



MEDIA RELEASE FROM SKYLINE ENTERPRISES, NEW ZEALAND
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Skyline Enterprises to advance investigations for a Franz Josef Glacier gondola

Leading New Zealand tourism company Skyline Enterprises has embarked on an investigation into the development of a gondola system to view the Franz Josef Glacier.

Following discussions with the Department of Conservation and other parties, the company will now fully study the installation of a gondola in order to make public access to the glacier easier and more affordable.

As owner of resident helicopter tourism operations based at Franz and Fox on the West Coast, Skyline is well aware of the changes to the glaciers, which significantly limit public access.

“The Franz Josef Glacier was in a state of advance until 2008 when it began retreating. Following a spectacular collapse of the terminal face in 2012, it is now only accessible by helicopter to land and walk on the Glacier,” Skyline Enterprises Chairman Mark Quickfall says.

“This prevents many visitors from experiencing the Glacier up close – outside of viewing from the base – unless they take a flight, which is not always an option due to weather conditions and cost.”

The investigation will take into account a number of important factors and is dependent on satisfying considerations including environmental mitigation, plus technical and economic feasibility. Skyline will consult a wide range of stakeholders in this regard, including Te Runanga o Makaawhio, Ngai Tahu, Franz Josef Community Council, West Coast Tai Poutini Conservation Board, Westland District Council, alpine groups, recreational users and all other relevant parties.

“Investigations, planning, consultation and securing support from a wide range of stakeholders will determine if the potential installation of the Gondola is realistic. This will take time, commitment and patience,” Mr Quickfall explains.

The positive flow-on effect to the Franz Josef and West Coast communities and the New Zealand economy, balanced against the environmental impacts, will be fully measured.

“Should the positives outweigh the negatives, Skyline believes this project will prove to be an iconic addition to the Glacier Country experience. It will provide a unique attraction encouraging visitors to stop over and spend more time in Glacier Country to truly experience the glaciers,” Skyline Director Grant Hensman says.

The gondola system would run adjacent to and above the Glacier. The towers would be anchored to land and rock, not ice. Interpretation of glaciers and surrounds will be a key component of the concept. Similar interpretation projects have been successfully designed and built in sensitive areas globally.

Skyline will continue to engage with the Department of Conservation on the Westland National Park Management Review to determine if the gondola system can be permitted, should all environmental issues be satisfied.

Until significant progress has been made with the technical and economic viability, and further engagement with the Department of Conservation, local runanga and conservation board, Skyline is not in a position to provide detailed information.

Skyline will be inviting interested parties to register their interest, allowing them to be kept informed on progress. Information sessions will also be held in Franz Josef in October.

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