



Inland Mata-au/Clutha

Integrated Catchment Group

Workshop One

29 June 2026

On a brisk, fine morning in Cromwell, we gathered for our first workshop to get to know each other, get ready to plan, understand the process, and begin exploring the environmental values that matter across this landscape.

This storybook chapter documents the workshop outputs — the first pieces of the catchment action plan we are building together.



Understanding the process

Before moving into the workshop activities, we talked about the wider process we are part of.

Integrated Catchment Management is about people working together to agree on shared values, make informed decisions, and act together for the natural resources of their catchments. It includes land, water, biodiversity and people.



The **Catchment Action Plan** will be a practical, community owned, non-regulatory plan that identifies actions over and above the rules, and helps coordinate effort across the catchment.

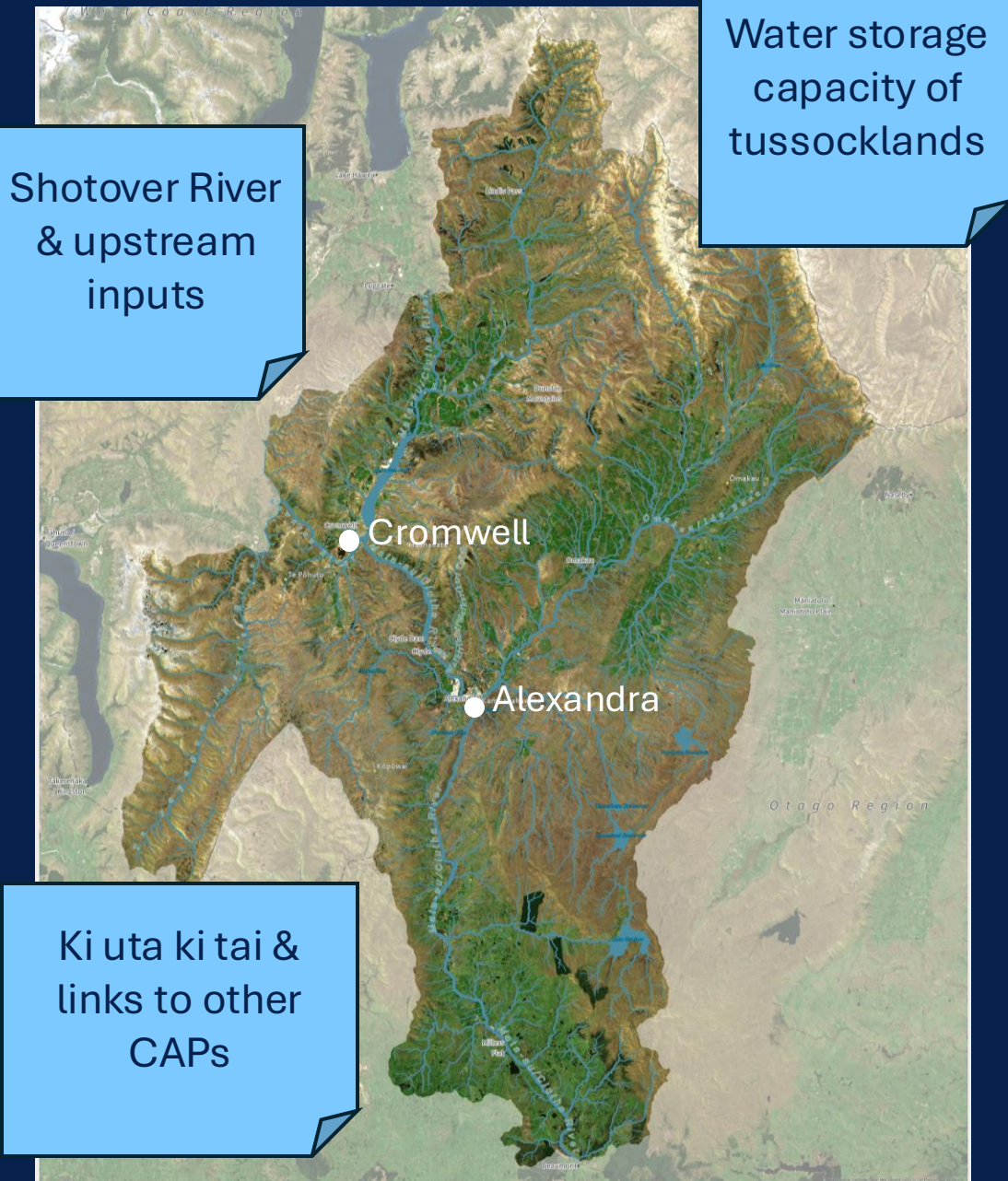
The **Integrated Catchment Group** brings local knowledge, practical experience, and understanding of the landscape into the plan. They will participate in six workshops and this was the first one.

How we will work together

The group brainstormed what good participation looks like across the six workshops. These ideas have been shaped into a short code of conduct to guide how we work together.

1. **Respect people and views:** Focus on the point of view, not the person. Keep open minds and agree to disagree.
2. **Listen and communicate clearly:** Practice active listening, ask if you don't understand, and keep comments concise.
3. **Contribute and share knowledge:** Be engaged, contribute to the discussion, share historic data, and offer help.
4. **Use evidence and expert advice:** Defer to evidence, acknowledge expert advice, and be aware of opinion bias.
5. **Stay focused and use time well:** Prepare, stay on topic, use clear structure, and keep the big picture in view.





Defining our scope

The group examined the mapped plan boundary and how this area interacts with the wider Mata-Au / Clutha catchment. They identified links with neighboring areas, communities of interest, and the need to consider the **interconnectedness** of the wider system.



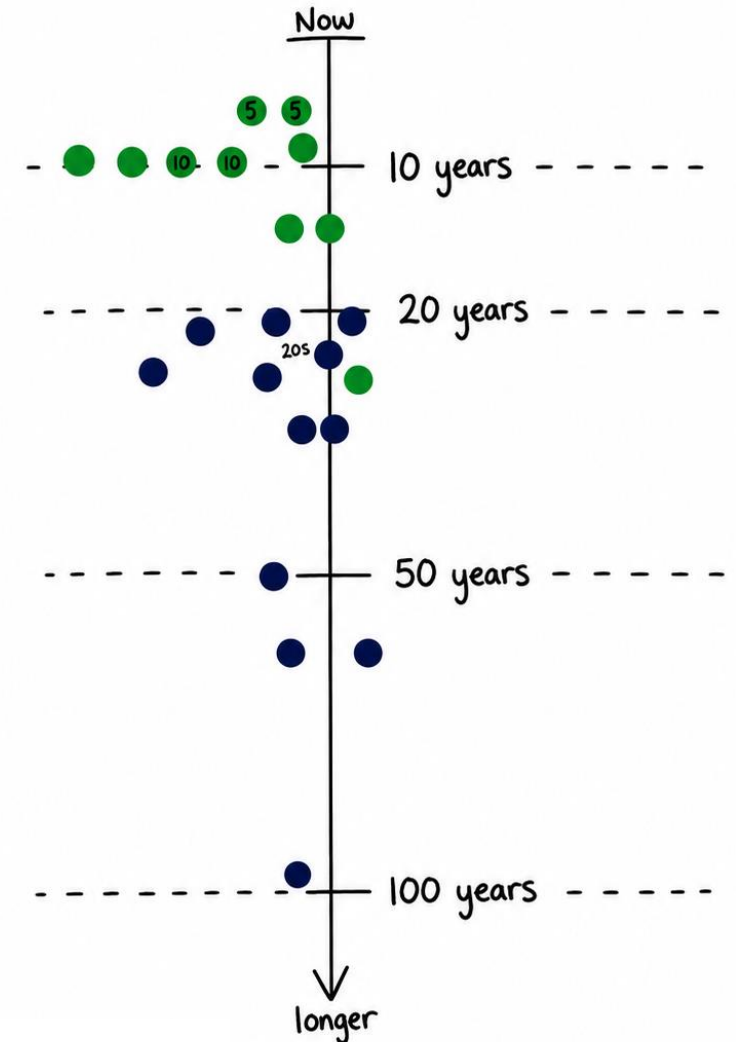
Defining our scope

The group also considered the useful time scope for the action plan and vision. The results indicate that the action plan should focus on the next **10 years**, while the vision can look further ahead, generally around **20–50+ years**.



What timeframe feels right for this Catchment Action Plan?

Green dot ● = action plan (what can the plan realistically start & support?)
Blue dot ● = vision (the longer-term future we want for the catchments)



In scope for this plan



Natural
environment
—
Land, water, air,
climate,
biodiversity



Biodiversity
Biosecurity
—
Native species,
fisheries, pests,
weeds



Land use
—
Agriculture,
forestry, industry,
energy



People & values
—
Wellbeing,
recreation, mana
whenua values



Planning &
action
—
Coordination,
solutions,
monitoring

Out of scope for this plan

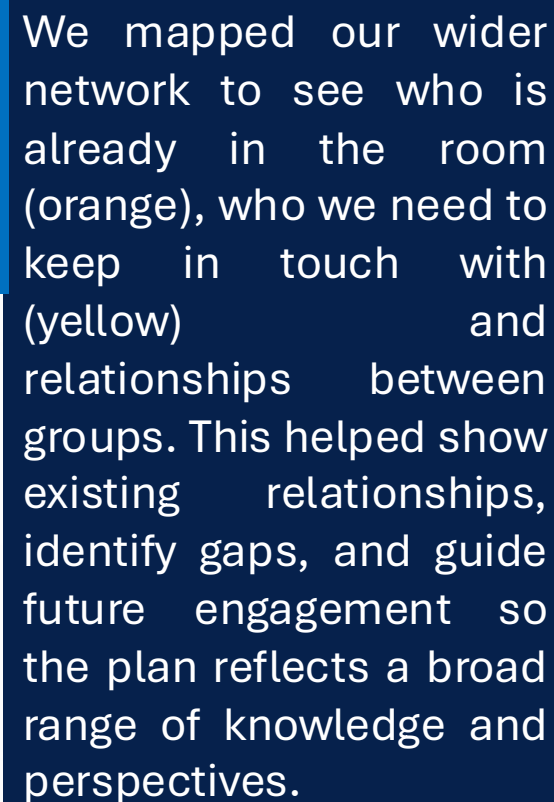
Setting rules and limits, changing regulations or consenting decisions. Roads, public transport, three waters . A promise of funding.

What belongs in this plan?

It was important for the group to discuss what is **in scope** and **out of scope** for the catchment action plan, and to ask questions early. This helped build a shared understanding of what the plan can focus on, what sits outside the process, and how to keep the work clear, realistic and useful.



We mapped our wider network to see who is already in the room (orange), who we need to keep in touch with (yellow) and relationships between groups. This helped show existing relationships, identify gaps, and guide future engagement so the plan reflects a broad range of knowledge and perspectives.



Understanding our values

The group looked at five connected parts of the landscape:

- **Rivers, lakes, groundwater and aquifers**
- **Wetlands**
- **Terrestrial ecosystems — forest, shrub and tussock**
- **Productive land systems — farms, orchards, forestry, irrigation and water storage**
- **Urban and residential spaces, and air**

For each part of the landscape, the group considered what has changed over time, what is valued now, what pressures are being seen, and what the future might hold.

The following pages show the past, present and future the group described.



Rivers, lakes, groundwater and aquifers

Past

We look back to lakes, rivers, aquifers and groundwater that were more natural, variable and productive. Flows were driven by natural processes, with better water and stable groundwater. Rivers supported indigenous aquatic biodiversity and abundant mahika kai, including tuna, kanakana and kōura.

Present

We see flows now controlled and changed by dams, structures and increasing water use. Water quality and flow have declined in one lifetime, with less flushing, more sedimentation, pests and weeds, and depleted mahika kai.

Future

We want hydrological resilience: healthy, productive rivers, lakes and aquifers that support biodiversity, mahika kai, recreation and community connection – along with a commitment to water security. We need better understanding, transparency, climate adaptation, control of introduced species, and to maintain access and infrastructure.

Wetlands

Past

We look back to wetlands as an extensive network with a diversity of types. They were biodiversity rich, culturally significant, and supported mahika kai. Wetlands filtered sediment and nutrients, stored carbon, contributed to high water quality and were nutrient and bacteria rich.

Present

We see wetland loss has reduced biodiversity and water resilience. Some pristine, constructed and restored wetlands are a source of community pride. Water quality has decreased, nutrients are an issue and invasive species are present. Wetlands are also places for recreation and hunting.

Future

We see potential for wetlands to build water quality and quantity resilience. The future could include better understanding, education, blue carbon, willow and weed removal and greater restoration. We support mahika kai restoration while balancing cultural and recreation use.

Terrestrial ecosystems: forest, shrub and tussock

Past

About 900 years ago, fires changed the vegetation. There was rich mahika kai, with tussocks for fibre, taramea for perfumes, and mountain daisy for cloak making. Later came pastures, burning, stock, rabbit plagues, degradation, and the effects of large dam-filling.

Present

We see more enlightened management and more native birds, but also weedy pests, wilding conifers and continued dryland vegetation loss. There are pockets of restoration, but land development, irrigation and land use change are shaping these areas. Deer, pests and feral cats are part of the picture too.

Future

We want intact, functional ecosystems with habitat for lizards, invertebrates and birds, including weka, and restored tussock alongside multiple land uses. We need rabbit management, native planting, pest control, engaged communities, finance to support the work, and recreational space to be enjoyed.

Productive land systems: farms, orchards, forestry, irrigation and water storage

Past

We look back to productive land systems shaped by mining, gold tailings and declining water quality. Orchardring brought diversity, people and growth. Farms were larger, less fragmented, and less intensively irrigated. Cultivation, super phosphate, DDT and sheep dips left a chemical legacy in soils and water. Rabbits were a major issue, and combining regulation with the delivery of rabbit control proved impractical and costly, highlighting the need for regulation to be supported by an effective delivery mechanism.

Present

We see population and cost of living increasing, with productive land sold for development, causing fragmentation. Land use is changing through intensification, irrigation and expensive infrastructure. Viticulture, horticulture, agritourism, diversification and market-driven crops are increasing, while rabbits, deer, goats, pigs and wilding trees remain threats.

Future

We anticipate challenges and change from solar and wind farms, wilding pines and animal diseases, alongside opportunities from fertile soils, reliable water and thriving sustainable land use. We want support for innovation, practical rules, healthy swimmable and drinkable waterways, reliable irrigation, strong science and research, and climate-resilient land use that creates opportunities for future generations.

Urban and residential spaces, and air

Past

Looking at Cromwell, we remember the dam being built and the lake filling, with people moving away and old buildings being lost. People used to curl and skate on natural ice. The Lindis River froze so thick a helicopter landed on it. Strong communities were built around schools, sports clubs, and hunting for wild foods.

Present

We have started seeing more urban and industrial development, land use change, and rural land becoming residential. There is insufficient infrastructure, poor air quality, inefficient heating systems, and increasing water use. Urban native planting and biodiversity have increased, but pests, woody weeds, deer, goats and fire risk remain.

Future

We anticipate population growth and pressure on infrastructure, potentially including mining, a Tarras airport and large solar farms. Drought and fire risk may also increase. We want development to be carefully managed so that economic opportunities are balanced with environmental and community wellbeing. We want urban native planting to continue, alongside effective pest, weed and fire management.

Key environmental attributes

The draft "key environmental attributes" shown below have been extracted from the group's past, present and future descriptions of catchment values. The attributes give an initial idea of themes to be understood, measured, protected or strengthened through the plan.

These key environmental attributes help turn broad community values into clearer planning questions, measurable indicators and support evidence-based decision-making. They will be further developed and refined with ORC's internal Project Support Team to align with current monitoring, information and advice.

Naturalness of flows and flushing **Stability of groundwater**
Native species abundance and diversity **Mahika kai abundance**
Water quality Hydrological resilience Recreational opportunity
Community connection to nature **Access to places**
Wetland extent and function Native vegetation extent and condition
Environmental issue understanding **Birdlife presence**
Habitat extent, condition and intactness
Community engagement and involvement Sustainable land use
Information transparency and understanding
Climate, temperature and precipitation **Air quality**



We aren't reinventing the wheel

A lot of planning and visioning work has already happened across Central Otago. This plan builds from that work, rather than starting again. The statement below helps frame a key idea for this plan: our wellbeing, economy, recreation and way of life all rely on a healthy natural environment. As the CAP process continues, the group will develop its own shared vision for the Inland Mata-au / Clutha catchment.

"The state of wellbeing in Central Otago is grounded in respect for and protection of the natural environment. This is **the foundation upon which all else depends**. While the productive capacity of the natural environment is a core driver of **economic prosperity**, the **recreational and aesthetic** value of a healthy natural environment is also valued as **fundamental to well-being and the way of life** in Central Otago."

Central Otago – Our Place in the World, 2025