

Audit, Finance & Risk Committee

5 December 2024

Report for Agenda Item | Rīpoata moto e Rāraki take [6]

Department: Strategy & Policy

Title | Taitara: Climate and Biodiversity Plan Update

Purpose of the Report | Te Take mō te Pūroko

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of priorities and progress of the Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025 (CBP) for the period up to November 2024, and progress on development of the new CBP.

Recommendation | Kā Tūtohuka

That Audit, Finance & Risk Committee:

1. **Note** the contents of this report.

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Date: 14 November 2024

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Date: 14 November 2024

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Title: GM Strategy and Policy

Date: 14 November 2024

Context | Horopaki

1. On 27 June 2019 Council declared a climate and ecological emergency. In response to this declaration Council approved the development and adoption of a [Climate Action Plan](#) for the period 2019-2022.
2. On 30 June 2022, Council adopted its second [Climate and Biodiversity Plan \(CBP\)](#) for the period 2022-25. This plan sets out how Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) plans to respond to biodiversity loss and climate change in Queenstown Lakes District, with three goals, six outcomes and over 80 individual actions (see Figure 1).

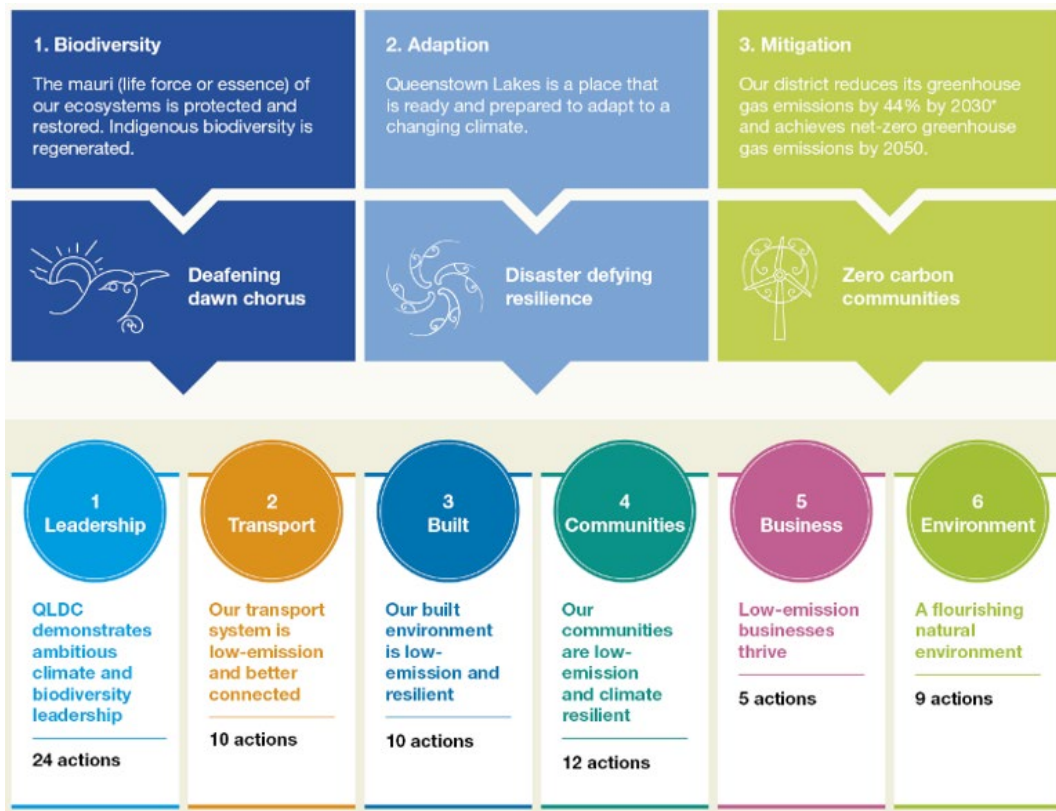


Figure 1: Climate and Biodiversity Plan Structure

3. Council has identified the following climate risks within its Organisation Risk Register. Both the Climate Action Plan 2018-2022 and the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025 can be considered as treatment plans for these Tier 1 risks.
 - **RISK10012 - Ineffective mitigation response to the declared climate and ecological emergency**
 - **RISK10059 - Ineffective planning and action to support climate change adaption**

Analysis and Advice | Tatāritaka me kā Tohutohu

CBP 2022-2025 PROGRAMME STATUS

4. The status of the CBP programme of actions is detailed in the below table. Of the 81 actions that were committed to, 77 are in a state of completion or in-progress implementation.

ACTION STATUS	Count	%
Complete	19	23%
In progress	58	72%
Not started	2	2%
On hold	2	2%
	81	100%

Actions completed or in progress	77	96%
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5. Commentary updates on all CBP actions are published quarterly in the following section of the Climate Action website: [Our Actions | Climate Action and Biodiversity \(qldc.govt.nz\)](https://www.qldc.govt.nz/our-actions). These commentaries can be accessed by clicking on the “+” symbol under the Update icon within each action.

KEY PROJECT UPDATES

6. The following sections provide a brief update on the progress of key actions over the last quarter.

Climate action is in our organisational DNA

7. As part of an internal change programme called “Project Taiao” a project has been initiated to embed sustainability considerations (i.e. climate action, energy efficiency, waste minimisation, biodiversity restoration) into QLDC’s project management framework (PMF), processes, and practices.
8. A Current State Assessment and Scoping study has been completed, which included staff interviews and documentation reviews. This assessment identified a number of key achievements including knowledgeable staff supportive of the initiative, a widespread understanding of the Climate and Biodiversity Plan and great examples of sustainable delivery. The assessment also identified some gaps and barriers to sustainable project management. These included a knowledge gap across staff and decision makers, a lack of consistent processes and tools, and ad-hoc use of tools for supporting sustainable project management.
9. Based on the findings of the assessment, a scope brief and roadmap for embedding sustainable project management has been developed. The scope included a number of recommendations across the areas of Governance, Implementation, Knowledge and Guidance, Sustainable PM Processes, Roles and Responsibilities, and Sustainable Project Management Tools.

10. Some key recommendations are to establish clear roles and responsibilities across the project lifecycle, implement a consistent process for carbon assessment, develop and implement a sustainability impact assessment, and provide ongoing training and support for staff.

We have our own house in order

11. Council has recently completed its FY2023-2024 Toitū carbonreduce verification audit on 13 – 14 November.
12. The Toitū reporting confirms that Council is making progress towards reducing its scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions through incremental performance improvements across the organisation however a step change in Scope 1 GHG emissions is required to achieve the reduction targets. This step change will be delivered by the clean energy projects that have been approved for an accelerated delivery in the recently adopted LTP 2024-2034.
13. The importance of robust greenhouse gas reporting is a key area of focus for local government. In their last “Insights into Local Government”¹ report the Office of the Auditor-General (OAG) noted there is an increasing number of councils voluntarily reporting on greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and climate-related activities. The OAG found that councils are incorporating climate-related performance targets and measures in their long-term plans, which enables them to track progress, report on achievements, and demonstrate accountability to their communities. The OAG acknowledged the complexity of measuring and reporting GHG emissions and highlighted the importance of robust reporting methodologies and the need for clear disclosures around any uncertainties in data measurement.
14. These recommendations from the OAG have been reflected in the increased level of auditing focus from Deloitte’s on Councils greenhouse gas reporting within the Long term Plan and Annual Report. At the time of writing this report, auditing is underway to verify the data that has been provided in the Annual Report.

Support energy demand management technologies, tools and behaviour change to decrease energy usage at peak times

15. Council has partnered with Transpower, Aurora, Powernet and other industry stakeholders to develop a forecast of future peak electricity demand scenarios for the district. The working group has developed a range of scenarios for different population and economic growth forecasts and decarbonisation pathways out to 2050. These scenarios provide insight into the potential scale and timing of power infrastructure investment as well as the critical role that flexible demand management (e.g. managed EV charging) will play in reducing peak levels of electricity demand.
16. The scenarios outlined in the above paragraph are contributing to the development of a Queenstown and Upper Clutha Regional Development Plan, involving all of the traditional energy

¹ <https://oag.parliament.nz/2024/local-govt/docs/insights-into-local-government-2023.pdf>

sector infrastructure providers. The first steering group meeting for this initiative is scheduled for November.

17. Council recently supported Are Ake (New Zealand's Future Energy Centre) to run a Flexibility Challenge: Solutions Workshop for the district on 30 October. The workshop focussed on identifying opportunities for demand response or load reduction/shifting initiatives that could help to reduce the peak loading on the district's electricity network.
18. The workshop was attended by power industry professionals, technology specialist and representatives from large electricity consumer organisations across the district.
19. Potential opportunities for partnered projects and innovation testing are being explored and will be a likely focus area of the next Climate and Biodiversity Plan.

We support the development of thriving, climate resilient communities

20. QLDC continues to work closely with Otago Regional Council's (ORC's) Natural Hazards team in the delivery of the Head of the Lake Natural Hazards programme.
21. In August and September, the key findings from the Glenorchy and Kinloch Natural Hazards Risk Analysis, and technical reports into floodplain management interventions for the Dart and Rees Floodplains were shared with ORC councillors, QLDC councillors, QLDC staff, and two community engagement sessions.
22. Two community engagement sessions were held on 10 and 11 September at Glenorchy. The first was an evening presentation of the key findings of the two natural hazard investigations by the technical experts and Q&A forum. The presentation was livestreamed online and recorded. The following day a drop-in session offered a one-on one opportunity for community members to talk to staff from councils, EMO and technical experts. There were also adaptation pathways activities. Staff from ORC, QLDC and EMO attended both sessions.
23. The current focus of the programme is on developing the Adaptation Strategy which will synthesise the programme findings into a community-centric adaptation framework. An early draft report of the adaptation strategy has been completed and shared with ORC staff and programme partners for their feedback. The final draft Strategy document will be completed by the end of the year and shared with programme partners, stakeholders and the community.

A FLOURISHING NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

24. Considerable progress has been made in the last quarter across the following three key biodiversity restoration projects that Council is partner to, or leading:
 - Project Tohu- Coronet Forest restoration
 - Waiwhakaata Lake Hayes Restoration Strategy
 - Blue Green Network Plan.

25. Project Tohu is an ecological restoration project spearheaded by QLDC on Coronet Peak's southern slopes, near Arrowtown. The initiative involves transforming the area from an old Douglas fir plantation to a native forest, enhancing biodiversity and addressing the spread of wilding pines. The project will cover about 200 hectares and aims to plant over 500,000 native trees, shrubs, and grasses over several years. It is one of New Zealand's largest revegetation efforts, with planting scheduled to begin in 2025 and continuing through 2030. For more details, visit the QLDC webpage on Project Tohu.
26. The Waiwhakaata Strategy is a non-statutory plan created to restore the mauri and mana of Waiwhakaata (Lake Hayes) through a partnership-driven model. The strategy recognizes the interconnectedness of environmental, Kāi Tahu, social, and economic factors, embracing the Kāi Tahu philosophy of ki uta ki tai to guide its collaborative efforts. The draft strategy seeks to achieve the vision: "To uphold the mana of the name, Waiwhakaata, so our actions are reflected in the waters", reflecting a long-term commitment to the lake's well-being through collaborative action and community engagement. The draft strategy will be shared for Council endorsement in early 2025.
27. The Blue Green Network Plan (BGN Plan) provides a strategic, long-term framework that identifies opportunities for protecting and integrating natural systems and open spaces into the planning and development of Queenstown Lakes District's urban areas and settlements. It emphasises the importance of preserving vital water systems (i.e. 'blue' elements) alongside land-based ecosystems and open spaces (i.e. 'green' elements), particularly as we face development intensification and climate change. The draft BGN Plan will be endorsed by the Grow Well Whaiora Steering Group in early 2025 and then shared with Councillors for endorsement ahead of community consultation in mid-2025.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NEXT CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY PLAN 2025-2028

28. Over the past quarter, the Resilience & Climate Action team has been focussing on the development of the next Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2025-2028 with advice and guidance from the Climate Reference Group.
29. The development process has involved an extensive review of recently released strategies, plans, reforms, guides and reviews to ensure actions align and integrate with the wide range of climate and biodiversity work programmes that are underway both within Council and with our partner organisations.
30. The outcome areas of the next CBP will likely be similar to the current plan to help build consistency and drive continuity and momentum. The one outcome area that has been identified for potential change is the Built Environment, where the importance of the Energy System will be reflected in the title.



Leadership



Natural
Environment



Transport



Energy & Built
Environment



Community



Economy

31. A number of new focus areas for actions and projects have been identified through engagement with the Climate Reference Group and key partners. These potential actions are still under development however they will likely include a focus on the following key areas:

- A commitment for partnered climate action delivery with Kāi Tahu and to place mātauranga Māori at the centre of climate action planning
- A commitment to engage more strongly with Rangitahi with a focus on inter-generational decision-making
- A programme of climate scenario modelling to provide an improved evidence base for investment planning, asset management and risk management.
- A commitment to providing an improved reporting framework to support climate governance and climate risk disclosure.
- A commitment to position the district as a testbed for innovative energy solutions and energy sector partnerships.

Consultation Process | Hātepe Matapaki

Significance and Engagement | Te Whakamahi I kā Whakaaro Hiraka

32. This matter is of low significance, as determined by reference to the Council's Significance and Engagement Policy because it is consistent with existing strategy, and does not impact on the objectives set out in the Financial Strategy, Long Term Plan or Annual Plan. Although the Climate and Biodiversity plan is of high importance to the district and community, the matter is of low significance due to the fact that current progress is aligned with the goals and outcomes of the plan.

Māori Consultation | Iwi Rūnaka

33. The Council has partnered with rūnaka representatives in the development of the Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-25 and undertakes regular engagement on its progress with representations from Aukaha and Te Ao Marama within the Climate Reference Group.

34. Opportunities for alignment and integration with Kāi Tahu's Climate Change Strategy Te tāhū o te whāriki are being discussed and explored.

Risk and Mitigations | Kā Raru Tūpono me kā Whakamaurutaka

35. This matter relates to the Environmental risk category. It is associated with RISK10012 Ineffective mitigation response to the declared climate and ecological emergency within the QLDC Risk Register. This risk has been assessed as having a high residual risk rating.
36. The approval of the recommended option will support the Council by allowing us to implement additional controls for this risk. This shall be achieved through the implementation of the 70 actions with the Climate and Biodiversity Plan. These actions represent a broad risk control response to the challenges associated with emissions reduction, climate change adaptation and biodiversity restoration.
37. The effectiveness of the implementation of these risk controls is supported through the advisory oversight of the Climate Reference Group and the governance of the Audit, Finance and Risk Committee.

Financial Implications | Kā Riteka ā-Pūtea

38. There are no variances to operational budgets or resource implications to consider at this time.

Council Effects and Views | Kā Whakaaweawe me kā Tirohaka a te Kaunihera

39. The following Council policies, strategies and bylaws were considered:
- The Climate and Biodiversity Plan is aligned to the principles of the Vision Beyond 2050, particularly Zero Carbon Communities, Disaster-Defying Resilience and Deafening Dawn Chorus <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/vision-beyond-2050/>
 - Related policies, strategies and bylaws (including Management plans) include:
 - Draft 2024-2034 Long Term Plan
 - Draft 2024-205430 Year Infrastructure Strategy
 - The QLDC Disability Policy was considered in the development of the Climate and Biodiversity Plan.
<https://www.qldc.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/FINAL-Disability-Policy-May-2018.pdf>
 - Further reference to Council policies can be found here: <http://www.qldc.govt.nz/policies>
40. The recommended option is consistent with the principles set out in the above named.
41. This matter is included in the [Long Term Plan](#):
- Message from the Mayor and Chief Executive - pg. 5
 - What's Changed?- pg. 19
 - Taking Climate Action pg. 45
 - Disaster Defying Resilience pg. 54
 - Climate Action – pg. 166
 - Risk, Resilience and Climate Action- pg. 167

42. This matter is also included in the [Annual Plan](#):

- Message from the Mayor and Chief Executive- pg. 4

Legal Considerations and Statutory Responsibilities | Ka Ture Whaiwhakaaro me kā Takohaka Waeture

43. There are no legal considerations to take into account at this time.

44. The Council has statutory responsibilities under the [Climate Change Response \(Zero Carbon\) Amendment Act 2019](#) as a reporting organisation.

Local Government Act 2002 Purpose Provisions | Te Whakatureture 2002 o te Kāwanataka ā-Kiaka

45. The recommended option:

- Section 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 states the purpose of local government is (a) to enable democratic local decision-making and action by, and on behalf of, communities; and (b) to promote the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of communities in the present and for the future. The Climate and Biodiversity Plan plays a central role in delivering upon this purpose through its focus on environmental stewardship, community resilience and intergenerational equity;
 - Can be implemented through current funding under the Long Term Plan and Annual Plan;
 - Is consistent with the Council's plans and policies; and
 - Would not significantly alter the intended level of service provision for any significant activity undertaken by or on behalf of the Council or transfer the ownership or control of a strategic asset to or from the Council.
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