

Queenstown-Lakes District Chamber of Commerce & Industry  
Level 3, Bradley Building, 19 Rees St  
Queenstown

10 April 2026

Fast Track Expert Panel,

**Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce -  
Comments to Expert Panel, Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project – Fast Track Application Process**

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The Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce has been invited to comment on the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project as part of the Fast-track consenting process.

The Chamber represents businesses primarily across the Queenstown Lakes District, encompassing tourism, hospitality, viticulture, retail, professional services, construction, and allied sectors. While the proposed mine is not located within our district, its effects will extend beyond its immediate footprint.

Our members are therefore focused on long-term regional economic resilience, productivity, and development that strengthens the industries that define our region's current and future prosperity.

**Overall Position**

The Chamber supports responsible, well-regulated economic development and diversification, and recognises that the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project has potential to deliver regional and national economic benefits.

At the same time, the Chamber emphasises that any such benefits must be carefully balanced against impacts on the region's dominant industries - particularly tourism and viticulture, which are at this point believed to collectively contribute greater economic value over a longer timeframe. These industries are highly sensitive to environmental quality, workforce availability, and destination reputation.

The Chamber does not take a position on whether the project should proceed. Our position is more concerned with ensuring, if approved, it operates with robust safeguards that protect long-term regional economic interests. This means we take a position that protects the environment our industries depend on and ensures that any new entrant industry is held to robust environmental safeguards.

### **Economic Contribution**

The Chamber acknowledges the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project projections of significant regional and national economic investment, including strong GDP impacts, high-value employment, export earnings, and fiscal returns through royalties and taxation.

At peak, the project would be a major contributor to the Central Otago economy, supporting several hundred direct jobs, high household incomes, and material indirect economic activity. Mining roles are highly productive and well paid, with a substantial proportion of value expected to be retained within New Zealand.

On this basis, the Chamber accepts that the project constitutes a material investment of regional significance. We do not however have sufficient information on the opportunity cost.

Our key concern is that current funding and royalty frameworks do not ensure mining revenues are adequately reinvested in the communities experiencing the impacts, potentially increasing pressure on existing commercial and residential ratepayers who are already bearing significant growth-related costs.

### **Economic Contribution in Context**

Economic contribution must be assessed in context to both existing industries and growth industries (ie Tech).

Tourism currently represents 17% of New Zealand's export economy and has a stated ambition to grow to \$55 billion in total annual expenditure by 2030 through higher-value visitation and

productivity improvements. In Queenstown Lakes, tourism is the largest employer, supports a wide base of SMEs, and underpins substantial private and public investment.

Viticulture and wine tourism further strengthen this economic base, with global brand value critically dependent on environmental quality and landscape integrity.

Mining is inherently finite. Tourism and viticulture are enduring industries, provided their core values are protected. This distinction is central to a balanced assessment.

### **Workforce Impacts**

The Chamber supports high-value job creation but is concerned about labour-market impacts in an already constrained region.

If the project proceeds, workforce strategies should focus on growing the labour pool, not simply reallocating it, through training, apprenticeships, and new workforce entrants, supported by accommodation solutions that do not exacerbate housing pressures.

### **Environmental Safeguards**

The Chamber is clear that strong environmental safeguards are non-negotiable.

In a region where economic prosperity is inseparable from landscape quality, water integrity, and international reputation, environmental risk is directly equivalent to economic risk. Tourism and viticulture depend on absolute confidence in environmental management, and reputational damage can have long-lasting effects.

Fast-track processes must not weaken the level of scrutiny required to protect the region's long-term economic foundations.

## Conditions and Recommendations

If consent is granted, the Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce recommends conditions that include:

1. Development of a clear and transparent royalty and community-benefit mechanism that ensures a greater share of royalties is reinvested in affected Central Lakes communities to support productivity, stability, and resilience
2. Demonstrable commitments to retaining value within New Zealand, including local procurement and reinvestment
3. Robust environmental safeguards, including water protection and independent monitoring
4. Workforce-development strategies that minimise adverse impacts on existing sectors, ie tourism and hospitality
5. An ongoing engagement framework to ensure communication with tourism, viticulture, and wider business stakeholders

## Conclusion

The Queenstown Business Chamber of Commerce recognises that the Bendigo-Ophir Gold Project potentially offers a combination of scale, productivity, export value, and fiscal opportunity.

It asks the panel to consider that the region's long-term prosperity is anchored in destination appeal which is central to Queenstown's global competitiveness and to build in conditions that preserve this.

The Chamber supports development that enhances regional prosperity without compromising the industries, environment, and reputation that sustain this region over the long term.

Yours sincerely,



**Sharon Fifield**  
Chief Executive



**Angela Spackman**  
Chair