

### Full Council

29 May 2025

### Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [4]

**Department:** Community Services

**Title | Taitara:** Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025

#### Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

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The purpose of this report is to present Council with the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 and for Council to consider adopting a Statement of Proposal for formal consultation, via the special consultative procedure.

#### Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

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That the Council:

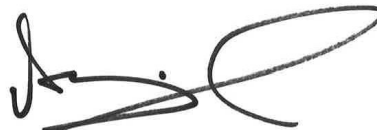
1. **Note** the contents of this report;
2. **Endorse** the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 (**Attachment A**);
3. **Adopt** the Statement of Proposal (**Attachment B**) for public consultation under the special consultative procedure outlined in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002;
4. **Appoint** four Councillors (to be named) of which three are required to form a hearings panel to hear and consider the submissions on the proposal and make recommendations to Council on adoption of the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025; and
5. **Direct** officers to report back the recommendations of the hearings panel.

**Prepared by:**



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5 May 2025

**Reviewed and Authorised by:**



**Name:** Ken Bailey  
**Title:** GM Community Services  
8 May 2025

### Context | Horopaki

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1. Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) comprises four parcels of land totalling 109 hectares. The Reserve is identified on the map in **Attachment C**. The Reserve provides a range of opportunities for recreational experiences that are easily accessible to Tāhuna Queenstown.
2. The Reserve is largely covered with wilding conifer tree species. It is predominantly forested with Douglas fir but includes other exotic species. These trees are acting as a seed source facilitating the spread of wilding conifers elsewhere in the Whakatipu basin.
3. Without active management and intervention, wilding conifers will continue to spread, creating a monoculture which threatens the landscape and its ecological values, resulting in the loss of biodiversity within and beyond the Reserve. Wildings reduce water yield and land productivity and limit future land use. The Otago economic analysis estimates an overall cost benefit-to-cost ratio is 96-1 for every dollar invested in controlling wilding infestations and preventing spread Prepared in 2022 for Ministry of Primary Industries on behalf of the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme. This ratio means that doing nothing, or doing little, will generate a large negative economic impact relating to the adverse effects of wilding conifers.
4. The zoning of Queenstown Hill under the Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) Proposed District Plan is Open Space Zone - Informal Recreation, and the forest has been designated (Designation #374) for the purpose of forestry operations, which means the use of the land primarily for the purpose of planting, tending, managing and harvesting of trees for timber or wood production.
5. Designation 374 allows QLDC to carry out forestry operations in the area known as Queenstown Hill. The designation states that the Queenstown Hill Forestry Plan must be updated before any operation can take place. It states that all updates of the Forestry Plan shall be subject to consultation with the community using the special consultative procedure set out in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 before adoption by the Council.
6. The Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan (RMP) has objectives and policies which support forestry management within the Reserve.
7. Council adopted the Ben Lomond and Queenstown Hill Forestry Plan in 2006. This plan is now outdated and no longer fit for purpose. A new forestry plan has been prepared which applies to Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill (**Attachment A**).
8. The Whakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group (WCG) was established by QLDC in 2009 to obtain funding and implement a work program to remove the threat of wilding conifers. QLDC has made an ongoing financial contribution to the WCG for the management of wilding conifers since its formation. Ahika Consulting were engaged by the WCG and QLDC to write the first draft of Te

Tapunui Queenstown Hill Forestry Plan. The removal of the wilding conifer seed source across the reserve is an initiative that supports the WCG's Strategic plan 2023-2033 endorsed by Council.

9. The Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 (draft forestry plan) was shared at a Council workshop on 25 March 2025.
10. The draft forestry plan assesses the current tree cover and site conditions, and outlines options for harvesting and replanting to replace invasive wilding trees. It will guide the removal of these species and support the restoration of a healthy, diverse forest for the future.
11. The draft forestry plan contains the following objectives for the site:
  - *QLDC will fell and eradicate all wilding tree species on Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve (the Reserve) and replant the site with a mixed native/exotic forest and scrub/tussock grassland. The Reserve will be retired from production forestry, with the new cover forming a permanent mixed species forest.*
12. The draft forestry plan has been developed to achieve the following objectives, identified through current policies, regulations, and the aspirations of the local community:
  - Control existing wilding conifers and eradicate successive wilding generation.
  - Protect, restore and enhance existing biodiversity values.
  - Protect and enhance the water quality in all water catchments within the reserves.
  - Protect landscape and ecological values by implementing staged management zones.
  - Revegetate harvested areas within two to four years following the completion of harvesting operations in each management zone.
  - Ensure that QLDC meets its obligations under the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme.
  - Manage the risk of erosion and land instability.
  - Manage the discharge of contaminants such as silt, sediment and debris to surface water bodies.
13. Within the draft forestry plan the site has been broken into six management zones based on the geology, flora and fauna, and landscape. Any wilding canopy removal must be accompanied by restoration due to community expectations, policy and regulation. Revegetating the site will also assist with the establishment of wildings or other non-desirable weed species. Each zone requires a different management approach as described in the draft forestry plan.

### Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

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14. This draft forestry plan (**Attachment A**) assesses the current tree cover and site conditions, and outlines options for harvesting and replanting to replace invasive wilding trees. It will guide the removal of these species and support the restoration of a healthy, diverse forest for the future. The draft forestry plan details the proposed harvest, wilding clearance, and restoration activities for the Reserve, based on findings from vegetation surveys and forest measurement data.

15. The removal of the established Douglas fir forest will alter the landscape and may significantly impact the experience of current recreational activities at the site. The draft forestry plan, alongside the draft Reserve Management Plan for the Reserve that's currently being reviewed, plays a crucial role in communicating the future intentions for the Reserve and informs how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like.
16. Notification of the draft forestry plan and the Statement of Proposal allows the public to provide submissions to Council and be heard if requested in relation to the harvest, wilding clearance and restoration of the Reserve.
17. This report identifies and assesses the following reasonably practicable options for assessing the matter as required by section 77 of the Local Government Act 2002.
18. Option 1 Endorses the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 and adopt the statement of proposal for consultation in accordance with the special consultative procedure.

*Advantages:*

- Endorsing the draft forestry plan ensures that the community are informed and have been consulted on how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like.
- Will align to the policies and objectives in Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan.
- Meets objectives in the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan. The wilding threat will be mitigated by removing the maturing seed source.
- If supported, the plan will enhance biodiversity outcomes by revegetating the site with more ecologically appropriate species.
- The draft plan aligns to the WCG's Strategic Plan 2023-2033 as endorsed by QLDC.

*Disadvantages:*

- Will not provide a plan aligned with the intent to eliminate invasive wilding species.

19. Option 2 Do not endorse the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 for consultation in accordance with the special consultative procedure.

*Advantages:*

- There will be no vegetation or landscape change to Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve.

### *Disadvantages:*

- There will be no clear direction for how Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve vegetation is managed.
- Council will not be complying with QLDC Proposed District Plan Designation #374 conditions.
- Council will not meet the policies and objectives in the Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan.
- Council will not meet the objectives in the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan.
- There will not be an opportunity to enhance biodiversity outcomes by revegetating the site with more ecologically appropriate species.

20. This report recommends **Option 1** for addressing the matter because this will provide the community with an opportunity to have their say on the tree management and future revegetation for Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve, and ensure a clear plan is developed that meets Council's obligations.

### Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

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#### **Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi i kā Whakaaro Hiraka**

21. This matter is of medium significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy 2024 because although Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve is listed as a strategic asset as defined by section 5 of the Local Government Act 2002, the decision sought in this report is related to consultation only. Other considerations which impact the significance are consistency with existing policy and strategy and alignment to Council's Climate & Biodiversity Plan outcomes. There is high community and stakeholder interest in the development and use of the reserve which are valued by the community.
22. The persons who are affected by or interested in this matter are residents, ratepayers and visitors to the Queenstown Lakes District and all users of the Reserve.
23. The Council draft RMP was formally consulted on and contains objectives and policies which support the draft forestry plan.
24. Council officers have been working closely with the WCG on the development of the draft plan.
25. Council officers have spoken to two neighbouring properties about the development of the draft forestry plan (Queenstown Hill Station and The Commonage developers).

26. Council officers held a public workshop on the draft forestry plan with Councillors on 25 March 2025.

### Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

27. Council officers have worked with Aukaha and Te Ao Marama Incorporated when preparing the draft forestry plan.

### Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

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28. This matter relates to the Community & Wellbeing risk category. It is associated with RISK10005 Ineffective planning for community services or facilities within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a high residual risk rating.
29. The approval of the recommended option will allow Council to avoid the risk. This will be achieved by creating a clear plan for how Council intends to manage the vegetation within the reserve.

### Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

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30. The preparation and finalisation of the draft forestry plan is planned for within existing operational budgets.
31. There is no funding in the QLDC Long Term Plan (LTP) 2024-2034 to implement the draft forestry plan. The LTP does include a capital budget of \$21 million to progress the wildfire reduction program. Specifically, there is a wildfire mitigation budget of \$1,067,000 in year 2026/27 of the LTP; and there are elements of the draft forestry plan which may align to this funding.
32. The reserve was not planted as a production forest, but it does contain some merchantable timber. However, challenges such as slope, rock outcrops, access, and the presence of power lines will impact the feasibility of logging. Harvesting may not generate an economic return due to the site difficulties, although it may offset some costs associated with the operation.
33. Government initiatives which would help with tree removals and tree planting may be available in the future. An example is the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme which is led by Ministry for Primary Industries.

### Council Effects and Views | Kā Whakaaweawe me kā Tirohaka a te Kaunihera

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34. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:
- Vision beyond 2050 [Our Vision and Mission - QLDC](#)
  - Reserves Act 1977
  - Local Government Act 2002
  - Parks and Open Spaces Strategy 2021
  - Significance and Engagement Policy 2024
  - Proposed and Operative District Plan



- Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022 – 2025
- Draft Climate & Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028
- Whakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group Strategic Plan 2023-2033
- Otago Regional Pest Management Plan 2019
- National Environmental Standards for Commercial Forestry

35. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the named policies. It aligns with the QLDC District Plan Designation #374 which specifies that draft forestry plan updates shall be subject to consultation with the community using the special consultative procedure.

36. This matter is not included in the LTP. But the completion of the draft forestry plan will be covered through existing operational budgets.

### Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions | Te Whakatureture 2002 o te Kāwanataka ā-Kiaka

37. Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. The adoption of the Statement of Proposal will support these outcomes by allowing the community to submit on the draft forestry plan. As such, the recommendation in this report is appropriate and within the ambit of Section 10 of the Act.

38. The recommended option:

- Can be implemented through current funding under the LTP and Annual Plan;
- Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
- Would not significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.

### Attachments | Kā Tāpirihaka

A	Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025
B	Statement of Proposal Draft Forestry Plan 2025
C	Aerial map extent of the Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Recreation Reserve

Attachments are presented separately.