

13. CONCLUSION

NZSki is seeking all necessary approvals from the EPA under the FTAA to authorise the upgrade, development and ongoing maintenance of existing infrastructure within the Remarkables Ski Area, and the expansion and trail development within the adjacent Doolans Basin.

13.1 MEETING THE PURPOSE OF THE ACT

The purpose of the Fast-track Approvals Act is:

to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

The suite of robust technical assessments demonstrate that the Project is undoubtedly a project that will deliver significant regional benefits. The net economic benefits have been quantified by Benje Patterson (2026) and are summarised as follows:

- > At completion, the ski field will be able to accommodate up to 6,000 skiers at one time, a comparable number of visitors to Queenstown Airport (currently experiencing 7,100 visitors daily) and significantly more than Dunedin Airport (2,300 passengers per day). Skier days at the Remarkables is projected to rise from 294,735 skier days per year to between 435,969 (low growth scenario) and 505,260 (high growth scenario) skier days per year within 10 years;
- > A capital expenditure of \$193.3 million in infrastructure investment resulting in a one-off economic impact of \$61.9 million GDP effect (measured in real 2026 pricing) or \$12.4 million per year over a five-year period;
- > A total of 81 annualised construction jobs in the heavy and civil construction sector, which, given the short construction window (November to May), will result in a peak employment of 150+ jobs each summer construction season;
- > A projected annual visitor spend within 10 years of between \$112 million (low-growth scenario) and \$168 million (high growth scenario) across Otago with no measurable direct economic costs from the Project. This is in addition to the \$235 million that is currently spent, representing 5.6% of spend across Otago's entire tourism industry;
- > The total of seasonal jobs across Otago supported by spending holiday makers at The Remarkables could rise from the current level of 2,388 to between 3,834 (low-scenario) and 4,443 (high-scenario) within 10 years;

- > The projected market demand increases over the next 10 years, brought about by domestic population and international ski visitor growth, is anticipated to result in 350,000 additional skier days, with The Remarkables forecast to capture between 40-60% of this growth, which is a rise in skier days between 141,234 and 210,252;
- > Of the 350,000 additional skier days, 210,000 skier days are expected to be attributed to international visitors, whereas 140,000 skier days will result from domestic visitors highlighting the growth opportunity for domestic and international tourism;
- > The Project will increase the ski area's resilience to the effects of climate change and increasingly variable weather patterns by virtue of Doolans Basin being on a south-facing slope. The Doolans Basin, therefore, has a greater capacity to retain snow, improving its longer-term resilience to potential effects of climate change; and
- > The Project will encourage mode-shift from private vehicle usage to use public transport, shuttles and car-pooling, reducing demand on the access road network and supporting the pursuit of a 2030 carbon neutrality goal.

The development and upgrades to ski infrastructure, ancillary visitor amenity facilities and infrastructure servicing will demonstrably achieve the purpose of the Act. The Project is of such a scale that its net-economic benefits will extend beyond the Queenstown Lakes or Central Otago District to the Otago Region as a whole.

13.2 MANAGING THE EFFECTS OF THE PROJECT

The actual and potential environmental effects of the Project are well defined in Section 6 of this Substantive Application. The associated management of those effects is described in Section 7. This information has been extrapolated from the various technical assessments commissioned by NZSki, contained within **Part B** of the application documents.

The findings of each technical assessment scrutinising the environmental effects of the Project has informed the mitigation, management and ongoing monitoring measures forming the basis of consent conditions relating to each approval. These are contained within **Part H** of the application documents and are considered to appropriately manage the identified effects while recognising that it is not possible to avoid all effects within a pristine alpine environment. The management of effects includes the following measures reproduced herein:

- > Construction related effects will be managed in accordance with an overarching Construction Environmental Management Plan establishing procedures, responsibilities, controls, monitoring and performance indicators in conjunction with

measures and monitoring requirements included in the site-specific Erosion and Sediment Control Plan to minimise effects on sensitive receptors.

- > Cultural effects of the proposed activities will continue to be addressed throughout the processing of this application, with NZSki welcoming further comments and input from Kā Rūnaka as to how the Project appropriately responds to cultural values and effects within their takiwā. NZSki also proposes the formation of a Mana Whenua Advisory Group with representation from relevant rūnaka to set out an agreed programme of works and cost recovery to facilitate ongoing mana whenua engagement. This ongoing cultural involvement will occur bi-annually throughout the construction-phase and continue once yearly for the life of the Project.
- > Ecological effects will be managed through a Terrestrial Ecology Management Plan, which will manage the effects of activities on indigenous vegetation, avifauna, wetlands and invertebrates within the Project Area.
- > Effects on the non-threatened McCann's Skink will be compensated through funding of a research project to the value of \$80,000 into the alpine lizard species for which limited information is known about the presence or distribution within the Remarkables and Hectors area.
- > The residual ecological effects resulting from the permanent loss of 13.8 hectares of indigenous vegetation is to be compensated by way of a Biodiversity Compensation Project including a \$75,000 annual fund towards a Biodiversity Project Plan annually until a commensurate area is revegetated.
- > The residual effects of reclamation of a tarn to store water as a snow-making reservoir in addition to the Biodiversity Compensation Project will be addressed through funding through a single one-off payment to the Department of Conservation for the construction of a boardwalk over the wetland to Lake Alta.
- > Pest control will be implemented, to manage NZSki's direct contribution towards, or exacerbation of existing pest distribution in the Doolans Basin.
- > Landscape effects within the Doolans Basin have already been incorporated into the design through fixing of building footprints, permissible height of buildings and requiring coating and cladding in external materials that tone with the landscape. The effects of Carpark B's vegetation clearance will be appropriately mitigated through a Landscape Planting Plan.
- > Natural character effects within the Doolans Basin have been largely avoided through siting of buildings, structures and infrastructure to avoid the highest ecological value wetlands, waterways and tarns (where practicable). The high degree of naturalness

within the Doolans Basin has been preserved except for ski-field infrastructure such as the weir intake in Doolans Creek Right Branch and conversion of an alpine tarn into a water storage snow-making reservoir. The resultant localised natural character effects within the Remarkables Conservation Area and ONL will be spatially and visually confined without impacting the broader landscape context. Construction mitigation measures will minimise ecological disturbance and ensure hydrological connectivity between all connecting waterways of wetlands and waterbodies is maintained. A one-off compensatory payment to DOC will support the construction of a boardwalk over Lake Alta Wetland.

- > An upgrade of the existing wastewater system, although increasing discharge volume to the application area, will achieve wastewater performance criteria, maintaining good to excellent ecological health within the Rastus Burn catchment through TN, TP, TSS and CBOD₅ limits, performance monitoring upstream, downstream, groundwater monitoring and annual submission of a Biological Monitoring Report.
- > Water quality and ecosystem health post-construction from stormwater discharges will be compared against baseline fine sediment conditions to understand changes in sediment deposition and determine if additional treatment or diversion is required.
- > While operational effects on winter activities and backcountry winter ski sports cannot be feasibly mitigated, NZSki will establish and lead a Recreation User Group comprising of representatives of the wider and relevant Queenstown recreation community alongside commercial users to facilitate wider recreation opportunities within the surrounding Remarkables and Hectors area.
- > All operational traffic, parking and State Highway performance effects will be managed through ongoing intersection performance monitoring, safety investigations and implementation of any required intersection safety upgrades (should this be determined to be required by NZTA). Seasonal traffic management measures will be implemented during afternoon peak departure periods as part of a revised Traffic Management Plan. Car Park B and the Boneyard Car Park will be upgraded, and a Travel Demand and Parking Management Plan implemented with the objectives to influence travel behaviour, reduce single occupancy vehicles and alleviate traffic congestion. An annual monitoring report prepared by a suitably qualified traffic engineer will assess the effectiveness of this plan.
- > Natural hazard risk has been considered within the alpine setting with appropriate factors of safety adopted, buildings located to avoid known natural hazard risks (where appropriate) with mitigation measures, monitoring and design constraints to be further addressed through detailed design.

NZSki has taken an effects-led design approach to the Project, with the initial siting of ski infrastructure and trails designed to avoid or minimise various areas of highest ecological and landscape value. The Project has been designed from this starting position, with the remainder of the effects seeking to be appropriately avoided, remedied or mitigated, as described above and in detail in Sections 6, 7 and the associated technical assessments contained in **Part B** of the application documents. Where residual effects remain significant, compensation has been provided to address those effects, albeit in the broader context of the FTAA purpose to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits.

13.3 ALIGNMENT WITH THE STATUTORY FRAMEWORK

As noted above, the Project will facilitate the delivery of a project that will deliver significant regional benefits and is therefore in accordance with the purpose of the Act. The Project generally aligns with the overall management intentions and policy imperatives specified in the relevant national, regional and district planning documents, national policy instruments and hierarchy of national and regional conservation planning documents and other statutory documents as set out in Sections 8 to 12 of this application. In summary:

- > The Project has been assessed against and is considered to generally accord with the NES Freshwater, NES Air, NES Soil, NES Drinking Water, NES Electricity Transmission, NPS-FM, NPS-IB, NPS-NH, Proposed RPS, Operative RPS, Water Plan, Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan, Queenstown Lakes Operative District Plan, Central Otago District Plan, Water Conservation (Kawarau) Order Act 1997 and Kāi Tahu ki Otago Natural Resource Management Plan 2005;
- > The Project is considered to generally align with the Conservation General Policy 2005 and Otago Conservation Management Strategy;
- > The Project is considered consistent with the ‘protective purpose’ of the Wildlife Act; and
- > The Project will provide for the protection of freshwater fisheries and maintain fish passage connectivity within rivers and streams through given there is no fish present at the altitudes present where in-stream structures are proposed.

Overall, NZSki has sought to align the project with the relevant policy directives set out in Sections 10 to 12, however some tensions do arise where strict adherence cannot be achieved. In those instances, the Project has sought to achieve alignment to the extent practicable. It is important to consider these situations in the wider context of the FTAA, where the greatest weight is to be afforded to the overall purpose of the Act.

A significant amount of work and effort has gone into responsibly addressing the actual and potential adverse effects of the Project, including through the preparation and identification of appropriate management measures, management plans, Biodiversity Compensation Project and other matters (all the subject of proposed consent conditions). As a result of these measures, the environmental effects will be appropriately managed so they will not be disproportionate to the benefits of the Project.

13.4 CONSULTATION

NZSki has consulted with mana whenua, local authorities, administering agencies, government agencies, recreational groups, adjacent landowners and other community stakeholders. This consultation has informed the various assessments provided as part of this Application and will continue throughout the FTAA decision making process and during the ongoing implementation of the Project.

13.5 CONCLUDING STATEMENT

NZSki is pleased to present and seek approval for an innovative project that will deliver significant regional benefits, while effectively and robustly managing environmental effects.

NZSki looks forward to working through the post lodgement phase of the Fast-track Application process with a view to securing approval for the Project in accordance with a set of workable and appropriate conditions.