

LET'S TALK KŌRERO MAI

THE QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT COUNCIL NEWSLETTER // FEBRUARY / MARCH 2026 // ISSUE 171

Managing freedom camping

Over summer we've seen an increase in freedom camping across the district, reflecting strong visitor numbers and a desire to enjoy our backyard paradise. Find out more inside about how QLDC has been managing this, including enforcement stats and updates to the Freedom Camping Bylaw.

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SIGN-UP MONTH



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Your Council

Ever wondered how to contact your elected representatives for a chat about what's happening in your community? We've listed your Councillors and the areas they represent, along with members of the Wānaka-Upper Clutha Community Board, and their email addresses so you can get in touch.



QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT MAYOR JOHN GLOVER
John.Glover@qldc.govt.nz

ARROWTOWN-KAWARAU WARD

Arrowtown, Gibbston, Shotover Country, Lake Hayes Estate, Dalefield and Arthurs Point.



Councillor Heath Copland
Heath.Copland@qldc.govt.nz



Councillor Melissa White
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Councillor Samuel "Q" Belk
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QUEENSTOWN-WHAKATIPU WARD

Jacks Point, Hanley's Farm, Kingston, Frankton, Quail Rise, Kelvin Peninsula, Glenorchy, central Queenstown and Fernhill.



Councillor Matt Wong
Matt.Wong@qldc.govt.nz



Councillor Gavin Bartlett
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Councillor Stephen Brent
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Councillor Jon Mitchell
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WĀNAKA-UPPER CLUTHA WARD

From the top of the Crown Range and all of the Upper Clutha area including Lake Hāwea up to just beyond Makarora and including part of the Matukituki Valley in Mt Aspiring National Park.



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- Councillor King
- Councillor Gladding
- Councillor Tucker



The New Year brings a new focus for Council.

By the time you read this, we will have said our goodbyes to QLDC's long-serving Chief Executive Mike Theelen and welcomed Michelle Morss into the Interim CE role for the next six months. Mike gave 40 years of local government service and, even in my short time as Mayor, the high regard in which he's held in the sector has been obvious. I'd like to extend huge thanks on behalf of the community for his ten years at QLDC during which he attended 124 Council meetings, served four mayors, and notably led the organisation through the pandemic.

Michelle's recent background as the staff member leading the organisational response to government reforms impacting QLDC, and our role in the City and Regional Deals negotiations with government mean she's exceptionally well placed to hit the ground running and lead the organisation as these reforms come into play.

Reforms aside, Councillors are busy working with staff to finalise budgets that will underpin the rates increases that will cover council spending for the 12 months from 1 July 2026. So far, staff have worked to reduce these so they match the forecast increase of 11.6%.

We know that affordability is an issue for many in this district and rates rises impact all of us as we either pay for them directly or via our rent. Please take the time to let us know what the impacts of the proposed charges are when we consult on them in a few weeks' time. If you think we need to save money, let us know on what, where and how.

Overlapping and then following on from this will be a series of Councillor planning sessions over ten months to build the plan for Council activities and spending over the next ten years. How we deliver more for our communities for less is the fundamental challenge that I have set ourselves. We need to lock in positive community impact to every decision we make.

Our treatment and disposal of wastewater will be one of those decisions that is made in the next few months. We are all aware that this is a significant topic of interest to many in our district and how we safeguard the quality of our water as it flows from the headwaters, through our towns and on to our downstream neighbours is a shared responsibility. The sums of money involved are eye-watering, but the need to find the most acceptable methods of dealing with wastewater place a duty on us to consider all options and alternatives.

As we look to how we enable community projects to progress when our funding streams are declining, I feel our role shifts to looking at how we can provide land for other groups to utilise. We should ask how we can ensure we bring the relevant staff from different teams together to support, encourage and advise those with proposals to use Council managed land. And recognise that speedy decisions are fundamental to maintaining the momentum of groups who are funding some of these projects.

The 'local' aspect of local government is where the rubber hits the road as far as most ratepayers are concerned so delivering in this space is my unashamed priority this year.

Queenstown Lakes District Mayor John Glover

Responsible camping update

Camping is the quintessential Kiwi holiday enjoyed by families every summer. It's also an increasingly popular way for many visitors to see our beautiful country. Over summer we've seen an increase in freedom camping across the district, reflecting strong visitor numbers and demand for freedom camping locations and campgrounds in our backyard paradise.

Since the new QLDC Freedom Camping Bylaw came into effect on 1 December last year, there has been significant use of the district's 15 restricted freedom camping sites that provide 141 spaces for self-contained vehicles.

And while many of our visitors camp responsibly and support the Tiaki Promise (to act as guardians of Aotearoa New Zealand), we've also seen an increase in community concerns about challenging behaviours by some freedom campers. Our team of summer ambassadors and enforcement officers have been working hard to patrol, educate and enforce the bylaw in response.

Here's how our ambassadors have been supporting (as at end-Jan):

| | | | |
|---|---|--|------------------------------|
| 977 recorded visits to freedom camping hot spots | 501 community queries and reports received | 173 survey interviews with campers | 1,979 hours worked |
| 4,643 campers 'checked in' to restricted QLDC sites | 15 bags (900 litres) of rubbish and recycling taken to local refuse centres | If sites are full, sharing other camping options ranging from fully serviced holiday parks to Department of Conservation (DOC) campsites | |

And when education and advice aren't enough our Regulatory and Enforcement team have stepped in and issued (as at 16 Feb):

| | |
|--|--|
| 1,268 Freedom Camping Act infringements (\$400 each) | 98 Reserves Act infringements (\$800 each) |
|--|--|

Key updates since the bylaw came into effect:

Allenby Place carpark

A temporary prohibition on freedom camping was placed on Allenby Place carpark in Wānaka from 23 January to 30 April. This was in response to access and health and safety issues relating to increased traffic that were unique to the layout of this area. To offset this, three additional freedom camping spaces were temporarily added at the Wānaka Recreation Centre carpark for the same duration.

Mount Iron carpark

On 22 January, Council formally took over management of the public conservation land at Mount Iron from Department of Conservation (DOC), which included the State Highway 84 Mount Iron carpark. This is now considered reserve land and managed under the Reserves Act 1977 which prohibits freedom camping, so anyone found staying overnight on Mount Iron Reserve will be subject to a fine.

For more information on the bylaw and how to camp responsibly in our district go to [📍 qldc.govt.nz/responsible-camping](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/responsible-camping)



RESPONSIBLE CAMPING
QUEENSTOWN LAKES DISTRICT

Need to report poor camping behaviour? Let us know on:

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| 03 443 0024 Wānaka | 03 441 0499 Queenstown | services@ qldc.govt.nz | Snap Send Solve app |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|

Funding applications open in April

Applications for four key QLDC funding rounds will be open from 1-30 April. Mark your calendars and start preparing! Check out some top tips at the bottom of this story.



COMMUNITY FUND:

Supports not-for-profits, charities and community groups to enhance local wellbeing outcomes.



EVENTS FUND:

Helps deliver vibrant, inclusive events that benefit our community.



HERITAGE INCENTIVE GRANT:

Supports anyone looking to preserve or enhance listed heritage assets (natural and built) in our district.



WASTE MINIMISATION COMMUNITY FUND:

Supports initiatives that promote sustainable use of resources and waste reduction.

For more details on how to apply and to view previous recipients visit [📍 qldc.govt.nz/community-funding](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/community-funding).

You can also reach out to our funding team via communityfunding@qldc.govt.nz.

Tips for preparing a good funding application

Allow time to gather key documents like financial statements, project plans and letters of support.

Clearly define your goals and outcomes, and how they align with the relevant fund's purpose.

Connect with your team and stakeholders to ensure everyone is aligned on the plan and budget before you begin your application.

We've joined with huddl, Three Lakes Cultural Trust, Sport Central and the Conservation Alliance to host a programme of free monthly workshops from March to June called The Funding Series.

These are designed for individuals, groups, boards and trustees who rely on funding or fundraising to support their non-profit operations, projects or events. Attendance is free but you must register for tickets.

Find out more at

[📍 threelakesculturaltrust.co.nz/funding-series](https://www.threelakesculturaltrust.co.nz/funding-series)



Talk to us before you build your rental property!

From blueprint to tenant-ready – Jess and Hayley are here to give you practical feedback on your plans.

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Talk to our property experts for honest, expert advice and a free market rental appraisal from your building plans.

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Council now manages all Mount Iron reserve land

We're pleased to share that QLDC has taken over management of the public conservation land at Mount Iron in Wānaka on behalf of the community. This land was previously managed by the Department of Conservation (DOC).

This means we now administer approximately 55ha of reserve land, which includes the Mount Iron carpark by State Highway 84 and the Mount Iron Scenic Reserve. This is in addition to the 100ha of Mount Iron Recreation Reserve Land that QLDC purchased in May 2023 from private ownership.

It also means the Mount Iron Reserve Management Plan, that the community guided and elected members approved in 2025, now applies to this land as well as the Council recreation reserve.

WHY IS THIS A GOOD OUTCOME FOR THE COMMUNITY?

QLDC already manages approximately 100ha of Mount Iron Recreation Reserve so including the public conservation land allows us to better manage the whole area as one reserve for community and visitor use. For example, the

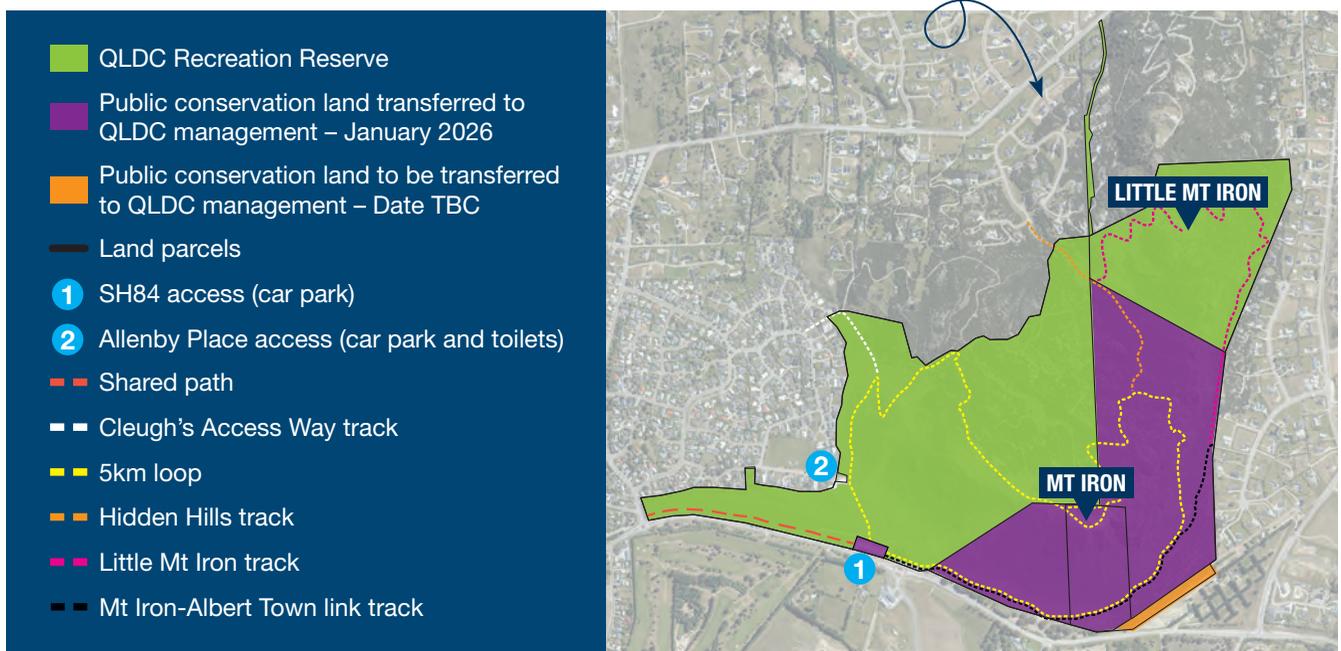
hugely popular 5km Mount Iron loop trail is now on land managed by one organisation. This will ultimately enhance the experience for Mount Iron users long-term.

WILL THIS CHANGE HOW THINGS ARE CURRENTLY MANAGED ON MOUNT IRON AND LITTLE MOUNT IRON?

QLDC has already been managing the day-to-day operations since 2024 so you won't see any big changes when you're out and about in the reserve. QLDC has now taken over responsibilities previously held by DOC, e.g. responsibility for agreements with community groups and commercial operators. A key change through this process is that the SH84 Mount Iron carpark is now part of the wider Recreation Reserve. This means freedom camping will be prohibited at the site following a period of education for visitors, and anyone found doing so will be subject to a fine.

Come and celebrate this milestone with us! A morning tea is planned on Mount Iron in March. All welcome. Find out more at qldc.govt.nz/mount-iron-reserve-management-plan

Here's the public conservation land now under QLDC management (purple) and QLDC Recreation Reserve (green).





LOVE THE KAWARAU

RIVERSIDE RESERVES?

Community feedback has helped us shape a draft plan to manage a collection of public reserves that sit alongside the Kawarau River in Frankton, jointly referred to as the Kawarau Riverside Reserves.

Have we got it right? We'd like to understand if you support this plan that guides how these open spaces should be used, managed and preserved for all to enjoy.

This area is popular with locals and visitors walking and biking the Twin Rivers Trail, part of the Queenstown Trail 'Great Ride' network, which connects the reserves while hugging one of New Zealand's most iconic and picturesque rivers. Also included in the scope of the plan is the Ivan Young Zoological Reserve, which used to house the Zoological Gardens.

Feedback from early community engagement showed strong support for biodiversity and ecological enhancement, retaining the informal and natural character of the reserves, and improved access to the river.

The resulting draft Kawarau Reserve Management Plan is guided by this feedback and aims to provide a shared vision for these reserves that supports the community and those that visit.

Head to  letstalk.qldc.govt.nz and share your feedback on the draft plan by Sunday 29 March.



Get me via email

This newsletter is mailed to our local residents and out-of-town, NZ-based ratepayers six times a year. If this means you, and you still want to receive a hard copy, then sweet as – you don't need to do anything.

But if you'd like to join the thousands of people who prefer to receive a digital copy via email then it's easy to switch. Just email services@qldc.govt.nz with the word "newsletter" as the subject and be sure to include your name, postal address and the address of your property in the district so we can cross you off the mailing list.

We'll send you a website link six times a year to view/download all future issues instead (and won't spam you with anything else!). You'll be helping us reduce the number of copies we print and distribute.

And remember, every issue is also on our website  qldc.govt.nz/lets-talk-korero-mai



Independent intensification recommendations adopted

Councillors recently adopted an Independent Hearing Panel Report and its recommendations for Council's proposed Urban Intensification Variation. This gives effect to central government policy while supporting broader objectives of achieving well-functioning urban environments and enabling development capacity to meet expected demand.

The Variation includes a refined approach to height and density across the district. This is based on recommendations made by the Panel, following detailed analysis of evidence, 1,274 submissions made on the matter, 108 further submissions, and over 7,000 submission points.

SOME OF THE KEY DECISIONS INCLUDE:

The Lower Density Suburban Residential Zone (LDRZ) will be renamed Suburban Residential Zone (SRZ) and will enable more flexible two-storey infill housing by increasing current permitted heights to 8m from the current 6.5m or 7m.

The Medium Density Residential Zone (MDRZ) will be retained, but a new zone called Medium Density Residential A Zone (MDRAZ) will be introduced where greater height and density will be enabled.

Greater heights and density will be enabled in locations near central Queenstown and on generally greenfield land in Wānaka South, increasing current permitted heights from 8m to 11m, and removing density requirements of one residential unit per 250m² net site area.

Similarly, the High Density Residential Zone (HDRZ) will be retained, with a new zone called High Density Residential A Zone (HDRAZ) also introduced to allow for greater height and density near Queenstown town centre and Three Parks, Wānaka.

The new HDRAZ will allow for building height of 16.5m and a tiered approach for any building greater than 24m to be discretionary activity.

Lower building heights than initially proposed will apply in Arrowtown in the MDRZ and SRZ, retaining the predominantly one- to two-storey character of these areas. Current references to the Arrowtown Design Guidelines 2016 in these zones will be removed and replaced with matters of discretion that enable consideration of Arrowtown's existing character.

Existing zones and lower height limits in smaller settlements like Lake Hāwea and Arthurs Point will largely be retained.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

The decision has been publicly notified, and Proposed District Plan provisions altered to reflect the above recommendations.

As required by the Resource Management Act, appeals can now be lodged to the Environment Court for a 30-working day period from the date of public notification of the decision. Any provisions not subject to appeals will then be treated as operative following the appeal period.

Generally, intensification involves allowing for denser housing in an area and enabling infrastructure to service that development in a more efficient and affordable manner. With more houses of different types able to be provided in appropriate locations, people can live closer to the local services, community facilities, and commercial activities they need, helping to reduce the need for unnecessary travel.

Scan the QR code to learn more about the Panel's recommendation report, revised chapter provisions, and maps of the changes.



TOP BIN TIPS

WINDY DAY? KEEP YOUR BINS SECURE WITH FREE BIN CLIPS

Free bin clips are available from the Queenstown and Wānaka Council offices. They're quick and easy to install and help keep your bin lid closed and reduce litter on windy days. Scan here to see the installation instructions



BROKEN BIN OR BIN LID?

We replace and repair council residential wheelie bins at no charge when damaged. Submit a fix it request via the QLDC website.



ROLL YOUR BIN BACK IN

Don't forget to bring your bin back to your property on the same day after your rubbish and recycling has been collected. This helps keep our streets safe, attractive and accessible for everyone.

AND DON'T FORGET...



ARE YOU A LEFTOVER LEGEND?

We're proud to support Love Food Hate Waste NZ's Leftover Legends Challenge, a nationwide initiative helping us make the most of our leftovers and reduce food waste. By encouraging small, practical changes, we can help Kiwis save money, cut waste, and build a more sustainable future.

Join the challenge this March — every plate logged is a step toward change (and a chance to win groceries for a year!).

lovefoodhatewaste.co.nz/leftoverlegends

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From the Chambers

There's always plenty going on at our Council and Committee meetings, here's a snapshot of some recent happenings.

CAN I SPEAK IN PUBLIC FORUM ONLINE? YES!

Hard to believe that it's just over six years since the pandemic started to dominate daily news reports. One of the outcomes of that period in our shared history has been the way in which we've all adapted to online meetings. Now even the less tech-savvy amongst us can manage to join Zoom or Teams meetings with our microphone on and our background blurred.

It makes sense therefore that people who want to speak during a Public Forum – the time set aside at the start of every ordinary Council, Community Board and committee meeting – should be able to do so online and not have to be physically present. This has been enabled at the Chair's discretion since the beginning of the year, so if you live in Makarora and the meeting is in Arrowtown for example, you no longer have to make the drive. In that way, it's also better for the environment.

QLDC uses Zoom for all its formal meetings. When you register for public forum and indicate you wish to appear online, a member of the Democracy Services team will email you the link. Easy as!

RECORDINGS OF WORKSHOPS NOW ONLINE

The Ombudsman's report 'Open for Business' in late 2023 prompted many councils to review how accessible their workshops and meetings were. Since mid-2024, QLDC workshops have been open to the public (except when there is a valid reason under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act) and we continue to refine our approach. You may have already noticed that for several months now, all public workshops have been recorded and loaded onto our website. In line with this, workshop minutes are now more 'high level' because the full recording is publicly available.

MEETING SCHEDULE ADOPTED

Council adopted its 2026 meeting schedule at its session on 5 February. There are two new committees and, of course, the various public holidays to factor in so creating a schedule that works for everyone is no mean feat!

It also proposes meetings in Arrowtown, Queenstown and Wānaka in accordance with our policy 'Council Meetings Across the District'.

That's not to say that things can't change. We publish up-to-date monthly schedules on our website and in local newspapers, so keep an eye out and join us sometime – it's a great way to learn more about how Council works and the decisions elected members are making on your behalf.

WAVE OF RECRUITMENT FOR WATER SERVICES PROVIDER

The new Water Services Council Controlled Organisation (WSCCO) is scheduled to open for business on 1 July 2027 (see Issue #168, p6).

It requires a board of directors and plans to appoint these took an important step forward at the Council meeting on 5 February. Councillors agreed to form an establishment board to recruit the first tranche of WSCCO directors.

The panel will comprise Mayor John Glover and Councillors Gavin Bartlett, Samuel 'Q' Belk, Stephen Brent, Niki Gladding and Cody Tucker. They will recruit the first five directors who will be appointed for an initial term of three years with one right of renewal and staged reappointment provisions to ensure continuity and stability.



It's show time!

That's right, it's time for the annual Wānaka A&P Show on 13-14 March.

We're back at site J4 – close to the food tents. Stop by to chat with your Mayor and elected members, and learn about Council projects in your community.

We'll have games – test your skills at pickleball or shooting hoops – plus giveaways and facepainting for the kids. Meet local favourites Dr Compost, Wastebusters, and libraries, and get tips on gardening, sustainability, and your next recommended read. See you there!



New offices for ORC

Access to the Otago Regional Council's customer and public service teams has been significantly improved following a move to the ground floor of the Terrace Junction complex in Frankton, by the BP fuel station.

Easier to find, the larger space gives ORC a more welcoming reception area for staff and public. The boardroom in the new office is a larger public-facing space that will be available for council meetings, or as a community activity space when not in use.

OPENING HOURS:

Monday-Friday: 8.00am-1.00pm; 2.00-4.00pm.

Closed on public holidays.

HOLIDAY HOME MANAGEMENT

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'Postcards' from recent events

We thought it would be good to round-up some recent events around the district with a few photos to tell the story.



TE ATAMIRA FOUNDERS HONOURED WITH MAYORAL CITATION

The philanthropists behind Queenstown's community arts centre Te Atamira, Abby O'Neil and D. Carroll Joynes, were honoured in January with a Mayoral Citation for their services to Queenstown. Originally from Chicago, the pair have a long-standing connection to Aotearoa New Zealand dating back to 1999. A nearly two-year stay during the pandemic became a time of reflection and then action as they honed their vision for what would become Te Atamira: a permanent, inclusive home for creativity which Mayor John Glover called "a cornerstone of our cultural life". He said the citation "recognises not only what they have built, but the lasting impact it will have for generations to come."



INTERNSHIPS RECOGNISE PETE'S LEGACY

Jed from Wakatipu High School and Dani from Mount Aspiring College recently spent time with us as part of the Hansby Engineering Internship Award. The initiative was set-up in partnership with Gracie Hansby, daughter of the late Pete Hansby – QLDC's General Manager Property and Infrastructure (P&I) for nearly ten years – to honour and recognise his everlasting contribution to the district. Jed has been learning from our P&I crew (including Three Waters Contracts Engineer Sam Saju pictured here) while Dani has been spending time with our Planning and Development team. We hope that internships like this will provide more talented young people with greater insight into the workings of local government and encourage them to consider it as a career.



ROAD SAFETY VIDEOS FOR VISITORS

We recently teamed up with NZ Police and local production company Storyworks to film a couple of short videos in Mandarin promoting road safety ahead of the busy Lunar New Year holidays. Starring QLDC's very own Xinghao Chen (centre), Sergeants Bruce Martin (second left) and Derek Ealson (far right), and Wānaka Road Policing Constable Kiriana Flannery (second right), the videos focus on what different road signs mean as well as tips such as pulling over safely to let others pass. Driving on our mountainous, winding roads can be a new experience for overseas visitors and we hope these videos help create a safer experience for all.



LOCALS PUMPED FOR KINGSTON'S NEW TRACK!

On the last day of January, the Kingston community gathered to celebrate the official opening of their new pump track that sports surely one of the most picturesque views of any in the district! This community-led project was driven (peddled?) by the Kingston Community Association with help from several local businesses and funders. QLDC is proud to support amazing projects like this one and provided guidance and support at each stage from planning, design and approvals through to construction.



FUN AND GAMES AT TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

A move inside due to rain couldn't dampen the spirits of all the cuddly toys and their owners who joined us for the annual Summerdaze Teddy Bears' Picnic at Queenstown Events Centre recently. Always a family favourite and a great chance bring the community together, this year's event was packed with activities and entertainment including games, inflatables, face painting, community group stalls, a magic show and even an acrobatics performance by Silk & Circus. MC Sunny Sky (pictured left) led proceedings ably assisted by QLDC Sport and Recreation mascots Paddles the Polar Bear and Puka the Pūteketeke. Thanks heaps to everyone who helped stage the event and to several local businesses for their generous support.

Upper Clutha wastewater upgrades progressing well

Construction of over 20km of new pipes between Lake Hāwea township, Albert Town, Wānaka and the Project Pure Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is well underway with multiple work sites operating and 4km of pipe already in the ground.

THIS SIGNIFICANT UPGRADE WILL:

Respond to and future proof Lake Hāwea's wastewater needs.

Minimise the chance of contaminants entering the environment during the treatment and disposal process.

Increase the capacity and resilience of the wider Wānaka and Albert Town wastewater network.

WHAT'S THE LATEST?

Work to construct the new wastewater pump station on Domain Road in Lake Hāwea continues. This will play a critical role in firing what goes down the loo along the pipes to be treated at Project Pure.

We're also busy upgrading the existing pump station on Riverbank Road in Wānaka, building an expanded control room to handle more powerful machinery, a wet well to store wastewater before it's pumped off to the treatment plant, and emergency storage tanks that can hold wastewater if this infrastructure stops working suddenly.

To complete this work safely and efficiently, a section of Riverbank Road between Mount Iron roundabout and Ballantyne Road is currently operating under traffic lights, before the southbound lane is closed in March for a month.



Emergency storage tanks being installed at the new wastewater pump station on Domain Road in Lake Hāwea.

STAY INFORMED

This significant investment in underground infrastructure naturally means there will be some disruption until work's completed early next year.

Scan here to learn about all the work zones and what to expect, and sign up to our regular newsletter.



Stormwater modifications to benefit Bullock Creek

Work's underway to modify a stormwater retention pond near Bullock Creek in Wānaka, with improvements to help ensure a more gradual release of water into the area in future.

Bullock Creek is a well-loved part of Wānaka, shown through the significant amount of volunteer work led by community groups in the area to preserve its ecological significance and heritage. And if you've wandered through the reserve and along the boardwalk, it's hard not to be in awe of all that hard work, and the area itself!

To protect this highly valued natural environment for future generations to enjoy, work on the stormwater pond will include:

Modifications to the existing outlet on the nearby retention pond to reduce standing water, allowing for more gradual release of water from the pond.

Water quality improvements through a longer and modified flow path and the planting of hundreds of native plants, providing a reduced but consistent flow of water while enabling it to contact newly planted areas within the reserve.

Installation of a flow retention device on the nearby retention pond to help manage high discharge rates.

The reserve will remain open at all times during this work, but visitors should expect a small and temporary detour at the southeastern end of the reserve to move safely around construction.

We expect to have these stormwater improvements completed by the end of March.

As part of our Long Term Plan 2024-2034, further work is planned to divert stormwater flows away from Bullock Creek in future.

Alpha Series stormwater modifications

-  Existing retention pond
-  Modified outlet
-  Amended stormwater flow path
-  New native planting
-  Bullock Creek Hatchery Springs Wetland



Warbirds Over Wānaka

The return of the biennial Warbirds Over Wānaka International Airshow to Wānaka Airport this Easter promises to be an unforgettable experience.

Set against the dramatic backdrop of the Southern Alps, this iconic event will once again blend heritage and the latest technology in a way that resonates with aviation enthusiasts and families alike.

The 2026 airshow will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the Supermarine Spitfire. Leading the tribute to this icon of WWII will be two examples – a rare Mk XI aircraft from the UK and NZ's own Mk IX from the Biggin Hill collection at Ohakea.

Fast forward to the present day with the appearance of the USAF F-22 Raptor which marks a rare opportunity to witness one of the most advanced fighter aircraft ever built.

Adding more international flair, The American Eagles jet display team return to Wānaka after their stunning debut in 2024, whilst the Southern Force Pitts Special aerobatic display team will be making their first appearance – a homegrown act set to impress.

Innovation takes a different form with the appearance of the BD-5 microjet. Compact, sleek and astonishingly fast, this tiny jet challenges expectations and demonstrates that aviation brilliance doesn't always come in large packages.

The Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) will be on hand with a full complement of their aircraft along with others from visiting air forces.

On the ground there will be numerous amazing attractions including the Future of Aviation Exhibition area, the NZ Aviation Federation members, the RNZAF camp and the entertainment stage.

From roaring jets to graceful warbirds and daring aerobatics, Warbirds Over Wānaka 2026 will be more than an airshow—it will be a celebration of past, present and future, written across the skies.

FOR ALL THE INFO YOU NEED CLICK
 warbirdsoverwanaka.com



QLDC provided a grant of \$25,000 to Warbirds via our 2025 events funding round. In line with our Events Policy that encourages sustainability and reducing impact on our waste facilities, the grant was awarded specifically to support improvements in waste management before, during and after the airshow.



Festival for food culture & community



The event celebrates skills that nourish our community.

The Wao Harvest Weekend Festival brings together growers, makers, educators and practitioners from across the region to share practical knowledge, hands-on experience, and stories rooted in land and season.

From field to plate workshops, forest foraging, garden tours, growing tips and more, this is a weekend to deepen your connection to food and the people who produce it locally.

Don't miss the Harvest Celebration Dinner featuring live music, a potluck feast and a lively ceilidh.

WHEN: 14–15 March.

WHERE: Rippon Hall, Wānaka and across the district.

FULL PROGRAMME & TICKETS:

wao.co.nz/harvest

wao 
Harvest
 Rippon Hall, Wānaka
 Weekend Festival | 14 & 15 March

The apple drive at last year's festival.



SOUTHERN LAKES

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 TAKE A BREAK FROM THE SHOPPING AND ENJOY
 DELICIOUS FOOD & COFFEE!

March is Libraries Sign-up Month

Challenge accepted!



Queenstown Lakes Libraries is running its annual Sign-up Month this March. If you've been thinking about signing up to the library, why not do it today? Joining is free and easy! Scan the QR code above. Then pop into a library with photo ID and proof of residence in the district.

If it's been a while since you've picked up a good book, our librarians are here to help and love giving recommendations. Plus, did you know our libraries are fine-free and hold-free?

Our children's Summer Reading Challenge: Forest Quest proved popular with families – more than 500 children participated! We've had several parents saying that the challenge has been very motivating for their children. One dad said he was thrilled that his daughter was going back to school with an improved reading level.

Image: Children's Librarian Shana Makuta, creator of Forest Quest, was pleased to see more than 500 children join in the challenge.

Our youngest ever champion reader?

Libraries recently had an eager young patron come in who completed our 1,000 Books Before School programme at only nine months old! Is that a record? We think it must be... They are going to start over and read 1,000 more books now!

Want to know more about our 1,000 Books Before School programme, as well as our free events and activities? Pop into your local library or find us online.



Electrification surging ahead

Queenstown Electrification Accelerator (QEA) is a community-led electrification pilot project with a big goal: to make Queenstown the world's most electric destination.

Building the 2050 energy system by 2030 would make Queenstown a lighthouse example for the world showing that homes and businesses can achieve lower bills, lower emissions, and higher resilience by upgrading fossil fuel machines to electric equivalents.

To achieve this, QEA is making a host of resources available to locals that highlight the benefits of electrification and provide practical advice about how to do it. They include:

- > Securing hot water heat pump discounts through collective purchasing.
- > A 'solar for renters' trial with benefits for both landlords and tenants.
- > A long-term vehicle-to-grid (V2G) trial which enables your EV to share its battery power with your home or business, and the electricity grid.

Learn more at qea.nz

ELECTRIFY QUEENSTOWN 17–19 May 2026

This award-winning, three-day summit returns in May with a power-packed programme combining political debate, high-profile speakers, immersive electric experiences and practical advice for businesses and households ready to electrify.

Full programme and tickets at electrifyqueenstown.co.nz

ELECTRIFY WĀNAKA

Across the Crown Range, Electrify Wānaka is also active in the community, spreading the positive message about switching to solar and other initiatives that can save you money and reduce emissions.

They've also published case studies with real-world examples of the benefits of electrification. In one, local resident and one of the team Pierre Marasti explains how installing solar and switching to an EV has saved about \$50,000 over seven years!

KEEN TO LEARN MORE?

Sign up for their newsletter at subscribepage.io/electrifywanaka

Follow them on Facebook @electrifywanaka

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Is that your kayak?

While it's awesome to see people picking up a paddle and enjoying our lakes and rivers over summer, here's a friendly reminder not to leave your craft at the lakeshore. Kayaks and boats block access for those enjoying our waterways, and restrict our Parks team and community groups from undertaking maintenance, pest plant removal, native planting and general enhancement of lakeside spaces. What's more, abandoned craft quickly deteriorate and become an environmental and safety hazard.

Thanks for helping to ensure our lakefronts are able to be enjoyed by the whole community!

No e-motos on trails



If you ride an e-moto, please be aware you can't use it on any public reserves, tracks or trails.

We've had increasing reports of close calls between trail users and e-moto bikes.

E-motos are different to e-bikes: they're powerful, heavy, fast and silent, rip up the trail surface, and are a hazard to those walking, running or biking the trails.

Any motorcross bikes (e-moto or otherwise) that are spotted on trails can be reported to QLDC Customer Services on 03 441 0499.

Thanks for helping to keep our tracks and trails safe for everyone.

New to town?

Looking for information to help you settle into life here? Get your hands on the latest edition of our Newcomers Guide – updated with new sections on education and waste and recycling as well as existing essential topics like housing, work, and emergency preparedness.

View the guide here and share with a friend!

[📌 qldc.govt.nz/newcomers-guide](https://qldc.govt.nz/newcomers-guide)

Proudly created by QLDC Welcoming Communities in collaboration with support services organisations, the education and business sectors, and newcomers themselves.

Multicultural Festival returns

The fourth annual Queenstown Multicultural Festival takes place in March, so mark your calendar!

Experience this unique opportunity to share in music, dance, cultural traditions and authentic food from around the world.

The festival coincides with New Zealand Race Relations Day – all about coming together, learning from each other, and celebrating the beauty of our differences. It's a perfect reminder of the values that make this festival such an important part of our community.

Head to [📌 queenstownmulticulturalfestival.co.nz](https://queenstownmulticulturalfestival.co.nz) to find out more.

Proudly delivered by Queenstown Multicultural Festival Trust in partnership with QLDC Welcoming Communities.

WHEN: 10.00am-5.00pm, Saturday 21 March

WHERE: Queenstown Events Centre, Frankton - Entry by donation (gold coin appreciated)

Community resilience – can you help?

No one knows your local community like you do. And in an emergency situation local knowledge – about people, places and available resources – counts more than ever.

There are currently 18 Community Resilience Groups (CRGs) in our district. Emergency Management Otago and QLDC have been working with locals to build a strong CRG network.

From Kingston to Makarora, Glenorchy to Luggate and everywhere in between, trained neighbourhood volunteers use local knowledge and plans to keep their communities connected, resourced, and ready to support one another.

They ease pressure on emergency services and act as a vital link between their communities and the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), where agencies come together to coordinate the wider response and recovery.

Some groups are well-established while others are just getting started, but all welcome new volunteers. You don't need any special skills, just a willingness to help within your own neighbourhood.

Interested in joining your local group? Find details of them all at [📍 qldc.govt.nz/CRG](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/CRG)

Wānaka's eyes and ears

Wānaka CRG Co-Chair Matt McPhee says operating at a micro level enables the connectedness required.

“We complement the overarching work of the EOC and Wānaka Incident Control Centre (WICC) in any response with our local knowledge and one-to-one connections. We're their eyes and ears on the ground.”

“Another key difference for CRGs is that we don't feed or fix, we facilitate. We can find volunteers to distribute food supplied by the EOC and WICC; we know people locally who have equipment those groups might need. Knowledge like that can be vital if transport links are broken and individual communities are cut off from the main centres.”

“We're always looking for new members to help drive things forward. The more connected we are in 'peacetime', the more prepared we can be if the worst were to happen.”



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Sneak preview of Project Tohu trail network

Mountain bikers, trail runners, walkers, horse riders and paragliders are all invited to get a taste of a new trail network near Arrowtown when it's unveiled to the community for the first time.

Alongside lead contractor Te Tapu o Tāne and trail funding partner Tāhuna Ride and Conservation (TRAC), QLDC is opening the Project Tohu restoration site gates – weather permitting – on the weekend of 7-8 March.

There'll be 12km of new trails to experience, ranging from grade 3 to 6, before the wider network officially opens next year. Winding across the hillside, they offer stunning views, varied terrain, and a first look at the regeneration work happening across the site.

It's a great opportunity to stretch your legs, test your wheels, saddle up, or simply take in the landscape while seeing the hard mahi that's gone into building these trails.

The Project Tohu team alongside TRAC has spent months shaping the network; carving routes, armouring slopes, and preparing the area for future public use.

Come explore, connect with the whenua, and get a glimpse of the future recreation space taking shape above the valley.

***Image:** The view from the trails [credit – Sam Hill Signature Trails / Callum Hayes]*



IMPORTANT!

To make sure everyone enjoys the day safely there are specific times that trails will be open to different user groups, and guidelines for how these groups access the site. See opposite or scan here to read all the details:





WHEN: Saturday 7 & Sunday 8 March (weather permitting).



WHERE: Project Tohu Site, Coronet Forest.



7.00-11.00AM
Horsriders access via bottom of Alan Reids Road off Malaghans Road.



7.00AM-6.00PM
Walkers, trail runners and paragliders access via Flight Park at 792 Malaghans Road.



12.00-6.00PM
Bikers access via Flight Park at 792 Malaghans Road.

Project Tohu is one of the largest native revegetation programmes currently being undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand, transitioning from an ex-Douglas fir plantation (exotic species) into indigenous vegetation. It involves planting more than half a million indigenous grasses, shrubs and trees across 200ha on the south-facing slopes of Coronet Peak. This project is proudly led by QLDC and delivered by Te Tapu o Tāne, Citycare Property and e3scientific.

Wildfire risk remains

Although we've had a wetter summer than usual this could change quickly.

Hot and windy conditions elevate fire danger which could lead to us closing access to Council-managed reserves that pose the highest risk in our district: Ben Lomond, Queenstown Hill and Mount Iron in Wānaka.

All three reserves are already subject to a year-round total fire ban, and QLDC works closely with FENZ on its reserve closure protocols which are introduced when fire indices reach extreme levels.

We've recently installed permanent gates and signs at reserve access points on Mount Iron (pictured below) and Ben Lomond which will indicate trail closures.

HOW WE'LL LET YOU KNOW IF A RESERVE IS CLOSED:

The fastest way to find out is to sign up for our 'etxt' service. We'll message you when a reserve needs to close. Just search 'Community Text Alerts' on our website.

WE'LL ALSO:

Display signage and close relevant gates on the reserves.

Share the message with local news outlets.

Update the webpage below and publish an alert on our homepage.

Share on social media.

Please be aware that we won't be staffing entrance points to reserves during closures; entering a reserve while it's closed will be at people's own risk.

To find out more, including maps and the current status of each reserve, head to [qldc.govt.nz/managing-wildfire-risk](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/managing-wildfire-risk)



Register with Let's Talk
and receive our monthly
consultation newsletter!



Let's Talk – we'd love to hear from you

Our Let's Talk website makes it easy to contribute to local decision making by having a say on the projects and plans that matter to you and your community.

There's lots of important stuff coming up this year, so head along to letstalk.qldc.govt.nz and keep an eye on what's out for feedback or consultation. And if you register with the site, we'll send a monthly update straight to your inbox so you'll never miss a chance to have your say.

We also provide a snapshot right here, on the back page of every edition of Let's Talk Kōrero Mai.

CURRENT CONSULTATIONS

KAWARAU RIVERSIDE RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Status: Formal consultation on a draft reserve management plan open until 29 March.

UPDATES ON RECENT CONSULTATIONS:

LONG TERM PLAN 2027-2037 PRE-ENGAGEMENT

Status: Pre-engagement finished on 8 February. Insights will be used to help prioritise spending as Council builds a draft Long Term Plan 2027-2037.

QUALITY OF LIFE SURVEY 2025

Status: Survey results are expected to be published in March.

WHAT'S COMING UP:

DRAFT ANNUAL PLAN 2026-2027

Status: Formal consultation runs 20 March – 23 April 2026.

SPEED LIMIT CHANGES

Status: Engagement runs 23 March – 3 May.

COMPREHENSIVE PARKING MANAGEMENT PLANS

Status: Engagement expected to start in May.

DOG CONTROL BYLAW

Status: Formal consultation expected in mid-2026.

FIND FULL DETAILS OF THESE PROJECTS AND MORE AT [LETSTALK.QLDC.GOV.TZ](https://letstalk.qldc.govt.nz)

QLDC OFFICES

Queenstown Office:

10 Gorge Road
Private Bag 50072, Queenstown
Phone: 03 441 0499

Wānaka Office:

47 Ardmore Street, Wānaka
Phone: 03 443 0024

E-mail: services@qldc.govt.nz

Office Hours:

Weekdays 8.00am – 5.00pm

QUEENSTOWN EVENTS CENTRE

Alpine Aqualand
Alpine Health & Fitness
Indoor Courts
Sports fields

Phone: 03 450 9005

WĀNAKA RECREATION CENTRE

Wānaka Pool
Indoor Courts

Phone: 03 443 9334

PAETARA ASPIRING CENTRAL

Indoor Courts
Studio
Phone: 03 450 1721

VENUES

For more information on our venues please head to qldc.govt.nz/venues

LIBRARIES

For library opening hours and locations please head to qldclibraries.govt.nz

TRANSFER STATIONS

Whakatipu: 110 Glenda Drive
Frankton Industrial Area
Phone: 03 348 5126

Upper Clutha: Cnr of Ballantyne & Riverbank Roads
Phone: 03 348 6125

HARBOURMASTER

Report non-compliance of waterway rules by phone **03 441 0499** or email services@qldc.govt.nz
In an emergency on the water always call **111**

EDITORIAL & ADVERTISING CONTACT

Let's Talk Kōrero Mai is published bi-monthly by Queenstown Lakes District Council to inform ratepayers and residents of council activities.

Sam White ✉ communications@qldc.govt.nz
Feedback and ideas are welcome.

LET'S TALK KŌRERO MAI // FEBRUARY / MARCH 2026 // ISSUE 171 // www.qldc.govt.nz

ISSN 3021-2464 (PRINT) ISSN 3021-2472 (ONLINE)