

Appendix Two: Summary of proposed allocation process

Four operators currently hold concessions that enable them to land aircraft in Westland Tai Poutini National Park. Concessions expired in June 2025 but have been permitted to run on until an allocation process is put in place.

We are undertaking targeted consultation on the proposed allocation process outlined below.

Objectives

In developing the proposed approach, we have had the following objectives in mind –

- Protects conservation values and the unique character of Westland Tai Poutini National Park as outlined in the Westland Tai Poutini National Park Management Plan;
- Reflects an effective Treaty partnership between the Department and Ngāi Tahu (as required by section 4 of the Conservation Act 1987);
- Provides certainty and workability for operators
- Enables a streamlined and efficient administration process for the Department;
- Is transparent, simple, and easily understood; and
- Supports the delivery of safe and high-quality visitor experiences.

Results of the Expression of Interest

The Department released an expression of interest on 14 April 2025 to better understand likely demand for concessions and inform the design of the allocation process. The expression of interest closed on 5 May 2025 and showed that overall demand for landings is significantly higher than the current allocations.

- Eleven operators (including current concessionaires) expressed an interest in obtaining a landing concession
- Eight operators expressed an interest in both scenic flights and positioning recreationists; two were solely interested in positioning recreationists, and one expressed an interest only in scenic flight landings
- All operators were interested in operating all year-round. However, the number of proposed landings varied significantly, ranging from fewer than 100 landings per year to as many as 100 landings per day

Allocation methodology

We are proposing to run an open allocation process for concessions

Applications would be assessed against these criteria:

- **Operator experience:** an operator’s past performance and experience in this or related operations that support their ability to comply with the regulatory requirements, particularly strict safety requirements.
- **Impacts on and benefits to conservation:** the operator’s contribution to achieving conservation outcomes including processes in place to mitigate visitor impacts and preserve the historic and natural values of the area.
- **Recognising Treaty rights and interests:** how the operator raises visitor’s awareness, knowledge, and understanding of Ngāi Tahu’s connection to and aspirations for the area.
- **Offerings to visitors:** an operator’s offering to visitors, including how the offering aligns with the vision and outcomes outlined in the Management Plan.
- **Benefits to the local area:** the benefits that the operator brings to the local area, including economic, social, cultural, and educational benefits.

An Assessment Panel would assess concession applications. The Panel would have knowledge and experience related to planning and managing tourism operations in within the Park, as well as knowledge of the conservation and cultural values of these areas. The Panel would be made up of representatives from the Department of Conservation, the West Coast Conservation Board, and Ngāti (Kāti) Māhaki ki Makaawhio and / or Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu.

Concession terms

We are proposing to issue concessions for a 10-year term to align with the approach taken in other parts of the country. Expiry dates for all concessions granted under this allocation process and any granted during the 10-year term would be aligned.

Increasing utilisation of allocation

Current allocations are significantly underutilised. Some operators consistently use their full allocation at certain landing sites, while others do not. This variation is largely attributed to operational challenges such as weather conditions and the accessibility of specific landing sites. Given the high demand for a concession and aircraft landings, under-utilisation is an issue. If some operators do not use their full allocation, then others unnecessarily miss out.

We are seeking feedback on ways to increase utilisation

- Taking a different approach to allocating for operators that land on a regular and ongoing basis versus those that are interested in lower or more occasional landings.
- Transitioning from annual limits to daily limits.
- Establishing a flexible pool of allocation that operators could access on a temporary basis during the calendar year.
- Encouraging operators to surrender any unused allocation to the Department for re-distribution.
- Reviewing utilisation every three years and adjusting allocations if required.

Approach to fees

The Department is progressing a pricing review for aircraft landings on public conservation land (at national level). The findings of this review will be applied to the concessions subject to this allocation process with sufficient notice to ensure operators can prepare and adjust accordingly. As part of the review, the Department will consider whether to retain the current per person approach to aircraft activity fees or if we should shift to alternative approaches (e.g. per aircraft, per aircraft passenger seating capacity, per aircraft weight, or a percentage of gross revenue).

The Department is considering the introduction of:

- **Seasonal activity fees** such as summer and winter pricing
- **Minimum activity fees** (for example 10% of the full activity fee) or similar that would incentivise operators to use their allocation or return it to the Department for re-distribution.