



PRESS RELEASE

Save Fiordland meets Deputy Prime Minister Bill English to tell him the monorail and road tunnel projects must be stopped in their tracks

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Fiordland campaigners have taken their voice to the top, telling Deputy Prime Minister and MP for Southland Bill English that they feel “angry and let down” that the proposed monorail and road tunnel projects in the region, which would cut across two national parks and a conservation area, have not yet been stopped in their tracks.

The campaigners represent the group Save Fiordland and include Mayor of Southland Frana Cardno who attended and spoke at the meeting on Friday (24 August). The campaigners expressed to the Minister their deep concerns that key governing documents, such as the Conservation Act and the Conservation Management Strategy, appeared to have been ignored by the Department of Conservation (DOC) in giving its “notice of intention to grant” concessions to allow a monorail to be built through the Snowdon Forest conservation area and a road tunnel from Mount Aspiring National Park into Fiordland National Park. DOC has subsequently run public consultations this year on these concessions and the final decision to allow or disallow these concessions is awaited.

Mr English said to the Save Fiordland representatives that while anyone had a right to seek concessions, people also had a right to raise any legitimate concerns about the environmental impact of concessions, or the financial viability of people seeking concessions. While Ministers cannot take steps at this stage to interrupt DOC’s consideration of whether to grant the consents, he praised Save Fiordland for getting its voice heard, and advised the group to continue to make sure its concerns were heard throughout the process.

The monorail and road tunnel projects, which aim to transport visitors between Queenstown and Milford Sound, would capture World Heritage status land for the exclusive use of two private companies, and in the process destroy tens of thousands of trees, disrupt unique biodiversity by carving up wilderness, and destroy the recreational value of these unique areas to trampers, hunters, anglers and the many other users of these special, irreplaceable places.

Chair of Save Fiordland, Daphne Taylor, who led the meeting on behalf of the campaign, said: “As his constituents, we felt it was particularly appropriate to engage Bill English now and seek his advice on how to combat this terrible threat to the World Heritage status of Fiordland. We were pleased he understood our concerns and we were able to explain to him that we weren’t just representing conservationists in Fiordland, but representing people of all backgrounds across the region, New Zealand and the world who are hearing our rallying call to protect our special place and who are dismayed that such blatantly destructive projects could even be considered by a nation so proud and dependent on its reputation for unspoilt wilderness.”

Save Fiordland is calling on New Zealanders to join its campaign to oppose the monorail and tunnel projects. Visit www.savefiordland.org.nz

Notes to editors:

Save Fiordland is a not for profit, non-political, volunteer-led organisation aiming to protect Fiordland's wilderness and World Heritage status. For more information about Save Fiordland's position on the monorail and road tunnel projects, go to www.savefiordland.org.nz

For media queries:

Daphne Taylor
Save Fiordland Chairperson
Tel: 03-249-7868 or 021-382-779
Email: billanddaphne@xtra.co.nz

Frana Cardno
Mayor Southland district council and Save Fiordland Spokesperson
03 249 7106 or 027 434 6773

Bill Jarvie
Save Fiordland Spokesperson
Tel: 03-249-7877 or 021-540-821