

Statement of Proposal

Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025

Introduction

Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Recreation Reserve (the Reserve) has become progressively dominated by wilding conifers over the past 60+ years. These trees are acting as a seed source facilitating the spread of wilding conifers elsewhere in the Whakatipu basin.

A Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 (the draft forestry plan) has been prepared to replace the Ben Lomond and Queenstown Hill Forestry Plan 2006 insofar as it applies to Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill.

QLDC would like the community's feedback on the Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025. The draft forestry plan describes the harvest, wilding clearance and restoration methods for the Reserve. The methods and approaches are informed by vegetation surveys and forest measurement information.

Background

Why do we need a forestry plan?

QLDC is proposing to remove the trees from the reserve. QLDC will fell and eradicate all wilding tree species within the reserve and replant the site with a mixed native/exotic forest and scrub/tussock grassland. The draft forestry plan sets out how this is to be achieved.

The QLDC administered reserve is 109 hectares and is located on the southeast and southwest side of Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill. The reserve is largely covered with wilding conifer tree species. Without active management and intervention, wilding conifers will continue to spread, threatening the landscape and its ecological values, resulting in the loss of existing native biodiversity values within and beyond the Reserve.

The Otago Regional Pest Management Plan (ORPMP) seeks to progressively contain and reduce the geographic extent of wilding conifers within the Otago region. A National Wilding Conifer Control Programme has been developed and provides a collaborative funding model for addressing infestations. The Douglas fir on Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve (the Reserve) provide a significant seed source for the wider Whakatipu Basin.

The ORPMP and the National Wilding Conifer Control Programme note that indigenous ecosystems at particular risk from wilding conifer invasions include tussock grasslands and sub-alpine shrublands found on Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill and in the mountains beyond.

The Whakatipu Wilding Conifer Control Group (WCG) was established to control wilding conifers in the Whakatipu Basin, protecting existing native biodiversity values and landscapes. The WCG support the removal of this significant wilding seed source on Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill.

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What are the impacts of the draft forestry plan for the Reserve and the Community?

The implementation of the draft forestry plan impacts the community and surrounding landscape, as outlined below:

Recreational Experience: The removal of wilding conifers will alter the experience of the Timewalk trail, which is valued by locals and visitors. The transition to a more open landscape will change the feel of the trails, especially during the first 5-10 years while vegetation is re-established. This is a common occurrence for trail networks within plantation forests. The long-term benefit will be an enduring trail in a permanent mixed species diverse forest.

Mountain Biking: While informal unauthorised mountain biking trails are present within the Reserve, they will be removed during the tree harvesting process. These trails, some of which cross public and private land, are not currently part of an official trail network. Council will work with the key stakeholders to develop a post-harvest trail masterplan for the reserve.

Visual Landscape Changes: The dense tree cover, familiar to the community, will be significantly altered. Some people may not support this change in landscape, particularly as we transition to the long-term goal of establishing a more ecologically resilient and diverse environment.

Impact on Neighboring Properties: Tree removal will have mixed effects on neighboring properties. While some landowners support the removal due to shading and invasive spread, others may be concerned about the increased visibility of their property or changes to privacy. Replanting with appropriate species aims to address these concerns. There will be effects from the harvesting activity on some properties such as noise and increased tree removal related vehicle movements.

Natural hazards: There are concerns about rockfall, stormwater, and slash movement during harvesting and while new vegetation establishes. Specific measures will be implemented during the operation will manage these risks, including erosion control and ongoing monitoring to ensure public safety.

Fire Hazard: The removal of wilding conifers will significantly reduce the fire hazard in the area. The proposed replanting with low-flammability vegetation will further decrease fire risks.

Biodiversity: The plan will enhance biodiversity within the Reserve. By replacing wilding conifers with native and carefully selected non-invasive species, the Reserve will see improved flora and fauna diversity, contributing to the overall ecological health of the area.

What does the draft forestry plan address?

The draft forestry plan details the proposed harvest methodology, wilding clearance, and restoration

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activities for the Reserve.

It is based on findings from vegetation surveys and forest measurement data, and provides an assessment of the current tree cover and site conditions,

The removal of the established Douglas fir forest will alter the landscape and may significantly impact the experience of current recreational activities at the site. The draft forestry plan, alongside the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan, plays a crucial role in communicating the future intentions of the Reserve and informs the community about how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like.

This statement of proposal is prepared under sections 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 (LGA) and contains:

- the reasons and options for the proposal
- a copy of the draft policy
- how you can have your say
- timetable for consultation.

The reasons for the proposal

The reasons for this proposal are:

- The QLDC Proposed District Plan Designation #374 authorises Queenstown Lakes District Council (QLDC) to carry out forestry operations in the area known as Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Recreational Reserve. The designation specifies that Forestry Plan updates shall be subject to consultation with the community using the Special Consultative Procedure set out in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 before adoption by the Council.
- to seek community views on the draft plan.
- to encourage people to give feedback on the draft plan
- to let people know how they can give feedback.

The 29th May 2025 Council report contains more detailed information on these points: XXXXXXXX

The Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025 and summary document can be found here: <https://letstalk.qldc.govt.nz>

Options

Council considers that the draft plan communicates the future intentions of the Reserve and informs the community about how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like. However, the

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following options show how Council could proceed after it has undertaken the consultation process, along with the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

Option 1 – Adopt the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025.

Option 2 – Adopt an amended version of the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025.

Option 3 – Do not adopt the draft plan

Option 1 – Adopt the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025.

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensures there is a clear plan for the vegetation management on the Reserve.• Ensures that the community are informed and have been consulted on how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like.• Meets objectives in the Otago Regional, Pest Management Plan. The wilding pine threat will be mitigated by removing the maturing seed source.• Meets policies and objectives in the Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan.• Updating the management plan complies with the QLDC district plan designation #374 conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The plan may not be supported by all community members.

Option 2 – Adopt an amended version of the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025.

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Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will effectively address or respond to issues not identified in the current version.• Ensures that the community are informed and have been consulted on how tree management will occur and what revegetation will look like.• Meets objectives in the Otago Regional, Pest Management Plan. The wilding pine threat will be mitigated by removing the maturing seed source.• Meets policies and objectives in the Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan.• Updating the management plan complies with the QLDC district plan designation #374 conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It may require additional time and resources, potentially delaying the implementation of the plan.• The plan may not be supported by all community members.

Option 3 – Do not adopt the draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Forestry Management Plan 2025

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No Council time or resource is required.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The 2006 Forestry Plan is now outdated and no longer fit for purpose. There will be no clear direction on how the vegetation across the Reserve is managed.• Does not comply with QLDC District plan designation #374 conditions.• Will not meet the policies and objectives in the Draft Te-Taumata-o-Hakitekura Ben Lomond & Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan.

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- Council will not meet the objectives in the Otago Regional Pest Management Plan.

How you can have your say

Anyone can make a submission online at <https://letstalk.qldc.govt.nz>. Submissions will be accepted from 8am on 5th June 2025 and must be received by 5pm on 6th July 2025.

All submissions should state:

- the submitter's name¹
- the submitter's contact details
- whether or not the submitter would like to speak to Council about this matter.

Copies of this statement of proposal and draft policy may be obtained at no cost from either of the Council offices at 10 Gorge Road, Queenstown, 47 Ardmore Street, Wānaka, any Council library within the Queenstown Lakes District or the Council website at <https://letstalk.qldc.govt.nz>. If you need help submitting, please contact Council at 03 441 0499, or call in to one of Council's offices. All written submissions made to Council will be acknowledged and made available to the public.

Council intends to hold a hearing around the 21st July 2025. This is when anyone who has made a submission and who has said they would like to speak to Council, can do so. This meeting will be open to the public. If you indicate you would like to be heard, Council staff will get in touch with you to arrange a time for you to speak at the hearing either in person or via audio-visual link. If at the hearing you have any requirements, please let us know.

Timetable for consultation

The dates below outline the timetable for the consultation process. Any changes to these dates will be publicly advised on Council's Facebook page and website.

Date	Activity
29 th May 2025	Council adopted the proposal for consultation
5 th June 2025	Consultation period begins (8am)
6 th July 2025	Consultation period ends (5pm)

¹ Note: if you do not feel comfortable providing your name or contact details in a submission, please contact Council, who can facilitate an anonymous submission.

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21 st July 2025	Oral submissions heard by Council (date to be confirmed after submission period ends) and deliberations.
4 th September 2025	Adoption by Council

Information about the proposal

SUMMARY DOCUMENT –

Draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Forestry Management Plan

Key Objective:

QLDC will fell and eradicate all wilding tree species on Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve (the Reserve) and replant the site with a mixed native/exotic forest and scrub/tussock grassland. The Reserve will not be replanted as a production forest, with the new cover forming a permanent mixed species forest.

The draft forestry plan has been developed to achieve the Key Objective through the following actions, identified through current policies, regulations, and the aspirations of the local community:

- Control existing wilding conifers and eradicate successive wilding generation.
- Protect, restore and enhance existing biodiversity values.
- Protect and enhance the water quality in all water catchments within the reserves.
- Protect landscape and ecological values by implementing staged management zones.
- Revegetate harvested areas within two to four years following the completion of harvesting operations in each management zone.
- Ensure that QLDC meets its obligations under the New Zealand Emissions Trading Scheme.
- Manage the risk of erosion and land instability.
- Manage the discharge of contaminants such as silt, sediment and debris to surface water bodies.

The QLDC Proposed District Plan Designation 374 (the designation) allows QLDC to carry out forestry operations in the area known as Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Recreational Reserve. The designation states that the Queenstown Hill Forestry plan must be updated before any operation can take place, and states that all updates of the Forestry Plan shall be subject to consultation with the community using the Special Consultative Procedure set out in section 83 of the Local Government Act 2002 before adoption by the Council.

Site description - Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve:

The Reserve is 109 hectares and is located on the southeast and southwest side of Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill.

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Figure 1: Extent of site - Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve

The draft forestry plan contains details on:

- Forestry access
- Public Utility Infrastructure
- Recreation
- Topography
- Hydrology
- Landscape
- Existing vegetation and proposed future vegetation cover

Proposed Future Vegetation Cover (replanting)

The future vegetation cover proposed across the site (Figure 2-4) has been informed by:

- landform (location of gullies, bluffs and spurs),
- existing pockets of native vegetation that may be retained,
- feasibility of establishing different vegetation types in each area,
- site constraints including risk of invasive species from neighbouring areas,
- current policy
- community drivers

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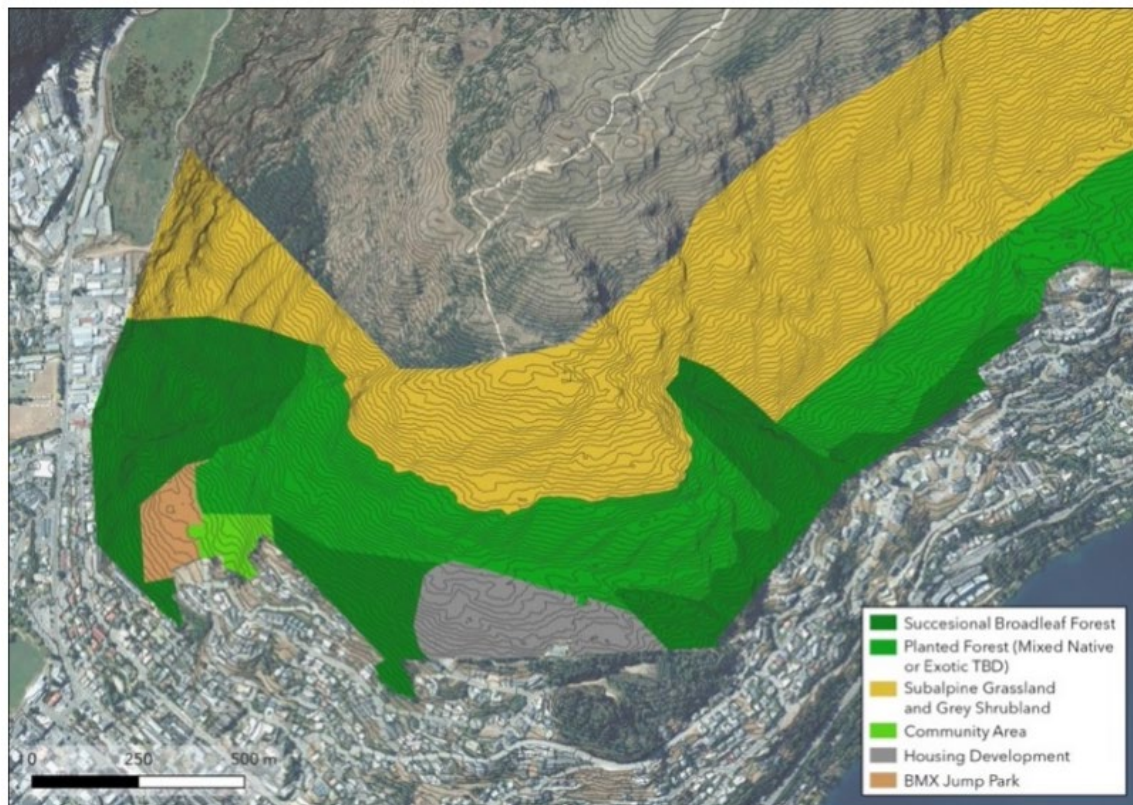


Figure 2: Proposed vegetation cover across the site

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Figure 3: Proposed vision - 3D interpretation viewed from the west, and comparison with current vegetation cover (inset)



Figure 4: Proposed vision - 3D interpretation viewed from the southeast, and comparison with current vegetation cover (inset).

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Forestry Site Assessment

A survey was conducted combining LiDAR data and ground-based forest surveying to estimate tree volumes and identify areas with the highest timber volumes.

Challenges such as slope, rock outcrops, access, and the presence of power lines will impact the feasibility of logging. Harvesting may not generate an economic return due to the site constraints.

Management Zones

The Reserve has been divided into six Management Zones based on the vegetation present, harvesting methodology and site restoration (see Figure 5).

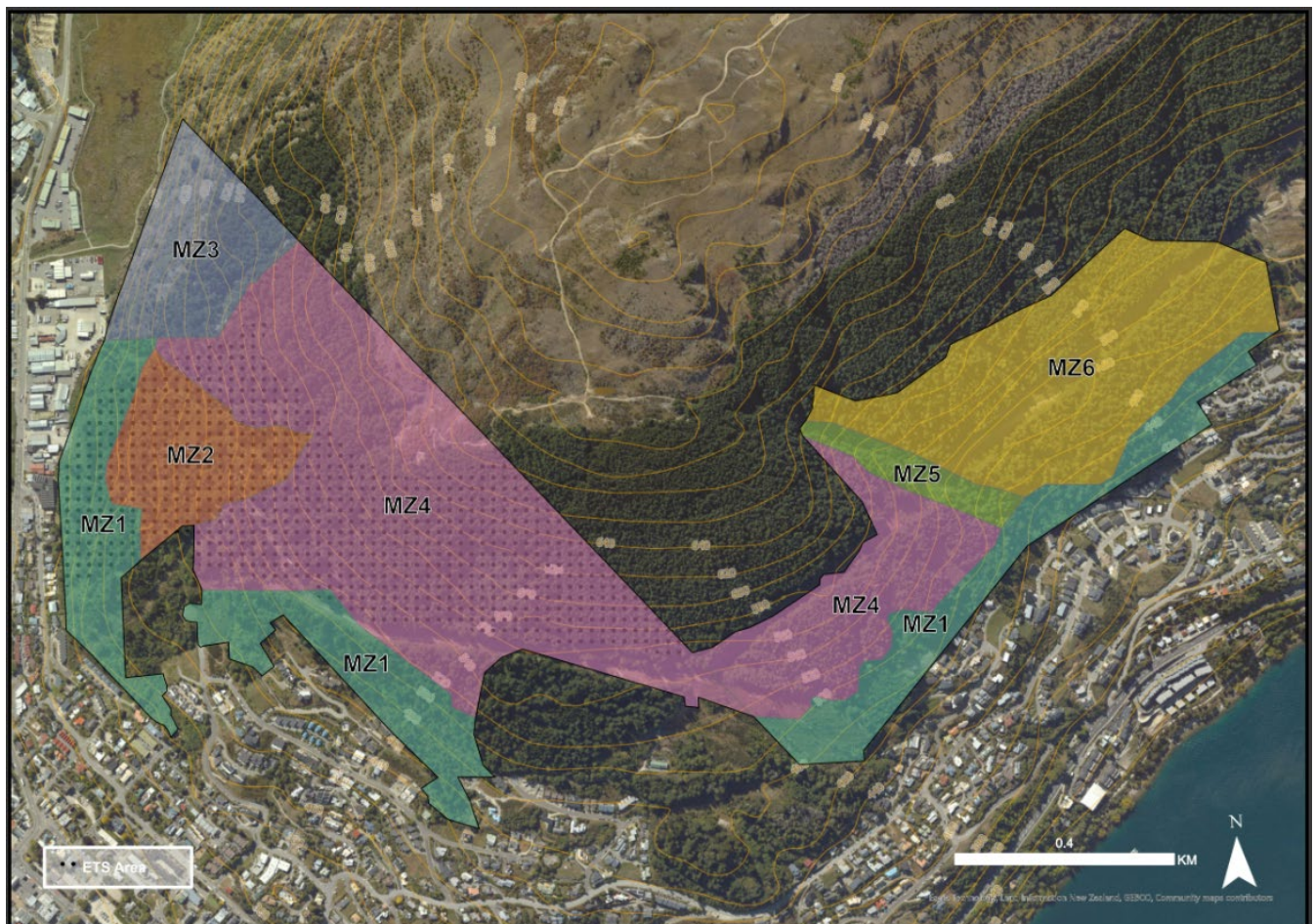


Figure 5: Proposed management zones

➤ Management Zone 1 (MZ1)

Key Action: Remove all wilding conifers using a ground based felling, while leaving non-invasive weeds as a temporary buffer between urban areas and the reserve.

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Forest Yield: No commercial timber due to poor tree quality.

Revegetation: Replant with fast-growing, low-flammable native trees to quickly stabilize the area and reduce fire risk.

➤ Management Zone 2 (M22)

Key action: Selective removal of larger trees using herbicide or low-impact methods; young wildings felled to waste. These methods will minimise soil disturbance and protect existing native understory.

Forest yield: No commercial return expected.

Revegetation: Supplement native regeneration through targeted underplanting.

➤ Management Zone 3 (M23)

Key Action: The trees will be targeted using herbicide or fell to waste or low impact harvest extraction methods, the technique used will be dependent on the size of each tree being treated.

Forest yield: No commercial yield due to inaccessibility.

Revegetation: Over-sow with grasses and/or early native successional forest species where practicable and encourage natural succession.

➤ Management Zone 4 (M24)

Key Action: Clear fell the wilding tree species using ground based or hauler harvesting methods.

Forest yield: This zone contains merchantable timber, and a relatively high yield is expected.

Revegetation: A staged planting programme of native and exotic tree species will be undertaken.

➤ Management Zone 5 (M25)

Key Action: To reduce disturbance to the native understory and lower the risk of soil erosion in this zone, mature larger trees targeted by herbicide, (drill and fill) or will be felled to waste.

Forest yield: No yield is expected

Revegetation: Underplanting with native species to support ecological restoration.

➤ Management Zone 6 (M26)

Key Action: Clear fell the wilding tree species using ground based or hauler harvesting methods.

Forest yield: Medium commercial timber yield expected.

Revegetation: A staged planting programme of native and exotic tree species will be undertaken.

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Pest Animal Management

Effective restoration of the Reserve depends on intensive pest animal control, especially targeting feral goats, which pose a major threat to seedlings. While fencing is impractical for the entire area, smaller zones may be enclosed. A combination of methods, including professional shooting, is recommended, with coordination across neighbouring properties. Monitoring and adaptive strategies will be needed to address reinvasion and other herbivores like deer, pigs, and rabbits.

Fire Hazard Mitigation

The current wilding conifer-dominated forest poses a significant fire risk, particularly if wood volumes are left unchecked. A formal flammability assessment of the current vegetation cover compared to the proposed vegetation cover has not been undertaken as part of this report. However, it is noted that the proposed vegetation cover is likely to pose a lower fire risk for the following reasons (especially if the strategy is extended onto Queenstown Hill Station):

- Removal of uncontrolled flammable wilding conifer forest;
- Improvement of the soil water balance resulting from wilding conifer removal;
- Rapid removal of dense ground cover of pine needles in harvested areas;
- Large areas of forest replaced by sub-alpine grassland, which is also flammable but doesn't burn for as long;
- Replacement of uncontrolled weedy areas with native species-dominated vegetation, which is not deciduous and can, therefore, provide better-regulated sub storey conditions year-round; and
- Replacement of highly flammable conifers with a range of native species including broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*) which has lower fire susceptibility.
- Better access to, and utilisation of certain parts of the site, which allows for easier maintenance of material that may pose a fire risk and improved access for emergency services in the event of a fire.

Next steps:

The draft forestry plan gives the community an opportunity to provide input on the future of the vegetation in the Reserve.

An Outline Plan (as required by the designation) will be prepared and submitted to the QLDC regulatory authority for approval.

The Outline Plan will contain the operational detail including:

- A Harvest Plan which includes exact methodology, forestry roads and tracking within the site.
- An Environmental Management Plan – which includes:
 - detail on sediment control within the site during and after the operation is complete,
 - protection of water quality through the creation of buffers between harvesting activities and surface water bodies.

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- A high level plan for redesign and establishment of recreational activities within the site, which. The draft Te Tapunui Queenstown Hill Reserve Management Plan contains policies which support working with key stakeholders to develop and implement a Trail Masterplan.
- Detailed pest control plan

There are opportunities within the draft forestry plan to carry out staging of the harvest, removing the trees over a shorter or longer period. An option is coupe felling whereby smaller areas of trees are removed. There are advantages and disadvantages to delaying the program and the draft forestry plan allows this flexibility.