

Milford Opportunities Project: Government decisions and next steps

Breathtaking Milford Sound Piopiotahi draws over a million visitors a year, bringing \$200 million to the region. Tourism growth is putting pressure on this taonga. Recommendations for a self-funded, sustainable tourism system for the Milford Road and Piopiotahi, were provided to government from the Milford Opportunities Project (MOP) in a masterplan in 2021 and subsequent feasibility business case in June 2024. The Government has considered these recommendations and is taking steps to support conservation and tourism using solutions identified by MOP.

MOP feasibility business case recommendations

MOP's business case provided tested options based on the masterplan's recommendations. It proposed:

- New legislation for an amenity area in the National Park Plan with independent governance
- An international visitor access charge (\$75 – \$100)
- More prominent Ngāi Tahu presence and cultural footprint
- New spatial plan for Piopiotahi with improved sense of arrival
- Investment in Milford corridor experiences and Te Anau
- Congestion and road safety management encouraging use of tourism operators with bookable, reduced car parking
- Investment in the aerodrome
- Continued access for cruise ships over the medium term with environmental mitigations
- Improved concessions management and new concessions opportunities
- Transition of staff and visitor accommodation to the Milford corridor to reduce risks from a landslide-induced Tsunami

MOP masterplan proposals not considered feasible:

- Visitor permit system with hop-on and hop-off buses and related Eglinton reveal car park (landscape impacts, complexity and cost).
- Piopiotahi cable car (ecological/landscape impacts)
- Mistake Creek to U Pass overnight tramp (visitor safety, demand and ecological impacts)
- Lake Marian Hinepitiwai loop walk and a covered nature trail (visitor safety, demand, and ecological impacts)
- Cleddau Cirque experience (safety)
- Milford Sound marine centre and hotel/staff accommodation (safety, cost)

Government decisions

MOP has informed Government decisions and work underway on broader legislative change including:

- \$6 million International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy (IVL) funding for visitor experiences and a greater cultural narrative
- \$400,000 IVL funding for a new gateway pou whenua
- Retaining the Milford aerodrome
- Not preventing access to the fjord for cruise ships
- Maintaining unrestricted road access with safety and traffic flow improvements
- Milford Sound Piopiotahi will remain within Fiordland National Park with no separate governance entity.

National legislation changes, initiated in 2024, will:

- Improve concessions processes and
- Consider access charges to premier visitor sites

Next steps (2025-2028)

DOC will work with Ngāi Tahu, local and national government agencies, and key stakeholders to deliver change:

\$1.8 million IVL over two years will fund:

- New infrastructure and safety improvement plans
- Revenue and investment strategies
- Work on traffic flows for Piopiotahi
- Addressing visitor impacts, including from cruise

DOC is funding a \$7 million work programme in Milford Sound and along the Milford Road over the next 12 months covering:

- Upgrading visitor facilities at the Divide, the Chasm and Lake Marian Track
- Cleaning up Little Tahiti landfill
- Replacing the boat ramp in Deepwater Basin
- Improvements to Cleddau River flood protection

A new Fiordland National Park Management Plan will be produced after law reform to make this happen.

- It will consider improved governance tools such as establishing a Special Amenities Area within Fiordland National Park making it easier to do business here while maintaining protections for nature.

For further information visit www.doc.govt.nz/milford-opportunities