

Milford Opportunities Project Masterplan released to public

The Milford Opportunities Project (MOP) has launched its Masterplan for Milford Sound Piopiotahi, the Milford Corridor and the Milford sub-regional area.

Background

The MOP was established as a multi-agency approach to consider how visitors to Milford Sound Piopiotahi and the Milford Corridor should be managed. Its purpose is to develop a masterplan for Milford Sound Piopiotahi, the Milford Corridor and the Milford sub-regional area to ensure:¹

that Milford Sound Piopiotahi maintains its status as a key New Zealand visitor 'icon' and provides a 'world class' visitor experience that is accessible, upholds the World Heritage status, national park and conservation values and adds value to Southland and New Zealand Inc.

Key recommendations

The MOP released the Masterplan to the public on 28 July 2021. The Masterplan makes the following key recommendations for Milford Sound Piopiotahi:²

- Establish a new governance and management model to deliver the Masterplan.
- Develop a new Te Anau visitor centre and bus hub.
- Divide the Milford Corridor into different 'nodes' with a consistent theme and quality. Facilitate a variety of activities at key 'nodes'.
- Introduce a park and ride, with hop on/ hop off

buses along the corridor. Provide layover facilities for the bus fleet.

- Adopt low and zero emission transport solutions.
- Require international visitors to pay an entry fee.
- Restrict private vehicle access to New Zealanders through a permit system. Make access for New Zealanders free of charge. Make special permits (free) available for pre-qualified commercial users, operators and service staff and for New Zealanders fishing, hunting, climbing and tramping.³
- Replace the existing hotel with a new eco-concept hotel with standard and premium services to meet demand.
- Enhance and create a variety of experiences including boat trips, Bowen Falls cable car, walks, Barren Peak Spur treetop lookout, and commercial/recreation marine interface.
- Upgrade, replace and expand infrastructure, particularly drinking water and electricity.
- Reorganise car parking to ensure low visual impacts and introduce permit parking.
- Redevelop staff accommodation to improve living arrangements, reduce exposure to natural hazards and repurpose the land.
- Prohibit cruise ships from entering Milford Sound Piopiotahi.
- Develop new heliport to allow the existing aerodrome runway to be removed and repurposed. Phase out fixed wing aviation. This aspect of the proposal received the largest and most negative

¹ Rachel McMillian *Project Governance Group Terms of Reference – Milford Opportunities Project* (Milford Opportunities Project, 27 August 2021) at [5].

² Stantec and Boffa Miskell *A Masterplan for Milford Sound Piopiotahi and the Journey* (Milford Opportunities Project Governance Group, 3 May 2021) at 11.

³ At 31.

Milford Opportunities Project masterplan (Continued)

response by far with only 14% positive responses.⁴ Major themes included reduced economic benefits, visitor experiences, safety; accessibility, heritage and the relative negatives of helicopters.

Process and next steps

The MOP is being carried out in three stages:

- Stage one was completed in September 2018. It involved establishing context, vision and objectives and developing the project's working vision and pillars.
- Stage two was completed with the launch of the Masterplan. It involved engagement with the community, key stakeholders, national interests and the New Zealand public.
- Stage three is the design, planning and implementation phase of the MOP. It will involve the formation of a new governance group, led by Independent chair Dr Keith Turner. A new project team will also be appointed. Government funding has been allocated for stage three. The MOP has indicated 'public engagement will be an inherent part of the stage'.⁵ A timeframe for stage three has not been made publically available.

The Masterplan states some recommendations will be implemented quickly while others will require legislative and management change.⁶ It refers to a 'detailed phasing plan' which we expect will include more information about the phasing out of fixed wing aviation.⁷

We will continue to keep our network updated on future developments including opportunities for public engagement. General feedback can be made via the [MOP website](#).

Want to know more?

If you have any questions about the [Masterplan](#), please contact our specialist [environment, planning, and natural resources team](#).

⁴ Milford Opportunities Project *Online Engagement Summary* (October 2020) at 3.

⁵ Milford Opportunities Project Q&A
<<https://www.milfordopportunities.nz/assets/Projects/QA.pdf>>

⁶ Above n2, at 66.

⁷ Ibid.