

Dear

Ref: LG24/0042

14 March 2024

Sent via email to

REQUEST FOR OFFICIAL INFORMATION – PARTIAL RELEASE OF INFORMATION

Thank you for your request for information held by the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). On 6 February 2024 you requested the following information under the Local Government Official Information and Meetings Act 1987 (LGOIMA):

Primary request (6 February 2024):

"The Coronet Peak plantation harvest was completed last year.

Just for the record and ratepayers, could the QLDC please itemize the costs and net returns resulting from the harvest of an immature Douglas-fir crop.

My understanding was that a small percentage was sold in the domestic market (paid AMG) and the rest exported via Bluff and Port Chalmers (AWG).

Harvest cost would have been about \$64/m3 (or tonne). Transport \$25 to \$32 p/t depending on distance.

Site prep and replanting costs should be available through Day Consultancy.

Original planting/thinning costs available through Steve Johnston Forestry Services.

Log Prices varied over the period of harvest but remained strong enough to yeild a profit. However the downside was the size of stems (piece size) due to age - about 12 years from maturity.

This could proves to be an exersize when to harvest D-fir - a possble article for the NZ LOGGER."

Secondary request (14 February 2024):

"In the meantime, has any work being done on ground prep' and replanting of site? Could do with photos.

The object was to replant with mainly natives (beech with sub canopy shrubs)."

On 5 March 2024 we extended the time to respond to your request.

QLDC response

- The Harvest began in Jan 2020 and was completed in May 2023. The harvesting contractor
 has been carrying out remedial works and the site will be handed back to QLDC in March
 2024.
- The Coronet Forest is some distance from the Mills and Ports wood was sold to the domestic market, and to China via Port Chalmers and Bluff.
- The Coronet Forest was approximately 175 hectares.
- There was a mix of ground based and hauler operations at the site.
- The total volume harvested from the site was 90,373 tonnes.
- The profit yielded from the site was \$1,895,840.00.
- Log prices varied over the three year period. Fuel prices increased and Covid lock downs occurred.
- The profit and yield include the sale of 6,623 tonnes of firewood.
- Both the profit and yield were higher than predicted at the start of the harvest. One reason was the Chinese market took a smaller piece size than was originally estimated in our forecasting.
- The forest was harvested before maturity, but a considerable wilding seed source has now been removed. A private Douglas fir block neighbouring the Coronet Forest was also felled before maturity earlier this year.
- 6,000 beech trees were planted in a trial site beside the forest last year.
- The planting contractor is to be announced in March 2024. The planting contractor will complete the first native planting at this site in 2025.

We trust the above information satisfactorily answers the relevant components of your request.

Decision to withhold remaining information requested

We have good grounds under the LGOIMA for withholding and refusing some of the information requested. We consider it is necessary to withhold and refuse certain information on the basis of the following grounds:

- s 7(2)((b)(ii) to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information.
- s 17(g) the information requested is not held by QLDC.

We are withholding harvest or transport costs because the information is commercially sensitivity. If we were to release this data, our contractor's commercial position could be prejudiced by this information falling into the hands of competitors. Ensuring a competitive market in this space is important to QLDC ratepayers, as it ensures cost checks and balances. It is therefore not in the interests of the public to release this information.

QLDC do not hold records of the site prep and replanting costs from the 80's and 90's, nor the details of the original planting and thinning costs. We therefore cannot respond to this part of your request.

Public interest considerations

We consider the interests of the public when making decisions to withhold requested information, including considerations in favour of release, whether the disclosure of the information would promote those considerations, and whether those considerations outweighed the need to withhold the information.

Promoting the accountability and transparency of local authority members and officials is in the public interest, as is the general public interest in "good government". Where possible, we have favoured the release of information.

However, we do not believe that these public interest considerations mean we should release the information withheld. Maintaining a competitive market in the forestry space holds greater weight than being transparent in this situation. It is therefore not in the interests of the public to release this information.

We conclude that the important section 7 withholding interests identified (e.g. commercial sensitivity), which relate to a subset of the information within the scope of your request, are not outweighed by a countervailing public interest requiring release.

Right to review the above decision

Note that you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about this process is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

If you wish to discuss this decision with us, please contact Naell.Crosby-Roe@qldc.govt.nz (Governance & Stakeholder Services Manager).

We trust this response satisfactorily answers your request.

Ngā mihi,

Senior Official Information Advisor