Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion – Heritage Peer Review – Summary Points Memo

NZSki proposes to upgrade the existing Remarkables ski field and expand their operation into the adjacent Doolans Basin. Consents for the project are being sought under the Fast-track Approvals Act (2024). NZSki commissioned New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd (NZHP) to undertake an assessment (the Heritage Assessment, dated to March 2026[1]) to identify heritage/archaeological sites within the project area, assess their values, and identify the impacts the project will have on their values.

Although I acknowledge that the Fast Track Approvals Act process is not a proceeding of the Environment Court, I have read the Code of Conduct for expert witnesses contained in the Environment Court Practice Note 2023. I have prepared this document in line with the Code of Conduct.

Origin Consultants Ltd. (Trading as Origin Heritage) was engaged by Louise Taylor (Taylor Planning), on behalf of the Central Otago District Council (CODC) to review the heritage work commissioned by NZSki. I provided this review to Taylor Planning/CODC on 15/04/2026.[2]

The authors of the Heritage Assessment undertook exhaustive background research and undertook a field survey to identify any potential heritage sites within the project area. Although a portion of the navigable terrain within the project area was surveyed, a component of the project (The Doolans Water Intake and Access), and the western bank of Doolans Creek were not surveyed. Although the altitude and setting indicates that there is less likely for archaeological or heritage sites in the project area, these parts of the project area are locations with the highest potential. Accordingly, there is a non-zero chance for sites to be present within the unsurveyed areas.

My key recommendations for the project were:

1. NZSki has their heritage experts complete the field survey to include the missing Doolans Water Intake and Access project component, and the bank of Doolans Creek inside the Project Area.
2. Update the Heritage Assessment to include this additional fieldwork.
3. If any additional heritage/archaeological sites are found, these must be evaluated within the proposed assessment methodology and the report updated accordingly.

As part of the substantive application, the Heritage Assessment was updated to a version listed as May 2026, however no update was made to attempt to complete the archaeological/heritage survey by inspecting the unsurveyed areas. Accordingly, my recommendations still stand.

Proposed resource consent conditions (H.02A) were submitted by NZSki as part of the substantive application. An Accidental Discovery Protocol (ADP) has been included. Although the application of an ADP is sound in principle, the one presented does not provision for encountering post-1900 heritage, and is not informed by a complete archaeological/heritage survey.

Conditions

[1] Irvine, S., Cropper, D. and Thorrold, C. (2026) *Remarkables Upgrade and Doolans Expansion: A Heritage Assessment*. Unpublished report prepared for Mitchell Daysh. New Zealand Heritage Properties Ltd.

[2] Jennings, C. (2026). Remarkables Ski Area Upgrade and Doolans Expansion: peer Review of Heritage Assessment. Unpublished report prepared for Central Otago District Council.

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As there is still potential for archaeological and/or heritage sites to be present within the project area, due diligence for the project cannot be considered to be completed until all project components have been surveyed. CODC should condition for the archaeological/heritage survey of the remaining project components and the west bank of the Doolans Creek to be surveyed and prior to the project works (e.g. site works, earthworks, or vegetation clearance) commencing.

The ADP should be more completely developed to cover suspected post-1900 heritage sites and include coordination with the Department of Conservation. A better condition than the presented ADP would be to require a new version to be produced with feedback and approval from the relevant consenting authorities (e.g. DOC, HNZPT, COD) and affected Papatipu Rūnaka to identify appropriate lines of reporting to notify the event of suspected archaeological/heritage sites.

Dr Chris Jennings
Senior Archaeologist
For and on behalf of Origin Consultants Ltd
Architecture *Heritage* *Archaeology*

Phone 03 442 0300
Office 9 Arrow Lane, Arrowtown
Post PO Box 213, Queenstown 9348
Web www.originteam.co.nz

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