
Subject: FW: 22-B-0576 - Advice - Request - Reactive lines on article on the Milford Opportunities Project (MOP)

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Sent: Friday, 26 August 2022 11:42 am

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Kia ora Huia and team,

See below some information to support any response to the article: [Govt splashing cash but achieving little with Milford project | Stuff.co.nz](#). Please note that some of the of statements in the article regarding the Milford Opportunities Project are missing context and therefore are a bit of a misinterpretation of the WPQ responses. Please shout out if you need anything else.

Key points

- The Milford Opportunities Project is a key priority for the Government to address rapidly growing visitor numbers and pressure on Milford Sound Piopiotahi and surrounding area.
- The number of visitors peaked at 870,000 in 2019, double the visitor numbers recorded six years prior. This growth is not sustainable.
- The issues facing Milford Sound Piopiotahi are complex because the area is, managed and regulated by various local and central government entities and private entities within the boundaries of a National Park.
- It's vital that all agencies work together to ensure that the place functions efficiently and cultural, environmental, and heritage values are retained while providing a world class visitor experience.
- The Government recognises the project has not progressed at the pace some stakeholders would prefer. Time has been taken to select and approve a strong, experienced Board and Programme Director to oversee and guide the work of the MOP.
- Now that the Board and Director is in place and the MOP unit is established it will be gathering momentum as quickly as possible and we're looking forward to seeing progress.

Supporting information

Some key points regarding the following:

- **Use of contractors:**
 - The figures have been misinterpreted – the only payment for recruitment costs included in the WPQ responses was the \$30,000 payment to **s9(2)(a)**.
 - While a small core of staff will remain through the life of the project to manage key feasibility testing workstreams, different skill sets will need to be procured as the work progresses. This reflects specialist skills required for specific elements of the feasibility testing. The use of contractors is prudent to provide flexibility and access to specialist skills.
 - The Programme Director and a core MOP team are Southland/Otago based which enables the MOP Unit to easily interact with local communities, businesses and visitors. However it is not possible to forecast the potential spend on local (Otago/Southland) staff as recruitment is still underway for the MOP Unit, and as mentioned above, the composition of the team will change over time.
- **Amount spent/projected cost:**

- The total spend for the MOP Stage Three from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022 is \$1.7 million.
- The majority of spend to 30 June relates to the establishment and set up of the unit, some early project work undertaken by contractors working for the initial establishment team and the contractor resources required for work this year, while fixed term resources are sourced.
- MOP, MOT, MBIE and DOC will be working closely on development of the work programme to create a clear view of how the funding will be applied to enable outcomes through Stage Three of the MOP. The recommendations in the Masterplan now require stringent feasibility testing.

- **Projected length:**
 - Stage Three, phase 1 of the MOP, the feasibility testing stage, is expected to take two years to complete, though feasibility testing of some recommendations may be completed sooner it is important to spend time to test such significant recommendations.
 - Feasibility testing will involve detailed analyses of the feasibility of the Masterplan's recommendations and their implications, cost-benefit analyses, pre-delivery design, community and stakeholder consultation, and work on consenting and preparation for infrastructure construction on individual projects. Proposed timelines for implementation will be determined as feasibility testing progresses. Stakeholder communication is a focus for the MOP team, and stakeholders will be involved as feasibility testing progresses.

- **Progress to date:**
 - Since the Masterplan was unveiled the following has been achieved:
 - the Ministerial Group to oversee the project has been stood up
 - an organising model for the project structure to be hosted by the Department of Conservation has been developed
 - a Programme Business Case, high level work programme and draft engagement strategy has been developed
 - setting up of systems and processes for the feasibility testing phase
 - initiated the Milford Opportunities project work programme.

- **Priority of the project:**
 - The MOP is a key priority for the government.
 - The overall approach and many of the recommendations of the Masterplan can be precedent setting for other parts of New Zealand that also experience high intensity tourism.

- **Consultation process (that it is underway):**
 - No decisions have been made at this point. The Masterplan's recommendations are not a fait accompli – they will go through stringent testing. There is considerable assessment and planning work needed to determine the feasibility of the specific recommendations. That work will include an extensive programme of consultation with stakeholders and the public. The MOP is currently developing an engagement plan to manage that consultation and communication.

Thanks, Tim and team

Out of scope

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