



Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated Independent Chairperson

Voluntary | Otago Central Rail Trail business community, New Zealand

The Opportunity

The Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated is seeking an independent Chairperson to lead its volunteer board. This is a meaningful governance role with a community that genuinely values strong, experienced leadership.

The Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT) is New Zealand's original multi-day cycling and walking Great Ride, running 150 kilometres from Clyde to Middlemarch. A train connection from Dunedin to Pukerangi creates a unique, end-to-end journey found nowhere else in New Zealand. The Business Network represents 48 member businesses that make this experience possible with accommodation, hospitality, guided cycling, retail, and tourism operators spread across the Otago Central Rail Trail business community from Middlemarch through Central Otago.

OCRT Business Network

Established 2005. Represents the businesses that make the trail experience possible. Advocates for operator interests, facilitates member connection and communication, contributes to trail marketing through Trails Hub, and operates the forward booking data tool. Funded through annual member subscriptions.

OCRT Trust

Established 1994. Works with DOC (landowner) to fund and deliver trail maintenance, infrastructure improvements, and promotion. Manages the trail brand, website, passport fundraiser (\$30k+ per year), visitor surveys, and trail counters. Funded through trail contributions, grants, and the NZCT.

Our previous two Chairpersons found the role rewarding. We are looking for someone who brings governance credibility and genuine interest in the region. You do not need to be a trail operator or tourism professional.

Further background on the organisation, the trail community and key performance data is provided in the Appendix at the end of this document.

Role at a Glance

Title:	Chairperson (constitutional title: President)
Organisation:	Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated
Tenure:	Elected annually at the AGM; eligible for re-election
Remuneration:	Voluntary
Time commitment:	10-15h per month with a seasonal structure based on strategy over winter and delivery focus over summer
Location:	Otago Central Rail Trail community: most meetings held online
Board meetings:	Six per year – one to two in person, remainder online

AGM:	Annually in September, Central Otago – 3 hours
Secretariat:	Business South
Financial oversight:	ICL Accountants Ltd
Previous chairs:	Matt Gorman (3 years); Andrew Stinchcombe-Gillies (12 months)

What You Will Do

Lead the board

- Chair all board meetings and the Annual General Meeting with confidence and clarity
- Keep the board focused, well-governed and effective, ensuring good agendas, sound decisions and timely follow-through
- Build an inclusive board culture in which volunteer board members, all running their own businesses, can contribute meaningfully
- Ensure the organisation meets its obligations under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022 and its Constitution
- Oversee conflict of interest management and uphold good governance standards

Drive strategy

- Lead the development of a strategic plan and long-term vision for the Business Network
- Help the board stay focused on member value and the long-term health of the trail business community
- Support the board's relationships with Tourism Central Otago, the OCRT Trust, and other key stakeholders

Represent and connect

- Act as an ambassador for the Business Network within the Otago Central Rail Trail business community
- Represent the Network credibly and collaboratively in dealings with Tourism Central Otago, Enterprise Dunedin, local government, and the OCRT Trust
- Build and maintain an ongoing relationship with Enterprise Dunedin – Dunedin is both the gateway city and a key marketing partner, particularly given the Dunedin to Pukerangi train connection that forms a nationally distinctive part of the trail experience
- Work closely with the Secretary (Business South) to ensure meetings are well-prepared and governance is on track

What We Are Looking For

Essential

- Governance experience – board, committee, or senior leadership background
- Strong chairing and facilitation skills – able to manage a diverse voluntary board effectively
- Sound independent judgement and the ability to remain objective
- Commitment to the role and genuine interest in the Otago Central Rail Trail business community
- Ability to participate in online meetings and travel to Central Otago one to two times per year

Desirable

- Familiarity with incorporated societies, charities, or not-for-profit governance
- Understanding of or interest in tourism, hospitality, or regional economic development
- An existing connection to the Otago Central Rail Trail business community, whether in Central Otago, Dunedin, or the wider Otago region
- Experience in organisations where the Chairperson plays a hands-on governance role

What's on Offer

- The chance to contribute to the success of one of New Zealand's most iconic trails and the businesses that depend on it
- A capable, committed secretariat (Business South) and professional financial oversight (ICL Accountants Ltd) so you can focus on governance, not administration
- A well-structured governance framework underpinned by a newly updated constitution (2026)
- A friendly and experienced board of trail operators who care deeply about their community
- Flexibility – most board activity is conducted online, with in-person meetings in Central Otago that offer a genuine opportunity to experience the region
- Recognition of governance contribution through the Institute of Directors network

What the Board is Working On

The incoming Chairperson will join a board in a period of positive momentum. Current priorities include:

- Developing a strategic plan and long-term vision for the Network
- Strengthening member engagement including a new programme of regular in-person member events
- Working with Tourism Central Otago to ensure trail marketing is strategic and collaborative, and that operator interests are effectively represented
- Leveraging the Network's forward booking data tool – the only one of its kind on any New Zealand trail

- Building the Board's relationship with the OCRT Trust and influencing decisions that affect trail businesses
- Recruiting a social media content creator to keep the member community active and connected

Time Commitment

Approximately 10-15h per month with a seasonal structure based on strategy over winter and delivery focus over summer. In practice this will depend on the person, their approach, and the needs of the organisation at any given time. Some months will be lighter; others will require more. The breakdown below gives an indication:

- Six board meetings per year (one to two in person in Central Otago, remainder online) – approximately 90 minutes each
- Annual General Meeting in September – 3 hours, in person
- Pre-reading and preparation – 1-2 hours per meeting
- Meetings or calls with other entities like Tourism Central Otago and Enterprise Dunedin
- Occasional correspondence and liaison between meetings

Both previous Chairpersons held the voluntary role alongside full professional lives. The secretariat and financial oversight are well-established, keeping the administrative burden on the Chairperson minimal.

How to Express Interest

We welcome expressions of interest from anyone with the right governance skills and a genuine interest in this community. Send your application before the 26th October 2026 to Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated.

Please contact:

Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated

admin@ocrtbusiness.nz | 021 522 361

We will offer an initial conversation to anyone who expresses interest before any formal process is progressed. Background information on the Business Network is included in the Appendix to this document.

Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated is committed to good governance and the long-term success of the trail and its business community.



Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated

Appendix – About the Organisation

Background information for prospective candidates

About the Business Network

The Otago Central Rail Trail Business Network Incorporated is a not-for-profit incorporated society established in December 2005 and re-registered in April 2026 under the Incorporated Societies Act 2022. It represents 48 businesses that operate along or near the Otago Central Rail Trail — New Zealand's original and most celebrated multi-day cycling and walking trail, running 150 kilometres from Clyde to Middlemarch. The trail extends into the Dunedin City boundary, and the Dunedin to Pukerangi train connection creates a unique, end-to-end journey that distinguishes the OCRT from every other trail in the country.

The Network provides an effective and united voice for trail operators, contributes to trail marketing through the Trails Hub collaborative, maintains a member portal and website, and operates the forward booking data tool, the only initiative of its kind on any trail in New Zealand.

Two Distinct Organisations – One Trail

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The Trail Community

The trail season typically runs from mid to late September through to April, including the summer peak and the Easter school holidays. Many accommodation providers and hospitality businesses close for the off-season from June through August, though visitors continue to use the trail year-round.

Many member businesses are owned and operated by individuals or couples. The Network plays an important connective role for these operators. The off-season is the best time to bring members together for events, planning, and peer connection. A recurring challenge for the trail is ensuring consistent hospitality quality and availability: visitors should not arrive in a town to find the only café closed or encounter a significant drop in quality between stops.

The Dunedin to Pukerangi train connection is a nationally distinctive element of the trail proposition. It allows visitors to create a true point-to-point journey, arriving by train and cycling or walking to Clyde or Alexandra, in a way no other trail in New Zealand can offer. Capitalising on this through marketing and member engagement is a board priority.

Trails Hub – Collaborative Regional Marketing

The Business Network is a contributing partner in Trails Hub, a collaborative marketing initiative bringing together trail operators across Otago — from Dunedin to Queenstown including Clutha and Central Otago. Trails Hub pools resources to promote the wider trails region to domestic and international visitors, sharing marketing costs across partner organisations. The Business Network contributes \$5,000 annually to fund a dedicated marketing coordinator working from within Tourism Central Otago.

Enterprise Dunedin

Enterprise Dunedin (Dunedin City Council’s economic development and destination marketing agency) is a key relationship for the Business Network. Dunedin is the southern gateway for many international visitors and the starting point for the Dunedin to Pukerangi train connection. The Business Network is establishing and maintaining a regular working relationship with Enterprise Dunedin to ensure the Dunedin gateway and the OCRT are well-coordinated in visitor marketing and to capitalise on the train as a nationally unique tourism asset.

Trail Performance – Key Numbers

Overall visitor satisfaction score	9.8 out of 10 (national average 9.1)
Net Promoter Score	100 (national average 81.1)
Annual visitor spending	\$25.9 million per year
Visitors in the area specifically for the trail	81%
Paid-up members	47

Secretariat provided by Business South