



FTAA-2510-1124: Application received for referral of the project under the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 – Stage 2 decisions

Project Name: Queenstown Cable Car

Date submitted:	31 March 2026	Tracking #: BRF-00763	
Security level:	In-Confidence	MfE priority:	Urgent

	Action sought:	Response by:
To Hon Shane Jones, Acting Minister for Infrastructure	Decision on recommendations	7 April 2026

Actions for Minister's Office staff	Return the signed briefing to: <i>FTAreferrals@mfe.govt.nz</i> . Approve the attached notice of decisions letter.
Number of appendices: 8	Appendices: 1. Statutory framework for making decisions 2. Application documents for the Queenstown Cable Car project 3. Stage 1 Briefing Note and decisions 4. Section 18 report on Treaty settlements and other obligations 5. Section 19 report on the use of public conservation land 6. Comments received from invited parties 7. Further information received from the applicant 8. Draft notice of decisions letter

Ministry for the Environment contacts

Position	Name	Cell phone	1 st contact
Principal Author	Ashley Sycamore		
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Project location

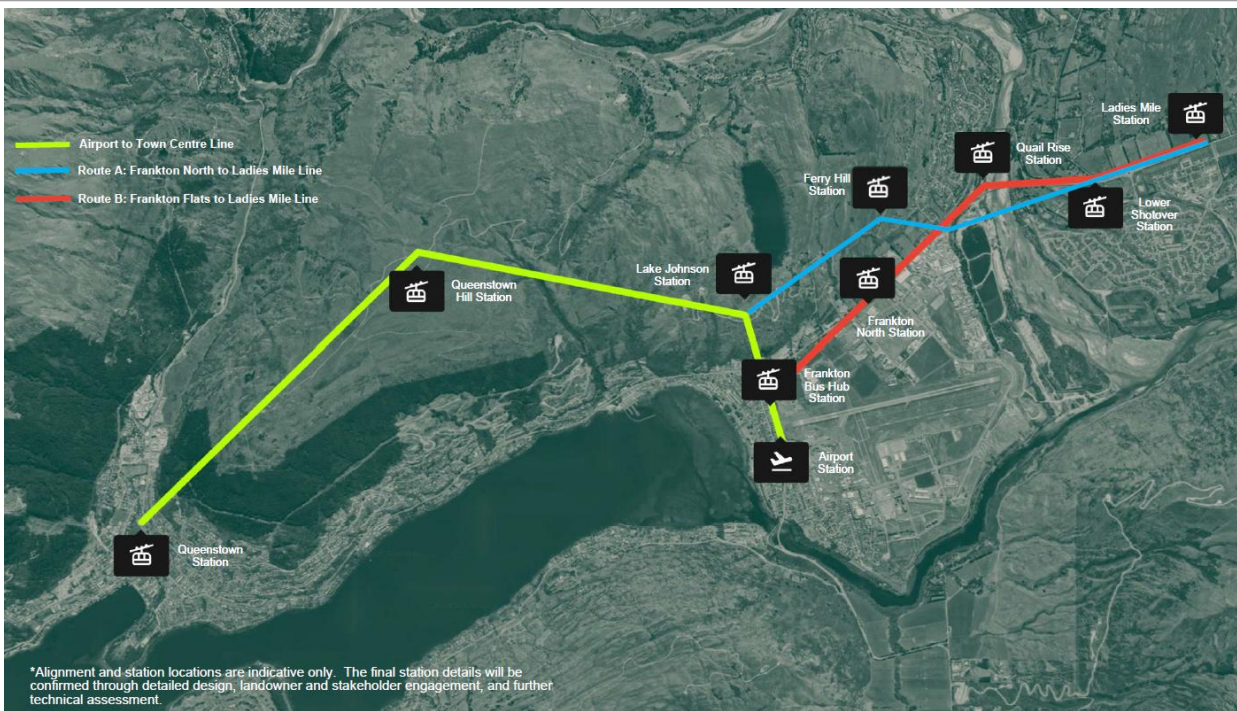


Image 1: The proposed route alignments of the Queenstown Cable Car project

Key messages

1. This briefing seeks your decisions under section 21 of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) on the referral application from Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited (the applicant) to refer the Queenstown Cable Car project (the project) to the fast-track approvals process.
2. A copy of the application is in Appendix 2. This is the second briefing on this application. The first briefing (Stage 1 – BRF-7186) with your initial decisions annotated is in Appendix 3.

Project details

3. The project is to establish and operate a mass rapid transit cable car network linking central Queenstown with a number of key catchments including Frankton, Queenstown Airport, and Ladies Mile.
4. The project includes a range of land uses associated with the establishment, construction and operation (including ongoing maintenance) of cable car lines, with associated stations (including complementary amenities and ancillary activities), towers, cableways and other supporting infrastructure and activities across multiple locations in the network. The project also includes subdivision to enable the establishment and long-term operation of the proposed cable car stations.
5. The network for the project comprises two primary lines, being:
 - a. the Airport–Town Centre Line, connecting the Queenstown CBD with Queenstown Airport via Queenstown Hill, Lake Johnson, and Frankton
 - b. the Frankton–Ladies Mile Line, extending eastwards from Frankton to the Ladies Mile urban area via either Route A or Route B.

6. The project area encompasses multiple sites and landholdings between central Queenstown, Frankton, Queenstown Airport, and Ladies Mile, within the Otago Region. The project area includes local and state highway road reserves, reserve land, hydro parcels, designated land, and privately owned properties. The route alignment, configuration and station positioning is dependent on further investigation and detailed design.
7. The applicant has confirmed they do not currently own, nor hold any legal interest in, the land within the project area. They advise that engagement is underway with relevant landowners to secure the necessary legal rights to enable construction and operation of the project. The applicant indicates that cable car stations will be secured through lease arrangements, while the cableway and pylons will generally be secured via easements in gross or, where appropriate, leases of airspace. We note these are matters for the applicant to address.
8. The applicant will require the proposed approvals under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:
 - a. resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA)
 - b. change or cancellation of resource consent conditions (specifically in relation to the variation of consent notices) under the RMA
 - c. concessions under the Conservation Act 1987
 - d. concessions under the Reserves Act 1977
 - e. an amendment to or revocation of a conservation covenant under the Conservation Act 1987
 - f. wildlife approval under the Wildlife Act 1953
 - g. archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga 2014.
9. Some of the reserve land within the project area is subject to a notice under Part 9 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, which is relevant to some of the concessions required under the Reserves Act 1977. The applicant intends to seek a lease over any land subject to this notice for a term (including renewals) of less than 50 years. However, should a lease exceeding 50 years be proposed, the applicant has stated any necessary supporting information would be provided as part of the substantive application, including written approval for the project from the relevant iwi authority.

Recommendation on referral application

10. We consider the project aligns with the section 22 referral criteria. We consider the project would have significant regional benefits because it will deliver new regionally significant infrastructure, will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, will deliver significant economic benefits, and will address significant environmental issues, specifically by supporting climate change mitigation.
11. We recommend you **accept** the referral application. We seek your decisions on this recommendation, proposed directions to the applicant and expert panel, and notification of your decisions.

Assessment against statutory framework

12. The statutory framework for your decision-making is set out in Appendix 1. You must apply this framework when you are deciding whether to accept or decline the referral application and when deciding on any further requirements or directions associated with referral of the project.

13. Before accepting the project, you must consider the following:
 - a. the application (in Appendix 2)
 - b. the section 18 Treaty settlements and other obligations report (in Appendix 4)
 - c. the section 19 report on the use of public conservation land (in Appendix 5)
 - d. the comments received from invited parties (in Appendix 6)
 - e. the further information received from the applicant (in Appendix 7).
14. Following that, you may accept the application if you are satisfied that it meets the criteria in section 22 of the Act and if there are no reasons meaning you must decline the application. We provide our advice on these matters below.

Section 18 Treaty settlements and other obligations report

15. A Treaty settlements and other obligations report (the report) prepared under section 18 of the Act is attached in Appendix 4.
16. Section 18(2) of the Act requires that the report provide a list of relevant Māori groups, including relevant iwi authorities and Treaty settlement entities. The report identifies Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu, Te Rūnanga o Moeraki, Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki, Te Rūnanga o Ōtākou, Hokonui Rūnanga, Waihōpai Rūnaka, Te Rūnanga o Awarua, Te Rūnanga o Ōraka-Aparima, Aukaha, and Te Ao Marama Incorporated as the relevant groups for the project area.
17. The report identifies the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 as the relevant Treaty settlement for the project area. The report does not identify any other obligations such as Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or joint management agreements.
18. The report states that while the Ngāi Tahu settlement provides for a statutory acknowledgement over Whakatipu-wai-māori/Lake Wakatipu, the project area is set back from the lake and the information provided by the applicant suggests it is unlikely to be directly affected. The report identifies several other settlement provisions – including a deed of recognition, right of first refusal, taonga species, a nohoanga entitlement, and a conservation protocol – which do not appear to be impacted by the application as it currently stands, but nonetheless underline the traditional connection of Ngāi Tahu with this area and its environment.
19. Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki provided comments on the referral application, expressing a neutral position on the application, but noting they have entered into a process agreement with the applicant.
20. The Minister for Māori Development and Minister for Māori Crown Relations: Te Arawhiti support the application for referral, subject to the panel for any substantive application considering whether the proposed activities will affect Whakatipu-wai-Māori (Lake Wakatipu) and other statutory areas under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, and the impact of the proposal on taonga species identified in that settlement. The Minister also encourages the applicant to continue to engage with all relevant Māori groups identified.
21. The report does not identify matters which make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts.

Section 16 Effects of Treaty settlements and other obligations on decision-making

22. In accordance with the section 18 report, we have not identified any documents that you must give the same or equivalent effect to, or procedural requirements you must comply with under section 16 of the Act.

Section 19 Report in relation to use of public conservation land

23. As the project area includes public conservation land (PCL), the Director-General of Conservation has prepared a report under section 19 of the Act (refer to Appendix 5).
24. The project will directly affect several areas of PCL, including marginal strips, and local purposes reserves and recreation reserves vested in and/or administered by Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC). The Department of Conservation (DOC) consulted with QLDC and Health New Zealand (HNZ) while preparing the report.
25. The report identifies the existing arrangements and active concessions for the PCL, including right of way access for gravel extraction, right to convey sewage, wildlife authorities for trapping pests, collection permits for lichen, and construction of monitoring wells.
26. The report has identified the following potential risks and liabilities to the Crown that relate to any proposed approvals of the kind described in section 42(4)(e), (f), (l) or (m): a risk of non-completion, failure, or inability to remediate land and frustration of pre-existing activities.
27. The report identifies a Government Purpose (Hospital) Reserve owned by HNZ with an unclear reserve status. DOC recommends that this matter be clarified through a land status check. We note this parcel of land has been excluded from the project area for the purpose of the referral application. Further detail is provided under the section 20 assessment below.
28. The report recommends the applicant completes further consultation with both DOC and QLDC prior to the lodgement of a substantive application. We note the applicant has identified they will have ongoing consultation with affected parties.
29. There are no other specific recommendations arising from the report.

Written comments received

30. Comments were received under section 17 from the following invited parties:
- a. relevant local authorities – QLDC and Otago Regional Council (ORC)
 - b. Ministers – the Minister for the Environment, the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, the Associate Minister of Transport, the Minister of Climate Change, the Minister for the South Island, and the Minister for Economic Growth
 - c. relevant administering agencies – DOC
 - d. the Māori groups identified in the list provided to the Minister – Kāti Huirapa Rūnaki ki Puketeraki
 - e. any other persons – the Chief Executive of NZ Transport Agency (NZTA), the Chief Executive of the Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC), the Chief Executive of Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT), and the Chief Executive of Transpower New Zealand Limited (Transpower).
31. A summary of the comments received from Māori groups is provided under the section 18 report above. The key points of relevance to your decisions are summarised in Table A and the full comments are attached in Appendix 6. A summary of the other comments is provided below:

- a. ORC and QLDC did not identify any competing applications or existing resource consents to which sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA could apply.
- b. QLDC considers the referral application to be premature, noting insufficient information to confirm that the project is feasible, deliverable, or would provide significant regional or national benefits
- c. ORC and the Minister for the Environment did not comment on whether the project should be referred, but highlighted further assessments they consider should be included in any substantive application
- d. the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality supports referral, noting the project addresses an urgent and well-evidenced transport constraint in an economically important tourism region
- e. the Associate Minister of Transport and the Acting Minister for the South Island considers the project has significant regional benefits and supports the application being referred
- f. the Minister of Climate Change considers the project is likely to be regionally significant in terms of climate mitigation
- g. the Minister for Economic Growth identifies the project is expected to contribute \$249 million to GDP over the five-year construction period and employment for more than 796 people at the peak year of development and operation
- h. several Ministers acknowledge a competing Queenstown cable car proposal, known as 'Whoosh', which is currently progressing through the standard resource consent process – we note this is not considered a competing application under the Act, as this proposal does not relate to the same natural and physical resources as the approvals sought by the project
- i. DOC notes they do not have sufficient information to determine the level of any potential environmental effects; however, they consider it is likely that with the appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels
- j. HNZPT identifies archaeological sites within the project area and confirms an archaeological authority will likely be required
- k. NZTA are broadly supportive of the project from a referral perspective, with their support subject to the effects of the project on the state highway network being acceptably managed
- l. QAC states that it is broadly supportive of the project's objectives, provided aviation safety, operational efficiency, and regulatory requirements are fully addressed
- m. Transpower identifies that the project area is located near a transmission line and notes its protection will need to be considered in a substantive application.

Further information sought from the applicant

32. Following consideration of the comments received from invited parties, further information was sought from the applicant on 17 February 2026 under section 20 of the Act. The request related to two matters: a potentially ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act, and whether any approvals may be required under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. The applicant provided responses to the further information request on 3 and 16 March 2026.
33. Full copies of the request and responses are attached in Appendix 7. You must consider any information received within the specified time frame. We note that while the initial response

was received within the specified time frame, further clarification was required, and a second response was received outside the specified time frame. You may consider the information in the second response, at your discretion, under section 20(2)(b). A summary of the requests and the applicant's responses is provided below.

Potential ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act

34. The further information request sought clarification on whether the proposed airport station (Option A) would involve an ineligible activity under section 5(1)(j) or (k) of the Act. This was due to the station being proposed on land described as a reserve, owned by HNZ (a Crown entity, but not "the Crown"), and identified in the section 19 report as a Government Purpose (Hospital) Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977, notwithstanding that the Record of Title does not clearly reference that Act. The applicant was requested to confirm whether the land is held or managed in a manner that would make the activity ineligible, or to specify otherwise.
35. In response, the applicant initially advised that the HNZ land is not a reserve and that the project would therefore not involve an ineligible activity. As the reserve status of the land remained unclear, further clarification was sought. In a second response, the applicant acknowledged that the status of the land is uncertain and that a detailed land status review is likely to take some time. The applicant therefore confirms that the project does not involve an ineligible activity, as it will not pursue an airport station (described in the application as Option A – Airport Station) on the HNZ land at this time.
36. For the purposes of the referral application, the HNZ land is excluded from the project area. The applicant notes that, following further design work, a station on this land may be included in a substantive application if the land status can be confirmed or necessary approvals obtained, and the project can be demonstrated not to involve an ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act. An updated indicative project area was provided with the second response (refer to Image 1).

Potential approvals under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014

37. The further information request sought clarification on whether the project would require an archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Although the applicant had not identified any heritage sites within the project area and was not seeking approvals under that Act, HNZPT advised that the project has the potential to modify or destroy a recorded archaeological site and may encounter additional archaeological material. The applicant was therefore requested to confirm whether an archaeological authority is required, and if so, whether it would be sought through the fast-track approvals process or outside that process.
38. In response, the applicant confirms that an archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 will be required and this approval is sought under the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states the extent of the authority sought will be confirmed in consultation with HNZPT to ensure it appropriately addresses both the recorded site and the archaeological sensitivity of the wider project area.
39. Accordingly, this approval has been added to the list of approvals sought by the applicant.

Reasons to decline

40. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the situations where you must decline a referral application under section 21(3). We have considered these matters in detail in Table A. We have not identified any reasons under section 21(3) that you must decline this application.

41. You may also decline the application for any other reason under section 21(4). The Act gives some guidance on matters you could consider when deciding whether to decline an application under section 21(5) and these are set out in Table A.
42. Comments from invited parties identify matters that, if not appropriately managed, have the ability to create significant adverse effects on the environment, relating to aviation safety, ecology (including Significant Natural Areas, indigenous biodiversity, and water bodies), and the use of reserve land, including recreational effects.
43. The applicant has provided sufficient information with the referral application and considers that potential adverse effects can be avoided, remedied, or mitigated through design, management, and consent conditions.
44. We consider these matters are best assessed at the substantive stage by an expert panel, with the benefit of a full application, technical advice, and additional comments from invited parties. The project aligns with the section 22 referral criteria and would deliver significant regional benefits. An expert panel is able to impose suitable conditions or decline the application if the adverse effects ultimately outweigh the benefits.
45. Accordingly, we recommend you do not decline the referral application on these grounds, or on any other grounds under section 21(4) or (5) of the Act.

Reasons to accept

46. The statutory framework in Appendix 1 sets out the reasons you can accept a referral application and refer a project to the fast-track approvals process.
47. Our assessment of these matters is detailed in Table A. To summarise, we consider the project aligns with the referral criteria under section 22, as:
 - a. the project is an infrastructure and development project because it is for the establishment and operation of a mass rapid transit cable car network to connect central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile
 - b. it would have significant regional benefits because it will deliver new regionally significant infrastructure, will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment, will deliver significant economic benefits, and will address significant environmental issues, specifically by supporting climate change mitigation
 - c. referring the project would facilitate its delivery by allowing multiple required approvals under specified Acts to be considered collectively through the fast-track approvals process, resulting in a more timely and cost-effective process than under normal processes
 - d. the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process because the applicant is sufficiently advanced and supported by the necessary expertise and technical assessments.

Conclusions

48. We consider the project meets the section 22 criteria and you could accept the referral application under section 21 of the Act and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process, with the specifications outlined below.
49. We consider that if you decide to refer the project, you should specify under section 27 of the Act, the following groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53:

- a. CAA
- b. LINZ
- c. Aurora Energy Limited
- d. EonFibre Limited
- e. Chorus Limited
- f. Aukaha
- g. Te Ao Mārama Incorporated.

50. A detailed assessment of the matters you may specify under section 27(3) is provided in Table A. In summary, we recommend the above specifications as the above groups are not automatically captured under section 53 of the Act but have a relevant interest in the project and were invited to comment at the referral stage.

Next steps

51. The Ministry for the Environment (the Ministry) must give notice of your decisions on the referral application, and the reasons for them, to the applicant and anyone invited to comment under section 17 (including relevant administering agencies) and publish the notice on the Fast-track website.
52. If you decide to refer the project, the Ministry must also give notice of your decision to the panel convener and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).
53. You must also provide all of the information you received that relates to this application to the panel convener and the EPA, including:
- a. the referral application
 - b. any comments received under section 17
 - c. the report obtained under section 18
 - d. the report obtained under section 19.
54. We will undertake this action on your behalf.
55. We have attached a notice of decisions letter to the applicant based on our recommendations (refer to Appendix 8) and we will provide it to all relevant parties. We will provide you with an amended letter if required.
56. Our recommendations for your decisions follow.

Recommendations

57. We recommend that you:

- a. **Note** section 21(3) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) requires you to decline the referral application from Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited (the applicant) if you are satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity, or you consider that you do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section or if you are not satisfied that the Queenstown Cable Car project (the project) meets the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act.

Noted

- b. **Agree** that before deciding on the referral application under section 21(1) of the Act you have considered:

- i. the application in Appendix 2
- ii. the report obtained under section 18 in Appendix 4
- iii. the report obtained under section 19 in Appendix 5
- iv. any comments and further information sought under sections 17 and 20 provided within the required timeframe (if you have received any comments or further information after the required timeframe you are not required to consider them but may do so at your discretion) in Appendices 6 and 7.

Yes / No

- c. **Agree** to exercise your discretion under section 20(2)(b) to consider the further information response received from the applicant (dated 16 March 2026) after the time frame specified in the request dated 17 February 2026.

Yes / No

- d. **Agree** you are satisfied the project will meet the referral criteria in section 22 of the Act because:

- i. it is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional benefits [section 22(1)(a)] as it:
 - will deliver new regionally significant infrastructure [section 22(2)(a)(ii)] through a mass rapid transit cable car network connecting central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile, with capacity for up to 3,000 passengers per hour in each direction
 - will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [section 22(2)(a)(iii)] by improving accessibility between housing, employment and community services, particularly in Te Pūtahi Ladies Mile, Frankton, and the southern growth corridor of the Queenstown area

- will deliver significant economic benefits [section 22(2)(a)(iv)] in the wider Queenstown area and Otago Region, including approximately \$249 million (net present value) in construction-related benefits over five years and support for 2,141 FTE jobs, including 813 direct roles
 - will address significant environmental issues [section 22(2)(a)(ix)] and support climate change mitigation [section 22(2)(a)(vii)] by supporting a shift to electric public transport use in the Queenstown area and reducing vehicle congestion along State Highway 6 and State Highway 6A, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
- ii. referring the project would facilitate its delivery [section 22(1)(b)(i)] by allowing multiple required approvals under specified Acts to be considered collectively through the fast-track approvals process, resulting in a more timely and cost-effective process than under normal processes.
- iii. referring the project is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)(ii)] because the applicant is sufficiently advanced and supported by the necessary expertise and technical assessments.

Yes / No

- e. **Agree** to accept the referral application under section 21(1)(c) and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process under section 26(2)(a).

Yes / No

- f. **Agree** to specify Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited as the person who is authorised to lodge a substantive application for the project.

Yes / No

- g. **Agree**, under section 27(3)(b)(i) of the Act, to specify a deadline of two years within your notice of decisions to the applicant for lodging the substantive application.

Yes / No

- h. **Agree**, under section 27(3)(b)(iii) of the Act, to specify the following groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53:


- i. Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA)
- ii. Land Information New Zealand (LINZ)
- iii. Aurora Energy Limited
- iv. EonFibre Limited
- v. Chorus Limited
- vi. Aukaha
- vii. Te Ao Mārama Incorporated.

Yes / No

- i. **Agree** that the Ministry for the Environment will provide your notice of decisions to:
 - i. anyone invited to comment on the application, which includes the relevant administering agencies
 - ii. the panel convener
 - iii. the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

Yes / No

Signatures



Stephanie Frame
Manager – Fast-track Operations

Hon Shane Jones
Acting Minister for Infrastructure

Date:

Table A: Stage 2 analysis

Recommendation	<u>Accept</u> the referral application and refer the project to the fast-track approvals process.		
Project details	Project Name	Applicant	Project Area
	Queenstown Cable Car (the project)	Southern Infrastructure (Cable Car) Limited The applicant is a registered NZ limited company and is eligible to apply for the approvals sought.	The project area encompasses multiple sites and landholdings between central Queenstown, Frankton, Queenstown Airport, and Ladies Mile, within the Otago Region. The project area includes local and state highway road reserves, reserve land, hydro parcels, designated land, and privately owned properties. A map illustrating the indicative project area and route alignment is attached in Image 1.
Project description	<p>The project is to establish and operate a mass rapid transit cable car network linking central Queenstown with a number of key catchments including Frankton, Queenstown Airport, and Ladies Mile. The project includes a range of land uses associated with the establishment, construction and operation (including ongoing maintenance) of cable car lines, with associated stations (including complementary amenities and ancillary activities), towers, cableways and other supporting infrastructure and activities across multiple locations in the network. The project also includes subdivision to enable the establishment and long-term operation of the proposed cable car stations.</p> <p>The network for the project comprises two primary lines, being:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> the Airport–Town Centre Line, connecting the Queenstown CBD with Queenstown Airport via Queenstown Hill, Lake Johnson, and Frankton the Frankton–Ladies Mile Line, extending eastwards from Frankton to the Ladies Mile urban area via either Route A or Route B. <p>The applicant has identified the following approvals as being required under the fast-track approvals process to authorise the project:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> resource consents under the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) pursuant to section 42(4)(a) of the Fast-track Approvals Act 2024 (the Act) change or cancellation of resource consent conditions (specifically in relation to the variation of consent notices) under the RMA pursuant to section 42(4)(b) of the Act concessions under the Conservation Act 1987 pursuant to section 42(4)(e) of the Act concessions under the Reserves Act 1977 pursuant to section 42(4)(e) of the Act an amendment to or revocation of a conservation covenant under the Conservation Act 1987 pursuant to section 42(4)(g) of the Act wildlife approval under the Wildlife Act 1953 pursuant to section 42(4)(h) of the Act archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 pursuant to section 42(4)(i). <p>Some of the reserve land within the project area is subject to a notice under Part 9 of the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, which is relevant to some of the concessions required under the Reserves Act 1977. The applicant intends to seek a lease over any land subject to this notice for a term (including renewals) of less than 50 years. However, should a lease exceeding 50 years be proposed, the applicant has stated any necessary supporting information would be provided as part of the substantive application, including written approval for the project from the relevant iwi authority.</p>		
Minister invites comments [section 17]	Comments from invited parties [section 17]		
	<p><i>The following section provides a summary of the comments received from invited parties under section 17 of the Act. Full copies of all comments received are attached in Appendix 6. Under section 17(7)(a) of the Act, the Minister must consider any comments received within the time frame under section 17(6). All comments were received within the specified time frame for this application.</i></p> <p>Local authorities</p> <p><i>Otago Regional Council (ORC)</i> ORC did not specifically comment on whether the project should be referred but did provide comments on further assessments/information the applicant should include in any substantive application for the project. ORC considers that particular attention should be given to the definition of nationally or regionally significant infrastructure, and the provisions relating to infrastructure, transport, freshwater, landscapes, ecology, natural hazards, and wāhi tūpuna values. ORC did not identify any competing applications, or any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA could apply.</p> <p>ORC considers the project aligns with some of the objectives of their Strategic and Policy Framework, however they note further detail will be required with the substantive application to fully assess alignment. ORC considers further detail and assessment are required on the following matters: strategic alignment in relation to the project's alignment with Otago and Queenstown's transport framework; safety, resilience, and access; and costs. ORC have identified the key natural hazards which may be present at the location of each station along the proposed route – depending on location, these hazards include liquefaction, slope instability (landslide/rockfall/debris flow), and flooding.</p> <p><i>Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC)</i> QLDC state they are unable to confirm that this public transport cable car project is the right one and would have regionally (or nationally) significant benefits in terms of the referral criteria in the Act. They consider the application does not provide sufficient information to demonstrate its feasibility and long-term viability with certainty. QLDC considers the timing of the referral application to be premature and that it would be more appropriate to submit a referral in the future, once the project can demonstrate it is deliverable by providing information and evidence showing that key matters have been resolved, including funding, landowner approvals, and the suitability of the proposed cable car routes.</p> <p>QLDC did not identify any competing applications, or any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA could apply. The comments received from QLDC include general comments on the project, an economic peer review (Appendix A), a transport peer review (Appendix B), two technical memorandums prepared by QLDC's Property & Infrastructure Department (Appendices C & D), a technical memorandum prepared by QLDC's Parks Department (Appendix E & Attachment 1), and three elected member statements (Appendices F–H).</p> <p>QLDC is supportive of public transport systems that extend the planned and approved transport improvements programme that is in place. Extensions to the public transport network is a key part of the Regional Deal with Central Government. The opportunity to expand the public transport network is supported where that expansion supplements the existing network and any planned and approved improvements to it.</p>		

QLDC acknowledges that the project responds to an identified transport constraint affecting travel efficiency, network resilience, and potentially broader land use outcomes within Queenstown. However, they consider the economic evidence supporting the application contains limitations that affect confidence in the scale and timing of the economic benefits claimed under section 22(2)(a)(ii)–(iv) of the Act. QLDC’s economic peer review acknowledges the potential benefits of the project but concludes that it is not possible to determine whether there are significant economic benefits (in terms of section 22 criteria under the Act) at this stage.

QLDC considers the project constitutes infrastructure under section 22(1)(a) of the Act. QLDC considers the benefits discussed in the application, as assessed at a qualitative level, are broadly plausible and at that qualitative level it is agreed that there is a credible case that the project could deliver economic benefits at the required scale. However, QLDC states the scale and certainty of these benefits are not sufficiently demonstrated in the application, and the feasibility of the project overall is also not sufficiently demonstrated in the application.

One of the elected members raises that ORC and QLDC currently have two cable car concepts in front of them for the Queenstown area – the current project and a proposal known as Whoosh. Both companies have briefed QLDC. The elected member notes the two proposals are quite different, but both may need to use the same key land holdings and considers that progressing with one option may preclude the other. The elected member also states competing uses of the same space is something the Minister may choose to consider under section 22(6) of the Act – we note this section of the Act is only applicable to competition for space in areas of New Zealand’s continental shelf or exclusive economic zone, which is not relevant to the current application.

Ministers

Minister for the Environment

The Minister identifies specific information on potentially significant adverse environmental effects that they consider should be provided with a substantive application for the project. They note that the project is located within sensitive indigenous biodiversity and freshwater systems of the Shotover and Remarkables Ecological Districts. The Minister states consideration should be given to the effects management hierarchy of both the National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management (NPS-FM) and the National Policy Statement for Indigenous Biodiversity (NPS-IB), including the recent amendments to these instruments.

The Minister suggests that, should the referral application be accepted, discretion is exercised under section 27(3)(b)(ii) of the Act to require specific information with the substantive application. This includes comprehensive ecological assessments, an assessment of the Lake Johnson Significant Natural Area and consistency with the NPS-FM and NPS-IB, and an assessment of adverse effects that includes construction and operational impacts on indigenous biodiversity ecosystems and water bodies.

Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

The Minister supports the referral of the application, on the basis that the project is directed at addressing an urgent and well-evidenced transport constraint in one of New Zealand’s most economically important tourism regions. The Minister notes the project includes the development of new infrastructure that could deliver positive outcomes for the Queenstown Lakes District and the wider region, including increased visitor demand, new opportunities for business growth, improved social licence, regional air connectivity, and new sustainable transport. The Minister considers these benefits align with the Tourism Growth Roadmap, which outlines the Government’s strategic vision and plan to boost tourism, drive economic growth, and enhance the visitor experience in New Zealand.

The Minister notes that there is a competing project in Queenstown currently progressing through the standard resource consent process. This proposal, known as Whoosh, involves a cable-pod network designed to provide an on-demand public transport system.

Associate Minister of Transport and Minister for the South Island

Hon Nicola Grigg provided joint comments on the project in their capacity as both the Acting Associate Minister of Transport and the Acting Minister for the South Island. The Minister considers the project has significant regional benefits and supports the application being referred to the fast-track approvals process.

The Minister notes that the project is expected to transport up to 3,000 passengers per hour in each direction, with an estimated 22-minute travel time between Queenstown Airport and the town centre. The Minister acknowledges the applicant’s economic impact assessment, which estimates that construction will contribute approximately \$249 million (Net Present Value) to the Otago economy over five years and support 2,141 FTE jobs, including 813 direct roles. The Minister considers that, given the scale of these projected economic benefits, the project will deliver significant regional economic benefit and aligns with the priorities of the South Island portfolio.

The Minister further notes that a future substantive application will require more detailed analysis of operational impacts, particularly on existing transport networks and air navigation. The Minister strongly encourages early involvement from the NZ Transport Agency Waka Kotahi (NZTA) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to ensure operational matters are fully considered and safely mitigated. The Minister also states that the project was included in the Queenstown Transport Package endorsed in December 2025 by the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission as a national infrastructure priority, and that it complements the Arthurs Point Crossing project.

Minister of Climate Change

The Minister considers the project is likely to be regionally (but not nationally) significant in terms of climate mitigation. The Minister notes the initial assessment concludes that natural hazard risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level, and that the development is feasible from a geotechnical perspective.

Minister for Economic Growth

The Minister states that, based on the applicant’s economic assessment, the project is expected to contribute \$249 million to GDP over the five-year construction period. It is forecast to generate direct employment for more than 796 people at the peak year of development and operation, with a total of 2,141 full-time equivalent (FTE) roles. Of these, the Minister notes that 813 FTE are direct and 1,328 are indirect. The Minister also notes that the assessment identifies a range of qualitative benefits to the Queenstown economy, including improvements to the regional transport network, support for future economic and population growth, increased tourism and visitor spend, an expanded labour-market catchment enabling further development, and improved productivity and agglomeration benefits. The Minister further acknowledges a competing Queenstown cable-car proposal, known as Whoosh, which is currently progressing through the standard resource consent process.

Māori Groups

Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki

Kāti Huirapa Rūnaka ki Puketeraki has indicated a neutral position on the application. This reflects that they, along with other mana whenua, are in the process of establishing a Process Agreement with the applicant.

Administering agencies

Department of Conservation (DOC)

DOC confirms that the project area includes public conservation land and notes that most of the reserve land is vested in and/or managed by the Crown or QLDC, except for a Government Purpose (Hospital) Reserve vested in Health New Zealand. DOC states they are satisfied with the applicant’s engagement to date. DOC has not identified any reasons under sections 21(3) or 21(4) of the Act for the Minister to decline the referral.

DOC has not identified any issues with the applicant's compliance history or any competing applications. While a conservation approval of this nature typically takes three to four months to process, DOC notes there may be benefits in combining them with RMA approvals under the Act. DOC has reviewed the section 22 criteria and considers the wildlife approval sought does not appear to be inconsistent with the Otago Conservation Management Strategy 2016 (noting detailed analysis will occur at the substantive stage). DOC also considered whether the project will address significant environmental issues and notes the project may reduce carbon emissions by easing vehicle congestion on State Highway 6.

While DOC notes they do not have sufficient information to determine the level of any actual and potential environmental effects, they consider it is likely that with the appropriate design and conditions, effects can be managed to appropriate levels. DOC states the conservation covenant (now administered by the Minister of Conservation) protects the natural environment in particular the faces and skylines of Queenstown Hill Te Tapunui visible to the public, and a full effects assessment to support variation or revocation of the covenant will need to be addressed as part of a substantive application.

Any other persons or groups

NZTA

From a referral process perspective, NZTA are broadly supportive of the project, with their support subject to the effects of the project on the state highway network being acceptably managed. NZTA state they are not opposed to the project being referred to the fast-track approvals process. NZTA welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on any substantive application for the project.

NZTA identifies the applicant's planning assessment states that the project is strongly aligned with key national, regional, and local transport policies and is expected to reduce congestion, improve journey-time reliability, and strengthen network resilience, while enhancing the functioning of nationally significant infrastructure such as State Highway 6 (SH6) and 6A (SH6A). NZTA considers the project could deliver these anticipated benefits and align with strategic transport documents, but only if it is well integrated with adjoining land use and the existing and planned transport system – particularly public transport – and adopts an aligned fare structure for all users.

NZTA note that funding, delivery, operation and governance matters remain outstanding. NZTA note that they highlighted in pre-application discussions with the applicant that without either a Market Led Proposal (MLP) submission or inclusion within an Otago Regional Land Transport Plan (RLTP), NZTA has no pathway to engage in any discussions regarding these matters. These matters have a bearing on the viability of the project and will need to be worked through with NZTA outside of the fast-track approvals process. The applicant will also need to separately secure approvals from NZTA for the aerial occupation and surface installations over and within the designated state highway road corridors.

Infrastructure from the project will cross or interface with the designated SH6 and SH6A road corridors at multiple locations. NZTA considers it is important that the infrastructure is designed, constructed, operated and maintained to ensure that it does not adversely impact the safe and efficient operation of the state highway network, or adversely affect maintenance of the state highway road corridor, nor impede upgrades and development of the state highway network. NZTA would need to see the substantive application to fully understand the potential adverse effects that the project may have on the state highway network and any mitigative measures necessary to address effects on the state highway network. In addition to the detailed design plans and Environmental Management Plan, NZTA have identified several matters they consider the substantive application should address.

Queenstown Airport Corporation (QAC)

QAC states that it recognises the strategic intent of the project and the potential contribution it could make to regional transport outcomes, network resilience, and broader urban connectivity. QAC considers improved public transport essential for reducing pressure on the surrounding roading network and acknowledges the applicant's constructive early engagement, particularly in addressing aviation-related constraints. As the operator of a controlled aerodrome, QAC emphasises its statutory obligations under the Civil Aviation Act 2023, Civil Aviation Rules, and its certification requirements, noting that aviation safety, efficiency, and commercial viability must remain paramount.

QAC considers that elements of the proposed infrastructure – such as pylons, cables, and construction activities – may penetrate the airport's protected airspace, including multiple Obstacle Limitation Surfaces. QAC notes that while the Navigatus assessment usefully outlines the necessary analytical processes, a full aeronautical study has not yet been undertaken. QAC expects detailed design work, obstacle assessments, airspace and operational modelling, and safety case development where required. QAC also highlights that construction activities may temporarily affect navigable airspace and will require coordination and compliance with Civil Aviation Rules Part 77.

QAC states that it is broadly supportive of the project's objectives, provided aviation safety, operational efficiency, and regulatory requirements are fully addressed. QAC expects ongoing collaboration throughout the design and assessment stages, including iterative technical engagement and coordination with the Civil Aviation Authority. QAC also notes that any airport-adjacent infrastructure associated with the project must align with current and future ground-transport and terminal access arrangements. While supportive of the project's potential public-transport benefits, QAC concludes that its support remains contingent on the identified matters being satisfactorily resolved.

Transpower New Zealand Limited (Transpower)

Transpower states that the project is located near its Cromwell–Frankton 110 kV transmission line, which is the sole electricity supply route to Queenstown and the wider Wakatipu area. Transpower notes that the project alignment intersects this line at one point, where the proposed Route B cable car route would cross beneath the transmission line over the Frankton–Ladies Mile Highway.

Transpower considers that protection of this line, and potential alterations, will need to be assessed as part of the project. It highlights two key matters: mandatory compliance with NZECP 34 separation distances during both construction and operation, and the need to determine the technical feasibility and safety of the cable car crossing. Transpower states that feasibility has not yet been established and that it must review any electrical clearance assessments. It notes that modifications to the existing transmission line – such as raising or adding structures – may be required to achieve safe clearances. Transpower expects these matters to be addressed through the substantive application, potentially including a condition precedent requiring feasibility to be confirmed before construction. Transpower requests the opportunity to comment on the substantive application.

Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga (HNZPT)

HNZPT was invited to comment on the application under section 17(5) of the Act as an "any other person", to confirm whether the project may impact any heritage sites. The applicant is not seeking approvals under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014, as they did not identify any heritage sites within the project area.

HNZPT considers the proposed works associated with the project has the potential to modify or destroy archaeological site E41/302. They also note there is potential to encounter further archaeological material or sites, as several archaeological sites are recorded within the vicinity of the project area. As such, HNZPT considers that an archaeological authority is required prior to works commencing and recommends that any proposed earthworks are assessed by a consultant archaeologist. If the project is referred, HNZPT anticipates further engagement with the applicant to ensure all relevant documentation is provided with a substantive application, including an archaeological assessment, a draft management plan and research strategy, evidence of appropriate consultation with tangata whenua, and suitable conditions.

Further information from the applicant [section 20]

The following section provides a summary of the further information request to the applicant and the response received under section 20 of the Act. Full copies of the request and responses are attached in Appendix 7. Under section 20(2)(a) of the Act, the Minister must consider any information received within the specified time frame. We note that while the initial response was received within the specified time frame, further clarification was required, and a second response was received outside the specified time frame. You may consider the information in the second response, at your discretion, under section 20(2)(b).

	<p>Following consideration of the comments received from invited parties, further information was sought from the applicant on 17 February 2026 under section 20 of the Act. The request related to two matters: a potentially ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act, and whether any approvals may be required under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. The applicant provided responses to the further information request on 3 March 2026 (received within the specified time frame) and 16 March 2026 (received outside the specified time frame). A summary of the requests and the applicant's responses is provided below.</p> <p><i>Potential ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act</i> The further information request sought clarification on whether the proposed airport station (Option A) would involve an ineligible activity under section 5(1)(j) or (k) of the Act. This was due to the station being proposed on land described as a reserve, owned by Health New Zealand (HNZ), and identified in the section 19 report as a Government Purpose (Hospital) Reserve under the Reserves Act 1977, notwithstanding that the Record of Title does not clearly reference that Act. The applicant was requested to confirm whether the land is held or managed in a manner that would make the activity ineligible, or to specify otherwise.</p> <p>In response, the applicant initially advised that the HNZ land is not a reserve and that the project would therefore not involve an ineligible activity. As the reserve status of the land remained unclear, further clarification was sought. In a second response, the applicant acknowledged that the status of the land is uncertain and that a detailed land status review is likely to take some time. The applicant therefore confirms that the project does not involve an ineligible activity, as it will not pursue an airport station (described in the application as Option A – Airport Station) on the Health New Zealand land at this time.</p> <p>For the purposes of the referral application, the HNZ land is excluded from the project area. The applicant notes that, following further design work, a station on this land may be included in a substantive application if the land status can be confirmed or necessary approvals obtained, and the project can be demonstrated not to involve an ineligible activity under section 5 of the Act. An updated indicative project area was provided with the second response (refer to Image 1).</p> <p><i>Potential approvals under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014</i> The further information request sought clarification on whether the project would require an archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014. Although the applicant had not identified any heritage sites within the project area and was not seeking approvals under that Act, HNZPT advised that the project has the potential to modify or destroy a recorded archaeological site and may encounter additional archaeological material. The applicant was therefore requested to confirm whether an archaeological authority is required, and if so, whether it would be sought through the fast-track approvals process or outside that process.</p> <p>In response, the applicant confirms that an archaeological authority under the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Act 2014 will be required and this approval is sought under the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states the extent of the authority sought will be confirmed in consultation with HNZPT to ensure it appropriately addresses both the recorded site and the archaeological sensitivity of the wider project area. Accordingly, this approval has been added to the list of approvals sought by the applicant.</p>
<p>The Minister must decline an application if the Minister is satisfied that the project involves an ineligible activity [section 21(3)(b)]</p>	<p>We consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity because it:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – would not occur on identified Māori land, Māori customary land or a Māori reservation as confirmed by the relevant records of title – would not occur in a customary marine title area or protected customary rights area as it is not in the common marine and coastal area (CMCA) – is not an aquaculture activity or activity that is incompatible with aquaculture activities that would occur in an aquaculture settlement area and for which the applicant is not authorised to apply for a coastal permit because it is not an aquaculture activity and will not occur in the CMCA – would not require an access arrangement which cannot be granted under the Crown Minerals Act (including s61(1A)) because it does not include an access arrangement – would not be prevented by section 165J, M, Q, ZC or ZDB of the RMA because it will not occur in the CMCA – would not occur on Schedule 4 land as confirmed by the records of title and the comments received from DOC – would not occur on a national reserve as confirmed by the records of title and the comments received from DOC – would not occur on a reserve held under the Reserves Act 1977 that is managed by or vested in someone other than the Crown or a local authority and that person has not consented in writing as confirmed by the record of title, comments received from invited parties, and the applicant's further information response under section 20 (refer to summary above) – is not a prohibited activity or decommissioning activity under the EEZA, 15B or 15C of the RMA – is not for the purpose of an offshore renewable energy project. <p>No comments raised by parties invited to comment have indicated that the project would be ineligible for referral.</p>
<p>The Minister must decline an application if the Minister considers they do not have adequate information to inform the decision [section 21(3)(c)]</p>	<p>QLDC considers the application does not include sufficient information, particularly in relation to whether the application demonstrates the project's feasibility and long-term viability with certainty. QLDC considers the timing of the referral application to be premature and that it would be more appropriate for the applicant to submit a referral application in the future, once the project can demonstrate it is deliverable by providing information and evidence showing that key matters have been resolved, including funding, landowner approvals, and the suitability of the proposed cable car routes.</p> <p>Any substantive or material changes to the project as described in an approved notice of decisions letter would be at the applicant's risk and could require a new referral application, dependent on the specific detail of any changes. Further information relating to the matters raised by QLDC could be worked through by the applicant if the application is referred to the fast-track approvals process and provided with the substantive application.</p> <p>Overall, we consider you have adequate information to inform the referral decision.</p>
<p>Relevant considerations and procedural requirements in Treaty settlement, Mana Whakahono ā Rohe, joint management agreement, or the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 or the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 [section 16]</p>	<p>We have not identified any matters under section 16 of the Act relevant to the application.</p>

Section 22 assessment criteria

The project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional or national benefits [section 22(1)(a)]

*You **must** consider a relevant Government Policy Statement (GPS) [s22(1A)]*

The only current GPS is the Government Policy Statement on Grocery Competition. This is not relevant to your decisions on the project.

*You **may** consider any of the following matters, or any other matters the Minister considers relevant.*

The applicant considers the project, being a cable car network in Queenstown, is a development or infrastructure project that would have significant regional and national benefits.

The project has been identified as a priority project in a central or local government, or sector plan or strategy or a central government infrastructure priority list [s22(2)(a)(i)]

The applicant states that while the project is not explicitly identified as a "priority project" in any central or local government plan or strategy, it aligns with the strategic intent of several key planning documents. These include the Otago Regional Land Transport Plan, Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan, Queenstown Town Centre Master Plan, Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan, and the Queenstown Land Transport Asset and Activity Management Plan. The applicant also considers the project supports the objectives of the Regional Deal – a partnership between central and local government – by contributing to transport network transformation, mass rapid transit acceleration, and more efficient infrastructure delivery. Further detail on the project's consistency with these and other planning documents is provided under section 22(2)(a)(x).

This criterion concerns whether the project itself is identified as a priority project, rather than its strategic intent or general alignment with the objectives of a Regional Deal. As the project is not identified as a priority in any central or local government plan, sector strategy, or central government infrastructure priority list, we **do not recommend** referral under this criterion. Consideration of the project's alignment with relevant plans, including local and regional spatial strategies, has instead been addressed under section 22(2)(a)(x), based on the applicant's assessment and feedback from the relevant local authorities.

Will deliver new regionally or nationally significant infrastructure or enable the continued functioning of existing regionally or nationally significant infrastructure [s22(2)(a)(ii)]

The applicant considers the project to constitute nationally significant infrastructure under the National Policy Statement on Urban Development (NPS-UD), by meeting the definition of a Rapid Transit Service. The applicant considers the project will deliver a permanent, high-capacity, low-emission public transport connection between key urban and growth areas in Queenstown, reducing congestion on SH6 and SH6A, improving journey-time reliability, and enhancing network resilience. The applicant also states that the project will support the continued functioning of existing nationally significant infrastructure, specifically by improving access to Queenstown Airport by easing road congestion and enhancing the performance of SH6 and SH6A through reduced demand and improved reliability.

QLDC considers the project constitutes infrastructure under section 22(1)(a) of the Act, but state they are unable to confirm that this public transport cable car project is the right one and would have regionally (or nationally) significant benefits in terms of the referral criteria in the Act.

The Minister for Tourism and Hospitality supports referral of the application and notes the project includes the development of new infrastructure that could deliver positive outcome for the Queenstown Lakes District and the wider region, including increased visitor demand, new opportunities for business growth, improved social licence, regional air connectivity, and new sustainable transport.

The Associate Minister of Transport and Minister for the South Island consider the project has significant regional benefits and supports the application being referred to the fast-track approvals process. They note that the project is expected to transport up to 3,000 passengers per hour in each direction, with an estimated 22-minute travel time between Queenstown Airport and the town centre. They also state that the project was included in the Queenstown Transport Package endorsed in December 2025 by the New Zealand Infrastructure Commission as a national infrastructure priority, and that it complements the Arthurs Point Crossing project.

Based on the applicant's assessment and comments from relevant Ministers, we recommend that the project **meets the section 22(2)(a)(ii) criterion**, as it will deliver new regionally significant infrastructure through a mass rapid transit cable car network connecting central Queenstown with Frankton, Queenstown Airport and Ladies Mile, with capacity for up to 3,000 passengers per hour in each direction. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Will increase the supply of housing, address housing needs, or contribute to a well-functioning urban environment (within the meaning of policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020) [s22(2)(a)(iii)]

The applicant considers that the project will contribute to a well-functioning urban environment as defined by policy 1 of the National Policy Statement on Urban Development 2020 (NPS-UD). The applicant states the project will deliver compact and connected transport infrastructure that improves accessibility between housing, employment, and community services, particularly in Te Pūhahi Ladies Mile, Frankton, and the southern growth corridor. The applicant details that infrastructure constraints currently limit the development of zoned land identified in the Housing and Business Capacity Assessment 2025, which sets housing bottom lines of 9,100 dwellings (2023–2033), 18,000 dwellings (2033–2053), and 27,100 dwellings in total. The project is intended to address these constraints by enabling intensification and mixed-use development. The applicant has provided an assessment in Attachment 12 of the application that indicates the project will enhance accessibility between key growth areas, reduce greenhouse gas emissions through decreased vehicle use, and offer a climate-resilient transport solution. The applicant further considers the stations within Queenstown and Frankton are located within walking distance of key destinations, supporting integration with existing public transport networks.

We agree with the applicant's assessment and recommend that the project **meets the section 22(2)(a)(iii) criterion**, as the proposed mass rapid transit cable car network would contribute to a well-functioning urban environment by improving accessibility between housing, employment and community services, particularly in Te Pūhahi Ladies Mile, Frankton and the southern growth corridor of the Queenstown area. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Will deliver significant economic benefits [s22(2)(a)(iv)]

The applicant states that the project will deliver significant economic benefits at both regional and national levels – the applicant has provided two Economic Assessments to support this consideration (Attachments 13 and 14 of the application). The applicant considers broader economic benefits of the project include increased GDP contribution, reduced transport costs, enhanced tourism spending, and employment generation during both construction and operation phases. The applicant further considers the project is expected to unlock constrained growth areas such as Te Pūhahi Ladies Mile and improve regional connectivity. Regarding operational economic benefits, the applicant considers the project will have an estimated Net Present Value of \$249 million over a five-year development period, with approximately 2,100 FTE roles. Additional benefits raised by the applicant include reduced congestion, improved labour market access, and support for higher-density development around station catchments.

QLDC's economic peer review acknowledges the potential benefits of the project but they conclude it is not possible to determine whether the project would have significant economic benefits at this stage.

The Associate Minister of Transport and Minister for the South Island acknowledge the applicant's economic impact assessment, which estimates that construction will contribute approximately \$249 million (Net Present Value) to the Otago economy over five years and support 2,141 FTE jobs, including 813 direct roles. They consider that, given the scale of these projected economic benefits, the project will deliver significant regional economic benefit and aligns with the priorities of the South Island portfolio.

The Minister for Economic Growth identifies that, based on the applicant's economic assessment, the project is expected to contribute \$249 million to GDP over the five-year construction period. Of the identified FTE roles, the Minister notes that 813 FTE are direct and 1,328 are indirect. The Minister also notes that the assessment identifies a range of qualitative benefits to the Queenstown economy, including improvements to the regional transport network, support for future economic and population growth, increased tourism and visitor spend, an expanded labour-market catchment enabling further development, and improved productivity and agglomeration benefits.

Based on the assessment above, including the applicant's economic assessments and comments from relevant Ministers, we recommend that the project **meets the section 22(2)(a)(iv) criterion**, as it will deliver significant economic benefits in the wider Queenstown area and Otago Region, including approximately \$249 million (net present value) in construction-related benefits over five years and support for 2,141 FTE jobs, including 813 direct roles.

Will support climate change mitigation, including the reduction or removal of greenhouse gas emissions [s22(2)(a)(vii)]

The applicant states that the project will support climate change mitigation by delivering a fully electric, low-emission transport system that reduces reliance on private vehicles and associated greenhouse gas emissions. The project is intended to integrate with existing and planned public transport and active travel networks, facilitating a long-term mode shift towards sustainable transport options. The applicant considers that this shift will reduce total vehicle kilometres travelled, improve air quality, and contribute to regional and national emissions reduction targets, aligning with national decarbonisation objectives.

The Minister of Climate Change considers the project is likely to be regionally significant in terms of climate mitigation. DOC considers the project may reduce carbon emissions by easing vehicle congestion on SH6.

Based on the applicant's assessment and the comments received from the Minister of Climate Change and DOC, we recommend that the project **does meet the criterion under section 22(2)(a)(vii)** as it will support climate change mitigation to a scale that would have significant regional benefits. We consider you can refer the project on this basis.

Will support climate change adaptation, reduce risks arising from natural hazards, or support recovery from events caused by natural hazards [s22(2)(a)(viii)]

The applicant states that the project will improve climate resilience by diversifying Queenstown's transport network and offering an alternative travel mode that does not rely on the existing road corridor. The applicant considers the elevated and off-line design of the project is considered less susceptible to disruption from natural hazards such as flooding, landslides, and seismic events. The applicant further considers that by maintaining connectivity between key destinations during such events, the project supports both climate change adaptation and regional recovery efforts.

The Minister of Climate Change notes the initial assessment concludes that natural hazard risk can be mitigated to an acceptable level, and that the development is feasible from a geotechnical perspective. However, the Minister of Climate Change did not specifically comment on whether the project will meet this criterion.

Although the project may support climate change adaptation, the applicant has provided limited analysis to support this criterion, and no other invited parties have specifically commented on this matter. Given the project's clear alignment with other criteria, we **do not recommend** you refer the project under this criterion. We note the applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this matter with a substantive application to assist the expert panel in understanding the extent of the project's significant regional or national benefits.

Will address significant environmental issues [s22(2)(a)(ix)]

The applicant states the project will deliver ecological improvements through wetland protection, native planting, and wilding pine removal. We note these ecological protection and improvement works could be a positive addition to the project and would likely provide localised benefits; however, they are primarily mitigation measures to address the project's potential adverse effects.

The applicant considers that the project addresses significant environmental issues in the Queenstown area by offering a fully electric, high-capacity public transport alternative to private vehicle use. Key environmental benefits identified by the applicant include reduced greenhouse gas emissions, improved air quality, support for compact urban development, and enhanced transport network resilience.

We agree that climate change and greenhouse gas emissions are significant environmental issues and consider that the project would address these through a fully electric, high-capacity public transport alternative to private vehicle use in the Queenstown area. Consistent with the assessment under section 22(2)(a)(vii), including the applicant's assessment and comments from the Minister of Climate Change and DOC, we recommend that the project **meets the section 22(2)(a)(ix) criterion** by supporting a shift to electric public transport and reducing vehicle congestion along SH6 and SH6A, thereby delivering significant regional benefits. We consider the project may be referred on this basis.

Is consistent with local or regional planning documents, including spatial strategies [s22(2)(a)(x)]

The applicant considers the project aligns with all local and regional planning documents, including the Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan. The applicant considers the project aligns with the outcomes sought by the both the Proposed and Operative versions of the Regional Policy Statement for the Otago Region by delivering regionally significant transport infrastructure that supports community wellbeing and economic development, enables compact and connected urban growth, provides a low emissions alternative to private vehicle travel, and mitigates any potential environmental effects. The applicant also considers the project is in accordance with the objectives of the QLDC Proposed District Plan (PDP) as it enhances connections between residential areas, town centres, the airport, and recreation zones, and contributes to compact, well-connected urban development. An initial assessment of the project's consistency with relevant planning documents is provided in section 5 of the applicant's planning report.

While QLDC has identified clear instances of alignment between the project and a Strategic Direction objective of the PDP, they consider further information to address the information gaps identified throughout their wider comments is necessary to confirm the proposal achieves the strategic direction of the PDP. QLDC state several PDP rules will be breached by this project, but they consider this is a matter for a substantive application should the project be referred.

ORC considers the project aligns with some of the objectives of their Strategic and Policy Framework. However, they note further detail will be required with a substantive application to fully assess the project's alignment with this framework.

DOC considers the wildlife approval sought does not appear to be inconsistent with the Otago Conservation Management Strategy 2016, while noting detailed analysis will occur at the substantive stage.

NZTA considers the project could deliver the benefits anticipated by the applicant and align with strategic transport documents, but only if it is well integrated with adjoining land use and the existing and planned transport system – particularly public transport – and adopts an aligned fare structure for all users.

Given the conflicting statements received from the applicant and invited parties in relation to this criterion, it is difficult to conclude that the project would be consistent with local or regional planning documents in a way that would have significant regional or national benefits. Therefore, we **do not recommend** that you refer the project under this criterion. We note the applicant will be required to provide a detailed assessment of the project's consistency with relevant planning documents at the substantive stage. The applicant retains the ability to provide further analysis on this matter with a substantive application to assist the expert panel in understanding the extent of the project's significant regional or national benefits.

	<p><i>Conclusion</i> Based on the assessment above, we consider the project is an infrastructure or development project that would have significant regional benefits in line with the criteria for accepting a referral application under section 22(1)(a) of the Act. If you agree with this recommendation and are satisfied that the whole project meets the criteria in section 22, you may accept the referral application and refer the whole project to the fast-track approvals process in accordance with section 26 of the Act.</p>
<p>Referring the project to the fast-track approvals process [section 22(1)(b)]</p>	<p><i>Would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes [s22(1)(b)(i)]</i> The applicant states that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would significantly facilitate its delivery by enabling a timelier and more cost-effective consenting pathway than normal processes. The applicant considers the project to be unsuitable for standard planning and approvals due to its complexity, including the need to traverse multiple landholdings, zones, and jurisdictions, and to obtain approvals from various agencies and stakeholders. The applicant notes that the fast-track approvals process is particularly important given they are not a requiring authority, and that the comprehensive approvals framework under the Act is essential to realising the project's benefits. The applicant further considers the project to be well aligned with the type of infrastructure the Act is intended to support.</p> <p>DOC considers that there may be time and cost benefits for the applicant in terms of consideration being combined with RMA approvals (rather than being advanced by separate processes) and given the different decision-making framework under the fast-track approvals process.</p> <p>Overall, we agree with the applicant's assessment that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process would facilitate the project, including by enabling it to be processed in a more timely and cost-effective way than under normal processes, in line with section 22(1)(b)(i) of the Act.</p> <p><i>Is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process [s22(1)(b)(ii)]</i> The applicant considers that the project is sufficiently advanced and well-defined, such that it is unlikely to materially affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process. The applicant states that the required approvals are well understood and supported by extensive technical assessments. The applicant considers the inclusion of alternative alignments is intended to streamline the process and avoid the need for future variations or parallel referrals. The applicant also notes that early engagement with key agencies has helped clarify information requirements and will reduce uncertainty for the expert panel at the substantive stage.</p> <p>While the project is likely to involve some technical and environmental complexities, projects of this scale and nature are consistent with the types of regionally significant infrastructure the fast-track approvals process was established to consider. Overall, we agree with the applicant's reasoning for this criterion and consider that referring the project to the fast-track approvals process is unlikely to affect the efficient operation of the fast-track approvals process, in line with section 22(1)(b)(ii) of the Act.</p>
<p>Reasons to decline</p>	
<p>Minister <u>must</u> decline [section 21(3)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>must</u> decline a referral application if:</i></p> <p><i>The application may not be accepted under subsection 1 (meets referral criteria)</i> As detailed above, we consider that the project is an infrastructure project that would have significant regional benefits in line with the criteria for accepting a referral application under section 22(1)(a) of the Act. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p><i>The Minister is satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity</i> As detailed above, we consider you can be satisfied that the project does not involve an ineligible activity. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p><i>The Minister considers that they do not have adequate information to inform the decision under this section</i> As detailed above, we consider you have adequate information to inform your decision on the referral application. If you agree, there is no reason to decline the application under this subsection.</p> <p>To conclude, <u>we have not identified any reason that you must decline the application under section 21(3).</u></p>
<p>Minister may decline [section 21(4) and 21(5)(a-h)]</p>	<p><i>The Minister <u>may</u> decline a referral application for any other reason, whether or not it meets the criteria in section 22.</i></p> <p><i>Reasons to decline a referral application under subsection 4 include, without limitation:</i></p> <p><i>The project would be inconsistent with a Treaty settlement, Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, a Mana Whakahoā ā Rohe, or a joint management agreement</i> No specific inconsistencies have been identified within the section 18 Treaty settlements report. The applicant states that further consultation and engagement will continue through Kāi Tahu's designated contact as part of the substantive application, including discussion of the matters outlined in Schedules 5 to 7 of the Act, the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998, and the associated rights-of-first-refusal provisions where applicable.</p> <p><i>It would be more appropriate to deal with the matters that would be authorised by the proposed approvals under another Act or Acts</i> The section 18 report has not identified any matters which make it more appropriate for the proposed approvals to be authorised under another Act or Acts. DOC has not identified any reason why the conservation approvals should not be considered through the fast-track approvals process. We have not identified any matters that would indicate the proposed approvals should be considered under another Act or Acts.</p> <p><i>The project may have significant adverse effects on the environment</i> Comments from invited parties have raised a number of matters, that if not suitably managed, have the ability to create significant adverse effects on the environment. These relate to aviation safety, ecology (including effects on Significant Natural Areas, indigenous biodiversity ecosystems, and water bodies), and the use of reserve land (including effects on recreation). The applicant has provided sufficient information with the referral application, and they consider that potential adverse effects are likely able to be avoided, remedied, or mitigated through appropriate design, management, and consent conditions. The applicant considers the project's potential adverse effects are localised, with any construction effects being temporary.</p> <p>We consider an expert panel is best placed to consider any adverse environmental effects of the project with the benefit of a full application (including a full assessment of environmental effects), relevant expert input, and further input from commenters. An expert panel has the ability to seek technical advice and impose conditions as deemed appropriate or decline the application if the effects outweigh the benefits.</p>

	<p>As such, we do not consider you should decline the application on this basis.</p> <p><i>The applicant(s) has a poor compliance history under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals</i> DOC has not identified any issues with the applicant's compliance history. There is no information to suggest the applicant has been subject to any compliance or enforcement actions under a specified Act that relates to any of the proposed approvals.</p> <p><i>The project area includes land that the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations considers necessary for Treaty settlement purposes</i> Although the project area includes public land, no comments received from invited parties have indicated that the project area includes land necessary for Treaty settlement purposes.</p> <p><i>The project includes an activity that is a prohibited activity under the Resource Management Act 1991</i> The project does not include an activity that is a prohibited activity under the RMA.</p> <p><i>A substantive application for the project would have one or more competing applications.</i> QLDC, ORC, and DOC have not identified any competing applications in the project area.</p> <p>Some Ministers identified a project in Queenstown currently progressing through the standard resource consent process. This project, commonly referred to as 'Whoosh', is proposed by Remarkables Park Limited and involves a cable pod network intended to provide an on-demand public transport system.</p> <p>At the time of this briefing, the Whoosh proposal did not meet the definition of a competing application under the Act, as it does not relate to the same natural and physical resources as the approvals sought by the project. Remarkables Park Limited was granted resource consent (RM250922) in March 2026, subject to conditions, to establish transport infrastructure in the form of a passenger cableway for a five-year period at Red Oaks Drive, 2 Gingko Avenue, and the Hawthorne Drive road reserve in Frankton. This land is separate from, and does not overlap with, the land included within the project area for this project.</p> <p>We note the applicant, relevant local authorities, and the EPA are required to re-check whether the project would have any competing applications at the substantive application stage. As such, we have not identified any reason to decline the application under this criterion.</p> <p><i>In relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consents), there are one or more existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)</i> QLDC and ORC did not identify any existing resource consents issued where sections 124C(1)(c) or 165ZI of the RMA could apply.</p> <p><i>Any other matter</i> We have not identified any other matters or reasons to consider declining the referral application.</p> <p><i>Conclusion</i> We <u>do not</u> recommend you decline the application. We note you retain the discretion to decline a referral application under section 21(4) for any other reason, whether or not the project meets the criteria in section 22.</p>
<p>Specified matters for an accepted referral application</p>	
<p>The Minister may specify any of the matters under section 27(3)</p>	<p><i>The Minister may specify any or all of the following under section 27(3) in the notice of decisions letter for an accepted referral application.</i></p> <p><i>Restrictions that apply to the project (for example, on its geographical location, its duration, or the aspects of the project that may be carried out)</i> We recommend the project description and project details at the beginning of this table are copied into the notice of decisions letter. We have not identified any other specific restrictions that we consider would apply to the project.</p> <p><i>In relation to a substantive application for the project:</i></p> <p><i>A deadline for lodging the application, unless section 27(3)(c) applies</i> The applicant anticipates that construction of the project is planned for 2027-2028, with operations targeted to commence in 2029, subject to consents and feasibility criteria being met. We consider the standard deadline for lodging the substantive application under section 28(3)(d)(ii) is suitable, which would be the date that is two years after the notice is given to the applicant.</p> <p><i>Information that must be submitted with the application</i> The Minister for the Environment recommends you specify information to submit with substantive application under section 27(3)(b)(ii). This includes comprehensive ecological assessments, an assessment of the Lake Johnson Significant Natural Area and consistency with the NPS-FM and NPS-IB, and an assessment of adverse effects that includes construction and operational impacts on indigenous biodiversity ecosystems and water bodies.</p> <p>Other invited parties, while not referring to this section of the Act, have identified specific assessments that they consider should accompany the substantive application. These recommendations generally relate to technical assessments addressing potential environmental effects of the project.</p> <p>The Act already prescribes a range of information that must accompany a substantive application. This includes the matters set out in clauses 5–7 of Schedule 5 that specify the information required in a resource consent application including the matters to be covered in an assessment of environmental effects. For example, any substantive application that includes resource consent approvals must include an assessment of the activity against any relevant provisions of an NES or NPS.</p> <p>While the project has some complexities and may require a range of technical assessments, we consider that the information requirements provided for in the Act, along with the expert panel's ability to request further information if required, are sufficient to support an effective assessment. Following a decision on the referral application, the applicant will also have access to the comments received from invited parties and can have regard to those matters when determining the scope of information and technical assessments to include with the substantive application. Careful consideration of those comments when preparing the application is likely to assist in supporting an efficient assessment process. The comments provide useful early input on matters that may require particular attention in the substantive application.</p>

As such, we have not identified any additional information that should be required beyond what is already provided for under the Act. Notwithstanding this recommendation, you retain discretion to specify any information that must be submitted with the substantive application if you consider it appropriate to do so.

The persons or groups from whom a panel must invite comments in addition to those specified in section 53

If you decide to accept the referral application, we recommend you specify in the notice of decisions the following persons or groups be invited to comment on the substantive application, for the reasons outlined below:

- Civil Aviation Authority of New Zealand (CAA) – as the project area is adjacent to Queenstown Airport and the CAA is the responsible agency for managing the safety of navigable airspace around airfields
- Land Information New Zealand (LINZ) – as the applicant identifies that a separate approval (occupation consents) will be required from LINZ outside the fast-track approvals process
- Aurora Energy Limited – as an infrastructure company that holds of existing legal interests (easements and caveats) over sites within the project area
- EonFibre Limited – as an infrastructure company that holds of existing legal interests (easements and caveats) over sites within the project area
- Chorus Limited – as an infrastructure company that holds of existing legal interests (easements and caveats) over sites within the project area
- Aukaha – identified as a Māori group with other relevant interests under section 18(2)(k), that is not specified in section 53
- Te Ao Mārama Incorporated – identified as a Māori group with other relevant interests under section 18(2)(k), that is not specified in section 53.

We note you retain discretion to decide not to specify that any of these parties be invited by the panel to comment at the substantive application stage. You may also specify that any other persons or groups of your choosing be invited to comment. You do not need to specify the parties already captured under section 53, as those parties must be invited to comment on a substantive application by the expert panel. This includes relevant local authorities, relevant iwi groups, relevant Treaty settlement entities, relevant administering agencies, the Minister for the Environment and other relevant portfolio Ministers, and the owners and occupiers within or adjacent to the land to which the substantive application relates (including any requiring authority that has a designation within or adjacent to the land – for example, NZTA, QAC, or Transpower).

Whether the substantive application would have any competing applications

N/A – The relevant local authorities and DOC have confirmed they have no record of any competing applications in the same project area.

Whether, in relation to any proposed approval of the kind described in section 42(4)(a) (resource consent), there are any existing resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a)

N/A – The relevant local authorities did not identify any resource consents of the kind referred to in section 30(3)(a).

To conclude, we recommend you specify under section 27(3)(b)(iii) the following groups from whom a panel must invite comments from in addition to those specified in section 53: CAA, LINZ, Aurora Energy, EonFibre, Chorus Limited, Aukaha, and Te Ao Mārama Incorporated. This is reflected in our recommendations above. We have not identified any other specified matters for the accepted referral application.

Appendix 1: Statutory framework summary

1. You are the sole decision maker for referral applications. If you accept a referral application, then the whole or part of the project will be referred to the fast-track approvals process.
2. If a Treaty settlement, the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011, the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, a Mana Whakahono ā Rohe or a joint management agreement provides for consideration of any document or procedural requirements, you must, where relevant:
 - a. give the document the same or equivalent effect through this process as it would have under any specified Act; and
 - b. comply with any applicable procedural requirements.
3. You must decline a referral application if:
 - a. you are satisfied the project does not meet the referral criteria in s22
 - b. you are satisfied the project involves an ineligible activity (s5)
 - c. you consider you do not have adequate information to inform your decision.
4. You may decline an application for any other reason, including those set out in s21(5) and even if the application meets the s22 referral criteria.
5. You can decline an application before or after inviting comments under s17(1). However, if comments have been sought and provided within the required time frame, you must consider them, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.
6. If you do not decline a referral application at the initial stage you must copy the application to, and invite written comments from:
 - a. the relevant local authorities,
 - b. the Minister for the Environment and relevant portfolio Ministers
 - c. the relevant administering agencies
 - d. the Māori groups identified by the responsible agency
 - e. the owners of Māori land in the project area (if applicable)
 - f. you may provide the application to and invite comments from any other person.
7. You can request further information from an applicant, any relevant local authority or any relevant administering agency at any time before you decide to decline or accept a referral application (see section 20 of the Act).
8. However, if further information has been sought and provided within the required time frame you must consider it, along with the referral application, before deciding to decline the application.