

## **Media Backgrounder: Fiordland Link Experience**

---

### **A 100% Pure NZ Experience**

The Fiordland Link Experience is a proposed backcountry tourist attraction that aims to provide visitors of all ages and abilities with a unique New Zealand experience. It includes:

1. A 20km catamaran trip from Queenstown across Lake Wakatipu to Mt Nicholas Station
  2. An all-terrain vehicle journey along 45km of existing backcountry roads through the Von River Valley to Kiwi Burn
  3. A 41km monorail ride through conservation land (29km) and along private land to Te Anau Downs (30km from Te Anau and 91km from Milford Sound).
- Visitors are delivered to the boundary of the Fiordland National Park, they do not travel through it. Once at Te Anau Downs, they can choose to continue on by bus to Milford Sound, by ferry to Te Anau or make any other plans they wish to.
  - The Fiordland Link Experience will carry 160 tourists per trip, with the ability to expand and take 224 people during peak season. Demand will dictate how regular services are.
  - Currently, almost 500,000 international and domestic tourists travel between Queenstown and Milford Sound each year. The majority undertake the 580km return trip by bus, which has resulted in clogged roads and Te Anau and Milford being flooded with visitors for only short periods at the same time every day, lessening the tourism experience.
  - While designed to be a stand-alone world-class tourism experience, The Fiordland Link Experience has the added benefit of taking 320km of road travel off the return trip, delivering tourists to the region throughout the day and alleviating the pressure on the roads.
  - Once established, it could potentially be scaled up to transport one million visitors a year without significantly increasing its environmental footprint.
  - The proposal has been refined during eight years of consultation with the Department of Conservation to ensure the route showcases scenery of great beauty without entering any wilderness areas or land classified as remote. Approximately \$5 million has been spent to date on planning and environmental reports, reflecting our commitment to the project.
  - A 30km public mountain bike track will also be created utilising the construction trail.

### **Contribution to Regional Economic Development**

- At least \$170m will be invested in the development and construction of the infrastructure and associated facilities. It would take approximately 18-months to complete the build.
- The construction phase would directly create up to 140 jobs, as well as providing work for a further 300 local suppliers and contractors.
- Once operational it will employ 65 fulltime staff, with up to 100 staff employed in peak seasons.
- By delivering more tourists to the region and enabling them to spend more time on the ground, there will be significant opportunities for other tourism operators to set up new businesses or expand. Several hundred further jobs would be created through regional growth in hospitality – food, beverage and accommodation – and tourism ventures such as scenic cruises, equipment rental, retail and guiding.

## **National Benefits**

- The Fiordland Link Experience has the potential to be one of the top 10 global tourism journeys. It realises the aspiration of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 to deliver a world-class tourism experience that meets the expectations of high-value visitors.
- A \$3 million annual international marketing campaign would promote the entire region, with the goal to stimulate an additional 20,000 tourists per year to come to New Zealand.
- It would showcase New Zealand as a leader in environmentally sustainable tourism.

## **About the Monorail**

- Of the 29km of conservation land the monorail crosses, 22 hectares is on the edge of the 47,000 hectare Snowden Forest, which is on the eastern perimeter of the Te Wahipounamu World Heritage Area.
- The World Heritage area covers 2.6 million hectares and contains towns, roads, quarries and a tunnel. Like the Cairns Skyrail that successfully operates in Australia's World Heritage listed Tropical Rainforest, the addition of a monorail would have no impact on its status.
- The monorail will run on pneumatic rubber tyres on a concrete rail supported by pillars spaced 20 metres apart at farm fence height, so it is above the ground. It is electrically powered, emission-free and barely audible, with power sourced from the Mossburn wind farm.
- It will be enclosed so any potential litter and the noise of human voices is contained.
- Like any infrastructure project, a wider than necessary corridor has been applied for to provide flexibility so the route can be tailored to the environment in the final design and construction phase. The corridor applied for is 200m, however the monorail will only require clearance of six metres and will be largely hidden from view beneath the canopy.

## **Environmental Impact and Mitigation**

Opposition to the Fiordland Link Experience is largely focused on the monorail's impact on the environment and recreational users. Minimising the environmental impact is an important principle and a number of mitigations have been proposed to ensure the monorail's impact is only minor, while also working to achieve an overall net conservation benefit. These include:

- Adopting best-practice construction methodologies, approved by DOC, that are specifically designed to minimise the monorail's footprint. This includes identifying the highest value trees and wildlife in the area and devising a route that avoids priority habitat.
- Extensive rehabilitation and monitoring of the area during and after construction.
- Funding a Project Liaison Officer, employed by DOC, who will have oversight of environmental impacts throughout the construction phase.
- Undertaking conservation projects, including pest control onsite to improve the habitat for native flora and wildlife that is currently unmanaged. A contribution would also be made to extend the Operation Ark pest control programme in the Eglinton Valley, an important habitat for native bats and mohua.
- Construction of walking tracks and a hut for recreational users away from the path of the monorail.
- Concession royalties to DOC, which would contribute to their management of endangered species and preservation and restoration work across the conservation estate.