

11 February 2021

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Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your Official Information Act request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 22 December 2020 in which you asked for:

What does DOC spend on heritage as a percentage of its budget?

** Has this come up or down*

** Is there any plan to restart collecting oral histories*

** What training do rangers (historic) do around the actual history side (as opposed to training on track maintenance etc)*

** Does DOC have an historian in the South Island? If so where, and how many?*

** Are the Coast archives accessible?*

** Is a new generation being trained up who can 'read' historic sites and make sense of, for example, mining remnants? Who can tell a water race from a tunnel?*

Heritage management within DOC is currently overseen by the national Heritage Advice Team which was established in 2019. This team provides direct support to operational field staff through the provision of technical advice and training. A key focus of this team is to uplift the capability of field staff who are doing the day-to-day management of heritage places within a region. The Senior Heritage Advisors from the Heritage Advice Team are based regionally in order to provide the most effective support possible. The Senior Regional Heritage Advisor for Tai Poutini West Coast is shared with the Eastern South Island and is based in Christchurch.

Funding for heritage work within the regions is provided through several channels: a region's annual operating budget, visitor capital for work that enhances visitor experience such as interpretation or addresses visitor safety concerns, and historic operating for significant heritage projects that require funding outside of the regional operating budget. Third party funding is also sought when required to support significant projects which may be beyond DOC's capability to fund or when DOC is working in partnership with a community group.

For many years there has been a focus on the mining (gold and coal) history of the West Coast and major investment has gone into important places such as Denniston and Waiuta to tell their stories. The Pounamu Pathway project provides a significant opportunity to direct

focus into recognising the importance of the region to Māori prior to and after European arrival thereby providing a much more comprehensive overview of the region's history.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. What does DOC spend as a percentage of its budget?

The WSI operations region spends approximately 2 per cent of its annual operating budget on heritage management and maintenance. Additional funding is obtained from national operating funds for significant one-off heritage projects. These include projects such as work on the Mahinapua Bridge (\$55,000), repairs to collapsing stone walls at the Denniston Brakehead (\$239,000), remedial work to the historic Prices Flat Hut in the Whitcombe Valley (\$25,000), and geotechnical investigations and assessment of earthquake risk to the Brunner chimney (\$85,000). Improving the visitor experience at heritage sites has been a focus recently, for example, the design and installation of new interpretation at Waiuta which was launched as a Tohu Whenua just prior to Christmas.

2. Has this come up or down?

This has remained the same since 2018. In 2017 the percentage was 11%. This figure is due to over \$2 million spent on remediation of contaminated historic mines (Prohibition Mine at Waiuta and the Alexander Roaster and Battery) in that year.

3. Is there any plan to restart collecting oral histories?

Oral histories are generally collected as part of specific projects and would be undertaken where they contribute to storytelling development for a site. This is ongoing work and is carried out when the opportunity presents itself. In addition to the Heritage Support Team, DOC also instated an Experience Design Team in 2019, which includes a Senior Storytelling Advisor role, dedicated to more fully and appropriately telling the conservation stories. The role works alongside DOC's Interpretation Advisor in this work and providing training and guidance to rangers (particularly interpretation/storytelling rangers around the country) and staff.

4. What training do rangers (historic) do around the actual history side (as opposed to training on track maintenance etc?)

There is not a specific historic ranger role within the DOC organisational structure. Our District Senior Rangers Heritage and Visitors and Rangers Heritage and Visitors work on heritage sites. This work is managed and prioritised by the district Senior Rangers Heritage and Visitor and carried out by ranger staff as part of our annual and seasonal work programmes. They are supported in this work by the Senior Heritage Advisor for the region who provides technical advice along with key information about the heritage values of the places being managed. Heritage assessments are key documents which outline the heritage values of the places we actively manage.

The physical on-site work is largely carried out by the district operations teams with specialist technical expertise such as built heritage conservation, geotechnical advice, and archaeology contracted in as required.

Training is provided as needed.

5. Does DOC have an historian in the South Island? If so, where and how many?

Heritage management within DOC is carried out under the support and guidance of the Heritage Advice Team which comprises eight Senior Heritage Advisors based regionally who have an extensive range of skills and experience including archaeology, historical research, built heritage conservation, disaster heritage management, World Heritage assessments and evaluation and collection management. There are three Senior Heritage Advisors in the South Island based in Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin, however the wider specialist skills of the national team are drawn on as needed.

6. Are the Coast archives accessible?

Access to the West Coast regional DOC archives in Hokitika is available on request.

The Heritage Advice Team is starting a national project to inventory archive and object collections held by DOC around the country. This project will give us a much better understanding of the range of material that we have and how to improve the way in which we manage these collections. One outcome of this project will be to facilitate research access to these archives through better documentation of their contents.

7. Is a new generation being trained up who can 'read' historic sites and make sense of, for example, mining remnants? Who can tell a water race from a tunnel?

Heritage training to DOC operational staff is provided as required to assist them to carry out the scheduled management and maintenance work that is undertaken at actively conserved heritage places. These places are a subset of the many heritage sites and landscapes within the region that have been identified for more active management to maintain their heritage fabric and values. In Tai Poutini West Coast there are over 100 actively conserved heritage places which reflect the range of history in the region including pre-European Māori settlement, mining, timber milling, and early tourism and recreation activities. These places include the Tohu Whenua sites of Denniston, Brunner and Waiuta, along with important tracks and trails such as the Inland Pack Track, Croesus and Browning Pass and significant huts such as Chancellor Hut and the Landsborough Rangers' Hut. Operational staff are supported in this work by the Senior Heritage Advisor for the region.



Any technical specialist advice required for particular places and projects such as built heritage conservation, geotechnical expertise, archaeology or the interpretation of heritage landscapes is contracted out as required.

Please note that this letter (with your personal details removed) may be published on the Department's website.

If you wish to discuss this with the Department, please contact Mark Davies, Operations Director on [REDACTED] or by email mrdavies@doc.govt.nz.

Nāku noa, nā

Steve Taylor
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Te Papa Atawhai