

Collaboration amongst Local Trail Entities and opportunities for the New Zealand Trail Ecosystem

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1. THE CONTEXT

The road to carbon neutrality, zero road deaths, healthier/happier communities and regenerative tourism isn't a road, it's a trail.

Significant investment in trail infrastructure can deliver significant societal benefits. Whether you walk or run, ride a bike, off-road handcycle or horse; trails create links within and beyond your community.

Trails are community assets that can ignite active transport, support regenerative tourism and enable conservation. Both locally and nationally, development of trail infrastructure has traditionally been disjointed, mainly volunteer driven. Alignment and collaboration among local trail entities (LTEs) is paramount to enabling recreation and active transport as a way of life. This report identifies regional solutions that integrate with a nationally aligned strategy to create collaboration and representation. Global engagement indicates that the golden era of trail development has arrived, not a trend or fad, it's an actionable solution to many of the challenges we currently face.

Trails are community assets that can ignite active transport, support regenerative tourism and enable conservation.



MTB at Moke Lake.

2. IN SUMMARY

Building new natural surface recreational trails involves an evolving and complex permissions process that is often driven by volunteers. The purpose of this report is to identify a path forward to coordinate entities involved in creating and managing trail networks. It reinforces the benefits of pursuing a collaborative approach to managing the expanding trail networks in the Queenstown region and identifies the opportunities that trail alliances can bring both regionally and nationally.

Individual LTEs continue to deliver fantastic results via strategic plans, economic impact reports and the ongoing expansion of the trail networks, however this is often done in isolation from other LTEs. This results in a lack of a collective structure and/or overarching strategy to enable LTEs that could effectively contribute to shaping policy decisions and strategies. This is also problematic for organisations responsible for creating policy as there is no collective entity to engage with. The result is that policies and management strategies are being created without meaningful sector engagement. Funding the maintenance of trails is also generally an unsolved challenge for LTEs and land managers; a collective approach creates opportunities to resolve this.

The vision is for LTEs to align and enable an approach to embracing trails for both active transport and recreation. This will improve the way we move within our communities, decrease our carbon emissions and result in improved mental and physical health. It will also create further tourism benefits including an opportunity to activate regenerative tourism initiatives.

This report focuses on natural surface recreational trails. While some of these trails form part of the traditional active transport 'commuter' networks, the majority do not.

Currently trail development here and abroad is overwhelmingly driven by the mountain biking fraternity; however, global best practice shows that effective trail development is inclusive of all trail users including walkers, runners, adaptive mountain bikers, trampers, climbers, birdwatchers, bikers and commuters (among others). An aligned user approach enables dialogue and a better understanding of each other's perspectives. This will create better policy decisions and a more symbiotic approach resulting in the overarching goal of more trails and more people out on trails.

Four separate LTEs within our district initiated this project. They include; the Queenstown Mountain Bike Club (QMTBC), Queenstown Trails (QTT), Glenorchy Trails Trust (GYTT) and Southern Eco Trails Trust (SETT).

Progress to date between these LTEs includes the formulation of the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trails Alliance (QTtoGYTA), which is working together to construct a trail connecting Queenstown to Glenorchy. Its members have signed an MOU and have successfully secured funding from QLDC to create a proof of concept. This collaboration creates the foundation for an expanded ongoing alliance. It is proposed this alliance will look beyond the Whakatipu basin to include Wānaka and other LTEs in the Queenstown Lakes District (including those centred around activity other than biking). Based on the next piece of engagement, there is the possibility that the alliance will seek a broader footprint that might include the wider Otago District and or LTEs in Southland.

It is proposed that the local LTE alliance can become a template and scalable model that can encourage other regional alliances to form, resulting in a network of regional chapters. This network can then feed into a properly resourced national advocacy body.

This document provides opportunities and strategies to pursue creation of both regional and national alliances however there is currently no overarching organisation(s) identified to fund or deliver on the opportunities identified.

This will improve the way we move within our communities, decrease our carbon emissions and result in improved mental and physical health.

The main recommendations from this report are as follows;

- The current Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail Alliance members continue to work collaboratively on Project QT to GY, while also working towards an expanded alliance with other interest groups.
- Pursue the formation of a Queenstown Lakes District and/or regional LTE alliance that is inclusive of all trail user groups.
- Pursue the development of a national advocacy body supported by a network of regional alliances/chapters. (This might become an expanded role of an existing national entity.)
- Create a localised stakeholder group to pursue tourism and business opportunities.
- District/regional councils, destination management organisations and/or a new or existing entity to consider establishing a trails manager/coordinator position.



Proposed Next Steps

There are two key pieces of work to be progressed concurrently.

1. Creation of a regional LTE alliance
2. Development of a network of regional alliances/chapters to support creation of a national advocacy body (or expand the role of an existing national body)

1. Next steps for the creation of a regional LTE alliance.

- a. Identify a champion or organisation to pursue the formation of the **regional LTE alliance**.
- b. Secure funding to establish a business plan as follows:
 - i. Initiate discussions with possible partners, funders and collaborators.
 - ii. Establish the geographic scope of the alliance.
 - iii. Confirm what, if any, existing organisation an alliance should sit within, or if an independent/external model is preferred.
 - iv. Create a draft set of guidelines and MOU to be adopted by members once formed.
 - v. Establish budget and identify long term funding opportunities for the LTE alliance.
5. Initiate an assessment of current recreational trails to identify the quantum, quality and condition to create a baseline of existing networks beyond the scope of the traditional active transport network.
6. Establish and initiate systems for data collection, collation and distribution.
7. Drive a change in ethos to identify that trails are a valued community asset that justify significant and ongoing investment.
8. Work with Chambers of Commerce, RTO, Economic Development organisations and stakeholders to create a localised stakeholder group or entity to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users' experience.
9. Work with local and regional councils to recommend Waka Kotahi redefines its definition of recreational riding.
10. Explore applicable models for community supported funding options via referendums and/or visitor levies.
11. Investigate alternative funding programmes similar to the Recreational Trail Programme (USA).
12. Participate with other regions to explore the expansion of the national alliance concept. Establishing chapters throughout the country that feed into a properly resourced advocacy body.
13. Explore Scotland's All of Government Approach to Mountain Biking to inform opportunities to emulate it in New Zealand.
14. Engage domestically and internationally to ensure global best practices are identified.

Once formed, the **regional LTE alliance** should create a work programme including the following opportunities:

1. Advocate to ensure that trail ecosystems are recognised for their conservation benefits and that LTEs become partners in conservation.
2. Partner with DOC to establish a positive working relationship to ensure the trail sector can expand its contribution to better conservation outcomes and fostering recreation.
3. Develop relationships and opportunities with wider stakeholders.
4. Work with local/regional councils and DMOs to discuss establishment of a local trails manager/coordinator position(s).

2. Next steps for the development of a national advocacy body supported by a network of regional alliances/chapters. (This might become an expanded role of an existing national entity.)

- a. Identify a champion or organisation to pursue the formation of the **national network of regional alliances**.
- b. Secure funding to progress a national network of regional LTE alliances/chapters.
- c. Initiate discussions to explore the expansion of the national alliance concept and collate feedback with existing LTEs to inform development.
- d. Identify possible partners, funders and collaborators.
- e. Establish guidelines to create the geographic or regional parameters to assist regional alliances/chapters in establishing their geographic reach.
- f. Confirm if there is an existing organisation an alliance should sit within, or if an independent/external model is preferred.
- g. Create a draft set of guidelines and MOU to be adopted by members once formed.
- h. Establish budget and identify long term funding for the formation the national network of regional alliances/chapters.

Once formed the **national network of regional alliances/chapters** should create a work programme to pursue and inform the following opportunities:

1. Collaborate proactively with other regions to develop regional alliance/chapters throughout the country.
2. A systematic approach to inform and be informed by its regional alliance members providing a two-way conduit.
3. Work with RTONZ, LGNZ, EDANZ etc. to discuss aligned national solutions to inform its regional alliance/chapter members.
4. Establish an umbrella advocacy entity at a national level (or join an existing entity/organisation).
5. Establish a high-level relationship with DOC to ensure the trail sector can expand its contribution to assist DOC in creating better conservation outcomes and to foster recreation.
6. Develop relationships with relevant Ministries, NGOs and other stakeholders.
7. Create a nationally consistent methodology to initiate an assessment of current recreational trails to identify the quantum, quality and condition to create a baseline of existing networks beyond the scope of the traditional active transport network.
8. Establish a nationally consistent system for data collection, collation and distribution.
9. Create a national campaign demonstrating that natural surface trail networks are valued community assets to enable significant and ongoing investment from a national level.
10. Work with Tourism New Zealand, New Zealand Chambers of Commerce, EDANZ, etc. to create a framework for localised stakeholder groups or entities to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users' experience.
11. Work with Waka Kotahi to explore redefining its definition of recreational riding and other opportunities.
12. Explore funding opportunities at a ministerial level including the investigation of alternative funding programmes similar to the Recreational Trail Programme (USA).
13. Explore Scotland's All of Government approach to Mountain Biking to inform opportunities to emulate it in New Zealand.
14. Engage internationally with similar organisations to ensure global best practices are identified.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 Importance of Trails in our District

The Southern region of New Zealand is home to many heritage trails originally created by animals, iwi, prospectors, and trampers/walkers. Trails such as the Routeburn Track and Milford Track have played an important role in recreational opportunities and tourism benefits and are part of New Zealand's identity. In the past two decades, trail development has been primarily driven by the mountain bike community. Bike trails have evolved from when bikers used animal or other existing tracks to present day where sophisticated trail construction techniques exist. These new techniques result in trails being created and managed to mitigate or eliminate adverse effects and properly constructed trails greatly reduce the need for maintenance. Our region currently has an enviable range of trail-based activities that has garnered a dedicated user base and a positive domestic and global reputation. It is important to continue to develop and expand local trail ecosystems to realise the wide-ranging benefits they provide.

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Benefits of a healthy local trail ecosystem:

- Enabling healthier communities that benefit from better physical and mental health.
- Encouraging active transport and decarbonisation by changing how people move around.
- Creating recreation opportunities.
- Achieving conservation objectives by embracing trail networks as a tool for conservation.
- Reducing road toll deaths by getting people out of their cars and onto trails.
- Enabling for a more equitable and inclusive community.
- Providing substantial economic benefits.
- Creating tourism experiences that support Regenerative Tourism and align with the outcomes of the Destination Management Plan.
- Increased property values.
- Making our community more attractive to residents, remote workers and visitors.

3.2 Whakatipu Local Trail Entities (LTEs)

Development of the Whakatipu's public trail network has been mainly driven by the Queenstown Mountain Bike Club and Queenstown Trails. This initiative has been driven by the following four LTEs with the common goal of creating a more efficient and integrated approach to developing and managing trails.

Queenstown Trails (Formerly Queenstown Trails Trust)

The role of the Queenstown Trails Trust (QTT) is to create, nurture and maintain our world-class trail network. Its vision is "Connecting our community and inspiring adventures". QTT has developed a 130km trail network, including New Zealand's most popular Great Ride - Ngā Haerenga - creating significant tourism benefits. Many trails in its network are multi-use, suited to commuting and considered part of the active transport network. In recent years QTT has partnered with the QMTBC to build more traditional mountain bike tracks such as Hot Rod. It also recently completed the Coronet Loop Trail. It has recently announced significant extensions to its network. The trust has one full time and two half time employees - equivalent to two FTEs.

Queenstown Mountain Bike Club

The Queenstown Mountain Bike Club (QMTBC) was formed in 2003 to facilitate the development of mountain bike trails and biking areas within the Queenstown area in a coordinated, safe and legal manner. The trails in its network focus on recreational riding and cater to all levels of riding, from freestyle and downhill to cross country, BMX jumps and family rides. With over 2000 members, it is the largest sports club in Otago. The club has an administration person (contractor) equivalent to less than 0.5 (1/2) Full Time Employees (FTE).

Glenorchy Trails Trust

The Glenorchy Trails Trust (GYTT) builds walking and cycling trails within and between the communities at the head of the lake. It aims to separate riders and walkers from roads for safety which provides enjoyment and health for the community as well as visitors to the area. It recently completed the first part of its network with multi-use trails within the township and is poised to help deliver on the community's vision of *'An enviable network of walking and cycling tracks, cycleways will be developed and maintained with visitors taking the time to stay for longer...'* as identified in its 'Shaping our Future' strategy. The trust has no FTEs.

Southern Eco Trails Trust

The Southern Eco Trails Trust (SETT) has a focus on creating new trails that enable conservation by developing trail corridors that initiate pest eradication and reforestation efforts. The goal is to ultimately create a corridor of birdsong where it is currently silent. It sees recreation and conservation going hand in hand and believes trails enable healthy and happy communities that can be at the core of regenerative tourism. It has identified the opportunity to help bridge the traditional geographic boundaries between LTEs in Otago and Southland. The trust has no FTEs.

Note: QTT and QMTBC have a longstanding positive working relationship. They have and continue to collaborate on successful trail projects; however, this tends to be project-based.

Note: Significant trail development in and around Wānaka has been driven by the Upper Clutha Tracks Trust (UCTT) and Bike Wānaka (BW). They are seen as key partners in further development of a regional LTE alliance.

3.3 Common Issues Experienced by Local Trail Entities (LTEs)

Management of the overall trail ecosystem currently needs an integrated and coordinated approach. Most governance boards/committees of LTEs are volunteers. Whilst there is some cross-pollination between these groups, they tend to be trail or project specific. These organisations' primary purpose is to deliver on their entity's strategic vision. Currently there is no overarching entity or framework managing collaboration amongst the various entities to inform strategic planning.

This is also problematic for local or national government organisations and iwi as the sector lacks consensus or single point of contact to engage with.

The Great Rides Network (Ngā Haerenga) is a unique example of a cohesive and interactive trails alliance, but only amongst LTEs who are part of the Great Ride network. Outside of this network, the NZ trail ecosystem is mostly disjointed and lacks a collective voice.

There is a lack of engagement between various trail user groups such as walkers, climbers, runners, bird watchers, equestrians, bikers, etc. This creates a lack of understanding of each other's objectives and strategies resulting in inefficiencies, missed opportunities and a void in advocacy for the wider trail sector.

The creation of an LTE alliance will identify and deliver collective priorities. It will also create a pathway to resolve the two key issues of maintenance funding and land access faced by all LTEs, as highlighted in the following sections.

Management of the overall trail ecosystem currently needs an integrated and coordinated approach.

3.3.1 Land Access

Acquiring permission to build a new trail can involve a multitude of permissions from various land managers, this process was identified by LTEs as a critical obstacle. For LTEs with paid employees, this process creates a heavy demand on limited resources. For volunteer led LTEs or community groups, it can significantly delay or stop a project.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) has been identified by NZ LTEs as the main obstacle in the permissions process, please refer to Section 6.7 for further details on opportunities to for the trail sector to improve DOC's role in achieving conservation and recreation outcomes.

To date, LTEs have been primarily reactive regarding advocacy for access. Usually only engaging when they seek permission for a specific trail/project or when responding to potential long-term threats to access. There is little effective coordinated advocacy or resourced representation at a regional or national level. This lack of advocacy results in a sector that is mostly unrepresented, leading to inefficiencies, poor outcomes and missed opportunities. For LTEs it results in trying to navigate a process that is lengthy, disjointed and sometimes contradictory.

Along with iwi, there are a variety of landowners, land managers and agencies involved in trail projects who will benefit from a more aligned approach from the wider trail sector.

3.3.2 Funding for maintenance

Ongoing funding for maintenance of natural surface trails is a key issue for LTEs. A unique aspect of mountain biking destinations is that many of the trails are free to use by participants. While there are significant economic benefits created by these trails; businesses, products and events who benefit from the trail network are not always compelled to support trail infrastructure.

The ability to attract funds and/or resources to build a new trail is achievable. However, the ongoing maintenance cost is often considered a burden and unwanted liability that is squeezed into a budget, or not funded at all. A lack of adequately resourced maintenance funding has the potential to stymie future trail development and create conditions that could mean that the quality of experience on our trail network would not be up to international standard; our brand will suffer. Recently DOC has indicated it may require applicants to demonstrate that ongoing maintenance funding is available before it will give permission to build a new trail.¹ This process puts applicants in a catch-22 situation, as having permission from DOC is often required to enable LTEs to secure funding for trail construction and ongoing maintenance.

The Queenstown Trails (Trust) is in a unique position as manager of the Queenstown Trail, one of 23 NZCT Great Rides, which are eligible for funding support via the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment. Whilst day-to-day maintenance of the trail (vegetation, water management, etc.) is contracted by Queenstown Lakes District Council under an MOU with QTT, major repairs and Great Ride extensions are able to be supported via contestable funds secured from MBIE by QTT. However, as Queenstown Trails has expanded its remit beyond the Queenstown Trail Great Ride with more backcountry and singletrack trails, funding for maintenance needs to be raised via sponsorships, partnerships and community fundraisers.

There have been some private sector contributions, such as recent funding from local philanthropists. QMTBC has also initiated a variety of ways to raise funding via membership, sponsorship etc. Its 'Wednesday Night Digs' are a great initiative with club members volunteering their time to build and maintain trails. However, secure long-term funding solutions are not in place for a network wide solution. This can result in individual entities competing when applying for limited pools of funding. It puts councils/funders in the unenviable position of being asked to choose between similar funding applications without independent guidance or an integrated maintenance schedule or a master plan to refer to.

Trails are assets. Many communities throughout the world now identify recreational trails as community assets, the added value they provide is tangible and justifies significant ongoing investment.

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¹ Department of Conservation (DOC). 2022. Otago Conservation Management Strategy 2016 – Partial Review 2022. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/about-doc/role/policies-and-plans/otago/otago-conservation-management-strategy-partial-review-2022.pdf>

Multiple studies by Headwater Economics demonstrate there is an increase in property value the closer the property is to a trail, creating an amenity such as a good school.² *'The revenue boost from increased property tax revenue can be used by local governments to partially offset the construction and maintenance costs of trails.'* Additional studies demonstrate there can be significant financial benefits by reducing a communities health care cost, *'the benefits of reduced health care costs associated with increased physical activity on trails far outweigh the costs of trail construction.'*³ When analysing the 'cost' of local trail ecosystem, a holistic approach that considers the associated benefits and savings is recommended.

In 2020 state/territory and local governments across Australia spent an estimated AUD\$428 million dollars on cycling related infrastructure and programmes.⁴ This includes *'more dedicated off-road bicycle trails and better-connected bike paths to transport and activity hubs.'* This demonstrates that natural surface trails are and should be considered part of an integrated trail ecosystem and that is part of active transport.

An evaluation of the NZ great rides showed that cycle trail users experienced a combined health benefit of more than \$11 million dollars as well as an estimated contribution to local communities of more than \$950 million between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021.⁵ This does not include trails outside the great ride network.

New Zealand could create something similar to the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) in the USA. The RTP is an assistance programme created by the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (NZ equivalent of Waka Kotahi) which uses funds generated from an off-road fuel tax to invest in recreational trails and trail-related facilities. In 2021 it provided \$136 million (NZD) to states, who then administer it to organisations in their state who match it on an approximately 80/20 contribution.⁶ This fund is only distributed to and administered by states who have formed offices of outdoor recreation and developed a plan on how to distribute this funding.

The Mountain Trail Foundation in Park City, Utah combines RTP funding with localised funding, trail sponsorship and charitable donations to fund its trail maintenance programme. The Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association (Colorado) encourages residents to vote for an open space property tax that supports active travel and secures open space for wildlife protection and recreation. This fund assists with the process for the acquisition of land and the building and ongoing maintenance of trails for a variety of users. Originally voted in as a policy in 1990, the community has reinforced its support of this tax in subsequent elections.

It is crucial to shift the view that trails are a liability to that of trails being valued assets that warrant significant investment. There are a variety of options to create new funding streams in New Zealand, the proposed LTE alliance will initiate and pursue these opportunities.

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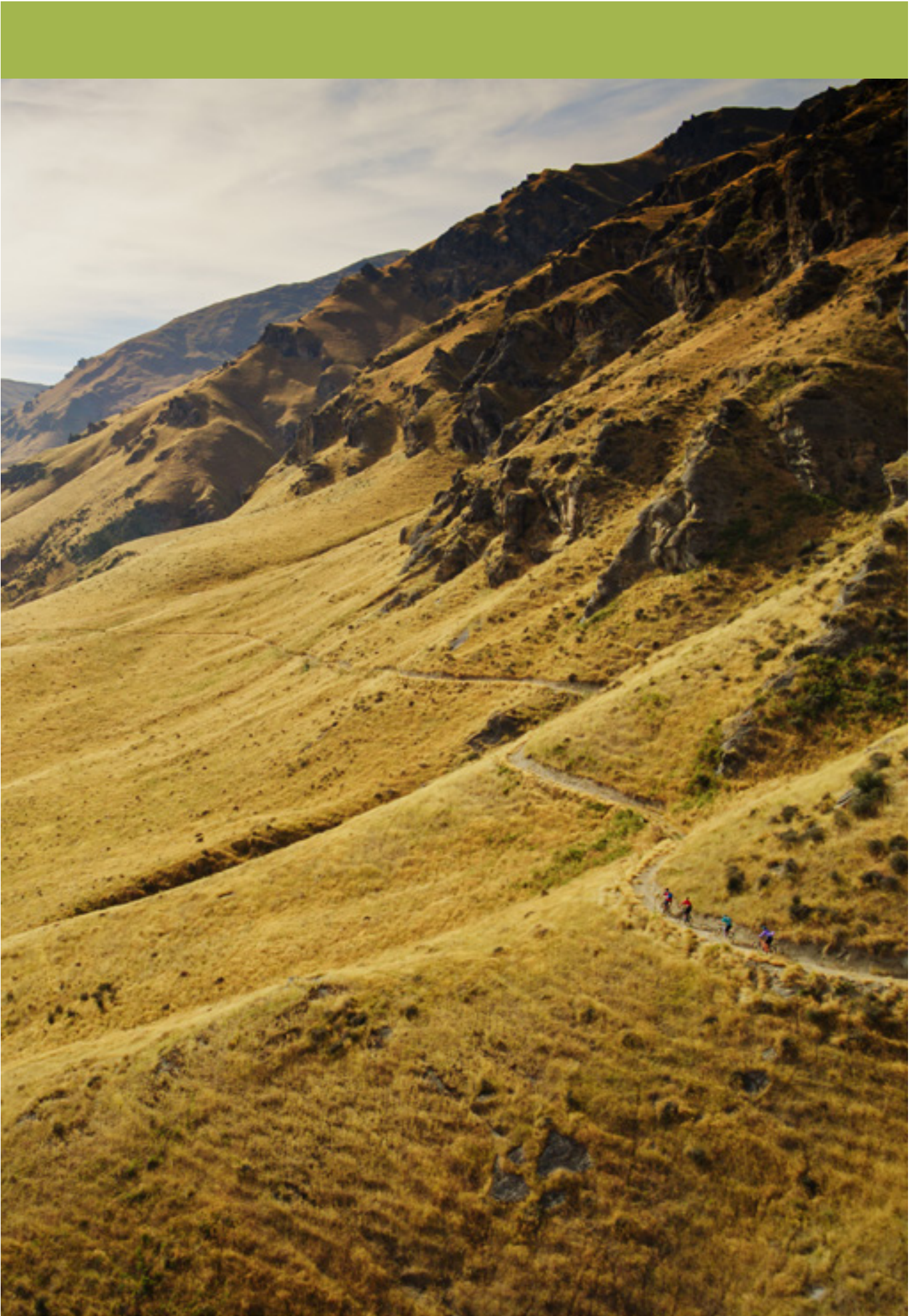
² Headwaters Economics. 2016. Measuring Trail benefits: Property Value. <http://headwaterseconomics.org/wp-content/uploads/trails-library-property-value-overview.pdf>

³ *ibid*

⁴ We Ride Australia. 2021. The Australian Cycling Economy 2021 Report. https://www.weride.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/The-Australian-Cycling-Economy_October-2021-Updated.pdf

⁵ Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment (MBIE). 2021. 2021 Evaluation of Ngā Haerenga Great Rides of New Zealand. <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/19854-2021-evaluation-of-nga-haerenga-great-rides-of-new-zealand-pdf>

⁶ Recreational Trails Program. 2023. About the Recreational Trails Programme. <https://recreationaltrailsinfo.org/about/>



Coronet loop

Credit: Storyworks/Queenstown Trails

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4. THE CREATION OF THE QUEENSTOWN TO GLENORCHY TRAILS ALLIANCE (QTtoGYTA)

In April 2022 the four entities - QTM, QTT, SETT and GYTT - began to engage to discuss how to create a more aligned approach. This was prompted by the partial review of DOC's Otago Conservation Management Strategy (CMS). Frustrated by this review process, the entities coalesced, driven by mutual agreement that a more aligned approach was worth pursuing. Existing personal relationships resulted in an inherent level of trust between the parties. Discussions identified that all were looking for better solutions to land acquisition and funding for maintenance for trails. The four entities continued to collaborate and agreed that while creating an ongoing alliance was worth pursuing, it was beyond any individual organisation's current resources. Therefore, they looked to collaborate on a project in the immediate term that would help to create a pathway to explore a longer-term and more formalised regional LTE alliance.

all were looking for better solutions to land acquisition and funding for maintenance for trails.

Further discussions between the LTEs identified shared interests in similar projects, which included:

- QTT and QMTBC had been in joint discussions around creating a trail from Queenstown to Seven Mile Bike Park.
- GYTT had established a long-term goal and had been exploring the opportunity to extend its existing trails towards Queenstown.
- QTT had separately been undertaking feasibility and route planning for a trail from Queenstown to Glenorchy.
- SETT had been exploring opportunities for a trail from Queenstown to Te Anau via Glenorchy.



Glen Jacobs of World Trail assessing the Queenstown to Glenorchy trail concept.

They agreed that collaborating on this project by combining resources and presenting an aligned approach would result in better results than if pursued individually. The Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail Alliance (QTtoGYTA) was established, a Memorandum of Understanding (attached in the appendix) was created and signed by all parties. It identifies how to work collectively while ensuring the individual entities remain autonomous outside this project and remain free to pursue and expand their individual work programmes unencumbered.

The benefits of this alliance are already being realised. GYTT, SETT and QTT have each committed funds to the trail project with the support of the QTMTBC. GYTT then submitted to QLDC for co-funding on behalf of the alliance. This collaborative application was successful and enabled the alliance to contract the proof of concept. The alliance members have noted their gratitude to QLDC for its support. Further progress has been made on the project, including a site visit by Glen Jacobs from 'World Trail' in November 2022 with the proof of concept for the trail expected in May 2023.

The formulation of the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trails Alliance is a definitive example showing the benefits of forming an aligned approach. Initial engagement with Wānaka based LTEs have indicated that they are interested in being part of discussions for future collaboration and it is hoped that they will become key partners in the development of a wider **regional LTE alliance**.

5. THE RECOMMENDED DEVELOPMENT OF A REGIONAL LTE ALLIANCE

A coordinated approach with collective input from LTEs and potential funders will be the foundation of creating a regional LTE alliance. There is no single conclusive model that prescribes the structure, membership or geographic reach of a regional LTE alliance. Most existing alliances interviewed noted they didn't try to define a geographic area first but instead looked for those who were willing to participate, often described as a coalition of the willing. Funding bodies can often influence the structure, membership and geographic reach and further engagement with potential funders and stakeholders should be prioritised.

The QMTBC has a focus on bike specific trails while QTT and GYTT and SETT work towards developing tracks that are multi use, it is recommended that the alliance consider including other trail entities outside of the biking ecosystem in its regional LTE alliance. This is key to gaining a collective understanding of all trail users and helping to achieve stronger representation for all trail networks. Global experience demonstrates that most of the activity and energy for the development of new trails is currently being driven by mountain biking entities, however aligning with all trail users helps to find consensus and ultimately benefits all user groups.

From a geographic perspective, a regional LTE alliance model worth exploring further is the Roaring Fork Mountain Bike Association⁷ in Pitkin County, Colorado, home of Queenstown's Sister City, Aspen. This association has a mountain bike focus, however by coalescing a variety of wider interests it created buy in from a diverse set of communities.

Members of the regional LTE alliance will align and collaborate as agreed via consultation that will result in contributing to and signing MOU. The structure will enable them to continue to pursue the individual work programmes and initiatives of their own entity unencumbered.

The recommended process to create the regional LTE alliance is as follows:

- Identify a champion or organisation to pursue the formation of the regional LTE alliance.
- Secure Seed Funding to progress the LTE Alliance, possible funders to include:
 - Local Councils
 - Regional Councils
 - Destination Management Organisations
 - Regional Tourism Organisations
 - Other public and private funding opportunities, Trusts, etc.
- Engage with existing LTEs in the Queenstown Lakes, initially the proposed entities will include:
 - Queenstown Trails - formerly Queenstown Trails Trust
 - Queenstown Mountain Bike Club
 - Glenorchy Trails Trust
 - Southern Eco Trails Trust
 - Bike Wānaka
 - Upper Clutha Trails Trust
 - Other trail entities in the district. These entities do not need to be bike focused.
- Identify the potential geographic boundaries of the alliance.
- A localised alliance is the primary objective however it is proposed that during the formation of an alliance within the Queenstown Lakes District, consideration should be given to explore the development of a wider regional alliance that might include Otago or Central Otago and/or Te Anau/Southland.
- Identify what, if any, organisation an alliance should sit within, or if an independent/external model is preferred.
- Initiate the establishment of a local trail manager/coordinator position to sit within local and/or regional councils and/or destination management organisations and/or a new or existing entity.
- Secure long-term funding for the LTE alliance from funding opportunities identified during the process of creating the alliance.

⁷ Roaring Fork Mountain Biking Association (RFMBA). 2023. Website. <https://rfmba.org/>

6. THE CREATION OF A NATIONAL NETWORK OF LTE ALLIANCES

There is currently no adequately resourced organisation representing Mountain Biking place in the wider trail ecosystem in New Zealand. This results in a lack of advocacy for the sector and missed opportunities. The regional LTE alliance created in the Queenstown Lakes region can become a prototype and/or template that can be scaled and shared with other regions to create a national network of LTE alliances or chapters. The goal is to create a network of regional LTE alliances and an overarching body to represent its regional LTE alliance members at a national level. The concept is to develop a model like Forest and Bird's branch structure or Federated Mountain Clubs' structure. This national body might sit within an existing national organisation, or it could result in the creation of a new entity.

Successful examples of this tiered approach exist. In the USA localised entities and alliances have been established to do work within their respective regions. They then feed into a state-wide alliance who in turn advocates and lobbies on their behalf at a state level. This approach is helping to create and influence policy decisions that benefit all its members. The State organisations also provide regional members with a variety of benefits such as data and research materials, in addition it looks after the well-being of its members by providing inspiration and moral support. Many of these alliances also support the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA), which advocates nationally.⁸ This is proving to be successful in influencing high level-policy decisions while ensuring local entities continue to represent their communities and drive local initiatives. A state-wide organisation in the USA could be considered equivalent to a National Body in New Zealand. The California Mountain Biking Coalition (CAMTB)⁹ is a state-wide alliance that provides a relevant model to reference when exploring a New Zealand-wide organisation. Its recently created sister non-profit organisation goes beyond Mountain Biking to include all trail stewardship organisations and offers a vision of more trails and access for everyone in California. The California Trails Foundation (CATF) *'exists to fund, empower and amplify the work of trail stewardship organisations all over California, and to address the long-standing trail and access disparities that exist throughout the state.'*¹⁰



The California MTB Alliance and its 30 alliance members.

⁸ Look to <https://www.imba.com/> for further information.

⁹ Look to <https://camtb.org/> for further information.

¹⁰ Look to <https://www.californiatrils.foundation/> for further information.

Another approach to consider is Scotland, which has a demographic similar to New Zealand, a population of 5.4 million and a land mass approximately one-third of NZ. Scotland has created an all-of-government approach to Mountain Biking by producing The Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking 2019-2025 - “Leading European Mountain Biking”.¹¹ The strategy’s vision is for Scotland to be recognised as the leader of European mountain biking through innovative product development and tourism, participation and sports development and sustainable trail development and management. Should a national body or organisation for trails be created in NZ it could pursue a similar all-of-government approach to trail ecosystems in New Zealand.

A nationally aligned body would follow global best practices and initiatives to address what steps could be taken to encourage and foster a more diverse trail user population. How to get more people of colour, younger riders, older riders, more women, more people from the LGBTQ+ community, more people with unique physical abilities and people from disadvantaged communities to make trail use more inclusive. Working with ministries such as Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People and Te Puni Kōkiri, could help to further this cause.

There is also opportunity to create a template or systematic approach to provide to regional LTEs to engage with their respective DMOs in a consistent manner. Initial informal conversations with representatives from Taupo and the Coromandel regions who could represent potential chapters have been very positive with strong encouragement to pursue this concept.

It is proposed that creation of a national entity and network of regional LTE alliances/chapters is done concurrently with creation of a local LTE alliance.



Finn Richardson.

Credit: Fiona Glennie / Makingtrax Foundation.

¹¹ Scottish MTB Tourism. 2019. The Strategy for Scottish Mountain Biking, 2019-2025. https://www.outdoorcapital.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/MTB_Strategy-Scotland-2019-2025_web.pdf

7. OPPORTUNITIES AN LTE ALLIANCE WILL CREATE

7.1 Trails creating positive conservation outcomes

To date, the wider biking community hasn't communicated the conservation benefits to the natural environment that can be realised by creating a new biking trail. There is an illogical perspective held by some who maintain that while conservation and hiking trails are symbiotic, conservation and biking trails are perceived as mutually exclusive. This prejudiced view fails to embrace how properly planned and executed trail development has the potential to enhance conservation outcomes irrespective of how a person might utilise the trail.

Conservation is a key driver and deliverable of many LTEs, there are initiatives underway that enable pest control and reforestation efforts to be expanded and amplified as a direct result of building a new trail.

A long-term objective is for trail development to result in a corridor of birdsong. LTEs and members of the trail and biking communities were recently part of a large-scale planting project on the Coronet Faces (Mahu Whenua/QEII covenants), led by Trees That Count, Te Tapu o Tāne and the Whakatipu Reforestation Trust. A recent meeting of the Wakatipu Conservation Alliance had representatives from three LTEs, creating a platform to foster relationships and identify synergies.

There is an illogical perspective held by some who maintain that while conservation and hiking trails are symbiotic, conservation and biking trails are perceived as mutually exclusive.



Coronet Faces tree planting.

Credit: Trees That Count.

A formalised LTE alliance will help further conservation efforts by aligning strategies, methodologies and funding streams with other conservation initiatives. It will help to create a better understanding that regardless of the type of trail user, trails can enable and enhance conservation. Further discussion on DOC's role in enabling trails to achieve conservation benefits is discussed in 7.6 below.

7.2 Trails are the key to regenerative tourism

The creation of an LTE alliance is consistent with and will deliver on all five guiding principles as stated in our regenerative tourism plan ‘Travel to a Thriving Future’.¹² They are; Building Communities, Enabling Regeneration, Demonstrating Leadership, Working Together and Embracing Change.

Local trail ecosystems should be designed for all trail users, further research is needed to provide data on other trail user groups. There are significant benefits to be realised from walking and running and other activities on trails. The following information provides context through a bike specific lens.

Recreational biking is experiencing a global boom on an exponential scale. Destination Queenstown’s (DQ) recent Biking Market Development Plan¹³ identified a projected 10% Category Average Growth Rate from 2020 to 2027. Biking tourists are typically low-impact visitors with a high spend, making them an attractive market for the local economy. There is the potential to reduce their carbon impact by getting them to stay in the region for longer periods. To enable this and compete with other national and international biking destinations, our district needs to continue to develop and expand its trail infrastructure to attract more ‘wallets on wheels’.

The DQ Biking Market Development Plan identified that our trail infrastructure needs development to compete globally. There are gaps in beginner to intermediate trails and lack of interconnection between trails, which currently requires the use of vehicle transport or on road cycling. Additionally, there are limited cross-country/trail riding and overnight or multi-day adventure rides.

A successful global biking destination evolves from creating a trail ecosystem that first and foremost serves its own community. LTEs such as QTMTB and QTT have driven the development to date and provide a great community driven platform to expand on. By creating buy-in, ownership and pride of place, a trail community vibe is emerging in Queenstown. This community-driven approach has been successful in other destinations such as Whistler (British Columbia) and Park City (Utah). Once known for their skiing, they have evolved into year-round destinations that attract visitors specifically to use the trail networks.

¹² Destination Queenstown. 2023. Travel to a thriving future – A Regenerative Tourism Plan. https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/queenstownnz/Queenstown_Lakes_Regenerative_Tourism_Plan_33b42536-edd1-4086-acc5-708207e134f8.pdf

¹³ Destination Queenstown. 2021. Queenstown Biking Market Development Plan. https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/queenstownnz/Queenstown_Biking_Market_Development_Plan_Final_November_2021_Website_1c6e805e-a071-4dee-a528-f8bbc9186cf8.pdf

The upper northeast of Tasmania is an example of how the development of three trail destinations within close proximity can provide a regenerative tourism solution. Georgetown, St Helens and Derby are approximately one hour from each other and attract mountain bikers from around Tasmania, mainland Australia and internationally. Once in Tasmania, many visitors utilise shuttle companies to get them to and between the ride centres, otherwise only riding their bikes and producing a minimal carbon footprint while there. Derby demonstrates it is possible to transform a former mining and logging town into a regenerative tourism success story. The Blue Derby Foundation is evolving with this success by exploring initiatives such as alternate booking systems to Airbnb, as well as providing staff accommodation on council land with proceeds generated used to support the trail network. There is an opportunity to replicate this in our region given the established trail centres in Queenstown and Wānaka and the aspirations of the Glenorchy community to create *'an enviable network of hiking and biking trails.'*

Consideration should be given by Chambers of Commerce, RTOs, Economic Development organisations and stakeholders to create or focus a localised stakeholder group or entity to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users experience. This is in addition to the formation of an regional LTE Alliance as LTEs should remain focused on their core purpose of creating and maintaining trails. It is expected there will be crossover and collaboration between the two entities however a separate structure will enable a more focused approach.



Bike wash and repair station at local hotel in Bend, Oregon.

Opportunities that will support regenerative tourism include:

- Developing amenities like bike locking facilities, E-bike charging stations, water-bottle refill stations, tool stations, bike wash stations, bike racks on buses, taxis, ferries etc.
- Create a localised stakeholder group or entity to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users' experience. Separate to but with a close relationship with the regional LTE alliance.
- Creating to a landscape scale trail master plan or plans.
- The development of new trails and ensuring that future trail development is done to a world class standard and has the potential to expand.
- The development of new trail town destinations beyond Queenstown and Wānaka in communities such as Glenorchy. Providing complimentary offerings in the region will increase the length of visitor stays, while reducing their emissions profile.
- Support alternate funding models for the maintenance of trails.
- Attracting, supporting and promoting events.
- Consistent and comprehensive signage across the trail networks including in-town information directing visitors towards trailheads.
- Ensuring trail information is updated and current on all biking apps and platforms such as Trailforks, AllTrails, MTB project, Komoot, etc.
- Funding and monitoring an extensive network of trail counters across the network to create visitor and usage data.
- Creating a seamless experience for visitors who arrive by bike, vehicle or plane.
- Explore the development of art trails as part of the network.
- Creating a social media presence that encourages participation from the local community.
- Positioning our region as the leader in trail advocacy by hosting an annual advocacy event targeted at LTEs, wider Alliances, iwi, Land Managers, NGOs, representatives from local and national government, businesses and other stakeholders.
- Target global LTEs and Alliances to create an affiliation or exchange programme that will encourage their members to engage with and contribute to local LTE initiatives while visiting the region, this can result in visitors participating in knowledge exchange, trail maintenance, tree planting on trails, etc.
- Explore establishment of a global network of great biking destinations, similar to initiatives DQ has pursued in the past with "great mountain resorts of the world."
- Support development of inclusive and accessible tourism products and infrastructure.

7.3 Carbon Zero by 2030

Currently over half of car trips by New Zealanders are under 5km, and 12% are under 1km.¹⁴ Research by Waka Kotahi found that 75% of New Zealanders in urban environments would travel by bike if the networks were improved.¹⁵ Converting these short car trips into people walking or biking will be enabled through redefining, improving and expanding active trail networks. Redefining the active transport network is further detailed in section 6.4.

Alignment and coordination by the trail sector will help foster regenerative tourism by delivering on a wide range of goals identified in the Destination Management Plan “Travel to a thriving future”. It will specifically enable the meeting of goals outlined in the Keystone Project 9: “Carbon Zero by 2030”.¹⁶

Project 9 identifies relevant known actions as:

1. Decarbonise emissions associated with visitor experiences, hospitality and attractions.
2. Identify system-wide initiatives that will increase the length of visitor stays, while reducing their emissions profile.
3. Reduce polluting emissions from road vehicles and relieve traffic congestion by improving infrastructure and changing traveller behaviour.
4. Support the development of infrastructure to enable lower and zero carbon mobility in the short-term, such as EV charging stations.
5. Encourage visitors to use alternative transport options like public transport, cycling and walking.
6. Work with partners within and beyond the district to support the development and promotion of EV and e-bike touring routes.
7. Identify and support further opportunities to develop walking and cycling transport networks that serve local communities, as well as visitors, to make cycling and walking a convenient way to get around.
8. Leverage the district’s reputation as a premier biking destination and identify opportunities for improving biking amenities that will benefit both the community and visitors.
9. Formation of a regional LTE Alliance will ensure that the independent LTEs are working in a strategic and collective manner with the local and regional Councils and DMOs to enable the actions listed above.

This approach is scalable and could become a template for other regions to develop in partnership with their respective DMOs.

Converting these short car trips into people walking or biking will be enabled through redefining, improving, and expanding active trail networks.

¹⁴ Radio New Zealand. 2019. Switching short car trips for walking and cycling has major health gains. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/394626/switching-short-car-trips-for-walking-and-cycling-has-major-health-gains>

¹⁵ Waka Kotahi (NZTA) 2016. Urban New Zealanders Attitudes and perceptions of cycling. <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/assets/Walking-Cycling-and-Public-Transport/docs/Urban-Cycling-Attitudes-Baseline-2016.pdf>

¹⁶ Destination Queenstown. 2023. Travel to a thriving future. https://assets.simpleviewinc.com/simpleview/image/upload/v1/clients/queenstownnz/Queenstown_Lakes_Regenerative_Tourism_Plan_33b42536-edd1-4086-acc5-708207e134f8.pdf

7.4 Redefining the active travel ecosystem to include more natural surface trails

In addition to delivering on the Carbon Zero by 2030 initiative, a regional LTE and/or national alliance will work with QLDC/ORC and Waka Kotahi to expand the active transport network to include more smaller, natural surface trails that create micro links into communities and neighbourhoods, addressing the first/last mile challenge.

Waka Kotahi currently defines recreational cycling as:

“Cycling undertaken just for enjoyment rather than utility; not in view of reaching a particular activity at the journey’s end. Recreation cycling includes cycle touring, sports cycling and cycling for pleasure.”¹⁷

Based on this definition, Waka Kotahi appears to consider the commuter networks created by QTT are conducive to active travel, while smaller trails traditionally built by QMTBC are for recreational purposes only and do not play a role in an active travel network.



Example of an abrupt end of the current active transport network.

Redefining recreational cycling and the role it can play directly and peripherally in the active transport ecosystem could create new funding opportunities to achieve the outcomes stated in “Better Ways To Go” a mode shift plan for the Queenstown Lakes District.¹⁸ The plan states ‘A key outcome of the Spatial Plan is: *Public transport, walking and cycling are everyone’s first travel choice. This includes access to more sustainable options such as a connected, high-quality network of walking tracks and trails...*

Waka Kotahi’s ‘Road to Zero’¹⁹ initiative which has set a target to reduce deaths and serious injuries on New Zealand’s roads, cycleways and footpaths by 40% over the next 10 years would benefit from a refreshed view of how recreational cycling can become recognised as a form of active transport. An expanded network of walking, biking and multi-use trails into and within neighbourhoods will ignite active transport.

¹⁷ NZTA. 2023. Glossary of terms. <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/walking-cycling-and-public-transport/cycling/cycling-standards-and-guidance/cycling-network-guidance/cycle-network-and-route-planning-guide/glossary-of-terms/>

¹⁸ Way to Go. 2022. Better Ways to Go. <https://www.qldc.govt.nz/media/ljzhnppz/item-2a-attachment-1-mode-shift-plan.pdf>

¹⁹ NZTA. 2019. Road to Zero Strategy. https://www.transport.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/Report/Road-to-Zero-strategy_final.pdf?gclid=EAlaIqObChMlp83Fz6q5_QIVqppmAh3Wtgc8EAAYASABEgKh6_D_BwE&gclid=aw.ds

The town of Eagle, Colorado is an relevant example of integrating recreational riding and active transport. Residents recognised that children who rode to school on bikes often zig-zagged off the sidewalk and onto the verge. The community worked with the Council and homeowners' association to enable access to the verge and with the assistance of a local trail builder they designed a recreational trail that allows students to have fun on their way to school. Based on its popularity, they needed to add bike racks at the destination school. The result is a new generation of active travellers.²⁰



Eagle, Colorado. Single Track Sidewalk creates active travellers for life.

²⁰ Vail Daily. 2018. Singletrack sidewalk. <https://www.vaildaily.com/news/mountain-bikers-enjoying-new-phase-of-singletrack-side-walks-now-open-in-eagle/>

One of the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)'s primary initiatives are 'More Trails Close to Home'.²¹ Trails close to home mean more quick hits for mental health and fun. They are key to creating recreational opportunities that create crucial links from people's homes onto interconnected trail systems. This results in users riding from home as opposed to using a car to get to their riding destination. In Park City, Utah there is a saying "My garage is my trailhead".



Another benefit of extending the active transport network to include natural surface trails is resiliency. In the event of a natural disaster, these smaller trails are likely to be the only access available for some time. Should these trails be damaged, they can be rebuilt at a fraction of the cost and time of traditional roading projects.

Some recreational trails such as downhill or flow tracks do sit outside of the traditional active transport network but they play an important part in the ecosystem. These trails provide value in a holistic way, as those who enjoy riding these trails are regular bike riders who are fit, active and engaged with the outdoors and more likely to ride a bike as transport than more sedentary residents.

Throughout New Zealand, there is currently no baseline of the expanse of trails beyond the commuter/great ride network. It is recommended that a stocktake of current recreational trails to identify the quantum, quality and condition be initiated to create a baseline of the existing networks that exist beyond the traditional active transport network.

An regional LTE alliance will provide a platform to engage with local and regional councils and Waka Kotahi to redefine 'recreational cycling'. Smaller, natural surface trails should be recognised for their ability to transport users from place to place. This would enable increased resources to develop and maintain more natural surface trails that would greatly expand on what is currently considered part of the active transport network.

Smaller, natural surface trails should be recognised for their ability to transport users from place to place.

Consideration should be given by local and/or regional councils and/or DMOs to create a trail manager and/or coordinator position. There are a variety of models and ways to structure this based on what organisation(s) or structures they sit within. They play a key role as the interface between external stakeholders and the multiple departments within their organisation who have a role in trail development and/or associated outcomes. Grand County, Utah and the Moab Trail Mix²² provides a relevant model to consider.

²¹ International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA). 2023. About IMBA, <https://www.imba.com/about>

²² Moab Trail Mix. 2023. Trail Mix Committee. <https://www.grandcountyutah.net/223/Trail-Mix-Committee>

7.5 Iwi Engagement

There is an opportunity for an LTE alliance to further engage with iwi. In the Queenstown Lakes district, engagement with iwi regarding trails is often project-specific and sporadic. This creates inefficiencies due to a lack of structured ongoing engagement and relationship building. As a new era of trail development is upon us, iwi should be celebrated and acknowledged for establishing the original trail networks in Aotearoa. How can LTEs support them in exercising their role as kaitiaki and develop user experiences through trail development while ensuring future trail development prioritises the protection of the mauri of the environment? There is a strong desire by LTEs to understand how to better engage with iwi.

Creating an alliance will enable structured and ongoing engagement by the Trail Sector. This will establish and build relationships that can inform and seek feedback and to determine what role iwi would like in the ongoing development of trail ecosystems. It will create an understanding of and ensure that the values and aspirations of mana whenua are considered and reflected throughout the development of a trail project. There is an opportunity to explore how LTEs can help to achieve the three outcomes identified in documents such as The Te Tangi a Tauira - The Cry of the People (Murihiku Natural Resource Management Plan)²³ as follows:

- Kaitiakitanga, Tino Rangatiratanga and Treaty related outcomes.
- Environmental outcomes.
- Social, economic, health and well-being outcomes.

An LTE Alliance should prioritise building relationships with iwi, including ongoing engagement with Te Ao Marama and Aukaha.

²³ Ngāi Tahu ki Murihiku. 2008. Te Tangi a Tauira - The Cry of the People (Murihiku Natural Resource Management Plan) <https://www.es.govt.nz/repository/libraries/id:26gi9ayo517q9stt81sd/hierarchy/about-us/plans-and-strategies/regional-plans/iwi-management-plan/documents/Te%20Tangi%20a%20Tauira%20-%20The%20Cry%20of%20the%20People.pdf>

7.6 Partnering with DOC

DOC was identified by LTEs as the single biggest obstacle in the development of new trails. DOC has a complex and difficult role in trying to coalesce the views of a wide variety of stakeholders, one issue is that LTEs have failed to date to create a nationally coordinated approach or structured organisation for DOC to engage with.

LTEs across New Zealand often apply to DOC to get permission for new trail access on Public Conservation Land (PCL). This process is currently flawed and inconsistent. The process can depend on the region, the status of its Conservation Management Strategy (CMS) and the variable interpretation by DOC staff. This has effectively created a moratorium on new bike trails in much of the country, in contrast new hiking trails can still be applied for and allowed in many of those places.

Significant delays by DOC in reviewing key strategies and plans fail to comply with the Conservation Act and National Parks Act which state Conservation Management Strategies (CMS) and National Park Management Plans (NPMPs) are meant to be revised every 10 years. There are 29 plans and strategies in total and only nine that are current.²⁴ Some strategies are approaching 30 years old and are no longer fit for purpose.



Land managers such as the US Forest Service are taking a proactive approach to recreation for all trail users.

²⁴ DOC. 2023. Statutory planning status report. <https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-policies-and-plans/statutory-plans/statutory-planning-status-report/>

The Minister of Conservation recently addressed these institutional issues by calling for a review of conservation law to “Help us improve conservation management planning and concessions legislation”. DOC itself has stated the current approach “has proven inflexible, cumbersome and frustrating.” In response to this, DOC announced it is engaging in a ‘Nationwide CMS partial review for biking’, identifying it as a priority. However, almost two years later, DOC has stated that it is still in “preparatory and planning” mode.²⁵

The Conservation Act 1987 that lists a function of the department as follows. *6(e) to the extent that the use of any natural or historic resource for recreation or tourism is not inconsistent with its conservation, to foster the use of natural and historic resources for recreation and to allow their use for tourism:*²⁶ Oxford defines foster as ‘encourage the development of’. There is an opportunity to better understand the internal strategies and operational guidelines DOC uses to fulfil its requirement to ‘*foster the use of natural and historic resources for recreation*’ during the process of creating management plans and strategies.

There are many examples of offshore government agencies who also have a remit of managing conservation and recreation like DOC who are achieving both outcomes concurrently. In discussion with various land managers overseas, many of them realised that an overly restrictive approach didn’t stop trails from being built, it meant they were being built without permission. They continue to prioritise preservation of the natural environment however demonstrate that recreation and conservation can be symbiotic. Their approach has evolved from being overly restrictive to enabling where appropriate, creating an evidence-based approach that encourages ongoing engagement research and education.

The trail sector wants to create a partnership with DOC to ensure a path forward that will be more efficient and deliver better conservation and recreation outcomes for all. There is a sense of urgency for this improved consultation, with pressing concerns that the current process for the ongoing ‘*Nationwide Conservation Management Strategy partial review for biking*’ will continue to be pursued without meaningfully engaging with LTEs at an early stage.

Perpetuating the issue is that there is currently no established and properly resourced advocacy body to represent LTEs to engage with DOC in a collective manner. DOC has engaged on occasion with Ngā Haerenga but this engagement does not include or represent LTEs or trails that are not part of the Great Ride Network.

A regional LTE alliance will provide opportunities for improved advocacy and collaboration with DOC in the interim, while a national advocacy entity is being developed.

²⁵ Newsroom. 2022. Inside DoC’s slow ride towards more biking. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/inside-docs-slow-ride-towards-more-biking>

²⁶ Conservation Act. 1987. Section 6 – Functions of Department. <https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1987/0065/latest/DLM104081.html>

7.7 Alignment with local and national policies

Numerous strategic planning documents are providing a long-term vision for land-use development and growth in our district and across New Zealand. Individual LTEs currently lack resource to stay current with the information and opportunities these plans contain. Creating an LTE Alliance will create a resource to analyse existing and new strategies and plans enabling it to provide direction to independent LTEs. This will ensure they are aligning their strategies with relevant local national strategies, plans and policies. Additionally, the proposed LTE Alliance will advocate and provide input to the development of future strategies and plans.

Figure 1. Outlines the relevant strategic plans, strategies and studies that intersect with the work of LTEs and informed this report.

National plans/policies	Local government plans/policies	Stakeholder group plans/policies	LTE plans/policies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government Policy Statement 2021 (GPS) Ministry of Transport MPI/Walking Access Commission - Report on the Findings of the Review of the Walking Access Act 2008 (2019) DOC - Heritage and Visitor Strategy 2021 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QLDC Vision Beyond 2050 QLDC - Queenstown Lakes Spatial Plan (2021) QLDC - Draft Queenstown Lakes Climate and Biodiversity Plan 2022-2025 QLDC Better Ways to Go - Mode Shift Plan May (2022) QLDC - Wakatipu active travel network (2019) QLDC - 10 Year Plan 2015-2023 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel to a Thriving Future - Regenerative Tourism Plan (2023) Te Tangi a Tauria - The Cry of the People (Murihiku Natural Resource Management Plan) (2008) Destination Queenstown - Queenstown Biking Market Development Plan (2021) Forest and Bird - Strategic Plan (2020) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> QMTBC - Trail Master Plan (2022) GYTT - 10 Year Strategy (2018) Upper Clutha Track Network Strategy 2021-2027 Southland Cycling Strategy (2018)

7.8 Enhancing relationships with other stakeholders

A regional LTE alliance will engage with stakeholders who do or have the potential to intersect with trail ecosystems to increase opportunities and efficiencies. It will enable a two-way flow of information to assist streamlined operational functionality and to inform relevant strategies. A primary role of the proposed LTE Alliance will be to establish and maintain relationships with the following stakeholders listed in Figure 2 table below.

National bodies/stakeholders	Local stakeholders
Ngā Haerenga - The New Zealand Great Rides network	Bike parks and trail venues
Te Araroa Trail	Trail building companies
Federated Mountain Club	Hiking/tramping/trail running community
Forest and Bird	Destination Queenstown
Herenga ā Nuku - Outdoor Access Commission	Lake Wānaka Tourism
Mountain Bike New Zealand - MTBNZ	Destination Management Office
AdaptMTB	Queenstown Lakes District Council
Making Trax	Otago Regional Council
Trail Fund	Te Tapu o Tāne Ltd
Backcountry Trust	Te Ao Marama
Sport NZ	Aukaha
Cycle NZ	Whakatipu Conservation Alliance
Waka Kotahi	Whakatipu Wildlife Trust
LINZ – Land Information New Zealand	Whakatipu Reforestation Trust
LINZ Pastoral	Wai Wānaka
MBIE – Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment	Lightfoot Initiative
ACC – Accident Compensation Corporation	Chambers of Commerce
Te Puni Kōkiri – Maori wellbeing and development	QT Airport Corporation
Whaikaha - Ministry of Disabled People	Community groups
International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) including IMBA Europe	Southern District Health Board
New Zealand Ultrarunners Association	Equestrian community
Wild Things: NZ trail running community	Wakatipu Walkers
New Zealand Deerstalkers Association	Historic societies and museums
Cycling Action Network	Other relevant stakeholders

Note: This list is a work in progress and any organisation with an interest who isn't mentioned are encouraged to engage.



Credit: Jeff Marks / Queenstown Trails

8. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS, NEXT STEPS AND ASSOCIATED RISKS

The main recommendations from this report are as follows:

- That the current Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail Alliance members continue to work collaboratively on its trail project while participating in the formation of an expanded alliance.
- Pursue and secure funding for the formation of a Queenstown Lakes District and/or regional LTE Alliance. (Geographic reach TBC.)
- Create a localised stakeholder group to pursue tourism and business opportunities.
- Local/regional councils and/or DMOs should consider establishing a trails manager/coordinator position that extends beyond the traditional commuter trails to include natural surface recreational trails.
- Engage with other regions throughout New Zealand to pursue a network of regional LTE alliances/chapters.
- Pursue the development of a national advocacy body for all trail users.

Proposed Next Steps

There are two key pieces of work to be pursued concurrently.

- 1. Creation of the regional LTE Alliance**
- 2. Development of a national advocacy body supported by a network of regional LTE alliances/chapters. (This might become an expanded role of an existing national entity.)**

1. Next steps for the creation of the regional LTE Alliance.

- a. Identify a champion or organisation to pursue the formation of the regional LTE alliance.
- b. Secure funding to progress a regional LTE alliance.
- c. Initiate discussions with possible partners, funders and collaborators.
- d. Establish the geographic scope of the alliance.
- e. Confirm what, if any existing organisation an alliance should sit within, or if an independent/external model is preferred.
- f. Create a draft set of guidelines and MOU to be adopted by members once formed.
- g. Establish budget and identify long term funding opportunities for the LTE alliance.

Once formed, the regional LTE alliance should create a work programme to pursue and inform the following opportunities:

1. Advocate to ensure that trail ecosystems are recognised for their conservation benefits and that LTEs become partners in conservation.
2. Partner with DOC to establish a positive working relationship to ensure the trail sector can expand its contribution to better conservation outcomes and to foster recreation.
3. Develop relationships and opportunities with wider stakeholders.
4. Work with local/regional councils and DMOs to discuss establishment of a local trails manager/coordinator position(s).
5. Initiate an assessment of current recreational trails to identify the quantum, quality and condition to create a baseline of existing networks beyond the scope of the traditional active transport network.
6. Establish and initiate systems for data collection, collation and distribution.
7. Drive a change in ethos to identify that trails are a valued community asset that justify significant and ongoing investment.
8. Work with Chambers of Commerce, RTOs, Economic Development organizations and stakeholders create a localised stakeholder group or entity to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users' experience.
9. Work with local and regional councils to recommend Waka Kotahi redefines its definition of recreational riding.
10. Explore applicable models for community supported funding options via referendums and/or visitor levies.
11. Investigate alternative funding programmes similar to the Recreational Trail Programme (USA)
12. Participate with other regions to explore the expansion of the national alliance concept. Establish chapters throughout the country that feed into a properly resourced advocacy body.
13. Explore Scotland's All of Government approach to Mountain Biking to inform opportunities to emulate it in New Zealand.
14. Engage domestically and internationally to ensure global best practices are identified.

2. Next steps for the creation of a national network of LTE alliances and the development of a national advocacy body. (This might become an expanded role of an existing national entity.)

- a. Identify a champion or organisation to pursue the formation of the national body and network of regional chapters.
- b. Secure funding to progress a **national network** of regional LTE alliances/chapters.
- c. Initiate discussions to explore the expansion of the national alliance concept and collate feedback with existing LTEs to inform development.
- d. Identify possible partners, funders and collaborators.
- e. Establish guidelines to create the geographic or regional parameters to assist regional alliances/chapters in establishing their geographic reach.
- f. Confirm what, if any existing organisation an alliance should sit within, or if an independent/external model is preferred.
- g. Create a draft set of guidelines and MOU to be adopted by members once formed.
- h. Establish budget and identify long term funding for the formation the national network of regional alliances/chapters.

Once formed the national entity and its network of regional LTE alliances/chapters should create a work programme to pursue and inform the following opportunities:

1. Collaborate proactively with other regions to develop regional LTE alliance/chapters throughout the country.
2. A systematic approach to inform and be informed by its regional LTE alliance members providing a two way conduit.
3. Work with RTONZ, LGNZ, EDANZ etc. to discuss aligned national solutions to inform its regional LTE alliance/chapter members.
4. Establish an umbrella advocacy entity at a national level. (Or join an existing entity/organisation.)
5. Establish a high-level relationship with DOC to ensure the trail sector can expand its contribution to assist DOC in creating better conservation outcomes and to foster recreation.
6. Develop relationships with relevant Ministries, NGOs and other stakeholders.
7. Create a nationally consistent methodology to initiate an assessment of current recreational trails to identify the quantum, quality and condition to create a baseline of existing networks beyond the scope of the traditional active transport network.
8. Establish a nationally consistent system for data collection, collation and distribution.
9. Create a national campaign demonstrating that natural surface trail networks are valued community assets to enable justify significant and ongoing investment from a national level.
10. Work with Tourism New Zealand, New Zealand Chambers of Commerce, EDANZ, etc. to create a framework for localised stakeholder groups or entities to pursue tourism and business opportunities to enhance local/tourist trail users' experience.
11. Work with Waka Kotahi to explore redefining its definition of recreational riding and other opportunities.
12. Explore funding opportunities at a ministerial level including the investigation of alternative funding programmes similar to the Recreational Trail Programme (USA).
13. Explore Scotland's All of Government approach to Mountain Biking to inform opportunities to emulate it in New Zealand.
14. Engage internationally with similar organisations to ensure global best practices are identified.

Risks

- No one champions for these projects to proceed. There is currently no individual agency or organisation with the resource or remit to drive the development of this alliance.
- There is insufficient seed funding to progress the alliance to a stage where it can secure ongoing funding from other sources.
- Resistance from those who question the need for yet another entity.
- Individual LTEs who may not want to participate concerned they might give up more than they stand to gain.
- Inability to agree on what geographic reach will provide the most benefits to the members of the alliance, Queenstown Lakes District vs. Otago Regional vs. Otago/Southland. This could likely be influenced by funders.
- Should this project not attract a champion or funding, it will likely lose momentum and become a missed opportunity. This will likely result in the current siloed activity among LTEs continuing without the development of a wider strategic approach. The opportunities that a healthy local trail ecosystem can create will be greatly diminished.
- Should the relationship between trail entities and DOC remain the status quo, it will inhibit the conservation efforts that could otherwise be realised by responsible trail development, increase costs and timelines for projects and further loss of public confidence in DOC.

Disclaimer

In preparing this report it has been necessary to make a number of assumptions based on the information supplied during research and investigations for this study. The recommended actions contained in this report are subject to uncertainty and variation depending on evolving events but have been conscientiously prepared based on consultation feedback and an understanding of trends. The author did not carry out an audit or verification of the information supplied during the preparation of this report, unless otherwise stated or referenced in the report. Whilst due care was taken during enquiries, we do not take any responsibility for any errors nor misstatements in the report arising from information supplied to the author during the preparation of this report.

9. APPENDICES

Methodology, Partners and References

The outcomes of this report have been informed by desktop research, in person interviews, attendance at events and review of existing strategies and plans which intersect.

Interviews and engagement with the following people informed this project:

Name	Association	Role
Mark Williams	Queenstown Trails Trust (QT)	CEO
Bruce Mcleod	Queenstown Mountain Bike Club (QTMBC)	Treasurer
Steve Hewland	Glenorchy Trails Trust (GYTT)	Trustee
Dave Howard	Upper Clutha Tracks Trust (UCTT)	Chairman
Ewan Mackie	Bike Wānaka	Trustee
Wendy Pannett	Southern Eco Trails Trust (SETT)	Trustee
Joanne Conroy	Whakatipu Wildlife Trust (WWT)	Executive Officer
Greg Lind	Southern Lakes Sanctuary (SLS)	Co-Chair
Leslie Van Gelder	Southern Lakes Sanctuary (SLS)	Co-Chair
Paul Kavanagh	Southern Lakes Sanctuary (SLS)	Director
Sierra Alef-Defoe	Southern District Health Board	Health Promotion Advisor
Matt Hollyer	GSD Workforce Ltd.	Operations Manager
Karen O'Donahoo	Whakatipu Reforestation Trust	Operations Manager
Jo Smith	Whakatipu Reforestation Trust	Education and Outreach Manager
David Butt	Department of Conservation (DOC)	Operations Manager Whakatipu
Alexa Forbes	Otago Regional Council (ORC)	Councillor
Angela Spackman	Queenstown Chamber of Commerce	Chair
Trent Yeo	Ziptrek	Executive Director
Sarah O'Donnell	Destination Queenstown	Marketing and Comms Director
Gizelle Regan	Lake Wānaka Tourism	Marketing and Comms Manager
Molly Hope	Lake Wānaka Tourism	Destination Development Lead
Henry Van Asch	Southern Eco Trails Trust (SETT)	Chairman
Aaron Halstead	Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Trust (COQTNT)	Trustee
James Reardon	Te Anau Cycling Inc. (TACI)	Secretary
Patrick Morgan	Cycling Action Network (CAN)	Project Manager
Matt Claridge	Te Araroa Trail	Executive Director
Ange van der Laan	Walking Access New Zealand	Regional Field Advisor - Queenstown Lakes and Southland
Ryan Hunt	Mountain Bike New Zealand (MTBNZ)	President
Kent McNeill	International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)	President
Marty Caivano	International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)	Community Engagement Coordinator

Anthony Duncan	International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA)	Director of Local Programs
Jake Bayless	California Mountain Bike Coalition (CAMTB)	President
Michael Anzalone	California Mountain Bike Coalition (CAMTB)	Executive Director
Susie Murphy	San Diego Mountain Bike Alliance (SDMBA)	Executive Director
Lora Smith	Mountain Trails Foundation (Park City, Utah)	Executive Director
Jennifer Wesselhoff	Visit Park City - RTO (Park City, Utah)	President and CEO
Mike Pritchard	Roaring Fork MTB Association - Aspen Colorado	Executive Director
Glen Jacobs	World Trail	CEO
Jimmy Young	Trail Fund	Advocacy Lead
Peter Harris	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Economic Development Manager
Marie Day	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Community Partnerships Manager
Samantha Marsh	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Parks Officer - Community Services
Jeannie Galavazi	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Senior Parks and Reserves Planner
Tony Pickard	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Transport Strategy Manager
Quentin Smith	Queenstown Lake District Council (QLDC)	Councillor
Wendy Fisher	Utah Open Lands	Executive Director
Carly Lansche	Utah Department of Natural Resources	State-wide Recreation Planner
Betsy Byrne	US National Park Service	Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance
Tyson Swasey	Grand County Active Transportation and Trails (Moab, Utah)	Operations Coordinator
Rachel Fussell	PeopleForBikes	EMTB Policy and Programme Manager
Vernon Huffman	Acces4Bikes (Marin, California)	Executive Director
Bill Keene	Climate Equity Solutions (Marin, California)	Principal
Shelli Fine	Reno-Sparks Convention & Visitors Authority (Nevada)	Director of Sports Development
Eliza Voss	Aspen Chamber Resort Association (Aspen, Colorado)	Vice President Destination Marketing
Janet Bartnik	Mountain Recreation (Eagle, Colorado)	Executive Director
Rich Balfour	Thames MTB Club (Coromandel)	Vice President
Greg Williams	Sierra Buttes Trail Stewardship (Downieville, California)	Executive Director
Chris Café	Blue Derby Foundation (Derby, Tasmania)	Chairman
Pete Coleborn	Blue Derby Trail Crew (Derby, Tasmania)	Head of Maintenance

Industry events/seminars attended:

- PeopleForBikes eMTB summit 14/15 September 2022 - Lake Tahoe, California.
- International Mountain Bike Association Trail Lab 17-19 October 2022 - Cedar City, Utah.
- CAMTB (California Mountain Biking Coalition) 'CAMTB Connected' 16-18 September 2022 – Downieville, California.

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Queensdown to Glenorchy Trail Alliance "the alliance"

1. Purpose

The purpose of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is to set out the framework for the working relationship between Queenstown Mountain Bike Club (QMTBC), Queenstown Trails Trust (QTT), Glenorchy Trails Trust (GYTT) and Southern Eco Trails Trust (SETT) "the parties" to further the Queenstown to Glenorchy trail project.

2. Background

In April 2022 the parties met to discuss how the entities could better collaborate and create efficiencies through enhanced collaboration and further developing their working relationships. At this meeting the parties realized that between them there was common ground in that they had individually identified trail development between Queenstown and Glenorchy (or a part of) as future projects for their own entities as follows:

- i. QTMBC and QTT had already been collaborating on developing the Queenstown to 7 Mile trail.
- ii. QTT and GYTT had individually identified development of the QT to GY trail as a priority.
- iii. GYTT was currently working on extending its recently developed trail towards the Buckler Burn further in the direction Queenstown.
- iv. SETT had identified a Queenstown to Te Anau trail as a goal.

Given the individual goals of each entity overlapped on the QT to GY trail - it was decided to form this alliance to help initiate the project and collectively create momentum.

3. Objectives of the alliance

The objectives of the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail Alliance are to coordinate efforts to further the development of the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail by:

- i. Promote the benefits of the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail.
- ii. Advocate for the Queenstown to Glenorchy Trail.
- iii. Explore opportunities to attract funding for the project.
- iv. Apply for funding as agreed by the entities
- v. Apply for permissions as agreed by the entities
- vi. Share knowledge and resources to assist where possible.

4. Objectives of individual parties

The objectives of the individual parties remain as they are. Each is free to retain its autonomy, manage its own work programmes, funding, partnerships and sponsorships as they see fit. All existing and any future management agreements, MOUs, Deeds of Grants or other legal arrangements between individual entities and DOC and/or other entities remain the responsibilities of the individual groups.

5. Relationship management and communication

It is agreed by the signatories of this MOU to:

- i. Work collaboratively and respectfully to promote a harmonious approach to the project.

- ii. Act as a first point of reference between parties and as liaison persons for external contacts; and
- iii. Communicate between parties on matters that arise that may be of interest to any of the parties.
- iv. Meet four times a year to discuss the project, discuss issues and solutions to any issues and opportunities.

6. Activity done on behalf of the alliance

Given the alliance has no formal structure, Applications for funding and permissions etc. related to the QT to GY trail will be done by one or more of the parties as nominated and agreed to by the other parties.

7. Dispute Resolution

Any dispute concerning the subject matter of this MOU is to be settled by full and frank discussion and negotiation between parties.

8. Term of MOU

This MOU will remain until June 30 2023 at which time it can be renewed or revised. It can be revised at any time prior to that date if deemed necessary: it will expire upon completion of the QT to GY trail or as decided by the parties.

Signed on behalf of Queenstown Mountain Bike Club by Bruce Mcleod:

Signature: 

Date: 3/6/2022

Signed on behalf of Queenstown Trails Trust by Mark Williams:

Signature: 

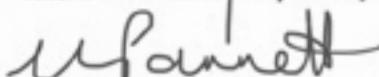
Date: 3 JUNE 2022

Signed on behalf of Glenorchy Trails Trust by Steven Hewland:

Signature: 

Date: 8/6/2022

Signed on behalf of Southern Eco Trails Trust by Wendy Pannett:

Signature: 

Date: 7/6/2022

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Glossary of Acronyms

BW – Bike Wānaka

CAMTB - California Mountain Biking Coalition

CATF - California Trails Foundation

COQTNT - Central Otago Queenstown Trail Network Trust

CMS – Conservation Management Strategy

DMO – Destination Management Organisation

DMP - Destination Management Plan

DOC – Department of Conservation

EDANZ – Economic Development New Zealand

DQ – Destination Queenstown

FTE – Full Time Employee

FTT - Fiordland Trail Trust

GPS – Government Policy Statement

GYTT - Glenorchy Trails Trust

IMBA - International Mountain Bike Association

LGNZ – Local Government New Zealand

LTE – Local Trail Entity

MBIE – Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment

MPI – Ministry of Primary Industries

NGO – Non Government Organisation

NZTA – New Zealand Transport Agency/Waka Kotahi

ORC – Otago Regional Council

PCL – Public Conservation Land

QLDC – Queenstown Lakes District Council

QMTBC – Queenstown Mountain Bike Club

QTtoGYTA - Queenstown to Glenorchy Trails Alliance

QTT – Queenstown Trails (formerly Queenstown Trails Trust)

RTO - Regional Tourism Organisation

RTP – Recreational Trails Programme

SETT - Southern Eco Trails Trust

TACI - Te Anau Cycling incorporated

UCTT – Upper Clutha Tracks Trust



Hotrod.

Credit: Queenstown Trail.