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**Subject:** 22-M-0070 - Talking Points - Interview with Tess McClure from The Guardian on the Milford Opportunities Project  
**Date:** Wednesday, 27 April 2022 9:46:00 am  
**Attachments:** [image002.jpg](#)

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Kia ora Neil

Please find below the talking points as per your email request.

Ngā mihi

**Anita Shannon**

Project Coordinator | Regional Visitor Planning Team

Department of Conservation | *Te Papa Atawhai*

s9(2)(a)

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**22-M-0070 - Talking Points - Interview with Tess McClure from The Guardian on the Milford Opportunities Project**

Please note that Minister Nash has also been asked for comment by the journalist, as have mana whenua.

**Key facts: Background and the need for government to take action**

- The breath-taking, isolated natural splendour of Milford Sound Piopiotahi is the jewel in the crown of New Zealand tourism and arguably the 8th wonder of the world. Piopiotahi has a rich cultural heritage and is home to unique geology, rare terrestrial and marine wildlife.
- The Milford Opportunities Project (MOP) was formed in 2017, due to concerns about the rapidly growing visitor numbers and ongoing pressures on Milford Sound Piopiotahi and the surrounding area. With the number of annual visitor's reaching 870,000 in 2019, the natural environment, cultural values and infrastructure at this UNESCO World Heritage site were experiencing significant and increasing pressures.
- Results from surveys over two years 2017-2018 (both NZ public and international tourist responses) indicated dissatisfaction with congestion at peak times, road safety and limited infrastructure to support a quality visitor experience.
- Despite the reduction in visitor numbers due to the COVID pandemic, there is still the need for integrated management and governance to activate benefits for mana whenua, conservation, communities, and visitors, while managing the impacts of visitors.
- The MOP Masterplan is based on a foundation of protection for the natural and cultural values and regenerative tourism, strongly aligned with the strategic direction of DOC's Heritage and Visitor Strategy and the New Zealand-Aotearoa Government Tourism Strategy, the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment reports on sustainable tourism, the Future of Tourism report and the Direction of Tourism.
- The MOP's independent, collaborative approach illustrates how strategic long-term thinking could better provide integrated future management and presents an opportunity

for the Government to harness ground-breaking innovative solutions.

- It has remained a ministerial priority across successive governments since its inception and is a critical project for exploring how we deliver sustainable visitor experiences while supporting conservation outcomes.

### **Talking point topic one: Milford opportunities Project what is it trying to achieve**

- Milford Sound Piopiotahi is a national taonga and arguably New Zealand's most recognised destination globally. It is of great significance to mana whenua and our national identity.
- Working collaboratively with Ngāi Tahu, Crown agencies, industry and local communities, the MOP uses an innovative approach to plan for the long-term future of Milford Sound Piopiotahi and its surrounding areas.
- In June 2021, the MOP delivered a visionary non-statutory Masterplan to Cabinet aimed at protecting the taonga, while creating a world-class visitor experience that would benefit Milford Sound Piopiotahi, surrounding areas and support conservation.

### **Talking point topic two: The Masterplan**

- The MOP Masterplan was based on extensive research and collaborative long-term destination planning.
- The Masterplan seeks to showcase Milford Sound Piopiotahi and surrounding areas through a curated visitor journey that celebrates place, the power of nature and the stories of the past. It intends on creating a world-class visitor experience that benefits Milford Sound Piopiotahi, surrounding communities and supports conservation goals.
- To support its 50 year vision, the Masterplan was guided by the following five overarching objectives:
  1. The role of Ngāi Tahu as mana whenua and Treaty partner is acknowledged, and Te Ao Māori values are embedded throughout.
  2. Milford Sound Piopiotahi is protected now and into the future, recognizing its World Heritage status.
  3. The visitor experience is world class and enhances conservation and community.
  4. Infrastructure is effective, efficient, resilient and sustainable (including access methods).
  5. Visitors benefit the communities of Te Anau, Southland and Otago.
- As part of an integrated solution, the Masterplan details a range of recommendations that, if enacted, would bring transformative change to Milford Sound Piopiotahi and surrounding areas. These include:
  - a. Restricting private vehicle access to Milford Sound Piopiotahi through a permit and public transport system
  - b. Charging international visitors for access to Milford Sound Piopiotahi based on the value of the place, creating a self-funded sustainable system
  - c. Prohibiting cruise ships from entering Milford Sound Piopiotahi
  - d. Closing the aerodrome (fixed-wing runway) at Milford Sound Piopiotahi and replacing it with an expanded heliport to allow for significant reorganisation of the infrastructure and visitor flow at Milford Sound Piopiotahi
  - e. Redesigning the facilities and attractions on the Milford Road to encourage longer and slower visitor experiences. The primary transport would be regular hop on/hop off bus services
  - f. Making Te Anau the primary transport hub for the journey to Milford Sound

Piopiotaahi

- g. Introducing a new governance and management structure for Milford Sound Piopiotaahi village and surface waters of the Sound to the Tasman Sea and the Milford Road corridor to improve efficiency and function, potentially with special legislation to enable change
- h. Using the revenue collected from visitors to increase the funding for conservation, mana whenua and community aspirations, transport, and the visitor experience

#### **Talking point topic three: DOC's role in the MOP**

- DOC has been involved with the MOP since its inception with Southland District Council. DOC supports the direction of the master planning work and sees the MOP's independent, collaborative approach as an opportunity to develop strategic long-term thinking to better provide integrated future management in high pressure locations.
- While the Masterplan is a major achievement, more work is needed to realise the Masterplan's full potential. Feasibility testing of the Masterplan's recommendations and preparations for project delivery will be led by the MOP Unit.
- Any proposed legislation or changes to existing legislation would go to Cabinet for consideration.

#### **Talking point topic four: Next steps**

- As part of the package to support the tourism sector and communities to recover and reset from COVID-19, last year Cabinet approved \$15 million to fund a detailed planning and feasibility assessment of the MOP Masterplan recommendations for the next two years and agreed to the formation of a MOP Unit and Board to oversee the work.
- The MOP is now at the beginning of this next stage of planning and feasibility work. This will include further analysis, consultation and public engagement and is expected to take two years.
- The MOP Board will guide the project and includes two Ngāi Tahu representatives, local and central government representatives, as well as skill-based members.
- The Minister of Conservation, Minister of Tourism and Minister of Transport oversees the MOP Board.

#### **Talking point topic five: Wider impacts on tourism management in Aotearoa**

- The MOP is a valuable test case in sustainable tourism management for Aotearoa New Zealand.
- Through the MOP, there is the ability to test different ways of managing places, exploring appropriate visitor limits and access, and ways visitors might directly contribute to conservation.
- DOC is applying destination planning principles at other key locations, such as Tongariro Alpine Crossing, Te Manahuna ki uta (the Mackenzie Basin and Aoraki) and the Glacier area of South Westland on the West Coast of the South Island – Te Tai Poutini.
- This approach of collaborative long-term destination planning may also inform statutory plan reviews, business planning and investment decisions for key locations.

**Contact: Claire Spencer, Manager Regional Visitor Planning, s9(2)(a)**



From: Neil Deans <[Neil.Deans@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Neil.Deans@parliament.govt.nz)>  
Date: 21/04/2022 4:15 pm  
Subject: FW: Milford Opportunities interview  
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Cc: Huia Forbes <[Huia.Forbes@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Huia.Forbes@parliament.govt.nz)>, Sven Grabow <[Sven.Grabow@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Sven.Grabow@parliament.govt.nz)>, Sam Green <[Sam.Green@parliament.govt.nz](mailto:Sam.Green@parliament.govt.nz)>  
Hi team

Could we please have the summary discussion points for the Minister on the Milford Opportunities Project as requested below, by next Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> "April 10.00 am, please?"

Many thanks



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**From:** Julie Jacobson  
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**Subject:** Milford Opportunities interview

Hi both

Could we get some notes for the minister for an interview with Tess McClure who writes for The Guardian (NZ correspondent) on the MOP

Including what it's trying to achieve, why government action was needed in that region, how conservation and tourism can compete as priorities, what the intentions are for balancing those, and lessons from Milford for the rest of the country.

The interview is Thursday morning so if it could be with the Minister Wed morning that would be great.

Thanks

**Julie Jacobson** | Press Secretary  
**Office of Hon Kiri Allan**  
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Proactively released