



## Track and Hut Engagement Session 2 March 2023

### Milford Opportunities Hub – Te Anau

#### Attendees

<b>Organisation Represented</b>
Trips and Tramps
Fiordland Tramping and Outdoor Recreation Club (FTORC),
Fiordland Trails Trust (FTT)
Bike Fiordland
New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) - Southland
New Zealand Deer Assn, Southland (NZDA)
Milford Sound Lodge
Fiordland Outdoors
Department of Conservation (DOC)
Milford Opportunities Project (MOP)

## Introduction

<b>Purpose / Structure</b>
Introductions and safety briefing
Update on Minister's visit. Two clear messages that we heard: Get on with some tangible stuff, and there are potentially some early wins.
Summed up ministers visit as ' <i>conservation and tourism go hand in hand</i> '
Setting out ground rules and purpose for the meeting, including etiquette to ensure all those attending were heard (whether online or in person) Purpose was to test the feasibility of the masterplan not relitigate it.
Project team wanted to learn two things from this meeting: 1. What you think of the proposals in the MP as it relates to tracks and huts. 2. What are some of the good things, some of the not so good things, and some impacts and alternative options. First time we have run an engagement session and want your feedback on the process.
Invited attendees to nominate tracks / nodes of interests to discuss.
Feedback from the group indicated that there was interest to discuss all tracks.

## Node 2: Eglinton Reveal



Figure 18: Aerial view of Node 1 To Rua O Te Mohio/Fordland National Park Entrance & Node 2 - Eglinton Reveal

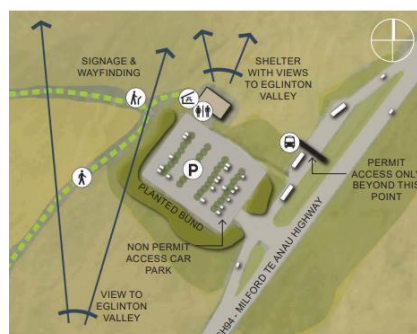


Figure 18: Node 2 - Eglinton reveal conceptual diagram (not to scale)

*The Eglinton Reveal proposes other visitor activities to continue the experience, such as a river trail and interpretive viewing areas and support facilities including car parking and public toilets.*

<b>Feedback</b>
Objective is to link to FTT.
There are over 40,000 passes per year on Lake2Lake already, track not finished. No question that there is demand for bike track.
What is planned service level for FTT section? Wilderness Trail, Grade 2 appears to be the sweet spot - very popular for older riders, locals, kids.
Accessibility, explicit about full access, wheelchairs etc. for bike track. Consideration for disability access within Master Plan? Needs to include access for younger age group, families with prams, trikes etc.
Grade 2 cycle trail would be used more (even with a few tricky bits), long sections 60 grade or less. Would be good for foot and bike traffic. Lots of people travelling around. Agree that Grade 2 with a few challenges would be the sweet spot. Would get used the most as a multiuse track. Great area to explore. Tracks like Wilderness Trail and Lake2Lake are good examples of tracks that cater for most.
Consideration on the impact track would have on camping.
Is there further capacity at Cascade Creek.
General support for track going through the valley, road is already there.
Provided an external reference about the benefits of a multiuse trail (MBIE report): <a href="https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/19854-2021-evaluation-of-nga-haerenga-great-rides-of-new-zealand-pdf">https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/19854-2021-evaluation-of-nga-haerenga-great-rides-of-new-zealand-pdf</a>
According to the 2013/14 Active NZ survey "Almost all participants took part in sport and recreation at one or more man-made facilities. The most popular being a path, cycleway or walkway in a town or city (53.1%)." Active NZ surveys: <a href="https://sportnz.org.nz/research-and-insights/surveys-and-data/active-nz/">https://sportnz.org.nz/research-and-insights/surveys-and-data/active-nz/</a>

The plan / notes could be explicit about the Reveal trail linking to the planned FTT trail at Te Anau Downs (jetty: some maps show 'Te Anau downs' as north of Retford hill). Initial plans only showed reveal to park boundary.

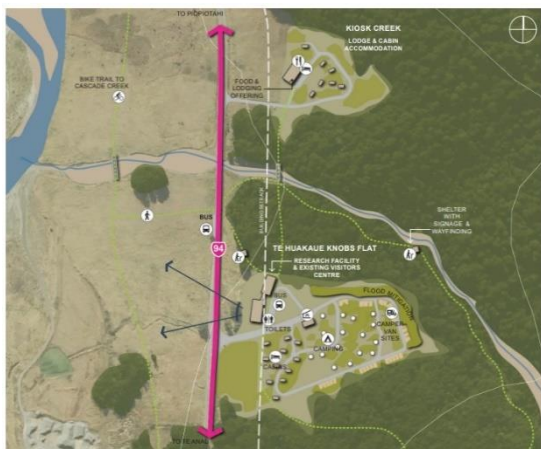
The master plan should consider the New Zealand disability strategy:

<https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/>

### Node 3: Te Huakaue Knobs Flat incl. Kiosk Creek

Short Walks at Te Huakaue Knobs Flat/ Kiosk Creek

Walking/Cycling Trail - Te Anau Downs to Cascade Creek



*The Milford Corridor is proposed to be more than a road for vehicles and aims to provide active travel links between nodes that are more leisurely and personal. Continuous, shared cycling and walking trails are proposed to link between nodes and short stops in the Eglinton Valley for a new non-vehicular journey experience away from Milford Road. These aim to link in with community-initiated trails that are planned for development between Te Anau and Te Anau Downs, with an opportunity for them to continue alongside Milford Road to join the Te Rua-o-Te-Moko Fiordland National Park Entrance*

#### Feedback

There are existing similar options e.g., Lake Gunn.

Enjoyed by people who require wheelchair and pushchair access.

Need to consider corridor / FNP, is that experience available elsewhere, and is it what people are wanting to do there?

Holistically, how much value would it add?

Cascade Creek is often full as accommodation is good.

It has power and is great for families.

There is a demand for power, cyclists charging e-bikes, and / or people with medical conditions / devices.

Gets the late sun, good for camping.

Very good campsite. Cascade has too many camper vans.

Kiosk Creek's west-facing grassy terrace keeps the sun & are well suited to camping. Cascade has more developed flat pads suitable for vehicles.

Not that appealing to specifically go there for a day walk, but if you were staying there, the availability of a short walk(s) would be of value.

Wheelchair access - trail development needs to consider disabilities and wider cohort that need less restrictive access.

Some cyclists are already using the existing campsites (and there would likely be more with a multi-use trail).

Short waterfall track already there - 25min return.

General support for short works. Potential for multiple short walks and potential to add some value for overnight option at Knobs Flat.

The master plan should consider the New Zealand disability strategy:

<https://www.odi.govt.nz/nz-disability-strategy/>

## Node 4: Ōtāpara Cascade Creek

Overnight Walk – Mistake Creek or equivalent alternative.



Figure 26: Mistake Creek Overnight Walking Track Experience conceptual location diagram (not to scale).

*The Masterplan proposes the Mistake Creek overnight walking track is redirected to begin and end at the Ōtāpara Cascade Creek node. It is proposed to accommodate walkers undertaking a new multi-day walk that complements the shorter and longer walks already offered in and near the corridor to create a variety of walking opportunities.*

*The great walk experience with considerable landscape diversity and interest is designed as a stepping stone for the longer walking experiences. A new hut of high DOC*

*standard, pre-booked and located on open grassy flats is proposed to accommodate up to 80 walkers when fully developed. Two short walks extend tramping standard tracks from the hut to access lookouts at the dramatic northern glacial cirque and western waterfall of Mistake Creek. An existing route is proposed to continue into Hut Creek via U Pass, looping back to Ōtāpara Cascade Creek for recreationalists with backcountry experience.*

*The shared trail along the corridor originates from the node before Milford Road becomes more physically constrained around Lake Gunn. There is an opportunity to utilise bus services along Milford Road to access this high point of the trail in the Eglinton Valley and benefit from gradient changes through to Te Huakaue Knobs Flat and beyond.*

**Feedback**

Concerned about the environment at the head of valley, avalanche hazard, pushing people up over U Pass, overhead hazards.

People have encountered grief in similar environments; therefore, we can expect similar issues. This could be exacerbated if promoted and opened up. Members concerned about the risk of the avalanche and hazard, promoting more people going into the area could push people into the pass itself into hazardous areas including avalanche risk. KC uses the example of Gertrude Saddle - people getting into grief. NZAC - open to having a new hut. It is an access point to a number of technical mountain climbs.

There are lots of valley huts in New Zealand, however few alpine huts. Gave examples of huts in stellar locations such as Mt Brewster, Mount Brown, Luxmore – all very popular, high visitation numbers and potentially have best return or bang for buck.

Mistake Creek – in the summer months it only has valley views, in the winter shade issue.

Further west bad weather, so NZAC members view is that east is the better location.

Maybe a smaller hut (and/or huts) rather the proposed 80 bunk. Proposes location like Countess Range. North of Boyd Ck. Close to Te Anau for access, ease of response with helicopter. Also, outside Fiordland National Park. Great views up Eglinton Valley, Te Anau basin - could loop track or destination in its. SBHS & Boyd Creek nearby, but we are proposing slightly further north up the Eglinton. Groups shown images from the location. Open to having new hut, but what and where.

Some confusion in the masterplan re U Pass.

(NZAC has already provided feedback to MOP on proposed track)

Mistake Creek - received mixed views from members surveyed ranging from very positive to very negative. (Feedback forwarded to MOP team).

Need to consider in the wider context of FNP. Lots of opportunities in east of FNP now, very few options in west.

Agree safety concerns, hazards - Mistake Creek.

With climate change we need to think about track resilience.

Two bridges would reduce resilience.

Risks, hazard, agree with NZCA point - would enable access into great country.

Agrees with high alpine hut.

Loops are better than there and back.

Current East Eglinton track in very poor condition. Had hoped the NZAC hut idea would allow a link from Boyd to East branch Eglinton – rather than a there-and-back walk to the Countess Range hut site suggested.

Countess - new hub created- wondering if MOP aim is to reduce hubs?

Agree new alpine hut - demand for experience.

Concerns re 80 bunks, congestion, diminish experience, alpine water supply, waste.

Kepler was built to alleviate pressure on other tracks, instead it grew demand, did not reduce demand.

Would need to be managed via booking system.

80 bunk huts are large structures; DOC does not necessarily have a lot of them for good reasons.

Large impact, footprint.

Potential to split the 80-bunk hut, 2 x smaller 40 bunk, but remains a significant impact on sewerage, water, footprint quite damaging and diminish the experience.

Great Walks survey feedback - hut etiquette and behaviour eroding. Expectations are increasing (phone charge, no snoring). Track and hut etiquette is becoming an issue and impacting on visitor experience.
Simon - who would Countess Range affect (hunters?)
Re Lake Gunn, combining sites, safer for cars, but could be serviced by hop on / hop off and park & ride.
New hut not about alleviating demand, Kepler Track example.
The 'where' and 'why' we are proposing - who does it impede?
Would still require a booking system.
NZAC do not support a hut in Mistake Creek, but they are keen on a hut in the Countess Range.

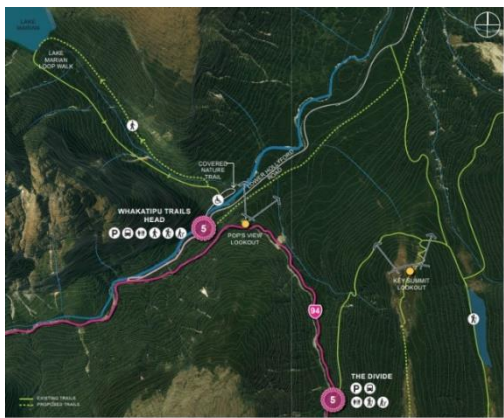


## Node 5: Whakatipu Trails Head

Hinepiwai Lk Marian Loop Walk

Covered Nature Trail

Connection to The Divide and Ara Tawhito Pass Creek Track



*Proposed in the Masterplan that the node would form a trail head destination, linking visitor bus services and recreationalists travelling along Milford Road to a range of world class short to multi-day walks, including guided routes. The trail head proposes to work with The Divide short stop, allowing loop walks and stronger connections into a wider track network, including the established Routeburn, Greenstone / Caples and Key Summit tracks. It proposes to combine these with Lake Marian / Lake Marian Falls Track, upgraded to a one-way loop and an extended Hollyford Track.*

*A new covered nature trail would be added to the Lake Marian tracks to provide an all-weather experience for all ages and abilities, on or near a level grade for wheelchair accessibility with rich interpretation along the route. Trail head facilities designed to serve a large range of visitors to complement those at the eastern end of the Routeburn Track, including observation points, interpretative displays, track information, shelter, toilets, and bus drop off / car park areas.*

Feedback
<p>Why would you do a loop on what is a 'there and back' track - different if return loop track goes through something new."</p> <p>Loop track doubles the capital and maintenance costs.</p> <p>Strongly disagrees with the covered trail, diminish experience, increase cost and maintenance. Also, Visual impact (for users of trail and from afar). Won't be covered from car to track anyway so already need a coat or umbrella (which do the job of keeping rain off just fine).</p>
<p>Lake Marian track has confined space at the very beginning. Loop track could potentially take the pressure off, in the early stages off the track.</p>
<p>Divide key location, access to tracks.</p> <p>Lake Marian - Geotech issue, avalanche considerations on true left for loop.</p>
<p>Bottom section very high use, short stop travellers, guided. Combined space, congestion. Any loop track would be most helpful on bottom of track - up to the cascades. Otherwise control visitor numbers.</p>
<p>Strongly advocate for a loop track to Key Summit - improved visitor experience. Track promoted internationally. Lots of cross over on way up and down. Key Summit available year-round. Advocates for resilient / sustainable tracks - sustained through storm impacts. And improved experience. 400m ascent - 4hr round trip. On Great Walks, heavily advertised/demand. Lake Marian people have not heard of. Loop back to Divide (note Geotech relevant). Recommends this as the best half day experience. Loop provide 2 access points. Resilience of tracks would be improved.</p>
<p>Pass Creek to Lake Marian option? Too long for the half day loop.</p>
<p>Pass Creek - nominated when Divide access was questionable.</p>

Did not understand what the Marian Loop would be like. Interested in the proposals discussed though. Marin loop track looks like it might cover some rough and steep terrain – it will be interesting seeing where the final placement is. Interesting other proposals.

Generally, a loop supported in principle for visitor experience and track.

## Node 6: Gertrude Valley

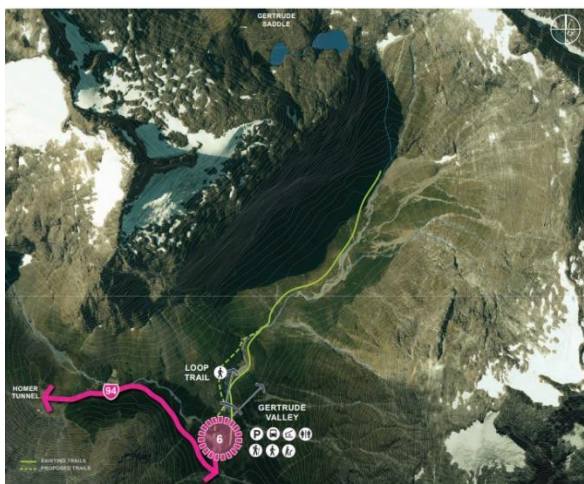


Figure 36: Node 6 - Gertrude Valley conceptual context diagram showing walking route to Gertrude Saddle (not to scale).

*In addition to enhancing longer day walks to Gertrude Valley, a new looped nature trail is proposed to capture the diversity of alpine landscapes, including meandering creeks through alpine vegetation, old boulder fields and stunted Beech forest with views surrounding the mountains. The proposal would provide a short stop experience for all ages and abilities, on or near a level grade for wheelchair accessibility, with rich interpretation along the route.*

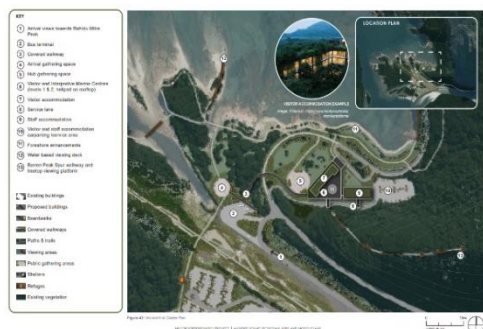
*All tracks will lead perpendicular away from Milford Road, providing a sense of detachment from the corridor and enabling a more immersive*

*wilderness experience with minimal infrastructure required. The node to work in combination with Homer Hut to provide access to a wide range of climbing experiences, including some of the hardest routes in Aotearoa New Zealand. The provision of trail head facilities including observation points, interpretative displays, track information, shelter, toilets, and bus drop off / car park areas for those not transporting by bus. Strategically located bunding and a refuge will provide protection for internal and external viewing areas from flooding, rock fall and avalanche hazards.*

Feedback
Gertrude Valley walk - great scope for short walk loop. Track about the valley not the saddle.
Gertrude Saddle is already known, not creating a new hazard.
Great short stop, alpine flowers. Do not need to go up the saddle to get the experience. What is missing is the ability to stop in the alpine area and space and experience the Alpine flowers in the vista. It is a quintessential Fiordland experience.
Great majestic sense of place walking up the valley. Hazard mitigation, bunds etc - does not support - going into hazard then engineering out of it. The structures conflict with the objective of "Piopiotahi as it was forever". Hazard mitigation and infrastructure. Needs engineering and as soon as you build a structure then you are adding to some sort of environmental impact, and it is not part of the MOP vision.
Day visitors putting pressure on Alpine Club toilet and drinking water. New facilities would need to resolve this conflict and / or physical separation. Access for members to drive in but not for general use. The gravel in the creek keeps aggrading, needs maintenance to avoid flooding. Gertrude Saddle - lots of people come to strife irrespective of the signs. Is there potential to move the carpark to get people away from Gertrude Saddle?
General support for Gertrude but would require separation and engineering to avoid the conflicts.
Quiet enjoyment of the facility and risk to inexperienced visitors.



## Barren Pk Spur Walkway and Treetop Viewing Structures



*A relatively low and geologically stable spur at the base of Barren Peak wraps around the visitor hub and provides dramatic elevated views of Milford Sound Piopiotahi. An upgrade of the existing track leading up the spur is proposed for able-bodied visitors with a bridge link provided directly behind the proposed visitors centre, which crosses over the common service lane. The track proposes to connect two treetop canopy viewing structures that are carefully configured to minimise*

*removal of mature Beech forest and to screen the built infrastructure of the visitor's hub below.*

Feedback
Proposal to take track higher than present.
Concerned about the visual impact of any lookout structure plus people on structure – will draw attention of people on water (which is main Milford experience). Is in favour of the trail development ideas for Milford, both for locals (safe recreation) and for visitors. As with Knobs flat comments (which I related to staying at Makarora), it enhances your visit if you can be up early or in the evening for a walk. What the Milford Infrastructure can cope with in terms of numbers
Realistically speaking how long do people stay in Milford Sounds. Generally, it is around 3 hours. Is it necessary to have lots of option?
Fiordland - every time you add something it creates pressure - creates an impact. What does it look like to the wider network not just a point-to-point issue but look at the whole scope in totality?
Price point may be an additional challenge - how much will people pay. Would you have to pay for tree top walk?
Less value in the Bowen Valley walk.
Visual impact concerns.
Visitor safety with natural hazards on Barren Pk face.
Starting to offer too many options at Piopiotahi. Keeping people there for longer will impact on infrastructure required, energy, water, sewage.

## Nature Walk Loop:



*To complement the existing foreshore boardwalk a new nature trail is proposed through the Beech forest to create a return loop. Proposed to provide a short walk experience, or alternative to the shuttle bus, for all ages and abilities with interpretation continued along the route.*

### Feedback

Already have the foreshore walk, available to everyone, free.

How long do you expect people to stay at Milford - how many options do they need? Unless you are staying overnight, unlikely to stay longer than 3hrs.

## Hine-Te-Awa Bowen Falls Experiences:



**HINE-TE-AWA BOWEN FALLS EXPERIENCES** (Lady) Hine-te-awa Bowen Falls is the tallest of two permanent waterfalls within the fiord and near the Freshwater Basin Node. It has a distinctive plume at its head, which adds to its visual interest and significance for Ngāi Tahu.

**HINE-TE-AWA BOWEN FALLS TOP LINKS** - A new fixed cable car up to the hanging Bowen Valley is proposed that would provide access to the top of Hine-te-awa Bowen Falls, via a nature walk, and toward the head of the Bowen River on a longer walking track. This would allow visitors to experience rising views over Milford Sound Piopiotahi, natural bush setting and dramatic views from an iconic lookout structure at the top of the Hine-te-awa Bowen Falls. In addition to aerial perspectives over the Falls and Delta below, longer views will be available over Milford Sound Piopiotahi, directly into Sinbad Valley and across to the steep northern faces of Rahoitu Mitre Peak.

It is proposed to provide visitors with a world-class activity, an alternative to the boat trip on the water. A cable car alignment would originate from a base building near the boat terminal and follow the steep alignment of the existing hydro pipeline. Although technically challenging and subject to significant detailed investigation, there is an opportunity to combine the provision of a cable car as part of the planned upgrade to the penstock infrastructure needed to service growing electricity demand.

Feedback
Some method of getting up the Bowen for a walkway and look out over Bowen Falls.
Filled with dread the thought of a cable car, the visual impact of something moving. Less valley up Bowen Valley than Gertrude. These new structures can adversely impact other people's views.
Hydro pipeline needs replacing at some time, potential for a walkway up it. Existing infrastructure up to the penstock. The masterplan proposes some travelator walkway to Bowen falls.
Need to consider why people visiting the area, what is their expectation? Thinks it is about natural beauty not necessarily a structure etc. Is this about a colonised landscape, again inconsistent with the vision. Foreshore walk - gives vistas already. Put people at the top of views, they have an impact on other's observation. Cruise boats are a visual impact but a temporal one. If you can see the fiord from the structure, then you can see the structure / people from the fiord.
The longer people stay the more impact they have on power, water, waste, and hazard exposure. Instead of adding to Milford, you could subtract - move some things out of Milford?
Does not fit with the vision of the plan, 'NZ as it was forever'
Duplication with Barren Peak.
Any commercial feasibility in this?
Concerned about the visual impact

Impacts on visual amenity natural beauty could be diminished the natural features of the landscape and visitor experience the stated purpose the landscaping visit experience in the stated purpose on the MOP plan talks about *New Zealand as it was for the future*. This infrastructure did not seem to fit the plan.

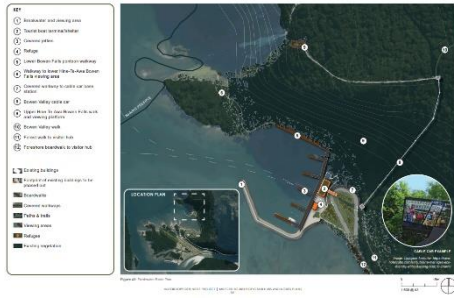
If there was infrastructure, would need to be concealed.

Questions as to who would use it.

Every time you add something it creates pressure - creates an impact. What does it look like to the wider network not just a point-to-point issue but look at the whole scope in totality.



## Lower Pontoon Walkway:



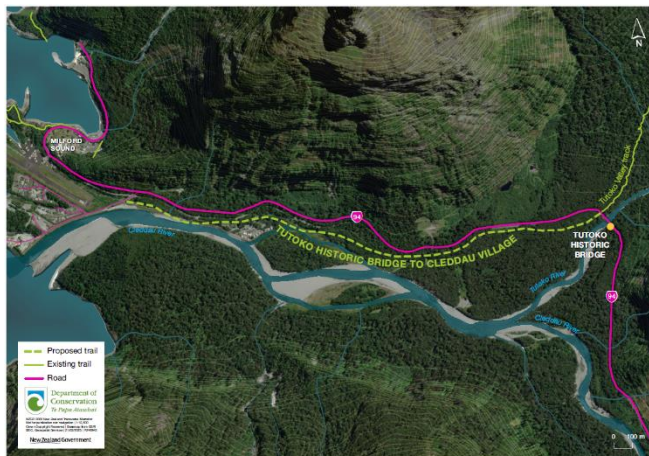
*This existing coastal and waterfall experience is currently accessed by a short, on-demand boat service. A new floating pontoon walkway is proposed to avoid rock fall hazards, linking the most northern jetty of the boat terminal with the Hine-te-awa Bowen Falls Delta.*

*It is proposed to connect to an existing track that takes visitors through the bush to Cemetery Point for unimpeded views out to Milford Sound Piopiotahi, and a boardwalk and lookout structure at the base of the dramatic Hine-te-awa Bowen Falls. Both will be enhanced to manage visitor growth while maintaining the sense of solitude and drama of the experience.*

### Feedback

Bowen lower pontoon - hazard assessment? Known rockfall, tree slide hazard. Sceptical re the hazards.

Miscellaneous (not depicted in the Masterplan but are additional potential opportunities):



**TUTOKO HISTORIC BRIDGE TO CLEDDAU VILLAGE WALKWAY:** A further opportunity exists to link Milford Sound Piopiotahi to the historic Tutoko River Bridge via a walkway, initially following the route of an existing informal walkway along the Cleddau Flood Protection Scheme to Milford Sound Lodge.

The walkway would then follow a new route away from the Milford Road corridor (where feasible) through to the historic Tutoko River Bridge. This would be an opportunity for visitors to safely walk to the Tutoko Bridge

and has been raised by residents as an important option to allow them to exercise safely off the State Highway.

#### Feedback

Have been canvassing DOC & NZTA for walking track to get people off the road.

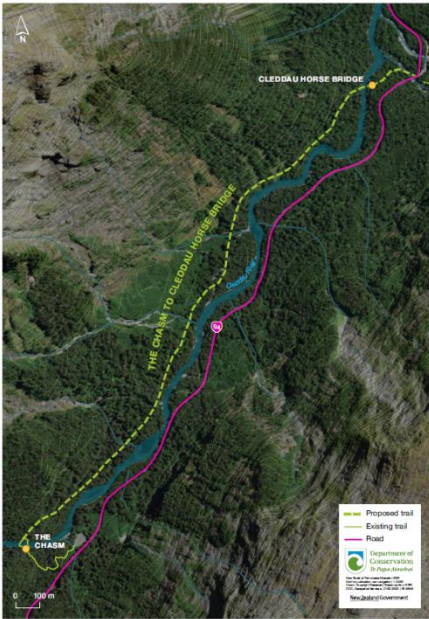
Safety, speed. Helpful but still an issue. Have an informal track to a reasonable standard but needs a foot access culvert. Strong advocate for free options for people who go to. Declares a conflict of interest as any track would benefit Milford Lodge guests.

Currently guests walk down the road. There is already a formed track, but not good enough for some guests. Missing a culvert pipe

Milford Sound residents do not have access to exercise tracks to recreate in. Residents exercise on the road, they wait for the traffic to die away.

There is a need for wider range of visitor to visit Milford Sound, enable a good experience without the cost.

Predator control tracks in place, there is also trek on the true lift to deep water basin. This track was well supported.



**THE CHASM TO CLEDDAU HORSE TRACK:** An opportunity exists to link the existing high standard short stop experience at The Chasm to the historic Cleddau Horse Bridge via a longer walking track on the true left bank of the Cleddau River. The Cleddau Horse Bridge is not currently a formal, managed visitor site.

This proposal would provide the opportunity to tell the story of the Cleddau Horse Bridge’s place in Milford Sound Piopiotahi history, particularly early proposals for walking access from Queenstown to Milford Sound. An alternative experience may be a short stop experience to the Cleddau Horse Bridge and return from the Milford Road at the Gulliver River bridge.

**Feedback**

Not discussed

## Wrap up

<b>General Context</b>
Putting together scopes for 7 engineering assessments in the transport work stream: visitor safety, hazard assessment, wider comparison as a network. Hope to put 7 tenders to market for consultants to complete the feasibility testing. Would take probably six months to scope out the proposed works from the contractors.
Looking at the proposal, what would the engineering and design look like. Costings - would go into the commercial workstream to help inform feasibility. Masterplan is to feasibility test and potentially look at next best option.
Aiming to get information to inform Cabinet paper June 2024.
Collate information into reports. Consultants can talk to people. MOP can keep people informed. Testing feasibility of what is in Masterplan, if it is not feasible, what is the next best option.
Will people outside the project team provide input into the brief and will agency experts help inform the tenders? Would stakeholders to be included with the consultations before they start testing the feasibility? Leaving that to the consultants to consult, possibly before the work is undertaken. This session has been about capturing local expertise.
Why was Milford Track not included given the profile? Was that intentionally left off by MOP? Sold as a Great Walk multi day one way. There are opportunities already for short day walks of Milford track. Drew a line before it, as it has a management regime in place already. Some suggestions re Sutherlands experience as new product on track, did not make the Masterplan.
Conservation is integral to the area and Tourism and Conservation go hand in hand.
How will this group be informed - local knowledge required. Feedback to be collated and feedback to the group to ensure that we have heard what has been said.

## Facilitation

<b>Facilitation Feedback</b>
Pre-reading was helpful
Small group so interactive - this size 11 worked well (including 1 online)
Two-hour duration was good
Online was very patchy but appreciated being able to participate in that way.
More representation. Good job of chairing the meeting
If the consultant feedback is looking good, just say that. If there is something already there that is good, why not build on that (e.g., trapping lines Mike mentioned)
Ideally would like to see the findings summarised. Want to see how their feedback is reflected
800,000 pax/year not represented here - we bring a parochial view to it. How is the user aspiration considered?
TNZ and Kantar to do international survey of masterplan objectives, to try to avoid our biases. Findings by end April
Would be good to overlay visitor survey and the findings from this session
Covid - national visitors, but only came once. Locals are the return visitors
Need to plan for future generation
We heard that MP needs to consider displacement - think it through as a system. travelator may displace people from a cruise which could be good from carbon footprint.
A loop track is not necessarily a complete loop. The loop may be completed via the hop-on, hop-off bus service