

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This application by NZSki Limited (“NZSki” or “the Applicant”) is made under the Fast-track Approvals Act (“the Act” or “FTAA”) and seeks to authorise the upgrade and development of infrastructure at the Remarkables Ski Area, and the expansion and development of ski activities, trails and associated infrastructure within the adjacent Doolans Basin (referred herein as “the Project”). The general location of the Project is shown in **Figure 1**.



Figure 1: General location of the Project.

Overview of the Project

The main objective of the Project is to deliver a multi-valley ski destination for international and domestic visitors alike that can accommodate a projected demand of 6,000 skiers at one time (an increase from the current capacity of 3,500). The Project broadly comprises:

- > Upgrades to the existing Remarkables Ski Area through expansion and reconfiguration of the Rastus Burn Base Building and arrival surrounds to accommodate a potential 6,000 skiers at one time. This increased ski-field capacity requires construction of a new Gondola Line, Drive Station, Towers, Cables within the Rastus Burn and new access roads and return trails from Helicopter Ridge to the top of Sugar Bowl and Curvey Basin. Ancillary to the proposed expansion at the existing Remarkables Ski Field is the upgrade of ski-field infrastructure, including:
 - > Infield power distribution and telecommunications upgrades;
 - > Potable water network upgrades;
 - > Upgrade and renewal of the existing on-site wastewater management system to include a potential wastewater treatment facility to sustain good-excellent water quality in the Rastus Burn; and

- > Stormwater management associated with new buildings and access and ski trails being established.
- > Expansion into the Doolans Basin located within the Remarkables Conservation Area through construction of a new Gondola Line, Towers, Cables and Mid-Station terminating in the Doolans Base Station containing an adjacent learner snowsports area and covered passenger conveyor lift. The area from the mid-station to Doolans Base Station will contain ski trails and access roads. Construction of a new multi-purpose Doolans Base Building will accommodate gondola cabin parking, integrated cabin maintenance, storage, ablution facilities, food and beverage facility and contain emergency shelter during adverse conditions. The ski-field operation in the Doolans Basin requires the following infrastructure to enable the development:
 - > Conversion of an alpine tarn into a snow-making reservoir;
 - > Consumptive water abstraction from the Doolans Creek Right Branch;
 - > Power, wastewater, stormwater, communications and snow-making facilities; and
 - > Safety infrastructure installation such as signage, fencing, barriers, avalanche control and boundary markers.

A high-level overview of the Project Area and key elements is provided in **Figure 2** below.

The Project will unlock approximately 262 hectares of new, south-facing skiable terrain within the Doolans Basin, which combined with the existing Remarkables Ski Area will provide over 700 hectares of skiable terrain within the wider Remarkables Conservation Area.

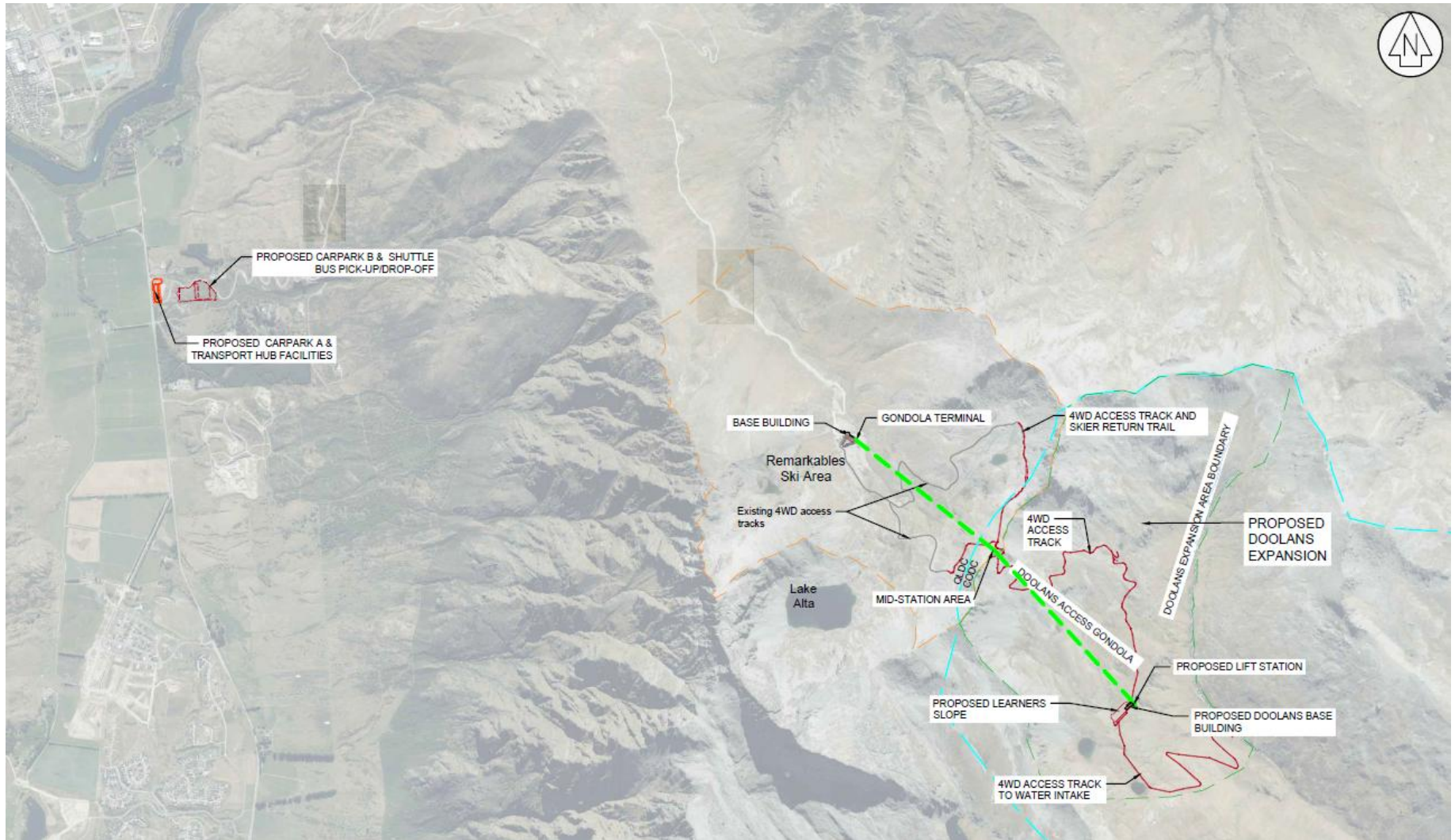


Figure 2: Project Overview

Purpose of the Fast Track Approvals Act and the Approvals Sought

The FTAA is intended to facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and development projects with significant regional or national benefits, as recognized through the inclusion of the Project within Schedule 2 of the FTAA. The Project is listed in Schedule 2 of the Act.

The Applicant is applying for all statutory approvals necessary to enable the construction, operation, maintenance and use of all structures and activities associated with the Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion Project.

The required approvals comprise of the following:

- > Resource consents that would otherwise be applied for under the Resource Management Act 1991 (“**RMA**”);
- > Concessions that would otherwise be applied for under the Conservation Act 1987 (“**Conservation Act**”);
- > Concessions that would otherwise be applied for under the Reserves Act 1977 (“**Reserves Act**”);
- > Wildlife Permits that would otherwise be applied for under the Wildlife Act 1953 (“**Wildlife Act**”); and,
- > Approvals, authorisations and dispensations that would otherwise be applied for under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations 1983 (“**Freshwater Regulations**”).

The Project requires a range of resource consents under the Central Otago District Plan (“**CODP**”), Queenstown Lakes Proposed District Plan (“**QLDC PDP**”), Otago Regional Plan: Water for Otago (“**Water Plan**”), Otago Regional Plan: Waste for Otago (“**Waste Plan**”) and the National Environmental Standards for Freshwater 2020 (“**NES Freshwater**”). The Substantive Application and accompanying Assessment of Environmental Effects (“**AEE**”) have been prepared in accordance the information requirements of the Act¹ (including the relevant clauses in Schedule 5 to 7 and Schedule 9) and provides a fulsome description of the proposal together with an assessment of actual and potential effects on the environment.

NZSki seeks an unlimited term for all land-use consents, a 35-year term for all regional consents, wildlife permits and dispensations under the Freshwater Fisheries Regulations

¹ Sections 43 and 44 FTAA 2024.

and seeks a 40-year term for any concessions granted under the Conservation Act 1987, reflecting the long-term nature of ski-field development.

Management of Effects

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 to the extent practicable. Where residual adverse effects are expected, including in respect of terrestrial ecology, lizards, natural character and recreation effects, these will either be appropriately compensated for (in accordance with the effects management hierarchy where applicable) or suitably managed through development and implementation of management plans or through establishment of advisory and liaison groups to address ongoing operational effects.

The management of effects for the Project broadly include the following measures:

- > 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 propose 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 to 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 a research project into 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 the 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 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 (amounting to some 33,000 hectares of recreation opportunity).

- > 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.

As identified above, 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.

Purpose of the Fast Track 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 one-off economic impact to \$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 spending within 10 years between \$112 million (low-growth scenario) and \$168 million (high growth scenario) across Otago with no measurable direct economic costs from the Project;
- > Modelling shows that the development will increase annual spending by holidaymakers in 10 years between \$112 million (low-growth) and \$168 million (high-growth). This is in addition to the \$235 million that is currently spent that is a 5.6% baseline share of spending across Otago's entire tourism industry.
- > The total of seasonal jobs across Otago supported by spending holiday makers who ski at The Remarkables could rise from the current level of 2,388 to 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 ski 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 Otago Region as a whole.

Statutory Considerations

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. 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 the above documents, however some tensions do arise where strict adherence cannot be achieved. In those instances, the Project has sought to achieve alignment to extent practicable. It is important to consider these situations in the wider context of the FTAA, where greatest weight is to be afforded to the overall purpose of the Act.

Consultation

NZSki has provided opportunity for regular hui, updates and offers to engage with Kā Rūnaka on an ongoing basis through the FTAA process and on an ongoing basis as outlined within proposed consent conditions.

Consultation with administering agencies, local authorities and other key stakeholders has occurred through an introductory project overview, technical workshops, site visits and progressive circulation of draft technical assessments for feedback. Engagement has been focused on presenting methods, identifying findings and recommendations in relation to

management of effects. This engagement will continue post lodgement to refine the scope of considerations for the Panel assigned to this application.

Conclusion

NZSki seeks all the requisite approvals required under the FTAA to enable the proposed upgrades to the existing Remarkables Ski Area and the expansion into the Doolans Basin. The Project is entirely consistent with the purpose of the Act, providing significant regional benefits, while effectively and robustly managing environmental effects.

When the purpose of the Act and the effects management approach are considered together, there is no statutory impediment to the granting of the approvals sought, subject to the imposition of a robust suite of proposed conditions.