



12 October 2020

Honourable David Parker  
Minister for the Environment  
Private Bag 18 888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

By email: s 9(2)(a)

Dear Minister,

**PROPOSED FILM PRODUCTION STUDIO: WANAKA  
PROPOSAL BY SILVERLIGHT STUDIOS**

We are writing today to express our Council's support for the proposal by Silverlight Studios to establish a comprehensive screen industry production facility near Wanaka.

We understand that Silverlight are seeking to gain Ministerial support for the development to be considered through the Covid-19 fast-track consenting pathway. The Council is aware that it is the regulatory agency that would otherwise process this consent. Accordingly we wish to make it very clear that this letter of support is intended to express Council's strong support for the concept and the economic benefits we can foresee from such a development; it is not a commentary on the merits of the consent application being pursued, nor does it provide any advice on the possible merits of the process you as Minister may consider or adopt.

In general terms, our Council is strongly supportive of the Silverlight concept. Aotearoa New Zealand's international film reputation was built on the back of the success of the Lord of the Rings trilogy, and following that a raft of other productions many of whom have relied on the evocative landscapes of Central Otago. A new screen industry production facility based on the Silverlight concept will enable this reputation to continue to thrive, while also providing for a wide range of production and post-production activities to be delivered at one location. The growth in demand across the globe for production space makes the opportunity to deliver this development a key opportunity for Aotearoa New Zealand to continue to grow its desirability as a screen industry production centre. The Silverlight concept fits perfectly into the recently released Aotearoa New Zealand Screen Sector Strategy as outlined below;

*"...Significant growth opportunities remain for the sector – to tell more great stories; grow employment and business opportunities; and to attract international investment. Few – if any – sectors in New Zealand generate the breadth of economic, cultural and social benefits in the way the screen sector does for both the country as a whole and for regions".*

*"... New Zealand's rapid response to, and potential recovery from, COVID-19 presents an opportunity to the sector as one of the first in the world to re-establish major screen production activity and respond to an unfulfilled demand for new content. A resurgent screen sector can also play a key role in New Zealand's much-needed economic recovery and future growth."*

Queenstown Lakes District has by many measures, been the hardest hit district as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The withdrawal of the international tourism market has highlighted

the region's economic dependency on tourism. This is something the Council has been working hard to address for many years. The Silverlight concept and associated screen industry infrastructure will provide an opportunity for economic diversity that this region urgently needs in the light of the impacts of the Covid 19 pandemic. This strongly aligns with QLDC's economic diversity strategy.

Developments such as Silverlight in communities such as Wanaka will not only provide direct employment, but also opportunities for skills and career pathways for young people, as well as an opportunity to support a wide range of businesses and other enterprises. Queenstown's own tourism tech industry is closely related to similar investment that grew out of the Lord of the Rings production and the subsequent success of the people and businesses attracted to the town. We anticipate that Silverlight can produce the same lift in economic activity and resilience for Wanaka while also enhancing Aotearoa New Zealand's reputation and capability as a great place to produce quality screen content.

We have, in addition to offering this support, connected Silverlight with some potential locally-based investors, who also see the significant economic opportunities of developing a strong screen industry production presence in the district.

As a Council, we are aware that existing production facilities are under pressure and insufficient to meet current and projected demand. This is a driver behind the competitive urgency for concepts such as Silverlight to gain certainty. We acknowledge that the fast-track consenting process is intended to facilitate faster and more certain outcomes.

Please be assured that our Council considers the proposal to be a significant COVID-19 response opportunity, and one that will deliver long-standing economic, social and environmental benefits to the Wanaka community, the wider Queenstown Lakes District and ultimately to Aotearoa New Zealand as a nation.

Yours sincerely,



Jim Boulton ONZM  
Mayor



Calum MacLeod  
Deputy Mayor