

Sustainable Destinations: **Milford Piopiotahi Programme update**

June 2026

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DOC's work along the Milford corridor:

- Sustainable Destinations Programme
- Visitor Experience Upgrades:
 - Te Anau BAU
 - Flood recovery
 - International Visitor Levy
- Conservation Amendment Bill
- Access charging



MOP Business Case recommendations (Option 4)

- Immersive nature experience celebrating the area's cultural heritage
- Safer, slower, richer visitor journey with new experiences along the corridor
- Visitors encouraged to use coaches and guided tours through concessions and reduced, bookable parking
- \$100 international visitor charge to fund facilities and conservation
- Independent statutory board & delivery unit
- New commercial opportunities for private investment
- Steps to give effect to Ngāi Tahu rights, interests and aspirations
- Retention of aerodrome and cruise-ship access – with impacts managed and reduced over time



What Government is progressing from the MOP Business Case

- IVL and DOC Investment in new and improved visitor experiences
- Ngāi Tahu's cultural footprint and interests
- Collaboration on hazards and congestion solutions
- Spatial planning
- Revenue and investment opportunities (including an access charge)
- New management tools such as a 'Special Amenities Area'
- Managing concessions differently, providing greater certainty and further opportunities where we can

Key differences

- Milford Sound Piopiotahi remains in Fiordland National Park with no separate governance entity
- Funding is likely to be significantly lower and heavily reliant on the introduction of an international visitor charge.

Sustainable Destinations: **Piopiotahi Milford Sound**

The programme is implementing the government's 2025 response to the Milford Opportunities Project (MOP). It is guided by an independent advisory board with a focus on:

- Immediate visitor experience improvements and increased cultural presence
- Transport and spatial planning
- Revenue and investment opportunities
- Infrastructure plans
- Long-term governance and operational management model



Conservation Amendment Bill

Work is underway to deliver changes to the Conservation Act which will enable:

- the introduction of a new international visitor access charge,
- improvements to the concessions system and
- a new approach to management planning.

Have your say

- **The Bill** - The Environment Committee is [seeking submissions on the Conservation Amendment Bill](#) by 13 July
- **Conservation Policy Statement** - DOC is also [seeking feedback on proposed content for the first National Conservation Policy Statement](#) by 10 august



Visitor Experience Upgrades

DOC is delivering immediate visitor experience upgrades along the Milford corridor, funded by:

- International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy
- 2020 Flood Recovery Programme
- DOC's local budget

Priorities:

- The Chasm
- Key Summit
- Deepwater Basin
- Hine Papiwai Lake Marian
- The Divide



Transport Planning Group

Current state

- Visitor demand is growing - pressures during specific time periods
- Safety concerns on Milford Road are escalating
- Problems are long standing – collective action is needed
- Govt. expects unrestricted access

Broad areas of agreement

- **Reducing private/rental vehicles** is the key lever – international boat tour customers key demographic
- **Park and ride** seen as a key part of the solution – though presents logistical/resourcing challenges
- **Parking as a controlled activity** - reduce car parks (once viable alternatives are in place)
- The visitor experience design & tourism system alignment is critical

Workshop 17 June to develop a preferred transport concept

“Milford Road is a technical drive... one mistake you have a crash.”

Short-term priorities

DOC, MSTL and Milford Road Alliance



Pariora (Little Tahiti)
Entrance congestion/safety
Risk: Sunk costs 3 – 4 yr life



DWB walkways
Upgrades incl. 200m boardwalk
Risk: Costs & timeframes



The Bowl
Overflow carparking
Surface improvements



FWB Terminal congestion
Managed access MSTL/MRA
Risk: SH94 unrestricted access

Supporting work

- Park & Ride plan – electronic road signage, Milford shuttles, assessing park & ride east of Homer Tunnel
- Paid parking Cleddau & DWB – assessment only
- Communications and behaviour change

Sustainable Destinations – Milford Sound Piopiotahi

milfordproject@doc.govt.nz

Spatial Planning for Milford Sound Piopiotahi

June 2026

Community engagement



Purpose of spatial planning session

Seek your views on the village layout and understand your priorities to inform planning:

- The Milford Opportunities Project proposed a wide variety of changes
- Funding for change is limited and tied to an access charge
- We're keen to hear your focus areas for improvement, challenges and opportunities

We want to improve:

1. Visitor Experience

Creating an arrival and on-the-ground experience worthy of the place.

Focus on two key visitor journeys



2. Ngāi Tahu Presence

Ngāi Tahu is present in the journey,
their position as mana whenua is clear

3. Safety / Natural Hazard Risk

Minimise worker/visitor exposure to
natural hazards



1. Queenstown coach visitors

- 45% of total visitors
- time-poor, cruise focused
- need for smooth/timely arrivals to the Terminal
- short stops in the Corridor to support coordinated arrivals at the Ferry Terminal

2. Te Anau/Corridor

- travel is at a slower pace, seek deeper connection, spend more time exploring
- need for uplifted stops and experiences in the corridor

Minimise time spent in high-risk areas

Enable faster paced visitor journey in Piopiotahi

Resolve congestion to support efficient movement

Make better use of lower risk areas (Milford road corridor)

Recap: MOP engagement Milford village

Parking

- Parking restrictions will need careful management.
- Boaties can take up sig. space, this parking should be paid and bookable
- Climbers, conservationists, locals want to access the places they love and avoid drawing crowds

“The big worry for me is that this place is my home. I don’t want to lose my home...the place where I live and also the things I go and do.”

Infrastructure and facilities

- Facilities not fit for purpose but keep construction to a minimum and must maintain the natural essence of the place
- Increased walks and wet weather activities desired

“Our work hours, they’re always changing, so you really need flexibility to be able to access the outdoors. We need a flexible system.”

Community and worker accommodation

- Valued tight-knit village and sense of belonging
- Support addressing complex, deep-seated challenges in Piopiotahi but need to protect community and place
- Oppose large staff accommodation block – need to cater to a range of preferences and life stages, separate to visitors
- Natural hazard risks are generally understood
- Strong need for social facilities, including multi-use communal spaces

“Doesn’t feel like you’re going to this magical nature place. I guess you can’t change the car parks, but it feels like capitalism. When you get here. You’ve got beautiful landscapes. But then it’s a carpark.”



Current state visitor experience

- The arrival and village experience falls short of expectations
- There is little acknowledgement of Ngāi Tahu
- Infrastructure is outdated and not designed for today's visitor
- The experience lacks a conservation story
- Congestion at key times



Leases mean
limited ability
to reconfigure

- Major reconfiguration will depend on collaboration
- Any change requires negotiation, staging, and long-term planning
- Some locations have room to change, others are constrained

Foreshore Redevelopment and Barren Spur



Proposal improved foreshore experience with story and views prioritised, endemic planting, enabling conservation story and Ngāi Tahu cultural presence.

Proposal: improvements to Milford Sound Lookout

? Do you agree that we should prioritise the foreshore to improve the visitor experience?

? Do you support expanding Milford Sound Lookout (Barren Spur) to serve as both a lookout and a 15m capacity evacuation point?



Tauranga Waka Landing



Recognition of waka landing site

The waka landing site is an important site at Piopiotahi for Ngāi Tahu. We want to ensure that visitors and mana whenua can enjoy this site and connect with its cultural significance.



Staff accommodation at Cleddau village

- Concessionaires hold leases for staff accommodation and utilities (e.g. waste water treatment plant) throughout Cleddau village
- Tsunami risk for workers staying overnight
- Unplanned layout, varying building conditions
- Cost implications for businesses

? What do you think our top priorities should be when planning for staff accommodation over the long term?

Deepwater Basin



The white house

New toilets

Carpark improvements

Boat ramp improvements

DOC owns the wharf, with Fiordland Lobster Company holding head lease and administering use.

Area used for fishing, kayaking and scuba diving.

DOC manages the carparks, offered free of charge for recreational boat users.

Any final comments?

- ? Have we captured all the changes required to:
- make Milford safer,
 - reflect Ngāi Tahu as mana whenua, and
 - make things better for residents and visitors
- ? Is anything missing?

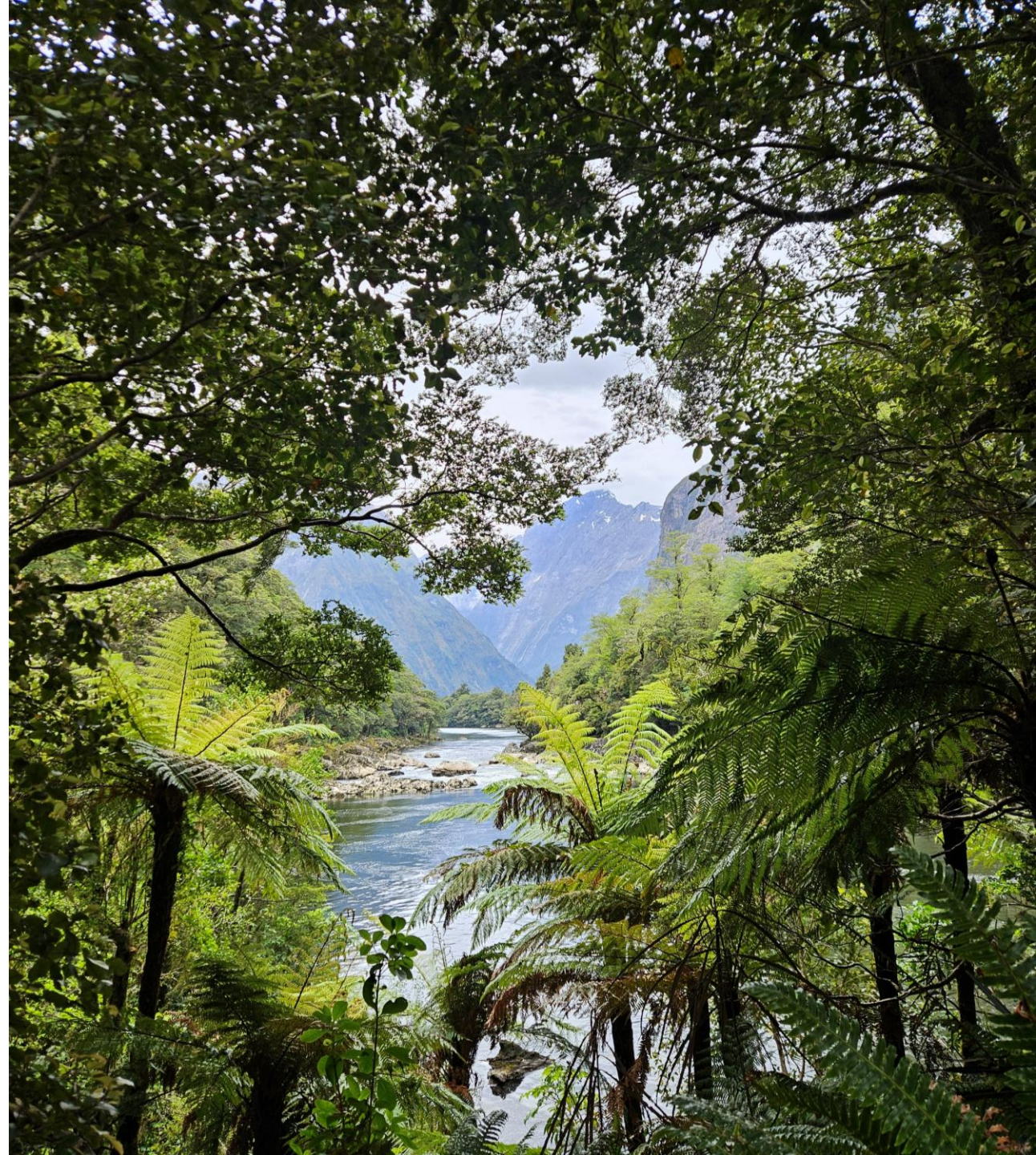


International visitor access charging

Cameron Loader, Senior Policy Advisor
Carl Walrond, Programme Manager



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Context



- DOC is facing funding challenges
- Access charges could create significant additional funding for conservation
- They could also help create a fairer system where visitors contribute to the experiences they use

The Conservation Amendment Bill would allow DOC to charge international visitors for access to some conservation land

- Key details would be set out in regulations
- We are seeking your input now because regulations take time to draft
- If the Bill becomes law, we aim to start charging in summer 2027/28

We are seeking your views on:

Proposed details for regulations:

- What areas will access charges apply to?
- What goes into setting the rates?
- What discounts, exemptions and waivers should apply?

Other topics:

- Initial thoughts on how to spend the money
- Initial thoughts on implementation



MOP Stage 3 feedback on an international visitor access charge

The IVAC is an important step towards delivering substantial change for tourism and conservation in Piopiotahi Milford Sound, building on Milford Opportunities Project recommendations.

Kantar market research

79% of international visitors support an access fee, seen as “overdue”

- Willingness to pay in the range of **\$90-\$110** (lower from AU visitors).
- Visitors expect to pay for World Heritage Sites and National Parks.
- Minimal deterrence to visiting NZ (**<1%**).
- Strong expectation investment is clear and visible and goes into conservation at place.

“People will pay. We’ve got a world-class asset on our doorstep... Don’t have to discount, don’t need to make it cheap because that will devalue it.”

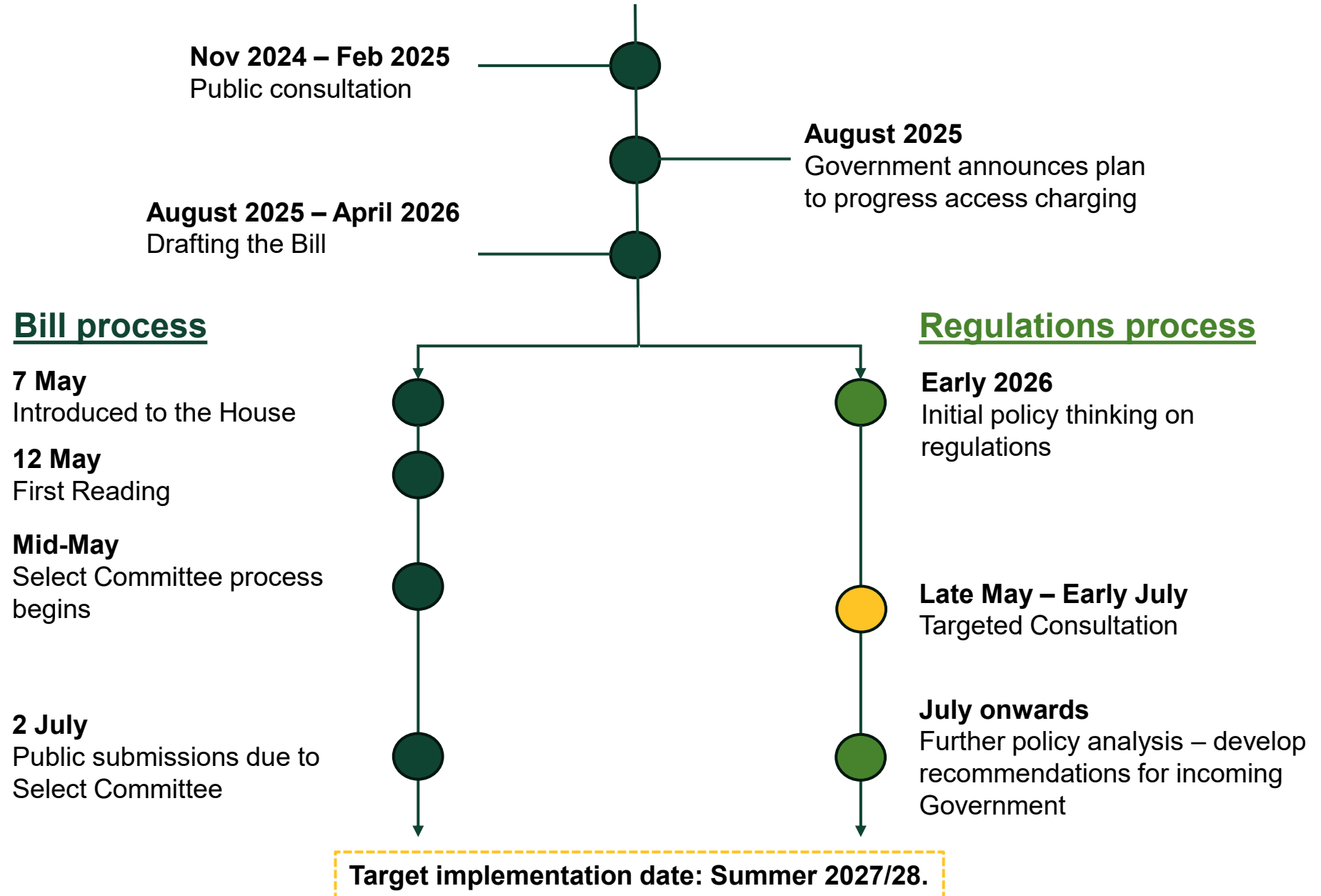
Stakeholder feedback

Stakeholders supported an IVAC provided it goes into protecting and enhancing Piopiotahi Milford Sound and Fiordland.

- There was consensus visitors should contribute more to the nature and facilities they enjoy.
- Tourism levies (e.g. IVL) should be planned collectively with comms on where the money goes.

“If you charge a levy (which we absolutely support), you’ve got to add value at every step of the visitor experience.”

Timeline – legislation and regulations



Where could access charges apply?

The Bill says that:

- Access charging can only happen where it would be cost-effective
- Sites must have high international visitor numbers or high costs for visitor infrastructure/facilities

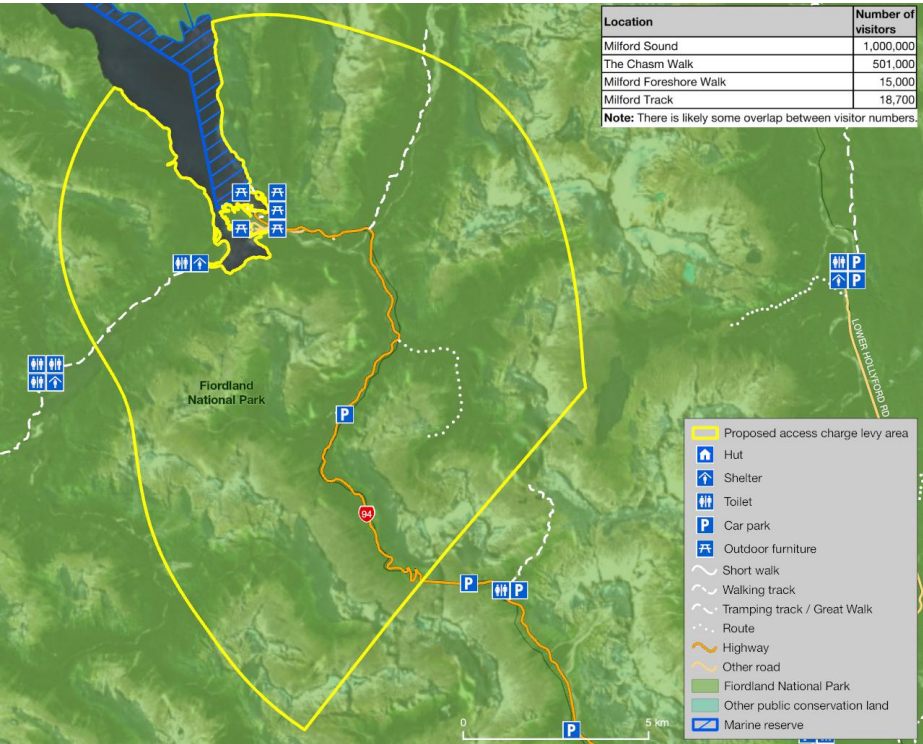
Initially, we are investigating four sites, including Piopiotahi, Milford Sound



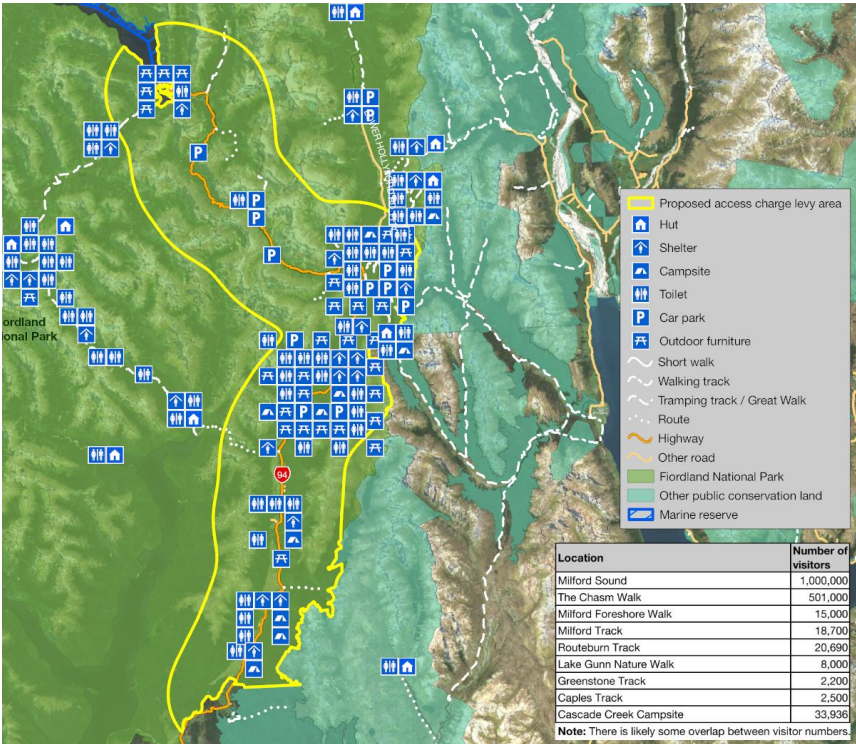
Where should the charging boundary be for Piopiotahi / Milford Sound?

- Considerations: impacts to revenue, costs to implement, simplicity for users, and compliance

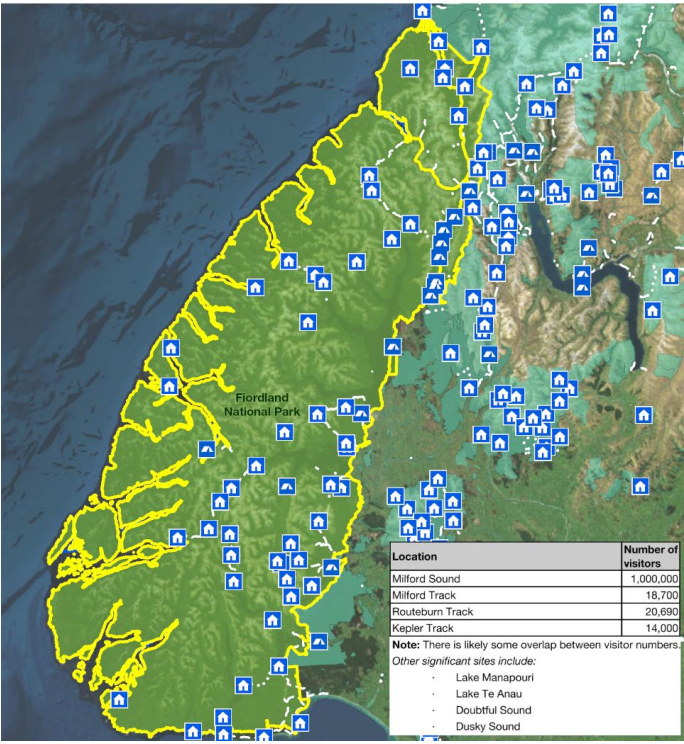
Milford Basin



Milford



Te Rua o Te Moko / Fiordland National Park

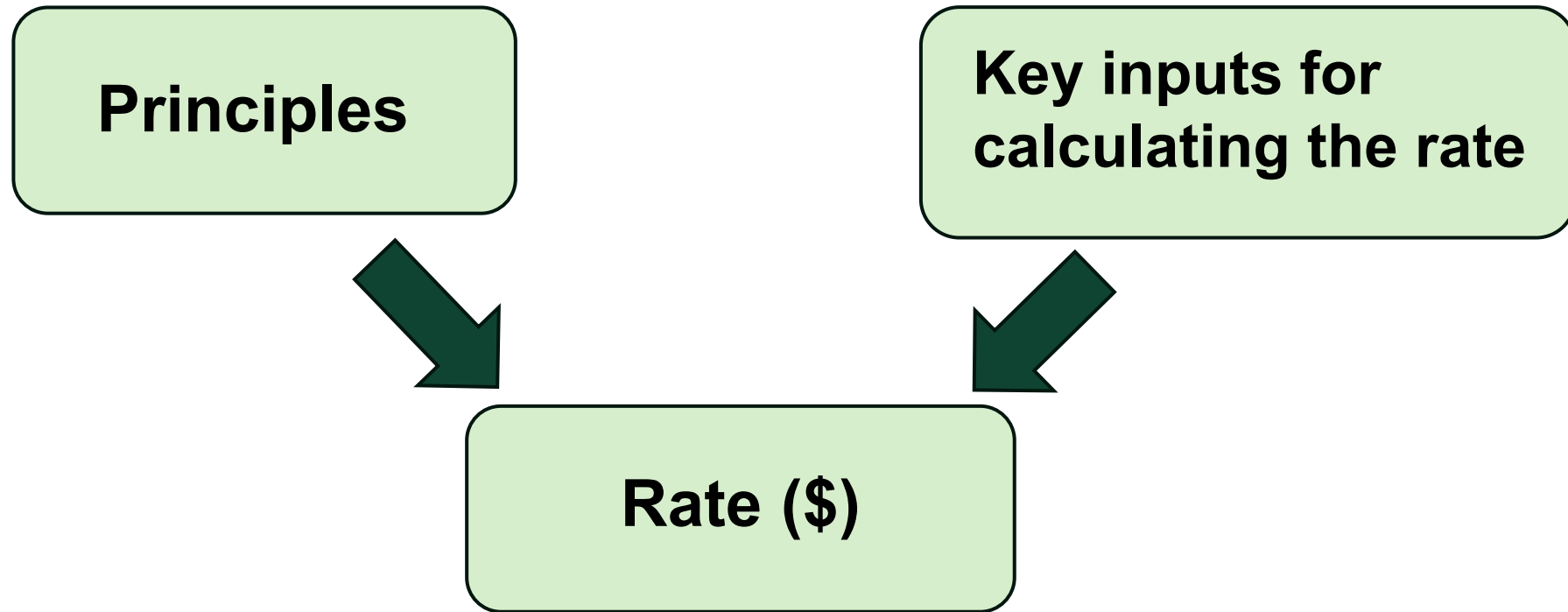


Questions

Where should charging boundaries be set for Piopiotahi / Milford Sound? What are the key areas to include?

Are there other areas which you think are appropriate for access charges?

Considerations for setting access charging rates



What principles should underpin the rate?

Effectiveness The rate should generate stable revenue that is:

- greater than the cost of running the charge, and
- sufficient to contribute to improving the visitor experience.

Reasonableness The rate should consider the:

- cost of providing the experience,
- ability and willingness of visitors to pay, and
- impact on local businesses.

Transparency Treaty partners, stakeholders and the public are informed about rates, and have an opportunity to provide input.

Questions: What are your thoughts? Have we missed anything?



What inputs should be used to calculate the rate?

Proposed inputs:



Questions

- What are your thoughts? Have we missed anything?
- Are there any wider considerations for setting access charging rates that we have missed?

What discounts, exemptions and waivers should there be?

Discounts (reduced price)

- Age based or seasonal discounts
- Multi park passes

Exemptions (do not have to pay at all)

- International scientists
- International delegates

Set in regulations

Waivers (no charges on a temporary basis)

- Operational failures (e.g. booking system is down)
- Degraded experiences
- Local or national significant events

Set by operational policy

Questions

- Who should get a discount or exemption?
- When should waivers apply?
- How can we keep the system simple while still being fair?



What could the money be spent on?

Currently, the Bill sets out that the purpose of access charging is to:

Help fund maintaining and enhancing the visitor experience on conservation land (and collecting the levies).

We think the 'visitor experience' includes:

- **Biodiversity work** (e.g. protecting native species and ecosystems)
- **Visitor infrastructure** (e.g. tracks, huts, toilets, signage)
- **Culture and heritage work** (e.g. protecting historic places and supporting cultural presence and storytelling)



Where should the money be spent?

Our initial thinking is that revenue allocation might look like:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| Priority 1 | Cover the operational cost of the charge |
| Priority 2 | Maintain and improve the site where the charge is collected (e.g. Milford) |
| Priority 3 | Improve other visitor experiences in the region |
| Priority 4 | Support maintenance of visitor experiences across the wider national network |
- We need to do further work to figure out how this would work in practice.

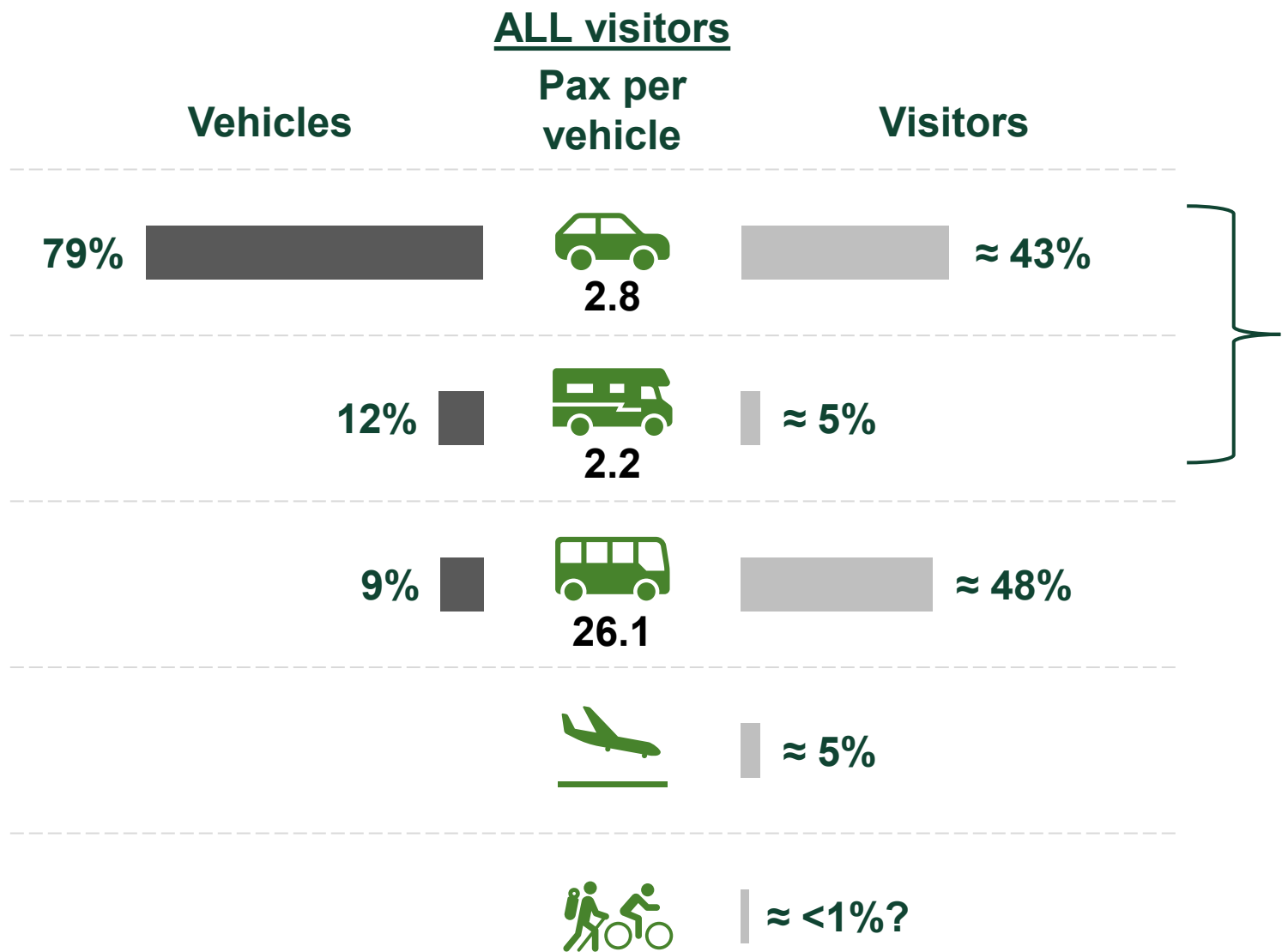
Questions

- What is important to you when you think about what makes up the 'visitor experience'?
- How should Iwi/Hapū, local communities and stakeholders be involved in setting investment priorities?

Implementing international visitor access charges



Visitor travel modes to Piopiotahi Milford Sound

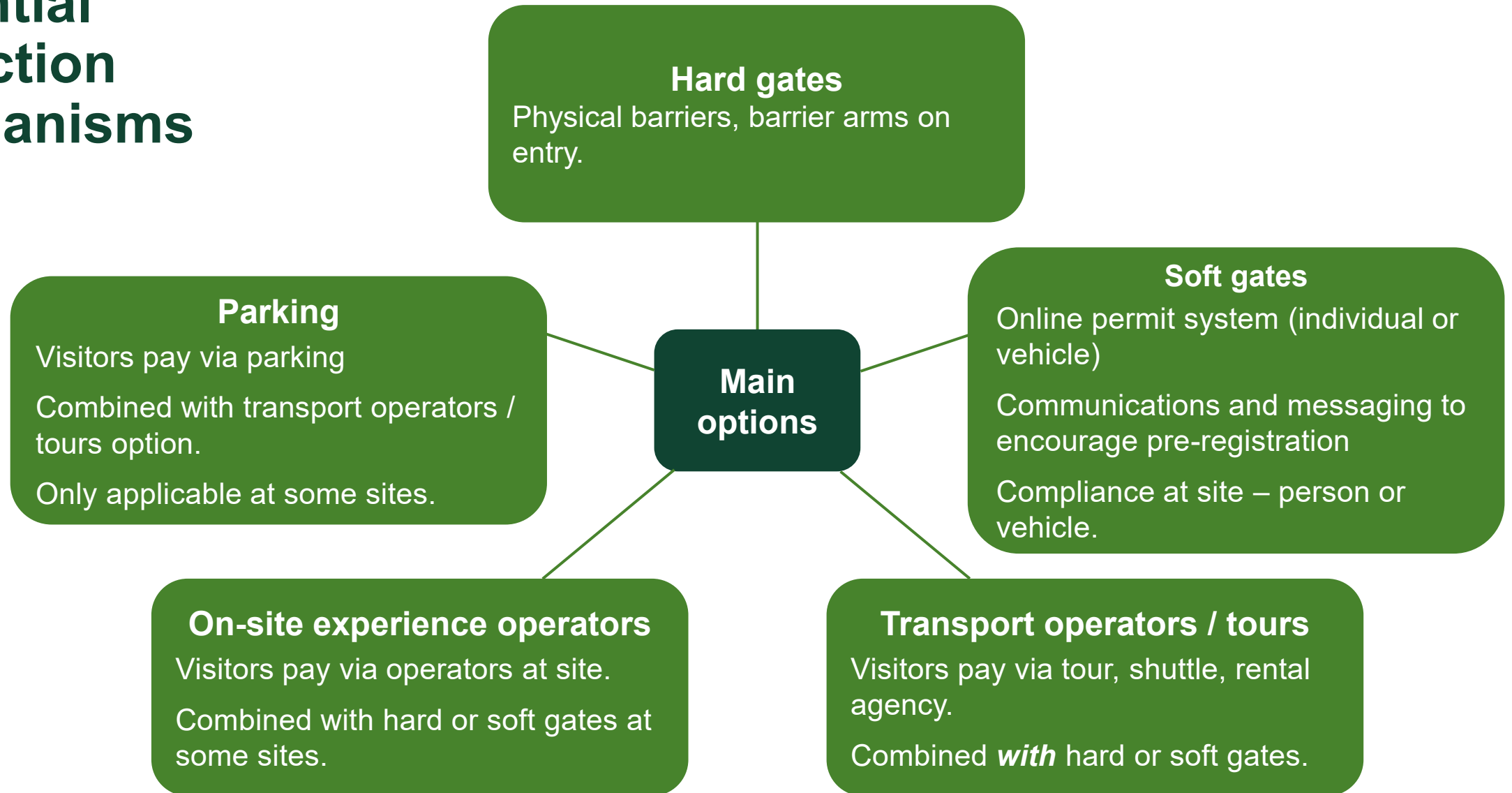


International visitors

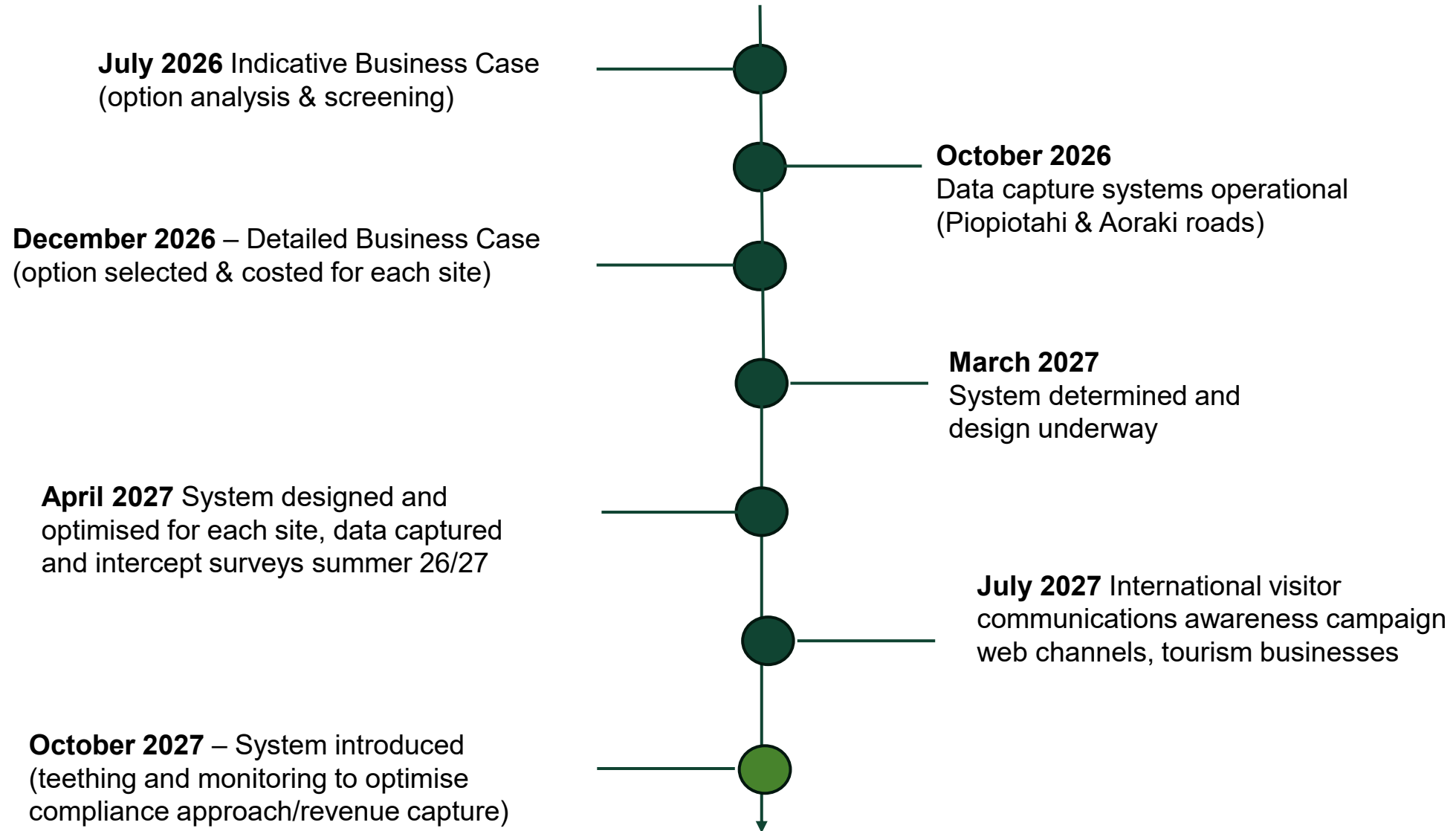
Around **86%** of international car and campervan users are **renting** the vehicle.

Almost all (**99%**) international visitors travel **only** with other **international visitors**.

Potential collection mechanisms



Timeline – implementation



Intended implementation date: Summer 2027/28.



Have your say

We welcome any further feedback you'd like to share.

Please email accesschargingconsultation@doc.govt.nz by 31 July 2026.

Questions to guide your feedback:

- Where do you think access charges should apply?
- What factors should be considered when setting the charges?
- What discounts, exemptions and waivers should be available?
- What do you think about our early ideas for how revenue could be used?
- What ideas do you have for implementation?