[FTAA-2605-1236]

REMARKABLES SKI AREA UPGRADE AND DOOLANS EXPANSION

FAST TRACK APPROVALS ACT APPLICATION

ADDITIONAL PEER REVIEW MEMORANDUM REGARDING LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS ASSESSMENT

Ben Espie

vivian+espie

14th October 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 Regarding landscape issues, matters have been materially refined or resolved, although I consider that proposed conditions should include a requirement regarding gabion or rock being used for retaining structures in order to mitigate potential visual effects of these structures.

2 I otherwise confirm the findings and conclusions of my peer review memo (as summarised in the conclusions section of this memo) and note that lighting of the gondola station buildings has now been explained and conditions regarding landscaping in the Carpark / Bus Hub area are resolved.

INTRODUCTION

3 My name is Benjamin Espie. I hold the qualifications of Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (with honours) from Lincoln University and Bachelor of Arts from Canterbury University. I am a member of the New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects and was the chairman of the Southern Branch of that institute between 2007 and 2016. Since November 2004 I have been a director of Vivian and Espie Limited, a specialist resource management and landscape planning consultancy based in Queenstown. Between March 2001 and November 2004, I was employed as Principal of Landscape Architecture by Civic Corporation Limited, a resource management consultancy company contracted to the Queenstown Lakes District Council.

4 The majority of my work involves advising clients regarding the management of landscapes and amenity that the Resource Management Act 1991 provides and regarding the landscape

provisions of various district and regional plans. I also produce assessment reports and evidence in relation to proposed development or proposed Regional and District planning provisions as they relate to landscape issues. The primary objective of these assessments and evidence is to ascertain the effects of proposed activities or provisions in relation to landscape character, values and visual amenity.

5 Much of my experience has involved providing landscape and amenity assessments relating to resource consent applications and plan changes both on behalf of District Councils and on behalf of private clients. I have compiled many assessment reports and briefs of evidence relating to the landscape and amenity related aspects of proposed developments in the rural areas of a number of South Island districts.

6 Over the past year, I have been engaged by a number of South Island District Councils to provide peer review comments regarding landscape effects assessments that form part of Fast Track Approvals Act (**FTAA**) applications. To date, I have completed two such peer reviews regarding substantive applications (FTAA-2508-1097 - Haldon Solar and FTAA-2508-1100 - The Point Solar) and am engaged on a number of others.

LANDSCAPE PEER REVIEW WORK ON THE REMARKABLES AND DOOLANS PROJECT TO DATE

7 I have been engaged by the Central Otago District Council (**CODC**) and the Queenstown Lakes District Council (**QLDC**) to peer review the landscape assessment work relating to the Fast-track Approvals Act Application FTAA-2605-1236 by NZ Ski to expand the Remarkables Ski Area into the Doolans Basin.

8 While acknowledging this is a substantive application made under the FTAA, I confirm that I have read and agree to comply with the Code of Conduct for Expert Witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. This memo has been prepared in accordance with that Code. Unless stated otherwise, the opinions expressed are within my area of professional expertise, and no material facts have been omitted that might alter or detract from those opinions.

9 I visited the site on the 30th of April 2026 with the guidance of Ross Lawrence, the Applicant's representative.

10 I reviewed a draft Landscape Effects Assessment and Graphic Supplement, dated the 1st of April 2026, prepared by Boffa Miskell, and I prepared associated peer review comments regarding that draft, dated the 4th of May 2026.

11 Once the substantive application was lodged, I reviewed the following final landscape assessment work prepared by Boffa Miskell:

i. B.03 Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion - Landscape Effects Assessment, dated the 7th of May 2026;

ii. B.03.1 Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion - Graphics, dated the 6th of May 2026;

iii. B.03.2 and B.03.3 Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion - Visual Simulation Graphic Supplement, dated the 7th of May 2026 (high and low resolution versions);

iv. B.04 Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion - Carpark and Bus Hub Landscape Effects Assessment, dated the 5th of May 2026;

v. B.04.1 Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion - Carpark and Bus Hub Graphics, dated the 5th of May 2026.

12 The substantive application also included Attachments E.03 and E.04 which summarised the Applicant's responses to QLDC and CODC landscape related questions and comments. Those responses are also included and explained in the Boffa Miskell documents listed above in my paragraph 11. I then prepared a peer review memo regarding the final BM documents dated the 3rd of July 2026 (**my peer review memo**).

13 Following my peer review memo, a meeting regarding outstanding landscape issues was held on the 3rd of August 2026, attended by representatives of the Applicant, CODC, QLDC and DOC. Subsequently, the Applicant (through Mitchell Daysh) provided a Response to Landscape Feedback Letter dated the 27th of August 2026 to the EPA (**MD Response Letter**), which appended my peer review memo and a Boffa Miskell memo, dated the 26th of August 2026 (**the August BM memo**). The MD Response Letter and the August BM memo give responses to the

outstanding landscape issues that were discussed at the 3rd of August meeting. I have reviewed those responses and an updated set of proposed conditions, dated the 3rd of September 2026.

14 In this memo, I give comments on those issues that were outstanding and the Applicant's responses to them. I will not substantially repeat commentary from my peer review memo which is already before the Panel.

LANDSCAPE ISSUES AND THE APPLICANT'S RESPONSES

15 In its introduction, the August BM memo summarises the landscape issues on which further information/assessment was sought pursuant to the 3rd of August meeting. I set these out below and give comments.

1. *Clarification regarding the location of the district boundaries*

   I understand that it is now agreed between all parties that the district boundary (and therefore the boundary between the COD Rural Resource Area and the QLD Rural Zone Ski Area Sub Zone) is in the location as shown on the plans that form Part C of the substantive application; i.e. the boundary is within the Rastus Burn catchment, downhill of the ridgeline such that the proposed mid-station building is within the COD.

2. *Views of the proposed mid-station*

   Attached to the August BM memo is a View Comparison Graphic Supplement comprised of digital model views of the mid-station. While very useful, that document confirms my previous interpretations of the proposal rather than changing any of my assessment.

3. *Clarification of the material of retaining structures*

   As per paragraph 23 of the MD Response Letter, the potential visual effects of retaining structures were raised. It was agreed that stacked rock or rock filled gabions would be suitably visually recessive and would visually blend with their context, while other materials (such as plain concrete) would not. The Applicant states that, subject to detailed design, it is preferred to use gabion basket retaining structures. If alternative solutions are required, retaining structures will be designed to minimise visual effects, which may include rock facing. In my opinion, this approach is appropriate but, while there are proposed conditions requiring

detailed design drawings to be submitted to the consent authority, there is no condition requiring retaining structures to be of gabion baskets or stone facing. In my opinion, there should be.

4. *Lighting conditions*

   The MD Response Letter explains that the ability to internally light the gondola, base station and mid-station is required between 6:30am and 5:30pm during winter and this is reflected in proposed condition OP.9. While this is understood, I consider that this will contribute to the mid-station building having a low-moderate degree of adverse visual effect as experienced from the part of the Wakatipu Basin centred on Lower Shotover, Domain and Malaghans Roads, particularly for residents rather than road users[1].

5. *Landscape analysis in relation to relevant provisions of the Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) and the Central Otago District Plan (CODP)*

   The August BM memo gives assessment comments in relation to CODP Objectives/Policies 4.3.2, 4.3.3, 4.4.1, 4.4.2 and 4.4.14. As per the comments of my peer review memo, the August BM memo acknowledges that since the proposed activities within the COD ONL will have adverse effects that range up to a high degree, they will be discordant with Objectives 4.3.2 and 4.3.3. However, it notes that these effects will be confined to the relatively-contained Doolans Basin, which is immediately adjacent to the Rastus Burn basin, which itself is modified by ski activity. This is agreed. It is also agreed that, while the Doolans Basin is of high landscape and natural character value, it is not unique in the context of other basins within the Remarkables / Hector Mountains.

   The August BM memo further acknowledges that in relation to landscape, amenity and backcountry values, the proposed activities will have adverse effects as set out in previous assessment work. These effects will be mitigated where practical and will be confined to the Doolans Basin but will range up to a high degree in some instances.

[1] Refer to paragraph 29 of my peer review memo and Section 6.3.5 of the BM Landscape Effects Assessment dated the 7th of May 2026.

In relation to the CMS, it is agreed that, while the proposal will lead to the adverse effects that have been described, it will essentially expand an existing ski area, which is preferred in comparison to the creation of new ski areas.

6. *Conditions relating to landscape effects of the proposed Lower Remarkables Transit Hub*

Amended proposed conditions LSP.1 to LSP.3 address the issues that I previously raised regarding mitigation landscaping in relation to proposed Carparks A, B and the Boneyard.

CONCLUSIONS

16 Regarding landscape issues, the matters of difference have been materially refined or resolved, although I consider that proposed conditions should include the requirement regarding gabion or rock retaining, as mentioned above.

17 I otherwise confirm the findings and conclusions of my peer review memo and note that lighting of the gondola station buildings has now been explained and conditions regarding landscaping in the Carpark / Bus Hub area are resolved. By way of brief summary, my conclusions regarding adverse effects are as follows:

i. Adverse natural character effects are of a very low to low degree within the Rastus Burn catchment (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment);

ii. Adverse natural character effects are of up to a high degree within the Doolans catchment and are very high in relation to the creation of the water storage reservoir (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment);

iii. Adverse landscape effects are of a low degree within the part of the Rastus Burn catchment that is within the QLDC PDP Ski Area Sub Zone (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment);

iv. Adverse landscape effects are of a moderate-high degree within the part of the Rastus Burn catchment that is within the CODC Rural Resource Area (the BM assessment finds that these adverse effects are of a moderate degree);

v. Adverse landscape effects are of a high degree overall within the relevant part of the Doolans Basin (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment);

vi. Adverse visual effects are of a low degree as experienced from the ski area access road, a low to moderate degree as experienced from the Rastus Burn Recreation Area, a moderate to high degree as experienced from the Doolans catchment, and a very low to moderate degree as experienced from the broader Remarkables Conservation Area generally (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment);

vii. Adverse visual effects are generally of a very low degree as experienced from the part of the Wakatipu Basin centred on Lower Shotover, Domain and Malaghans Roads. However, when the mid station building is lit, I consider there will be an adverse effect of a low-moderate degree (the BM assessment finds that this adverse effect is of a very low degree).

viii. Taking account of the amended proposed conditions LSP.1 to LSP.3, adverse landscape effects of the carpark and bus hub are of a very low to low-moderate degree, and adverse visual effects are of a moderate degree as experienced from the ski area access road and a low degree otherwise (i.e. I agree with the BM assessment).

Ben Espie

vivian+espie

14th October 2026