

In This Report

The 2025-26 DMP Progress Report reflects progress made by delivery partners and supporting stakeholders over the past financial year. The report highlights how the visitor economy has an important role in achieving value socially, culturally, environmentally and economically.
This report captures activity directly related to delivery of the DMP. A wider range of work supporting DMP objectives and visitor, community and environmental outcomes is also delivered through the programmes, projects and strategic plans of community partners and QLDC.

The report is structured around the DMP's strategic pillars:

- Foundational projects for success.
- Enrich communities and enhance the visitor experience.
- Restore the environment and decarbonise the visitor economy.
- Build economic resilience, capability and productivity.

The report covers 23 projects, highlighting new and existing workstreams, achievements and priorities for the year ahead. Further detail on specific projects is available at regenerativetourism.co.nz.

Together, the Queenstown Lakes District has the opportunity to change how the visitor economy works to deliver social, cultural, economic, and environmental benefits through tourism that also provides exceptional visitor experiences.

Queenstown Lakes Destination Management Plan, Travel to a Thriving Future.

Queenstown Lakes Destination Management Plan

Summary

Travel to a Thriving Future, is the Queenstown Lakes' Destination Management Plan (DMP). The plan is about protecting and enhancing the wellbeing of our environment, our communities, and everyone who visits or calls this place home. By embracing regenerative tourism, we're building a future where tourism gives back more than it takes – benefiting the people, places, and ecosystems that make this destination what it is. Together, let's transform tourism into a force for positive change and ensure a thriving future for all.

Vision

Tourism in the Queenstown Lakes is regenerative and resilient, delivering benefits environmentally, socially, culturally and economically, enriching the lives of the people who live here and the people who visit.

Purpose

Improving local and visitor wellbeing and experience, forging connections between people and places, and enabling healthy ecosystems, so that the district becomes known as a leading example of how travel creates a thriving future.



Foundation Projects

Foundational work to enable the three strategic pillars.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECT 1: FRAMEWORK FOR GOVERNANCE AND REVIEW Objective: Develop a robust governance model that includes a reporting and review cadence.	This foundational project sets out to ensure there is effective, accountable leadership that can guide stakeholders across sectors and communities to deliver the plan and its various projects.	
	A formal Destination Management (DM) Steering Group was established between the RTOs and QLDC. Meeting monthly, this group plays a crucial role in strategic direction and refining the implementation of the plan, ensuring alignment and consistent progress reporting across all activities.	Monthly progress reports will continue to be shared with the steering group, along with the opportunity to propose new workstreams or changes to workstreams for approval from the group.
	In 2025-26, DQ and LWT operated together under a shared services partnership. The focus of the partnership centres on leveraging opportunities, driving efficiencies and maximising resources to better serve the entire Queenstown Lakes district.	The RTOs will continue to operate under a shared services partnership delivering projects across Queenstown and Wānaka.
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECT 2: OPERATIONALISE PROJECTS Objective: Establish an implementation plan and communications structure.	The purpose of this foundational project is to assign the 23 projects and 114 actions to the different organisations involved in the implementation of the DMP. Early work included assigning all 23 projects and 114 actions between QLDC teams and the RTOs.	
	A DM Working Group consisting of RTO and QLDC departments was established to convene monthly to discuss progress on DMP projects from different teams and departments.	The working group will continue to meet monthly and share monthly progress reports.
	The RTOs established annual implementation plans for their assigned projects, these were outlined in the Sustainability and Stewardship department plans, along with inclusion in other RTO team's department plans – these align to the RTO Business Plans.	The RTO has updated department plans and commitments in line with project progression for FY26-27.
	The different teams within QLDC have approaches to achieving actions from the DMP as they are outlined within their team's strategic plans. These teams and associated plans include: Community Partnerships (Welcoming Plan, Creativity, Culture and Heritage, Responsible Camping), Climate and Biodiversity team (and plan), Waste Management and Minimisation team (and plan), Economic Futures team (Economic Diversification Plan).	
	Reporting and communicating progress: - Early work included establishing a structured monthly reporting cadence for the DM Working Group to share progress with the DM Steering Group. - Quarterly updates are published on the regenerative tourism website, which provides transparent progress updates to stakeholders, community and industry. - A biannual DMP Stakeholder Alignment Hui was established to provide stronger communications between different delivery partners (inclusive of community groups, QLDC, RTOs, and organisations that have projects that support or enable delivery). - Regular updates on the DMP and its delivery are provided to the RTOs' membership through the Member Capability programme, and communications channels.	Monthly, quarterly and annual reporting will continue, with updates quarterly and annual updates being shared on the regenerative tourism website.

Foundation Projects (cont.)

Foundational work to enable the three strategic pillars.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECT 3: DATA AND MEASUREMENT FRAMEWORK Objective: Establish data collection and reporting systems.	In February 2026, the DM Steering Group approved the development of a Thriving Destination Measurement Framework to monitor destination outcomes across social, cultural, environmental and economic dimensions.	Selection and endorsement of priority indicators and core destination signals by the DM Steering Group will be complete during Q1 FY26-27.
	Work then focused on compiling an indicator catalogue using local, regional and national data sources to support future reporting and dashboard development.	Refine the indicator framework and establish baseline reporting measures, including confirmation of data sources, methodologies and reporting responsibilities, in alignment with other measurement work underway.
	The framework is designed to evolve as new data becomes available and related DMP workstreams mature.	Continue integrating insights and data inputs from related destination management initiatives to ensure the framework remains relevant, practical and aligned with evolving community priorities.
	QLDC partnerships with the University of Otago and University of Canterbury continued to expand the evidence base supporting destination management. Research projects explored topics including tourism productivity, workforce capability, destination monitoring, and modelling visitor economy impacts from environmental shocks.	Findings are informing DMP implementation and future decision-making.
FOUNDATIONAL PROJECT 4: UPDATE QUEENSTOWN LAKES BRAND AND MARKETING STRATEGIES Objective: Align brand and marketing activities with regenerative tourism goals.	The RTOs have completed a full review and evolution of the consumer marketing approach and activity to align with regenerative tourism goals. This has included evolving priority audiences and visitor segments, with greater consideration of residents and changemakers and a stronger focus on areas such as arts, culture and heritage. Content and storytelling have evolved alongside this through initiatives such as Our People, Our Home, Mahika Kai (Wānaka) and From the Ground Up, helping visitors connect more meaningfully with local people, place and community. This evolution broadens the role of destination marketing, with a greater focus on building long-term destination reputation, influencing visitor behaviour and supporting the outcomes for our communities, environment and visitor economy. Find out more here.	The initiative is linked to the Place-Based Destination Planning project and will feed into the upcoming Place Brand work for Queenstown.
	The RTOs developed and have continued to use a new marketing model that extends beyond the traditional 'dream, plan, book' visitor journey, to include in-destination engagement and post-visit advocacy. Visitors are encouraged not just to arrive, but to connect meaningfully with the place, participate in experiences that reflect community values, and share stories that influence future visitors.	
	The invitation to visitors has continued to be shaped to attract high contributing visitors. This visitor type essentially displays the same qualities as a 'temporary local'. They take the time to connect with people and place, appreciating culture, forging relationships, and giving back in meaningful ways - from supporting conservation projects and understanding Kāi Tahu stories to spreading their spend across local businesses.	Focus is on building a strong destination preference for Queenstown and Wānaka by celebrating the distinct and authentic qualities of each place, attracting high contributing visitors who stay longer, engage more deeply and contribute positively to the region.

Strategic Pillar One

Enrich communities and enhance the visitor experience.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Objective: Build positive community sentiment and a tourism system that listens and responds.	The regenerativetourism.co.nz website evolved to be a community-focused platform that builds transparency and understanding within the community. The website houses the purpose and progress of DMP projects. 15 stories have been posted detailing progress since the DMP's implementation.	Stories on the regenerative tourism website will be updated on a quarterly basis.
	The RTOs conducted the fifth wave of the Views on Tourism resident sentiment research, with fieldwork running from October 2025 to March 2026. The research measures the value and impacts of tourism on the local community. Results show community sentiment has stabilised at limited acceptance, with 97% of residents personally benefiting from tourism activity in their local area. However, 99% of residents have been adversely impacted, and 76% of Queenstown residents agree the region needs a destination management plan. Views on Tourism Resident Sentiment Research - Queenstown Lakes District.	The sixth wave of the Views on Tourism research will be conducted from October 2026 to March 2027.
	The RTOs delivered resident-focused communications aimed at strengthening tourism's social license, building pride in place and encouraging residents to engage with local businesses, events and experiences. Initiatives included Eat Drink October, Locals' May and What's On Around Town event marketing.	Resident-focused activity will continue, with further campaigns and content being scoped.
	DQ delivered the third season of Our People, Our Home, a four-part video series celebrating the local people, businesses and stories that shape Queenstown. The campaign highlighted tourism's contribution to the community and aimed to strengthen local pride and connection to place.	Resident stories and event marketing will continue, with campaigns and storytelling initiatives for the coming year being scoped.
	The RTOs regularly leverage media channels to share stories of tourism businesses giving back to people, place, environment and culture. These stories highlight practical action across the district, including conservation projects, waste reduction, cultural initiatives, community partnerships and businesses supporting the wellbeing of their people.	Media partnerships will continue to strengthen regenerative tourism storytelling.
	The RTOs contributed a chapter to The Routledge Handbook on Regenerative Tourism and Hospitality. The chapter outlines the practical steps being taken to turn the district's regenerative tourism ambitions into action and create a visitor economy that supports community wellbeing, restores the environment, respects culture and strengthens long-term resilience.	
	The RTOs delivered Member Capability events and workshops across Queenstown and Wānaka to support community engagement and local values. Examples include: Developing your Pepeha, Confident Communication Across Cultures in Today's Workplace, Confident Customer Service, and Destination Management Plan 101.	Ongoing development of member capability events and resources, supporting local businesses to connect with the local community and bring values to life through their business.
	QLDC and RTOs actively support and engage with key community organisations: Wao (including Better Events Collective, Southern Lakes Kai Collective, Better Building Group, Transport Group), Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Group, Wai Wānaka, Sustainable Queenstown, Wastebusters, Te Kakano, Plastic Free Wānaka and Queenstown, Protect our Winters, Southern Lakes Sanctuary, Mana Tāhuna, Whakatipu Reforestation Trust, Three Lakes Cultural Trust, Lakes District Museum, Queenstown and Wānaka Business Chamber of Commerce, Startup Queenstown Lakes, Technology Queenstown and other local conservation and community organisations via direct engagement and forums (including Whakatipu Conservation Alliance (QT), and Our Place (WKA)).	An annual impact report for the calendar year 2026 will showcase collective action and impact of DMP projects and shared stewardship for our place among individuals, community groups and businesses alike.
	A Stakeholder Alignment Hui was established to improve visibility, alignment and collaboration between organisations contributing to the DMP.	Continual cadence of Stakeholder Alignment Huis.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 2: TIAKI PROMISE: LEAD BY EXAMPLE Objective: Align visitor experiences with the core values and guiding principles.	QLDC Responsible Camping Programme aligned messaging and branding with Tiaki Promise, including working with Tourism NZ 'Camp with Care' campaign using Tiaki, rolled out 2025-2026 summer.	Assets are being reviewed in advance of 2026-2027 summer season.
	The RTOs encourage local tourism businesses to champion Tiaki Promise through in-person member capability events and supporting resources on the RTOs' Member Hub.	Liaison with national agencies to understand the future direction of and commitment to the Tiaki Promise.
	The RTOs regularly engage with Tourism New Zealand on how to enhance the kaupapa of the Tiaki Promise in the district.	On hold until there is a national strategy or focus on localising the implementation of the Tiaki Promise.
PROJECT 3: PRESERVE AND CELEBRATE KĀI TAHUTAKA AND MĀTAURAKA Objective: Align visitor experiences with the core values and guiding principles.	The RTOs' focus has been on building a relationship with Kāi Tahu and mana whenua representatives to guide cultural storytelling, support mātauraka Māori and raise awareness of Kāi Tahu legends and stories of place which are authorised by Kāi Tahu to be shared. The Place DNA® values research project highlighted the strong alignment of Kāi Tahu values with those of the Queenstown (Whakatipu only) community.	Work is underway to use Place DNA® and Kāi Tahu values as a platform for storytelling and guiding how we collectively position and reference Tāhuna Queenstown. The RTOs will seek to work with takata whenua and mana whenua to develop a clear and shared understanding of the district's cultural taonga as a cultural values map or similar.
PROJECT 4: PLACE-BASED DESTINATION PLANNING Objective: Strong visitor satisfaction.	The RTO progressed the Queenstown Place Brand project through desk research, on-the-ground research, stakeholder and Kāi Tahu interviews, and community and industry workshops. Findings were synthesised into a Place DNA® Analysis and Report, defining Queenstown's unique identity, key place attributes and strategic considerations to guide future destination and brand alignment. Key insights were also shared with participants and wider stakeholders through a webinar in June 2026. Find out more about the project here.	Planning for the next stage of the Queenstown Place Brand project begins early FY26-27, including use of Place DNA® values and attributes as a foundation for how we represent Tāhuna Queenstown and how findings will inform future brand strategy and alignment.
	The RTOs and QLDC completed optimal visitation research and scenario modelling with Dr Susanne Becken, testing growth scenarios (for example faster growth, seasonal peaks, and value-led growth) to explore not just how many visitors the district can host, but how many it should, and under what conditions. Find out more here.	The optimal visitation research will support informed, evidence-based decision making for a regenerative, system-led approach to growth.
	The RTOs' marketing and communications team published 12 regenerative tourism stories for both visitors and resident audiences.	Regenerative storytelling will continue to be woven through RTO marketing and communications, with future content opportunities and campaign activity scoped as part of annual planning.
	Additional From the Ground Up videos were produced by DQ in early 2025, bringing the series to nine stories profiling Queenstown businesses, organisations and local leaders taking practical action to support the environment and community. The series showcases initiatives spanning conservation, waste reduction, local production, sustainable accommodation, clean technology, arts and community connection.	Continued promotion of the From the Ground Up series to help visitors and residents to connect more meaningfully with local people, place and community.
	Mahika Kai, produced in partnership with LWT and Monster Children, continued to gain international recognition during the year, including selection for the 2026 Antenna Documentary Film Festival. Grounded in Kāi Tahu knowledge, the film explores the regeneration of traditional food-gathering practices and themes of environmental stewardship, cultural resilience and connection to place.	
	The RTOs continued to evolve their target market segments, strengthening the focus on Arts, Culture, Heritage and Creativity and incorporating Astrotourism as a segment aligned with regenerative tourism through its connection to place, dark-sky protection and low-impact visitor experiences.	Future projects in conjunction with QLDC include the Tāhuna Glenorchy Dark Sky Group's Star Compass project and various other projects with Dark Skies groups both locally and across the region. Significant tourism opportunities offered by the 2028 solar eclipse will also be explored.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 5: WELCOME PROGRAMME Objective: Strong visitor satisfaction.	QLDC is now in year two of the three-year Welcoming Plan, aligned to the MBIE Welcoming Communities Standard. The plan has made significant progress to make the places we love more welcoming for everyone and ensures that all newcomers to our district are able to thrive. • 1,300 Newcomers Guide printed copies distributed. • 1,464 Newcomers Guide webpage visits recorded. • 3,996 counts on the page (include all clicks/ interactions). Find out more here.	Te Atamira, a trusted partner in community wellbeing, is contracted to implement and deliver Te Waharoa ki Whakatipu initiative: a half-day cultural wānanga (educational seminar) that enables newcomers and long-established migrants in the Whakatipu rohe to meaningfully connect with mana whenua, tangata whenua and te ao Māori. Local community leaders of Kāi Tahu whakapapa, who are working to uplift, revitalise and normalise te reo Māori in Tāhuna, will be facilitating this initiative, considered a pilot project. Its kaupapa provides foundational knowledge of local hītori, tikaka, and te reo Māori, creating a culturally grounded welcome into the area.
	QLDC are piloting a 'New to Queenstown Lakes' digital hub to house the Newcomers Guide online. The intention is to make existing content more accessible and allow linking to relevant content on partner sites.	QLDC will soft launch the digital hub in October 2026 prior to full launch in December 2026. Analytics will help inform future content development.
	QLDC Community Partnerships team launched a series of impact vignettes based on social cohesion and civic engagement and participation. The first covering the Queenstown Multicultural Festival.	Further development of impact vignettes will take place.
	QLDC undertook information sessions and workshops on 'Starting a Business for the Latin community', in collaboration with Startup Queenstown Lakes to identify interest, need and further support.	
	The RTOs held a series of Member Capability events to support migrant workers and newcomers to the district including development of frontline staff training, and intercultural communication (in partnership with QLDC).	Ongoing Member Capability events and resources are being developed to support new and migrant workers in the district.
PROJECT 6: ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE DEVELOPMENT Objective: Strong visitor satisfaction.	QLDC jointly hosted the Queenstown Multicultural Festival held in March 2026 on race relations day. Race Relations Commissioner, Dr Melissa Derby, from Te Kāhui Tika Tangata | Human Rights Commission was in attendance promoting common connections, respectful dialogue, and shared values.	The date for the 2027 Multicultural Festival is to be confirmed.
	QLDC supported a five-day Creativity and Culture Hui that took place in June 2026, with a focus on the role of arts and creativity within place as a visitor attraction.	Release of the post-hui Creative and Cultural Spaces and Places Evidence Report.
	A storymap was live for the month of November supported by QLDC and Three Lakes Cultural Trust to showcase the Creative Spaces Project, connecting artists with spaces and places across the district. Find out more here.	Preparations are underway for the 2027 Creative Spaces project.
	The RTOs increased the exposure and marketing of arts, culture and heritage through a range of blogs, event marketing, social and digital marketing, and storytelling, including a From the Ground Up feature on Te Atamira and Our People, Our Home video feature on local Arrowtown artist Jenny Merhtens. RTO visitor research has been provided to the Three Lakes Cultural Trust to help understand visitor interest for existing cultural, arts and heritage experiences.	The RTOs will work with the district's creative communities and local arts and cultural organisations to identify opportunities to celebrate and share arts and cultural experiences better with our visitors.
	The RTOs published a series of segment insight guides for members including Arts, Culture and Heritage. The guide shows 21% of respondents visited culture or heritage experiences art galleries, museums, historic buildings or sites and 21% of respondents participated in culture or heritage experiences while in the Queenstown Lakes District.	Segment Insights Resources will continue to be maintained to strengthen destination competitive advantage.
	QLDC funding through the Economic Futures Diversification Fund supported video content for two projects showcasing the diversity of the local economy and the strength of creative and tech industries.	Content released through Three Lakes Cultural Trust channels. Assess the viability of a shared content library for use by broader business sectors to showcase and celebrate Queenstown beyond traditional tourism.
	QLDC supported community media, including 1964 and the Unmaking podcast, through project support and connections to help them share stories from the district.	

Strategic Pillar Two

Restore the environment and decarbonise the visitor economy.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 7: MEASURE ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT Objective: Biodiversity health & zero waste and pollution.	The RTOs are scoping a methodology for attributing visitor economy waste to landfill with Wānaka Wastebusters. This will provide key data to understand tourism's contribution to landfill waste and reduction opportunities.	Methodology for attributing visitor economy waste to landfill is complete, alongside a waste reduction plan for the visitor economy.
	Ecosystem monitoring of key sites is being scoped as part of the Nature Restoration project with the RTOs, QLDC, and Griffith University. See further detail in project 11.	Nature Restoration Project monitoring of key sites is scoped and underway.
	RTOs and QLDC supported the development of the Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Plan with key partners and are now working with the governance group on the Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Plan on delivery workstreams. Data sharing and a progress dashboard have been identified as one of the key priorities for the group.	Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment Plan monitoring and workstreams scoped and underway.
	The RTOs' Member Capability programme has delivered a series of events and resources to support businesses with measuring their environmental footprint. Examples include a Planetary Accounting Network workshop, access to a subsidised carbon measurement tool and carbon reduction resources, as well as waste management events and resources, including resources created through QLDC-funded programmes for example, Resourceful Communities business workstream.	Ongoing support for businesses measuring and monitoring their environmental footprint, via events and resources as part of the RTOs' Member Capability programme.
	The RTOs have taken part in a 'Climate Risk Scan' project with Travel Forward, providing the opportunity to be a case study on climate risk to winter destinations.	The Climate Risk Scan project results are analysed and used to inform businesses on climate risks associated with operating in a winter destination.
PROJECT 8: MEASURE GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS Objective: Reach carbon zero by 2030.	The visitor economy emissions profile for the district is currently being measured for FY25-26, and will be published on the regenerative tourism website when finalised.	The RTOs & QLDC have a clear carbon measurement for the visitor economy emissions for the previous FY (FY25-26) which is used to inform future evolution of the decarbonisation roadmap.
	The RTOs are working with Regional Tourism New Zealand and other RTOs on a national tourism carbon measurement approach.	A clear, united and consistent national approach is established to measure the carbon footprint of the visitor economy at the regional levels.
	The RTOs delivered a series of carbon measurement and reduction workshops via the Member Capability programme. Sectors included transport, activities, accommodation, and food and beverage.	Ongoing Member Capability events and resources will be provided to member businesses on carbon measurement and reduction.
	A carbon management tool was subsidised for DQ & LWT members to measure their carbon footprint.	The carbon measurement tool was disestablished in early 2026; however ongoing support is being provided to businesses to ensure access to carbon counting tools, reduction resources and certification options.
	The RTOs' sustainability manager continued to provide sustainability 1:1s with tourism businesses.	Continued support for member businesses measuring and reducing their carbon footprint via the RTOs' Member Capability programme.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 9 (KEYSTONE): CARBON ZERO BY 2030 Objective: Reach carbon zero by 2030.	A Pathway to Decarbonise was launched as the Queenstown Lakes' Visitor Economy Decarbonisation Plan. Developed collaboratively by Destination Think, the RTOs and QLDC, and with input from experts, and community partners - the document turns climate ambition into coordinated action. The plan can be found here.	Ongoing stakeholder engagement across all workstreams. An annual report will be created for the decarbonisation goal in FY26-27, tracking progress against the roadmap actions and measurement.
	The plan sets out 10 key delivery workstreams which are currently underway: 1. Influencing system-level change: • The Electrify Queenstown event ran for its third year (17-19 May, 2026). See more information about the event here. • The RTOs supported member businesses by providing a subsidised carbon measurement tool alongside a series of carbon reduction workshops via the Member Capability programme.	Electrify Queenstown will run 30 May – 1 June 2027. Ongoing Member Capability support in carbon measurement and reduction. Ongoing advocacy to central government on stronger carbon reduction targets.
	2. Powering the Visitor Economy: • Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) was launched thanks to support from the RTO and QLDC (among other organisations & funders) and have supported 26 businesses to date. Find out more about QEA here. • Electrify Queenstown event.	QLDC and the RTO are working with QEA on developing their Business Accelerator Programme for FY26-27. QLDC and EECA are supporting QEA with a large battery project, which will support businesses in accessing larger batteries.
	3. Transporting visitors to the destination: • The RTOs and Queenstown Airport have been working on a Sustainable Aviation working group. A terms of reference has been created, and group format identified.	Formalise the Aviation working group and hold initial kick-off meeting.
	4. Transporting visitors around the destination: • The RTOs and QLDC have supported various active transport and electric transport initiatives and pilots. For example: Vessev pilot, Whoosh, Southern Infrastructure's Queenstown Cable Car project. • QLDC and RTOs have been in support of the development of the trails network.	Ongoing advocacy and support for sustainable and decarbonised transport solutions.
	5. Feeding visitors: • The RTO and QLDC are actively involved in the Southern Lakes Kai Collective. • The RTOs' Member Capability programme supports businesses with localising their supply chains – particularly in the food and beverage industry. • A range of new resources went live on the RTO Member Hub that includes procurement processes in the food and beverage industry.	Continue to work with key stakeholders on actions out of this workstream as per the roadmap.
	6. Building the visitor economy: • The RTOs and QLDC are involved in the Better Building Group. • The Electrify Queenstown event and Queenstown Electrification Accelerator Programme support operators in building capability and awareness around electrifying buildings, including renovations and new builds.	Continue to work with key stakeholders on actions out of this workstream as per the roadmap.
	7. Removing visitor economy waste: • A range of new resources went live on the RTOs' Member Hub that includes procurement and waste reduction processes for the food and beverage industry.	A waste reduction plan for the local industry has been created and socialised.
	8. Stewarding the land and water: • As per project 10 and 11 of the DMP. • The Community Funds support tourism businesses and visitors in providing avenues for giveback into local ecological projects.	Love Queenstown and Love Wānaka evolution operationalised and continue to work with key stakeholders on actions out of this workstream as per the roadmap.
	9. Decarbonising visitor economy supply chains: • As per project 10 of the DMP, the procurement project aims to support businesses in localising their supply chain.	Continue to work with key stakeholders on actions out of this workstream as per the roadmap.
	10. Removing residual emissions: • Initial scoping of possible local projects is underway.	Continue to work with key stakeholders on actions out of this workstream as per the roadmap.
	Separate to the decarbonisation plan's workstreams above, DQ & LWT became signatories on the Glasgow Declaration.	Annual reporting against climate action plan.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 10: ZERO ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT Objective: Zero waste and pollution.	RTOs and QLDC representation in key environmental organisations: • WAO Better Events Collective, supporting systems change in the events sector to measure and manage its environmental footprint. • WAO Southern Lakes Kai Collective supporting actions from the roadmap in the 2025 food resilience report. • Upper Lakes Integrated Catchment governance group. An ORC and community-driven initiative aimed at managing and enhancing the environmental health of the Upper Lakes area, focusing on water quality, biodiversity, and community wellbeing.	Ongoing representation from the RTOs and QLDC on key groups to supporting community-led environmental mahi.
	QLDC is progressing with waste infrastructure that will support the district's transition towards greater waste diversion, resource recovery, and circular economy outcomes. The Wānaka Refuse Transfer Station redevelopment responds to capacity, safety, environmental, and growth pressures at the existing site. QLDC is also progressing a district-wide Materials Recovery Facility solution to improve processing of mixed recyclables collected from residents and businesses.	Progress with these projects as important system enablers for reducing waste to landfill and supporting more sustainable visitor and community outcomes.
	An RTO-led procurement project is underway, with the aim of developing a closed-loop, localised procurement system in the food and beverage sector. Engaging both suppliers and tourism businesses through a multi-phased approach, the project aims to identify supply chain inefficiencies and waste reduction opportunities. A dedicated page has been created on the RTOs' Member Hub. Find out more about the project here.	The next phase in the procurement project is to pilot innovative solutions in collaboration with stakeholders and businesses. Best practice learnings will be scaled across the district, and result in a district-wide procurement plan.
	The RTOs' Member Hub features resources supporting businesses on waste and food waste reduction, contribution to biodiversity health, carbon measurement and reduction.	Ongoing resources created for businesses in line with the most relevant and up to date environmental information.
	QLDC Waste team provides funding support to deliver waste minimisation services and behaviour change initiatives in line with the Waste Management & Minimisation Plan (WMMP). Including via service agreements delivered under the Zero Waste District Programme and through grants under our Waste Minimisation Community Fund. Many of these initiatives intersect the visitor economy.	QLDC Waste team continues to provide funding support to community organisations and businesses via grants and service agreements.
	QLDC continue to work closely with the Event and Film sector providing advice on waste and emissions reduction, showcasing the district's commitment to sustainability and ensuring visitors experience firsthand that waste minimisation and emissions reduction are standard practice here.	Working with the sector to further develop resources that support sustainable events and film.
	QLDC delivers waste education initiatives, including promoting correct use of public litter bins, providing information to freedom campers, and running targeted visitor campaigns to reduce contamination and encourage responsible disposal of specific waste streams.	Continue to monitor waste data and identify trends in waste to inform future waste education campaigns.
PROJECT 11: RESTORING ECOSYSTEMS Objective: Biodiversity health.	Love Wānaka and Love Queenstown community funds continue to grow, providing a valuable touchpoint for visitors and businesses to contribute to environmental restoration across the Queenstown Lakes. To date, over $300,000 has been raised to support a variety of projects, with $145,000 allocated across native revegetation, pest control, freshwater action, biodiversity and sustainability. For more information, see project 14.	The 2026 Annual Impact Grants will see a further $100,000 distributed to support restoration initiatives in the Queenstown Lakes.
	A total of 10,565 native trees have been planted with volunteer and industry support, and the Love Wānaka and Love Queenstown volunteer calendars continue to provide an avenue for visitor contributions, with more than 1,200 volunteer opportunities shared so far.	The Love Queenstown Industry Planting Day (Oct, 2026) will see a further 2,500+ native trees planted at Jardine Park. The Love Wānaka Industry Planting day is scheduled for April 2027.
	As part of the RTO Member Capability programme, an expert contractor was engaged to create a Biodiversity Guide for tourism operators. The guide dives into the relationship between tourism and the natural environment, and details ways operators can contribute to positive change.	Further develop assets to support business capability in integrating restoration practices into operations.
	The RTOs and QLDC are supporting a three-year nature restoration research project, led by Griffith University and funded by the Australian Research Council. The project seeks to quantify the ecosystem benefits of local restoration projects and understand how different models influence business participation and investment.	Nature Restoration Project monitoring of key sites is scoped and underway.
	QLDC-supported Environmental Projects: • Project Tohu: Over 200,000 trees planted to date with survival rates over 95% helped by an unseasonably wet summer season. • Waiwhakaata/Lake Hayes: Strategy endorsed by Community & Environment Committee and implementation planning underway. A video case study to share the vision, progress and objectives of the strategy was completed. • Mt Iron Reserve: An ecological report was undertaken to understand the existing ecological values, opportunities for enhancement and to inform future decision making on the reserve. Workshops were completed with local groups and individuals with ecological knowledge of Mount Iron to input into the report.	• Spring planning for Project Tohu is planned for September 2026 • Finalisation of the QLDC implementation Plan to support the Waiwhakaata/Lake Hayes Strategy • Te Kākano to undertake first plantings on Mount Iron planned for August 2026.

Strategic Pillar Three

Build economic resilience, capability and productivity.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 12: ECONOMIC LEAKAGE ASSESSMENT AND COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and economic leakage.	QLDC's Economic Futures team commissioned an economic analysis to consolidate existing knowledge on tourism leakage and identify opportunities to retain a greater share of visitor expenditure within the local economy.	The work has helped clarify key leakage pathways and informed future discussions on productivity, local procurement, supply chains, and business capability initiatives.
PROJECT 13: DIRECT FUNDING FOR INFRASTRUCTURE Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and economic leakage.	QLDC submitted visitor-related infrastructure priorities for International Visitor Levy funding consideration. Submissions included funding for freedom camping programme delivery and temporary infrastructure, toilets at visitor hotspots, Wānaka lakefront project funding, and end-of-network roads.	$1.3M for public toilets was approved and QLDC is working to confirm appropriate locations in line with the amount of funding received and the terms of that funding.
	The RTOs have advocated strongly at a national level for a local visitor levy (bed tax) on both commercial and non-commercial accommodation to ensure that local infrastructure is sufficient to meet the needs of local communities and visitors.	Advocacy will continue both locally and nationally to enable Queenstown Lakes to leverage the visitor economy for appropriate investment in mixed-use infrastructure via a visitor levy.
PROJECT 14: LOVE WĀNAKA & LOVE QUEENSTOWN Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and leakage.	Love Wānaka and Love Queenstown community funds continue to grow, providing opportunities for visitors and businesses to support community-led environmental initiatives across the Queenstown Lakes. Learn more here.	
	A further $125,065 was raised during the 2025-26 fundraising year, bringing total funds raised since the establishment of Love Wānaka and Love Queenstown to $309,345. This funding has supported 16 community-led projects to date, with the 2026 Impact Grants expected to support a further 8-10 projects.	The 2026 Annual Impact Grants will distribute $100,000 to support local restoration efforts in September 2026.
	3,200 native trees were planted during the 2025-26 year, contributing to a total of 10,565 trees planted with industry and volunteer support since 2023.	The Love Queenstown Industry Planting Day (October 2026) will see an additional 2,500 native trees planted at Jardine Park. The Love Wānaka Industry Planting day is scheduled for April 2027.
	Visitor and business participation continues to expand through an increasing number of partnerships, donation opportunities, volunteer experiences and community storytelling.	
	More than $60,000 has now been invested in the Love Wānaka and Love Queenstown endowment funds, creating a lasting source of funding for community-led environmental initiatives into the future.	

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 15: PRODUCT EVOLUTION PROGRAMME Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and leakage.	QLDC has started work on the refresh of the 2018 Disability Policy and the development of an Accessibility Action Plan. This work will help position Queenstown Lakes as a more welcoming, inclusive destination for the growing number of visitors seeking accessible travel options.	A community survey is now in development, ahead of engagement sessions across Wānaka and Queenstown from October 2026, which will help identify barriers affecting both locals and the accessible tourism market. Findings from this engagement will feed into a final report due late November 2026, informing briefings to stakeholders and Council after that, ahead of an updated accessibility policy and action plan, scheduled for March/April 2027.
	To improve beach accessibility across the district, QLDC installed a trial mobi mat at the Wānaka Lakefront providing a firmer, more stable pathway for wheelchair users, mobility scooters, prams, and anyone who finds the lake front difficult to navigate.	Results of the mobi mat trial will be assessed.
	The RTOs worked closely with the Making Trax Foundation supporting businesses in building accessibility consideration into their experiences. Practical resources are listed on the Member Hub detailing industry best practice and step-by-step process on how to write an access guide.	Ongoing Member Capability events and resources will target operators and business event venues/suppliers to create access guides in line with industry best practice.
	DQ supports businesses engaged in the Making Trax Foundation's Adapting Aotearoa initiative by recognising their commitment to accessibility through the Sustainability Accreditation programme on queenstownNZ.nz. Participating businesses receive an accessibility badge, enabling visitors to easily identify and search for operators that have demonstrated a commitment to creating more inclusive visitor experiences.	Accreditation and certifications on wanaka.co.nz listings will be launched late 2026.
PROJECT 16: TOURISM BUSINESS EXCELLENCE Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and leakage.	The RTOs' Member Capability programme, now in its third year, is designed to strengthen businesses' skills in areas such as marketing, leadership, sustainability, customer service, and inclusivity. This equips businesses to adapt to shifting markets while also aligning with the region's regenerative goals. The past financial year saw 64 events held across Queenstown and Wānaka, engaging 773 members in attendance. Find out more here.	
	Expert-led events are complemented with resources, training and business cases on the RTOs' Member Hub. Resources cover environmental responsibility, social responsibility, marketing upskilling and a comprehensive data and insights platform, providing visitor economy dashboards, forward outlook reports, and research updates.	An evolution to the RTOs' Member Capability programme will see an expansion to current events and resources on the Member Hub, providing more support for a range of staff within organisations: frontline and back of house staff, managers, leaders, marketing, HR, and sustainability staff on key topic areas that support sustainable business growth.
	DQ now recognises and supports sustainability accreditations and certifications, highlighting the efforts of local businesses taking bold steps in climate action, social equity, accessibility, and sustainability. Members can display their sustainability accreditations on their product listings on the official queenstownNZ.nz website.	Accreditation and certifications on wanaka.co.nz listings will be launched late 2026.
	QLDC digital capability pilot – see project 19 for full details.	See Project 19 for full details.
	Launched in 2024, the Electrify Queenstown event (which ran 17-19 May 2026) brings together innovators, policy makers, businesses and homeowners to shift Queenstown Lakes to a clean energy, low-emissions district. The annual event showcases operational solutions for businesses such as fleet electrification, solar and battery adoption, cooking facilities, heating and cooling technology, equipping businesses with the knowledge and tools to transition to a regenerative future. Find out more here.	Electrify Queenstown returns 30 May – 1 June 2027 to showcase clean-energy innovation for local businesses. Find out more here.
	The RTOs held bi-annual Sustainable Tourism Leaders Group meetings, and monthly Sustainable Business meet ups in Queenstown and Wānaka.	Sustainable Tourism Leaders Group meetings will continue to be held on a six-monthly basis.
	DQ sponsored the 2025 Queenstown Chamber Business awards celebrating excellence in sustainability and environmental business practices. This award recognises businesses that gives back more than it they take, by taking a holistic and purpose-led approach towards the creation of long term environmental and social value.	
PROJECT 17: THRIVING WORKFORCE PROGRAMME Objective: Ensure workforce availability and improve workforce retention.	Mahi Queenstown Lakes (MahiQL) is a collaboration between QLDC and the Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce, working towards making the district the best place in the world to live, work, play and do business. While wage growth here has outpaced the national average, challenges like housing shortages, access to services, and seasonal work remain. MahiQL is addressing this through long-term solutions beyond pay, strengthening community connection, clearer career pathways, and improving the overall quality of the work experience. Find out more here.	Ongoing discussion series hosted in conjunction with Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce, RTOs, and QLDC.
	The RTOs commenced filming a staff induction video series designed for frontline and back of house staff. The first completed is a waste separation video showcasing waste streams and recycling methods specific to the district's waste management system.	Further develop district-wide topics for the staff induction video series, educating and welcoming newcomers to the district, and support tourism businesses' onboarding process.
	The RTOs held 15 Member Capability events supporting this project including, building customer service skills, practical front-line de-escalation training, understanding upcoming employment law changes and confident communication across cultures in today's workplace.	Ongoing Member Capability events and resources will be created to support customer service and thriving workforces.

PROJECT	PROGRESS	NEXT KEY MILESTONE
PROJECT 18: EMERGENCY AND CLIMATE ADAPTATION PREPAREDNESS Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and leakage.	QLDC staff have been involved in a national working group to develop a set of climate scenarios for the local government sector. From this work, Queenstown Lakes district climate scenarios have been developed which are being incorporated into development of the Council's 30 Year Infrastructure Strategy and the 2027-2037 Long Term Plan, to support more adaptive and resilient long-term investment decisions.	
	QLDC staff have been involved in and Otago Regional Council-led workshop to review the 2021 Otago Climate Change Risks Assessment (OCCRA). The purpose of the work is to update climate change risks for Otago and provide a local context to how these risks may affect the district's people and places.	The review of the OCCRA is expected to be released by ORC in August 2026. Updates on the QLDC climate risk programme will be reported to the Risk & Assurance Committee.
	Five emergency preparedness RTO Member Capability workshops were delivered by Emergency Management Otago and QLDC Resilience & Climate Action team, with a total of 88 attendees. The workshops were sector and location specific supporting businesses with understanding their responsibility and getting prepared for major emergencies with particular emphasis on the Alpine Fault Earthquake (AF8).	Continue to support this work with tourism industry events and resources.
	The CARE Project (Coordinated Air Repatriation and Evacuation) was progressed with QLDC, Queenstown Airport Corporation, and Emergency Management Otago. The project develops a dual-airport evacuation plan for Queenstown (ZQN) and Wānaka (WKA), focusing on how aviation could support the safe and efficient evacuation of tens of thousands of visitors if road access to the district was cut off. Early work included exploring airport infrastructure, airspace and airline capabilities, as well as talking to other airports and organisations to learn from their emergency response experiences.	Strengthen links between community resilience groups, community emergency hubs, lifeline planning, and QLDC emergency management arrangements.
PROJECT 19: INNOVATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Objective: Increase the total value of the visitor economy, net of all costs and leakage.	A digital capability pilot (Digital Catalyst) was launched helping four businesses understand their tech stack, identify areas for improvement, and implement changes that will support resilience and productivity, and build a digitally confident visitor economy. Find out more here.	Learnings from the pilot have been integrated into planning for the FY26/27 programme, which will expand support to 10-12 businesses and include a self-assessment tool to help better identify and route support to where it will have the most impact on resilience, productivity, and overall business performance.
	QLDC is working with the University of Otago on a staged, long-term presence in Queenstown. The initial focus is the Bachelor of Entrepreneurship with QRC and a postgraduate digital technology qualification.	The University of Otago will start with temporary teaching space and a small intake, then grow into a full campus-style operation with accommodation, executive education, and industry-linked programmes. Partnerships will be designed with local industry and technology companies, rather than simply importing existing Dunedin courses.
	Under delivery contract with QLDC, Technology Queenstown scaled the original Host Tech event into Web in Travel, a global event using Queenstown's tourism base to attract international speakers, investors, and operators while positioning the district as a serious travel-tech hub.	QLDC to join Technology Queenstown as a Foundation Member alongside DQ and others. KPIs by Q4 2027.
	The annual Electrify Queenstown event was held to showcase clean-energy innovation for local businesses. See further details in project 16.	The Electrify Queenstown event will be held 30 May – 1 June 2027.
	QLDC has undertaken development of 'Best Fit Businesses' rating scale, and engagement with various businesses, as well as New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) locally. By leveraging NZTE and NZ Story support, it highlights local producers, tells the story of place, and raises the profile of the destination through food and beverage brand stories.	Explore how to get local beverage producers into tourism and hospitality locations to further tell the story of local provenance (see also, project 10).
	QLDC's Economic Futures team contracted a University of Otago PhD student to develop a robust, internationally comparable measure of tourism productivity in New Zealand. The work established a baseline for tourism productivity nationally and in Queenstown Lakes, tested how comparable and defensible productivity data is across similar tourism economies, and examined the factors that may explain differences in productivity performance. Rather than prescribing interventions, the aim was to answer a foundational question: how productive is New Zealand tourism relative to its peers, how confidently can that be measured, and what can international evidence tell us about the drivers of higher productivity.	Research has informed the Digital Catalyst programme and ongoing tourism productivity discussions.
	The RTOs are regularly invited to speak at international forums about regenerative tourism and implementation of the DMP. Some examples of this include the Global Sustainable Tourism Conference (GSTC) and online GSTC course, involvement and taking part in the Destination Think Collective, IMPACT Sustainability Travel & Tourism Summit.	
	With support from QLDC, Technology Queenstown ran their inaugural Summer Technology Interns programme with seven summer tech internships across Skyline Enterprises, RealNZ, and AJ Hackett Bungy New Zealand. The internship had participants work on practical projects, including one example of an intern group developing a sentiment analysis web application for Skyline's ICT team.	Planning for the 2026 Summer Technology Interns programme is currently underway.

GLOSSARY

DM	Destination Management
DMP	Destination Management Plan
DQ	Destination Queenstown
LWT	Lake Wānaka Tourism
RTO	Regional Tourism Organisation
QLDC	Queenstown Lakes District Council


Queenstown
NEW ZEALAND
Wānaka
QUEENSTOWN
LAKES DISTRICT
COUNCIL