



Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Minute of Decision

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Milford Opportunities Project: Delivering Change

Portfolios **Tourism and Hospitality / Conservation**

On 9 April 2025, the Cabinet Economic Policy Committee (ECO):

Background

- 1 **noted** that:
 - 1.1 the Milford Opportunities Project (MOP) was established in 2017 to address the challenges and opportunities to manage increasing visitors at Milford Sound Piopiotahi;
 - 1.2 the previous government agreed to development of a Master Plan to improve the future management and protection of Milford Sound Piopiotahi [DEV-19-MIN-0159];
- 2 **noted** that, on 27 June 2024, the MOP Board delivered a business case to the Minister of Conservation and the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality setting out projects for investment and policy, governance, and organisational changes to deliver the Master Plan's objectives;
- 3 **noted** that, while the business case makes a clear and compelling case for change, some of the ideas reflect wider systemic issues around how public conservation land is managed while others require further analysis to get right, such as how access charging might work in practice or prioritising the capital projects that represent the best investment for delivering a better world-class experience and outcomes;

Government response and immediate policy decisions

- 4 **agreed** that Milford Sound Piopiotahi will continue to be part of Fiordland National Park/Te Rua-o-te-Moko and not have separate statutory governance, management, and delivery entities or a separate management plan;
- 5 **agreed** that the Government will consider an amenities area for Milford Sound Piopiotahi with unique planning rules to support economic activity in the area;
- 6 **agreed** that the Government will not prevent cruise ship access to Milford Sound Piopiotahi and both it and public access to State Highway 94 from Te Anau to Milford will continue and remain unchanged for Government purposes at this time, with further work to consider safety, natural hazard risk, vehicle congestion, carparking issues, mitigating the environmental effects of these activities and any further conditions of access;

- 7 **agreed** that Milford Sound Piopiotahi aerodrome will remain open at this time, with questions of long-term ownership, funding, and resilience to be addressed in the future alongside the Ministry of Transport;
- 8 **noted** that the Department of Conservation will deliver capital improvements at Milford Sound Piopiotahi over the next 12 to 18 months that align with MOP Board's business case proposals;
- 9 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation and Minister for Tourism and Hospitality will consider additional projects for Milford Sound Piopiotahi that could be funded through the International Conservation and Tourism Visitor Levy (IVL), subject to further decisions about the allocation of IVL revenue as required;

Delivering change

- 10 **agreed** that the Minister of Conservation will lead the development of the Government's response to the Milford Opportunities Project proposals, as a part of the Minister's ongoing work delivering on the Conservation portfolio priorities, in collaboration with the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality;
- 11 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation, in collaboration with the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, will make decisions on detailed proposals for Milford Sound Piopiotahi to deliver the response set out in Appendix Three to the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0053, and will seek Cabinet's approval for any specific decisions arising from delivering this response that have significant cross-government policy or financial implications;
- 12 **approved** the public release of the MOP's business case and the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0053 as the Government's response.

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis (Chair)
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Dr Shane Reti
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Simon Watts
Hon Chris Penk
Hon Penny Simmonds
Hon Andrew Hoggard
Hon Nicola Grigg
Hon Scott Simpson
Hon Mark Patterson
Simon Court MP

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Office of Hon Chris Bishop
Office of Hon Simon Watts
Officials Committee for ECO