



Milford Sound Piopiotahi Programme Board meeting summary

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| Dates: | 12–13 November 2025 |
| Venue: | Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill |
| Chair: | Penny Nelson (DOC) |
| Board members: | Jenn Bestwick (Independent), Nora Burghart (MBIE), Rob Phillips (Environment Southland), Jana Davis (Ngāi Tahu), Nadia Wesley-Smith (Ngāi Tahu), Barry Bragg (Ngāi Tahu), Dave Beeche (Independent), Stephanie Rowe (DOC). |
| Other attendees: | DOC Milford Sound Piopiotahi programme team, Michael Skerrett, Muriel Johnstone (Ngāi Tahu/ex MOP Board) |

Summary

- The Milford Sound Piopiotahi Programme Board held its first hui in Invercargill on 12–13 November 2025.
- Board members were joined by Michael Skerrett and Muriel Johnstone who were closely involved in the Milford Opportunities Project (MOP). We are grateful that they were able to share knowledge and experience from their many years of leadership in this work.
- The Board agreed on the importance of building on MOP's work using the preferred option (Option 4) from the MOP business case, modified by subsequent Ministerial decisions.
- The Board is focused on action. There is an intention to identify quick wins and trial new solutions in this phase, while keeping an eye to longer-term transformational change.
- Board members have come into this work keen to share their time and knowledge, and to ensure DOC and others are able to deliver improved outcomes at Milford Sound Piopiotahi.
- Advisory groups are likely to be formed in the new year to support the work and ensure strong community connection and advice. A decision on the form of these groups will be taken in December.

Board objectives

The Board agreed six objectives for the programme, building on those of MOP, but noting that these will evolve as the programme develops:

1. Design and implement an outstanding visitor experience that incentivises and enables the future use we want (e.g. guides and public transport over private vehicles, decarbonisation)
2. Work in partnership with Ngāi Tahu to establish a cultural footprint and a visitor journey that reflects the significance of this place to them, respects tikanga, activates manuhiritanga, and restores connection for mana whenua
3. Address ageing infrastructure by investing to meet visitor needs and for future resilience
4. Improve the state of nature by using revenue from a visitor charge to create a sustainable system, enhancing biodiversity and facilitating broader regional benefits
5. Improve decision-making processes via conservation system modernisation legislation that will increase certainty and avoid siloed approaches
6. Prioritise safety by planning for natural hazards and giving clear messages to visitors, staff, and public.

Next meeting

The next Programme Board meeting will be held online on 11 December 2025. The draft agenda includes discussion on tsunami risk tolerance and risk management, the definition of world class visitor experience, and proposals for quick wins this summer.