

Central Otago Project Update

December 2023

Kia ora koutou,

We say it every year, but I can't believe it's mid-December already. This year has flown by. There have been a few highlights on the way and we feel we've made real progress in this project.

A highlight for me was the engagement at the end of the August following the release of [Unlocking Potential: Central Otago's runway to a future-focussed airport](#). It's always hard to tell in advance how much interest there will be, but it was great to see over 500 people take time out of their day to come along in Tarras, Cromwell and Wānaka, consider the information and engage with the project team.

It's been reassuring to hear more people talking about what infrastructure a fast growing region like Central Otago will need for its future. Rather than waiting until the pain of an infrastructure deficit bites there is now a real sense that people are beginning to talk about how we plan for the needs of populations in 30, 40 years and beyond.

A local economist recently drew attention to the 8.0% per annum population growth experienced in the Queenstown Lakes, describing it as "an incredible statistic" and "the equivalent to one in every 12 people sitting in a room being new to town in the past year".

This lines up with the work we've published previously which shows 40% of Central Otago residents have moved to the region in the last five years.

Good infrastructure planning can support that kind of growth. To do that, we all need to build on those growing conversations that look beyond today and focus on all the infrastructure that

regions will need to support their residents over the next 30, or 40 years and beyond.

The team has enjoyed hearing feedback from Tarras Community Fund recipients. We're committed to doing our best to make a positive contribution to Tarras and being able to contribute equipment for Tarras Playgroup, assist with the urgent replacement of the solar heating unit for Tarras School pool, and enable a local horse rider to compete overseas, is a really special part of the job for the whole team.

Our new board chair Sarah Ottrey recently visited Tarras School to talk with the children who delivered letters at the August drop-in. Sarah shared her own experience growing up in a small but changing rural community, and enjoyed answering questions from the children.

Looking ahead to 2024, we expect work will continue to drill deeper and keep growing our understanding of the site and its capability. We expect at some point in the next 12 months that our Board will consider whether the project is ready to proceed to the approvals phase, or whether further work is required to gather more information. As we said in August, this is about laying the groundwork for good decision-making – whatever those decisions.

Finally, we wish you all happy holidays and look forward to sharing more with you in 2024

Kind regards,
Michael Singleton
Project Director

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