



Cabinet Economic Policy Committee

Summary

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Modernising Conservation Land Management: Policy Approvals

Portfolio

Conservation

Purpose

This paper seeks agreement to matters for inclusion in a bill to modernise conservation land management (set out in **Appendix 1**).

Previous Decisions

In 2022, the previous government agreed to amend relevant legislation to improve conservation management processes [ENV-22-MIN-0059].

In October 2024, ECO approved public consultation on changes to modernise conservation land management and invited the Minister of Conservation to report back with recommended legislative amendments [ECO-24-MIN-0235].

Proposal

More than 5,500 submissions were received during public consultation on the potential changes, with overall agreement that the current system is not working and needs to be modernised. However, there were considerable differences in views on how to achieve this.

The proposed new model for managing conservation land will:

- streamline the planning system, replacing two current policy documents and multiple management plans with one National Conservation Policy Statement and a single layer of area plans (see table at **paragraph 20**);
- unlock greater economic activity on conservation land where the risks are manageable;
- improve concession processing by setting statutory timeframes, enabling greater standardisation, and making it easier to transfer concessions; ☐ enable greater exchanges and disposals of conservation land.

The Minister also seeks agreement to clarify in the Conservation Act 1987 how Treaty principles will be given effect through legislation (set out in the table at **paragraph 50**) and to include in the Bill changes agreed in 2022 by the previous government (detailed in **Appendix 2**).

Impact Analysis

Quality Assurance Panels have assessed the **attached** five Regulatory Impact Statements as meeting or partially meeting quality assurance criteria (detailed in table at **paragraph 66**).

Financial Implications	None from this paper. The Minister will provide more information on estimated fiscal impacts when seeking agreement to standard concession pricing.
Legislative Implications	These decisions will be given effect through the Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill (the Bill), which holds a category 5 priority on the 2025 Legislation Programme (to proceed to select committee by the end of 2025).
Timing Matters	The Minister intends to report back to Cabinet: • in the next few weeks on charging for access to some conservation land; • following consultation with affected parties on upholding Treaty settlement commitments and arrangements to uphold rights under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019; • later in the year on further matters for inclusion in the Bill.
Communications	The Minister intends to announce these decisions.
Consultation	Paper prepared by DOC, MCH, MfE, Treasury, DIA, MoJ, LINZ, TPK, MoT, MPI, MHUD, MBIE, MfR, and Treaty Settlements were consulted. Crown Law, PCO and DPMC (Prime Minister) were informed. NZTA was also consulted. The Minister indicates that all Ministers were consulted.

The Minister of Conservation recommends that the Committee:

- 1 note that in October 2024, ECO approved public consultation on changes to modernise conservation land management and invited the Minister of Conservation to report back with recommended legislative amendments [ECO-24-MIN-0235];

Policy approvals

- 2 agree to the proposals to modernise conservation land management as detailed in the paper and Appendix 1 under ECO-25-SUB-0096, which will:
 - 2.1 streamline the conservation management planning system by replacing the Conservation General Policy and General Policy for National Parks with a National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS);
 - 2.2 replace conservation management strategies, national park management plans and conservation management plans with a single layer of areas plans;
 - 2.3 enable the creation of amenities areas to provide for recreational and public amenities and related services on conservation land;
 - 2.4 enable faster processing of concessions, including by specifying classes of activities;
 - 2.5 streamline contractual management of concessions;

- 2.6 enable competitive allocation of concessions; and 2.7 enable greater exchange and disposal of conservation land; 3 invite the Minister of Conservation to report back to ECO on:
- 3.1 policies for the new NCPS which will unlock economic activity within appropriate constraints;
- 3.2 an appropriate mechanism for a financial contribution to Treaty partners for efficient engagement on statutory processes;
- 3.3 s9(2)(f)(iv)
- 3.4 whether there are any situations in which leases and licences with significant private capital investment should be contestable;

Codifying section 4

- 4 agree to add an overall descriptive clause to the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) following section 4 with signals and signposts to new requirements in various other parts of the Act;
- 5 note that drafting will make clear that complying with these requirements will be sufficient to comply with section 4 (in relation to the relevant processes), subject to advice from the Parliamentary Counsel Office;
- 6 agree that the Act specify what section 4 does not require, such as making concessions contestable;
- 7 note that the Minister of Conservation will liaise with the Ministerial Oversight Group for the Treaty principles provisions review on any drafting issues that arise regarding section 4 and Treaty principles;

Treaty settlements and Takutai Moana rights

- 8 note the intent to uphold Treaty settlements through these reforms including redress commitments made by the Crown in Crown offers, Agreements in Principle, initialled and signed Deeds of Settlement, and settlement legislation;
- 9 invite the Minister of Conservation to report back to ECO on the following, after engagement with affected groups:
- 9.1 upholding relevant Treaty settlement commitments; and
- 9.2 arrangements to uphold rights under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019 (in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations);

Drafting of legislation

- 10 note that a Bill to give effect to the above decisions holds a category 5 priority on the 2025 Legislation Programme (to be referred to select committee by the end of 2025) and will bind the Crown;

- 11 invite the Minister of Conservation to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions;
- 12 authorise the Minister of Conservation to make decisions consistent with the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0096 on issues that arise during drafting, except those in paragraphs 3 and 9;
- 13 agree to also include in the Bill proposals agreed by Cabinet in 2022 [ENV-22-MIN-0059] but not enacted, as listed in Appendix 2 to the paper under ECO-25-SUB-0096;

National Conservation Policy Statement

- 14 note that the Minister of Conservation intends to seek policy approvals for the NCPS in September 2025 following targeted consultation;
- 15 authorise the Minister of Conservation, Attorney-General, Minister for Tourism and Hospitality and the Minister for Resources to agree policy matters to be consulted on for the first NCPS;

Other policy proposals

- 16 note that legislative amendments for the following could also be progressed through the Bill:
 - 16.1 enabling charging for access to some conservation land [ECO-24-MIN-0236], on which the Minister of Conservation will report back to Cabinet shortly; and
 - 16.2 supporting afforestation of Crown land [ECO-24-MIN-0246].

Rachel Clarke
Committee Secretary

Hard-copy distribution:

Cabinet Economic Policy Committee
Attorney-General



Cabinet Business Committee

Summary

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Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill: Further Policy Decisions

Portfolio	Conservation
Purpose	This paper seeks approval of remaining policy decisions relating to the Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill (the Bill).
Previous Decisions	In June 2025, Cabinet agreed to modernise the management of conservation land and invited the Minister to report back with further detail, and directed the Minister amend the purpose statement for the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01].
Proposal	The Bill is intended to modernise the management of conservation land to drive greater economic activity on conservation land where effects can be managed, while protecting nature. Agreement is sought to the remaining policy decisions related to the Bill, including: • upholding the intent of Treaty of Waitangi (Treaty) settlements and Takutai Moana rights. The proposed approach to upholding settlements is: ○ translating redress that can be upheld with minor consequential amendments (approximately 90 percent of relevant Treaty settlement commitments); and ○ including temporary arrangements preserving redress that may require more complex and material changes in the Bill (approximately 45 Treaty settlement commitments), and committing to working with post-settlement governance entities prior to enactment to discuss replacing the placeholder drafting. • enabling the disbursing of funds collected from concession applicants to Treaty partners to help meet costs of statutory consultation; • for major tourism concessions with significant private capital investment, notifying the incumbent at least five years before term expiry if a contestable process is intended to be run to allocate the concession upon expiry. If not, there will be a protected window for incumbents to be able to apply for a new concession before other applicants; and

- amendments to the purpose statement of the Act to ensure that the National Conservation Policy Statement and area plans can enable greater economic development on conservation land.

Impact Analysis	The attached regulatory impact statement and cost recovery impact statement were assessed as partially meeting the quality assurance criteria.
Financial Implications	None from this paper. DOC will implement these reforms in the context of reducing baselines. Without new funding, the Minister expects that reprioritisation will be needed to ensure successful delivery.
Legislative Implications	The Minister intends to submit a bid for the Bill for the 2026 Legislation Programme, with the aim of introducing in early 2026.
Timing Matters	None.
Communications	The Minister intends to intend to write to PSGEs to inform them of the Crown's approach to preserving Treaty settlements in the context of the Bill.
Consultation	Paper prepared by DOC (Conservation), MCH, Crown Law, PCO, Environment, the Treasury, Justice, LINZ, DIA (Local Government), DPMC, Transport, MPI, MHUD, MBIE (Energy, Tourism and Hospitality, Resources), DOC (Hunting and Fishing), MfR, Office of Treaty Settlements, and TPK were consulted. The Minister indicates that all Ministers and Government parties were consulted.

The Minister of Conservation recommends that the Committee:

Background

- 1 note that in June 2025, Cabinet agreed to proposals to modernise conservation land management, and directed the Minister of Conservation to amend the purpose statement for the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) to ensure that the National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS) and area plans can enable greater economic development on conservation land [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01];
- 2 note that in June 2025, Cabinet invited the Minister of Conservation to report back on:
 - 2.1 policies for the new NCPS which will unlock economic activity within appropriate constraints;
 - 2.2 an appropriate mechanism for a financial contribution to Treaty of Waitangi (Treaty) partners for efficient engagement on statutory processes;
 - 2.3 s9(2)(f)(iv)
 - 2.4 whether there are any situations in which leases and licences with significant private capital investment should be contestable; and

- 2.5 after engagement with affected groups, upholding relevant Treaty settlement commitments and arrangements to uphold rights under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations;

[CAB-25-MIN-0213.01]

Upholding Treaty settlements

- 3 agree to uphold redress relating to deeds of recognition, overlay classifications, decision-making frameworks, cultural materials, and consultation on exchanges and disposals as described in the paper under CBC-25-SUB-0049;
- 4 agree in principle to carry across to the new system:
- 4.1 co-approval and/or co-development roles for post-settlement governance entities (PSGEs) directly provided through Treaty settlements in relation to statutory planning documents; and
- 4.2 the substantive effect of legal weightings provided through settlement redress;
- 5 agree that the Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill (the Bill) will include temporary arrangements preserving redress commitments to enable further engagement on about 45 more complex commitments prior to enactment;
- 6 authorise the Minister of Conservation to make final decisions, in consultation with the Minister for Māori Development, to replace drafting relating to temporary arrangements for complex redress;
- 7 note that the Minister of Conservation will consult the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations on outcomes of talks with groups in negotiation before making decisions;

Upholding Takutai Moana rights

- 8 agree to uphold the requirement for a customary marine title planning document to be considered by replacing references to conservation management strategies with area plans;
- 9 agree to preserve the requirement for the customary marine title group to have 40 working days to give or decline permission for a concession application to be considered;
- 10 agree that the Bill include temporary arrangements in relation to the Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou arrangements to enable engagement with Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou before enactment;
- 11 authorise the Minister of Conservation to make final decisions, in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, to replace drafting relating to temporary arrangements for the Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou arrangements;

A mechanism for financial contributions to Treaty partners

- 12 agree to enable disbursing funds to Treaty partners collected from concession applicants to help meet costs of statutory consultation on those applications;

Contestability of leases and licences with significant private capital investment

- 13 agree that incumbent operators for major tourism concessions involving significant private capital investment will have a protected window from two to five years before expiry of the current concession to apply for a new concession;

Other matters

- 14 note the approach taken by the Minister of Conservation to amend the purpose of the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) to ensure the NCPS and area plans can enable greater economic development on conservation land, including the following changes:
- 14.1 amending section 6 of the Act (which sets out DOC's functions) to include sustainable development (to the extent it is not inconsistent with conservation);
- 14.2 adding new purpose provisions to Parts 3A (management planning) and 3B (concessions) of the Act to state the NCPS and area plans can include policies for the use and development of conservation land;

Drafting of legislation

- 15 invite the Minister of Conservation to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions through the Bill;
- 16 authorise the Minister of Conservation to make decisions consistent with the policy direction outlined above on issues that arise during drafting.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Hard-copy distribution:
Cabinet Business Committee
Minister of Conservation



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

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Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill: Further Policy Decisions

Portfolio Conservation

On 22 September 2025, the Cabinet Business Committee:

Background

- 1 **noted** that in June 2025, Cabinet agreed to proposals to modernise conservation land management, and directed the Minister of Conservation to amend the purpose statement for the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) to ensure that the National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS) and area plans can enable greater economic development on conservation land [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01];
- 2 **noted** that in June 2025, Cabinet invited the Minister of Conservation to report back on:
 - 2.1 policies for the new NCPS which will unlock economic activity within appropriate constraints;
 - 2.2 an appropriate mechanism for a financial contribution to Treaty of Waitangi (Treaty) partners for efficient engagement on statutory processes;
 - 2.3 s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
 - 2.4 whether there are any situations in which leases and licences with significant private capital investment should be contestable; and
 - 2.5 after engagement with affected groups, upholding relevant Treaty settlement commitments and arrangements to uphold rights under the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) Act 2011 and the Ngā Rohe Moana o Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou Act 2019, in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations;

[CAB-25-MIN-0213.01]

Upholding Treaty settlements

- 3 **agreed** to uphold redress relating to deeds of recognition, overlay classifications, decision-making frameworks, cultural materials, and consultation on exchanges and disposals as described in the paper under CBC-25-SUB-0049;

- 4 **agreed** in principle to carry across to the new system:
- 4.1 co-approval and/or co-development roles for post-settlement governance entities (PSGEs) directly provided through Treaty settlements in relation to statutory planning documents; and
 - 4.2 the substantive effect of legal weightings provided through settlement redress;
- 5 **agreed** that the Conservation Acts (Land Management) Amendment Bill (the Bill) will include temporary arrangements preserving redress commitments to enable further engagement on about 45 more complex commitments prior to enactment;
- 6 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation to make final decisions, in consultation with the Minister for Māori Development, to replace drafting relating to temporary arrangements for complex redress;
- 7 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation will consult the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations on outcomes of talks with groups in negotiation before making decisions;

Upholding Takutai Moana rights

- 8 **agreed** to uphold the requirement for a customary marine title planning document to be considered by replacing references to conservation management strategies with area plans;
- 9 **agreed** to preserve the requirement for the customary marine title group to have 40 working days to give or decline permission for a concession application to be considered;
- 10 **agreed** that the Bill include temporary arrangements in relation to the Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou arrangements to enable engagement with Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou before enactment;
- 11 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation to make final decisions, in consultation with the Minister for Treaty of Waitangi Negotiations, to replace drafting relating to temporary arrangements for the Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou arrangements;

A mechanism for financial contributions

- 12 **agreed** to enable disbursing funds collected from concession applicants to help meet costs of statutory consultation on those applications;

Contestability of leases and licences with significant private capital investment

- 13 **agreed** that incumbent operators for major tourism concessions involving significant private capital investment will have a protected window from two to five years before expiry of the current concession to apply for a new concession;

Other matters

- 14 **noted** the approach taken by the Minister of Conservation to amend the purpose of the Conservation Act 1987 (the Act) to ensure the NCPS and area plans can enable greater economic development on conservation land, including the following changes:
- 14.1 amending section 6 of the Act (which sets out DOC's functions) to include economic development;
 - 14.2 adding new purpose provisions to Parts 3A (management planning) and 3B (concessions) of the Act to state the NCPS and area plans can include policies for the use and development of conservation land;

Drafting of legislation

- 15 **invited** the Minister of Conservation to issue drafting instructions to the Parliamentary Counsel Office to give effect to the above decisions through the Bill;
- 16 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation to make decisions consistent with the policy direction outlined above on issues that arise during drafting.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Christopher Luxon (Chair)
Hon David Seymour
Hon Nicola Willis
Hon Chris Bishop
Hon Simeon Brown
Hon Brooke van Velden
Hon Shane Jones
Hon Erica Stanford
Hon Paul Goldsmith
Hon Louise Upston
Hon Judith Collins
Hon Todd McClay
Hon Tama Potaka
Hon Simon Watts

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet

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MOC Deep Dive: CALM Bill

Bryan Dunne, Angela Bell, Gayathiri Ganeshan
23 March 2026

Released under the Official Information Act 1982



Objectives of the session

- Refresh you on progress to date
- Highlight key outstanding MOC decisions needed to meet timeframes
- Existing timeframes for reference:
 - 10 April: Ministerial consultation on draft Cabinet paper completed
 - 16 April: Lodging of final Cabinet paper and Bill
 - 20 April: Cabinet approval and Bill introduction
 - 23 April: First reading

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

The wider legislative reform context

The Government is focused on a suite of reforms that collectively deliver faster, more consistent decisions through simplified regulatory systems that enable more economic development.

To unlock infrastructure and housing development, support New Zealand's primary industries and drive significant growth while protecting what is important

Scope:
Projects of
national or
regional
significance

Fast-track
Approvals
Act

Streamlining consent processes for infrastructure and development projects of regional or national significance

RM
Reform

Scope:
Regulating
use of
privately
owned land

Scope:
Regulating
use of
conservation
land

CALM Bill

Modernising conservation land management, speeding up decisions, and enabling more economic development

Objectives of your reforms

Outcomes sought

Supporting economic growth and businesses on conservation land

+

Regulatory efficiency and faster processes

+

Generating revenue to improve outcomes for conservation

+

Providing clarity about the Government's Treaty obligations

Bill components

NCPS and area plans will have same decision-maker and provide **clearer and simpler planning rules**

Purpose changes to make it clear the role of NCPS and area plans is to **enable economic development**

Bill will make it easier to **competitively allocate and transfer** concessions among businesses

NCPS will make **bulk decisions** for low risk activities

Bill will **speed up** concession decisions and **modernise** price-setting, contract management

Bill will give more **flexibility** to exchange and dispose of conservation land

The Bill also contains some more minor and technical changes to modernise conservation laws, which have not been substantially amended since the 1990s.

Bill will **enable charging** international visitors for access in some areas

For all reform areas, Bill will set out **steps to comply with section 4** (supported by operational policy and guidance)

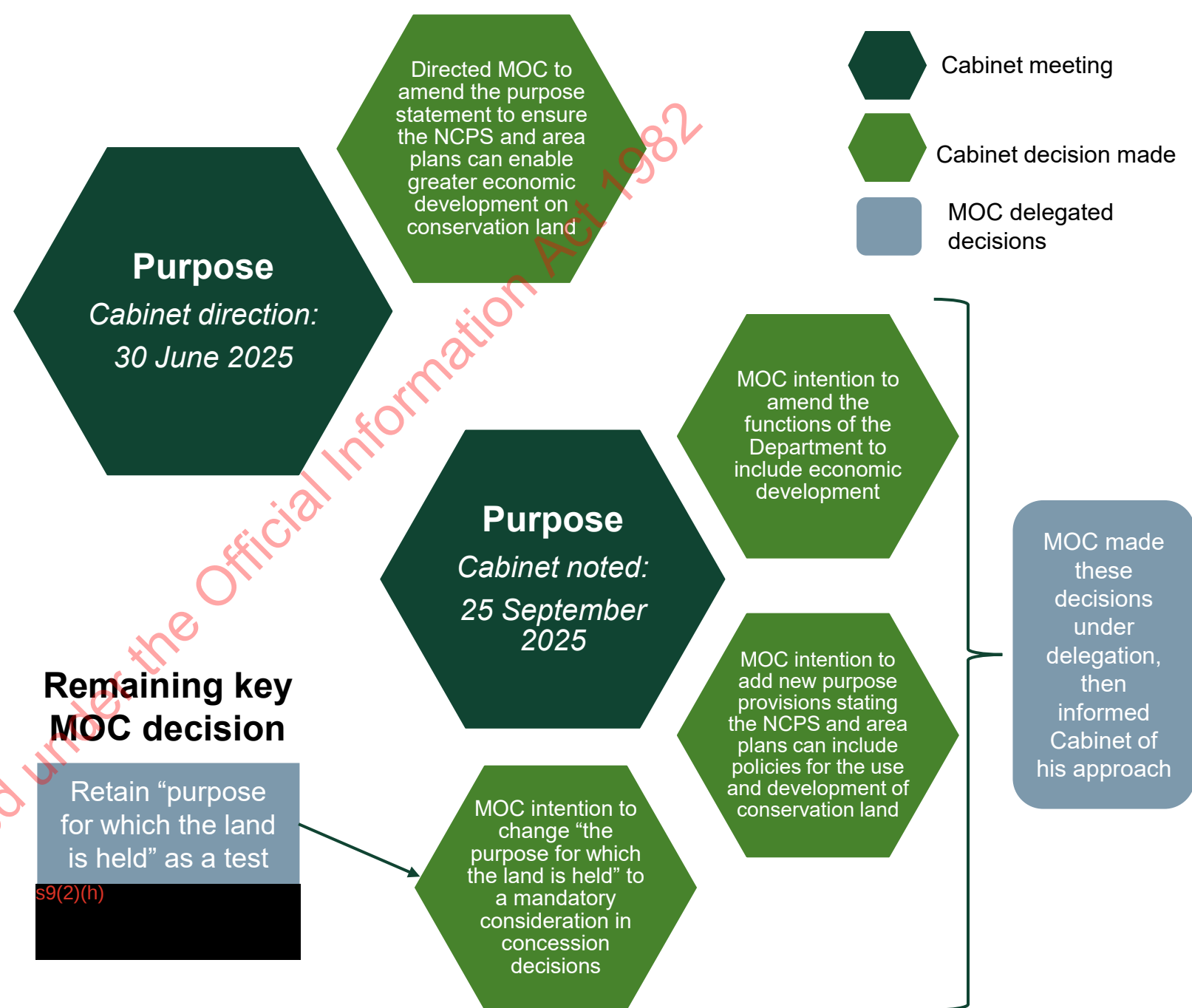
For all reform areas, Bill will demonstrate how reform can be done in a way that **upholds settlement redress and MACA rights**

There are also connections to broader work underway across Government: the review into Treaty references in legislation, and the approach to upholding settlements and MACA rights in RM reform.

The purpose of the Conservation Act

Intended outcomes:

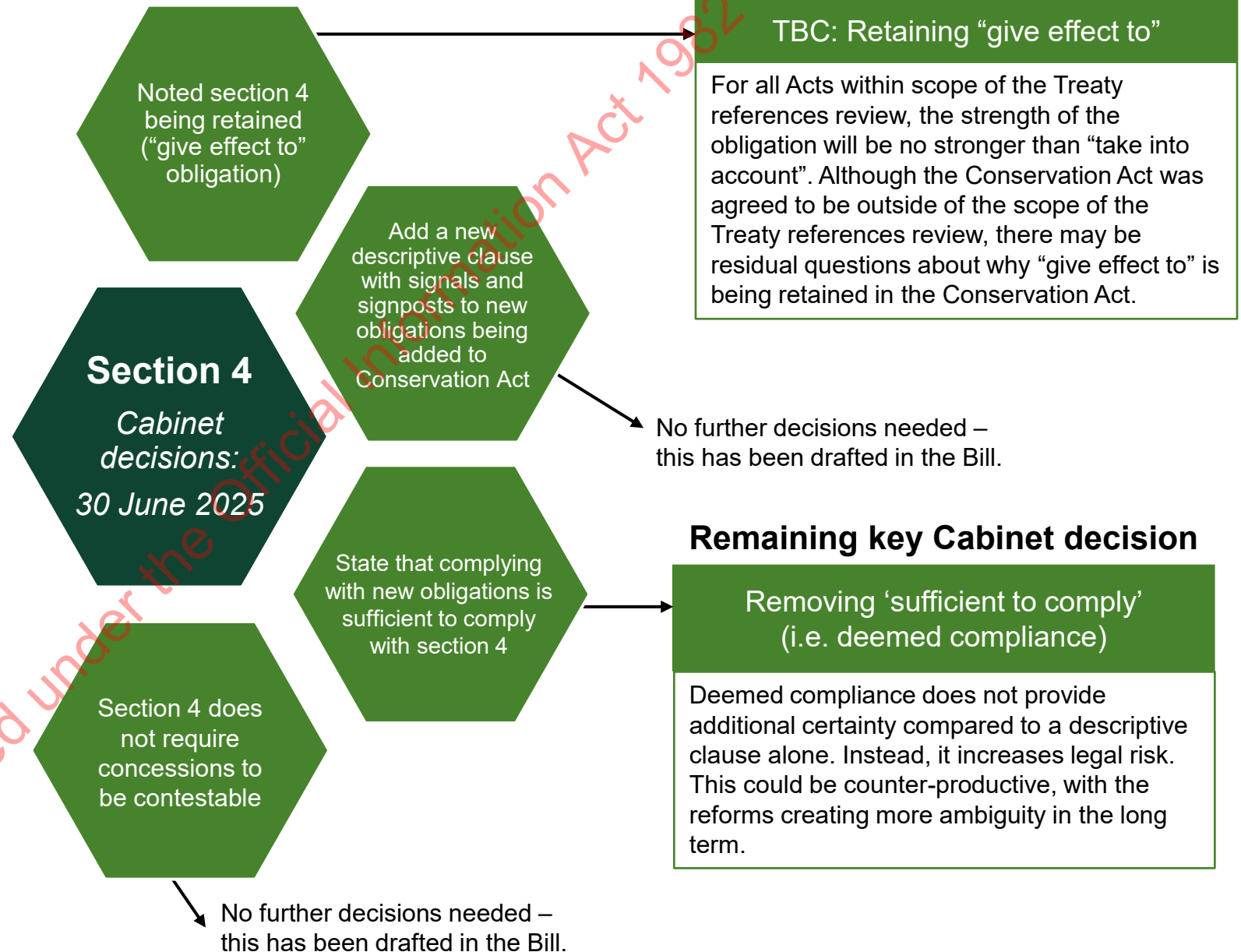
Supporting economic growth and businesses on conservation land



Section 4

Intended outcomes:

- Providing clarity about the Government's Treaty obligations
- Providing clarity about how the Government will meet its section 4 obligations under the Conservation Act



Management planning

Intended outcomes:

Regulatory efficiency and faster processes through:

- A more coherent regulatory framework
- A simplified set of planning documents
- More efficient plan making processes

Further Cabinet decisions sought through Cabinet paper (updated draft sent 20 Mar) to complete drafting

Further MOC decisions under delegation sought through ADVB-139 (sent 12 Mar) to complete drafting



National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS)

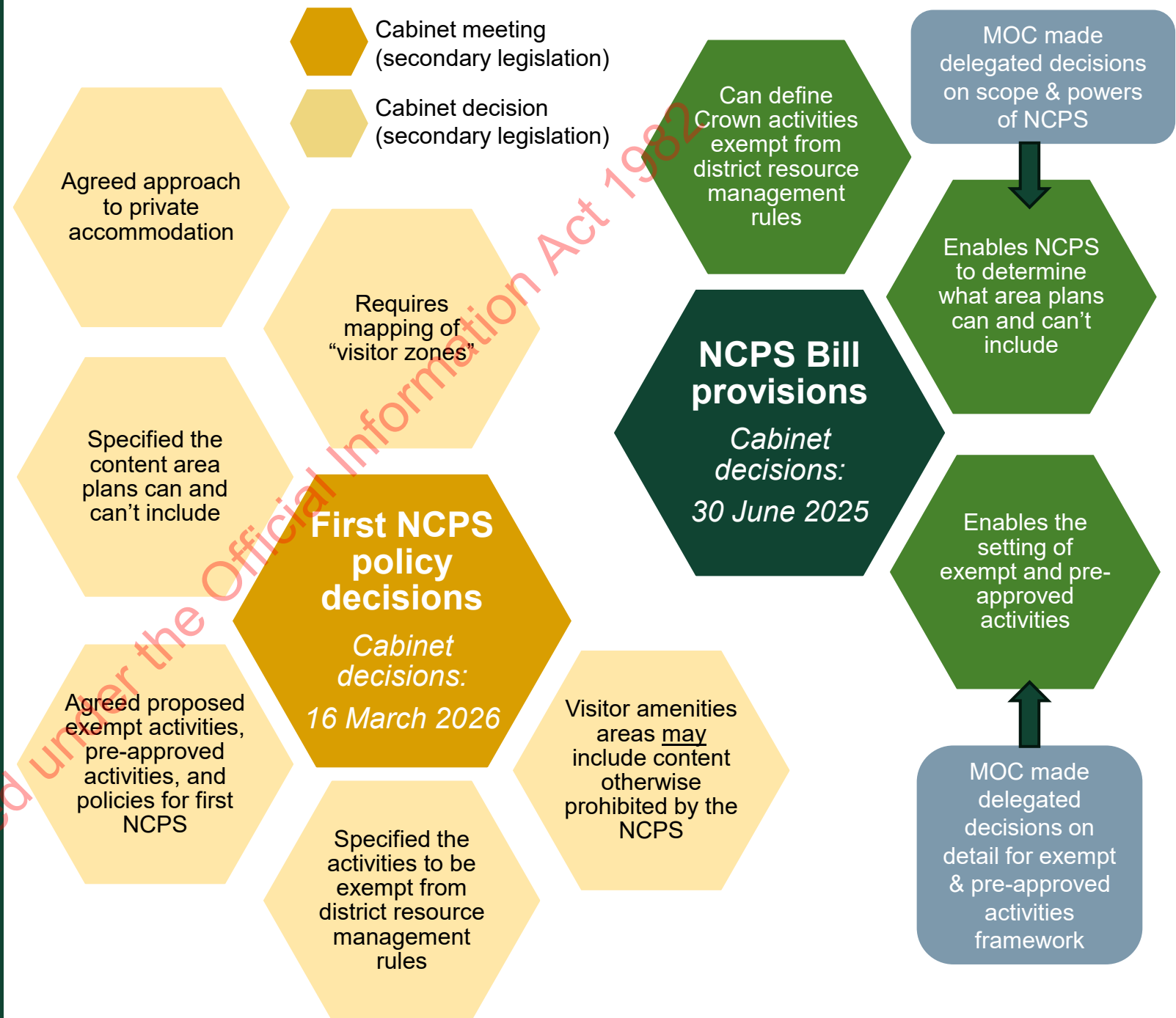
Intended outcomes:

Regulatory efficiency and faster processes, through:

- Faster concessions processing
- More focused area plans

Supporting economic growth and businesses on conservation land, through:

- More effective and efficient use of conservation land
- Clearer signalling of where activities are likely to be suitable

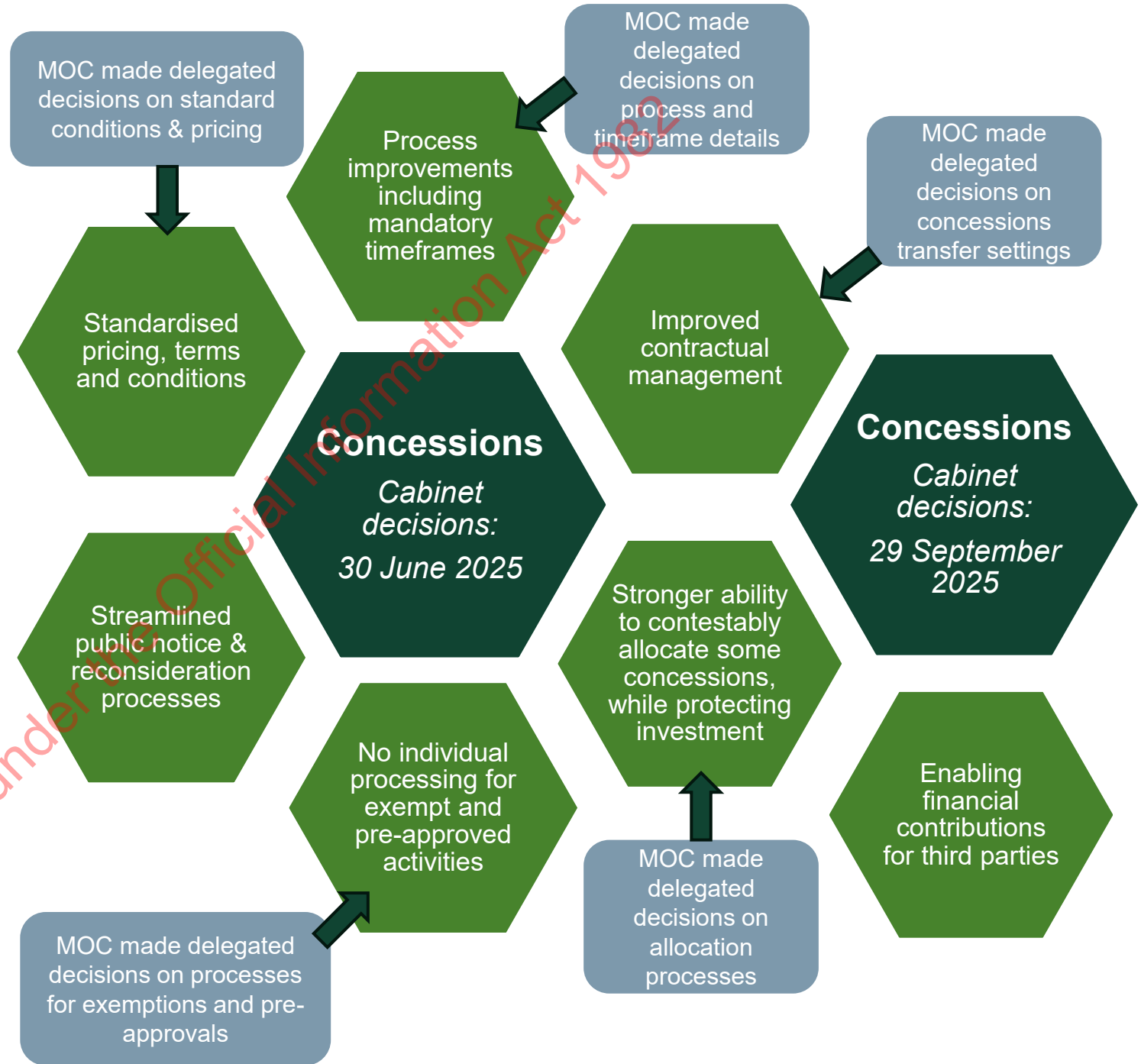


Concessions

Intended outcomes:

- Regulatory efficiency and faster processes
- Supporting economic growth and businesses on conservation land

Further MOC decisions under delegation sought through ADVB-139 (sent 12 Mar) to complete drafting

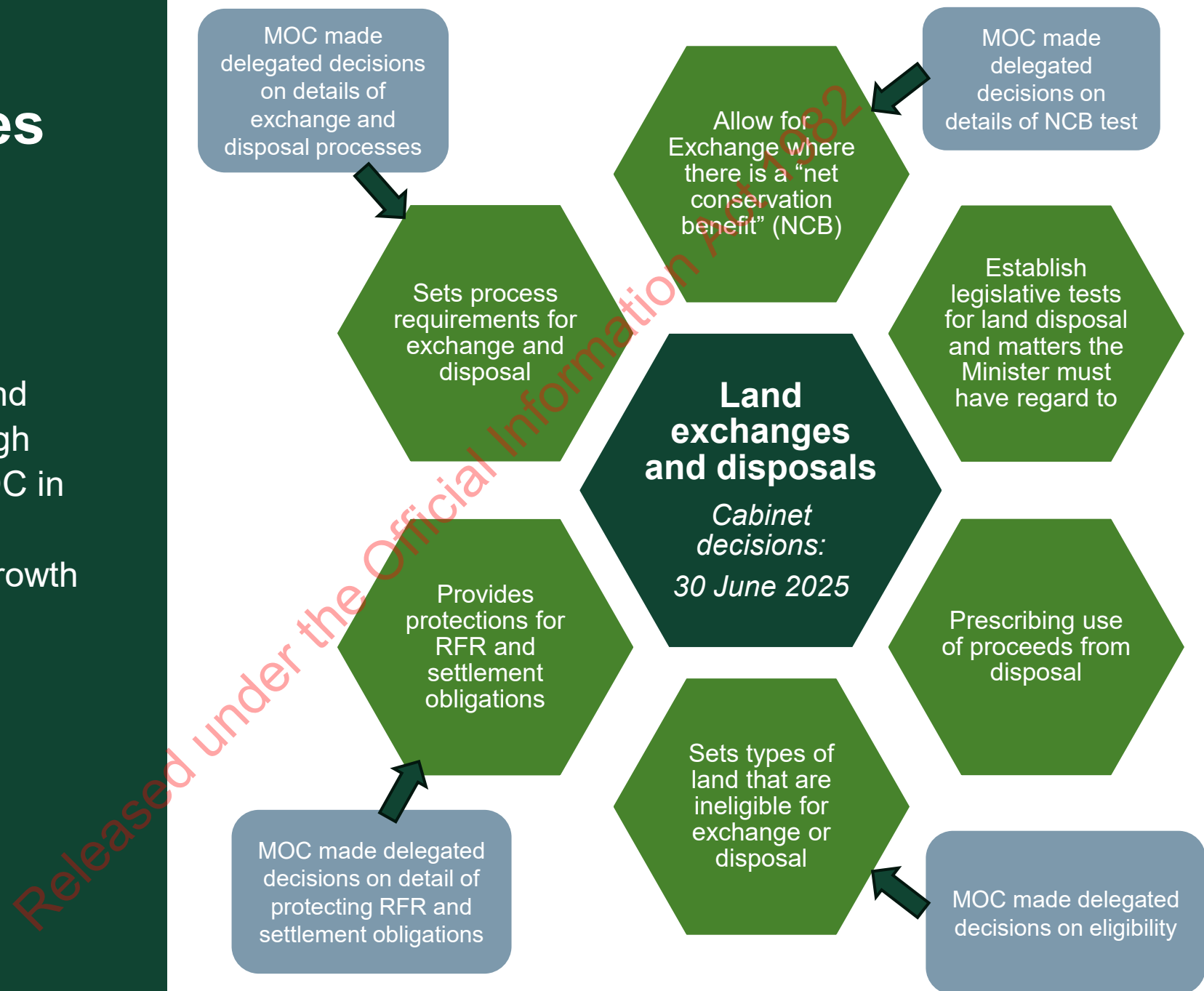


Land exchanges and disposals

Intended outcomes:

- Regulatory efficiency and faster processes, through greater flexibility for DOC in how it manages land
- Supporting economic growth and businesses on conservation land

Further Cabinet decisions sought through Cabinet paper (updated draft sent 20 Mar) to complete drafting

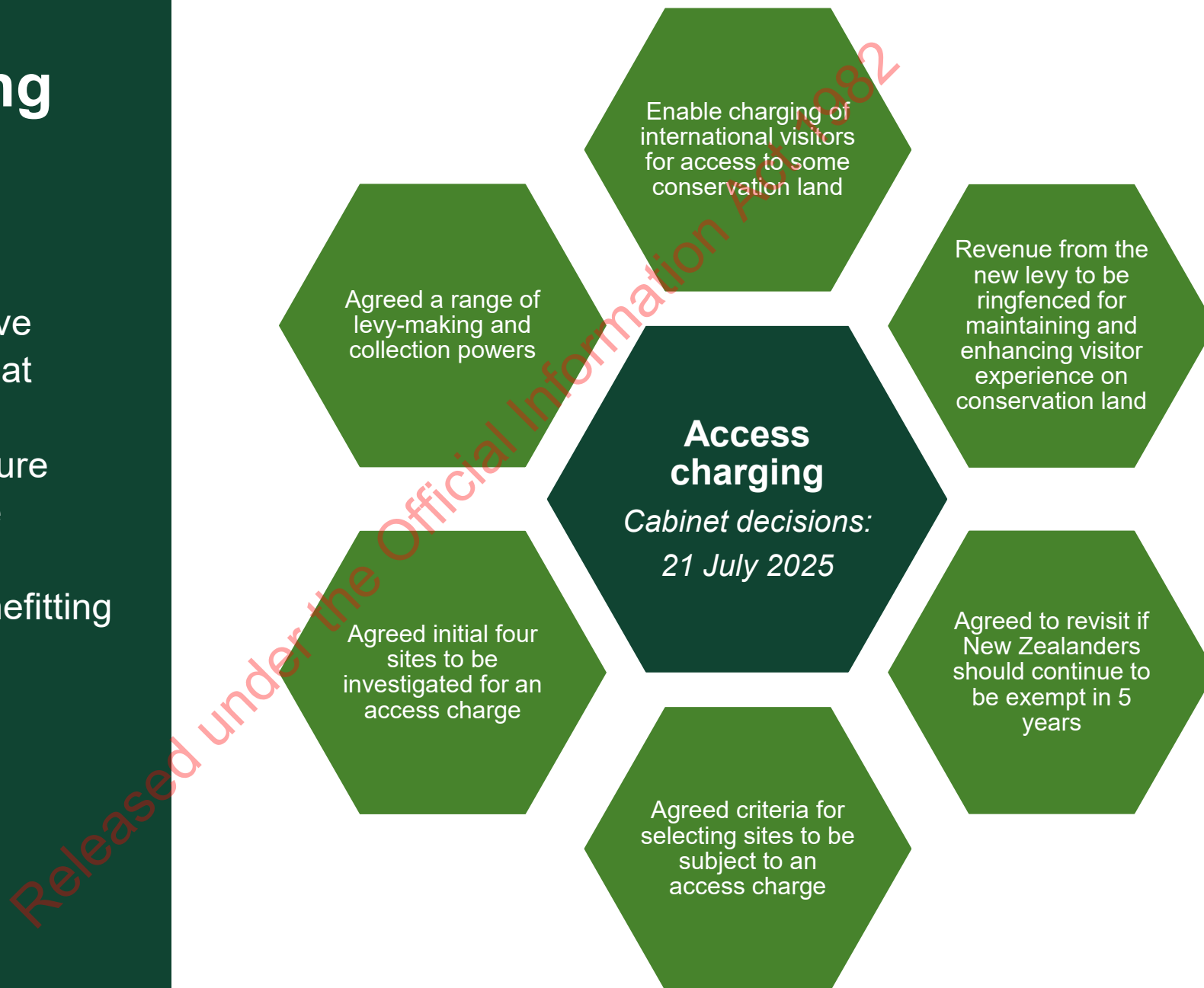


Access charging

Intended outcomes:

- Raise revenue to improve conservation outcomes at highly visited sites
- Improve equity and ensure international visitors are contributing towards experiences they're benefitting from

Further Cabinet decisions sought through Cabinet paper (updated draft sent 20 Mar) to complete drafting



Upholding redress

Intended outcomes:

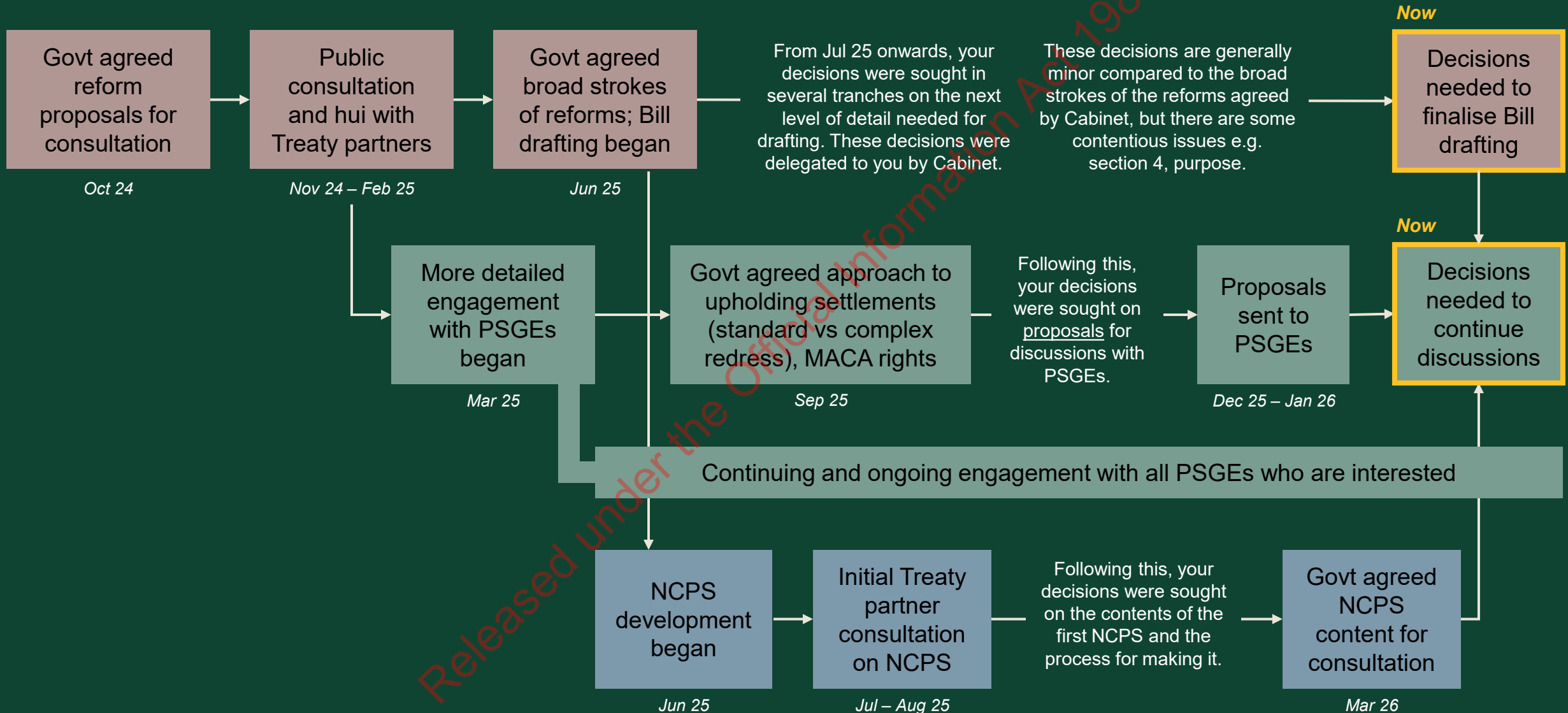
- Redress upheld
- System improvements retained to the extent possible
- Consistency of approach across wider Government reform programme

Further Cabinet decisions sought through Cabinet paper (updated draft sent 20 Mar) to complete drafting

Further MOC decisions under delegation sought through ADVB-139 (sent 12 Mar) to complete drafting



The path to date



Decisions needed at this stage

Key milestone:

Ministerial consultation must conclude by 10 April in order to lodge for Cabinet for consideration on 20 April.

Completing Bill drafting

Briefing ADVB-139 and draft Cabinet paper seeking these decisions provided on 12 March.

Updated Cabinet paper provided on 20 March.

These include:

- Decisions which can be **made by you under delegation** from Cabinet. These are relatively minor decisions in line with overarching decisions Cabinet has made previously.
- Decisions which require **Cabinet agreement**, because they involve changes to previous Cabinet decisions. These range from relatively minor changes to more substantive ones.

Supporting PSGE engagement

Briefing ADVB-148 seeking these decisions (including some for drafting) provided on 4 March.

Revised advice to come later this week, following feedback.

To support more meaningful conversations with PSGEs over the coming months, we are seeking decisions to **further refine the proposals for discussion with PSGEs**. The proposals provide a tangible starting point for more specific engagement about upholding redress.

The decisions sought address a few key questions being raised by PSGEs. PSGEs are also seeking more information about the Bill's approach to section 4, and the likely content of the first NCPS – both of which will be publicly available around the time of Bill introduction.

- We have provided you with a revised Cabinet paper to share with your colleagues for feedback. Where necessary, this notes where decisions on the above matters have not yet been made.
- DOC and PCO are in the final stages of drafting the Bill. We remain on track to provide you with a complete draft on 1 April, as per agreed timeframes.

Timeline for Bill introduction

Agreed between MOCO, DOC and PCO

Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
<i>23 Mar</i> Start ministerial consultation on Cabinet paper	<i>24 Mar</i>	<i>25 Mar</i>	<i>26 Mar</i>	<i>27 Mar</i>
<i>30 Mar</i>	<i>31 Mar</i>	<i>1 Apr</i> DOC sends Bill to MOCO for any feedback ahead of ministerial consultation	<i>2 Apr</i> MOCO provides any feedback on Bill; Bill then revised and sent out for ministerial consultation	<i>3 Apr</i> Public holiday
<i>6 Apr</i> Public holiday	<i>7 Apr</i>	<i>8 Apr</i>	<i>9 Apr</i>	<i>10 Apr</i> End ministerial consultation
<i>13 Apr</i> DOC and PCO start finalising Bill	<i>14 Apr</i>	<i>15 Apr</i>	<i>16 Apr</i> Bill and Cabinet paper lodged	<i>17 Apr</i>
<i>20 Apr</i> Cabinet Introduction	<i>21 Apr</i>	<i>22 Apr</i>	<i>23 Apr</i> First reading and referral to SC	<i>24 Apr</i>

Department of Conservation Status Report

for the Minister of Conservation

Week beginning 6 April 2026

Date: / /

Seen by Hon Tama Potaka
Minister of Conservation



Through a two-year partnership, Alliance Group will supply beef hearts to feed endangered kakī chicks at DOC's Twizel breeding facility. This support will boost their survival and aid the recovery of one of the world's rarest wading birds.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

1 Standing and priority items

1.1 Priorities update: Generating and activating revenue through the conservation estate

Access charging implementation update and targeted consultation planning (Decision item – 26-N-0004)

- This item updates you on implementation work for international visitor access charging and seeks your endorsement to progress targeted consultation on access charging regulations in the middle of this year.

Context

- In July 2025, Cabinet agreed to change conservation legislation enabling us to charge for access to some conservation land. This will be achieved through a new access levy progressed through the CALM Bill, and associated regulations.

s9(2)(f)(iv)

- Access charges are indicatively planned to go live at the end of 2027, in time for summer, although the new legislative timeline may impact our ability to do so. Cabinet agreed that access charging would be investigated at four sites: Piopiotahi Milford Sound, Aoraki Mount Cook, Tongariro Alpine Crossing, and Mautohe Cathedral Cove.

Implementation planning is progressing; we still consider the four sites feasible

- Staff assess the four proposed sites can continue to be progressed. There will be specific challenges to overcome at each site (e.g. Cathedral Cove has both land and water access to manage), but we do not consider these to be insurmountable.
- We will be undertaking the following tasks in the next few months: targeted consultation planning (discussed further below), researching international visitors' willingness to pay, finalising locations for licence plate cameras for data gathering on roads to Piopiotahi and Aoraki, and initial business case analysis of implementation options in order to recommend preferred solutions to take through to a detailed business case.

Proposed targeted consultation in Q2 this year on access charging regulations and seek your endorsement

- Public consultation on access charging was undertaken between November 2024 and February 2025; it sought feedback on who should pay, locations where the charges should be, and how the revenue should be used. No further public consultation is needed on the legislation, beyond what will occur through the Select Committee process.
- The draft legislation, and standard government practice, requires consultation with iwi, local communities and relevant concessionaires on any new regulations, or major changes to existing regulations. We are also required to meet our Section 4 obligations.
- We propose to undertake targeted consultation with key stakeholders and our Treaty partners on key components of the regulations, such as the rate, the specific area where they will apply (e.g. the physical boundaries), and possible discounts and exemptions. Feedback will also inform wider implementation considerations.
- We plan to hold in-person hui between May and June at all four sites with local communities, and local businesses / concessionaires. We will also engage with our Treaty partners in separate hui, utilising existing sessions where we can. Finally, we will undertake limited national-level engagement online with peak bodies for the recreation sector, ENGOs, tourism groups and concessionaires, and conservation boards.

Risk assessment

- Consulting now is necessary to maintain our planned implementation timeline and enable us to gather additional data and finalise details for the proposed regulations. The regulations will then be ready for consideration by an incoming government, and after the CALM Bill passes its final reading.
- A key risk is that consultation will run concurrently with the wider Bill process. We will develop clear messaging about the purpose of the targeted consultation and how it differs from the Bill process.
- If we do not consult this year, it is unlikely regulations will be in place in time for the planned implementation of charges in the summer of 2027/28. The CALM Bill will need to be passed, and we will have to brief an incoming government, undertake consultation, finalise implementation planning, undertake procurement processes, and draft regulations in less than 12 months. Notwithstanding uncertainty around the legislative timeline, delaying consultation now would push out the proposed implementation to Summer 2028/29, and delay the accrual of revenue.

Next steps

- With your endorsement, we will begin contacting local communities and Treaty partners at the four sites to organise hui. This will provide early notice and ensure good attendance at meetings. We will provide you with further details on the planned consultation and the regulations in late April.

Recommendations

Endorse our plan to undertake targeted consultation in May/June on access charging regulations at the four proposed access charging sites	Yes / No
/ /	
Hon Tama Potaka Minister of Conservation	Date

Contacts: Dasha Leonova, Director, Policy: s9(2)(a) and Cat Wilson, Director, Heritage and Visitors: s9(2)(a)



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Summary

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Conservation Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio	Conservation
Purpose	This paper seeks approval to introduce the Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill), and confirmation of decisions taken by the Minister during drafting.
Previous Decisions	In June and September 2025, Cabinet took policy decisions on the Bill [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01, CAB-25-MIN-0334.01].
Proposal	The Bill will amend the Conservation Act (the Act) to update and streamline the conservation land management framework, and better enable economic activity on conservation land. Approval is sought for several policy changes made by the Minister during the drafting process, as set out in Appendix A. These include: • progressing only three of four proposed changes to the Act's purpose clause, in response to legal advice about the effect of the fourth change; • retaining the requirement in section 4 of the Act to 'give effect to' Treaty principles, and not including a deemed compliance provision in the section; • upholding non-standard Treaty settlement redress, such as deeds of recognition, through temporary transitional provisions, rather than more specific drafting, and drafting these transitional provisions to be consistent with the approach taken in the Planning Bill and Natural Environment Bill; • broadening the scope of access charging to apply to all conservation land managed or administered by DOC, whether or not it is Crown-owned. A number of other policy changes were made during drafting, within the Minister's previous delegations from Cabinet. These are set out in Appendix B.
Impact Analysis	A Supplementary Analysis Report relating to proposed changes to the purpose of the Act is attached as Appendix C .
Compliance	Parliamentary Counsel certified the Bill on 21 April 2026 as being in order for submission to Cabinet.

- Timing Matters** The Minister proposes that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible, and referred to the Environment Committee.
- Consultation** Paper prepared by DoC, MCH, Crown Law, MoJ, DPMC, MfE, Treasury, DIA, LINZ, MoT, MPI, MHUD, MBIE, MfR, Te Tari Whakatau, and TPK were consulted.

The Minister indicates that all Ministers were consulted.

The Minister of Conservation recommends that the Committee:

- 1 s9(2)(f)(iv)
- 2 note that the Bill will streamline the conservation land management framework, better enable appropriate use of conservation land, and support more effective administration of conservation land;
- 3 approve the Conservation Amendment Bill [PCO 28229/16.0] for introduction;
- 4 approve additional proposals for the Bill as set out in the paper and Appendix A under the submission LEG-26-SUB-0066;
- 5 note the policy decisions made during drafting, consistent with Cabinet's earlier delegations, which are set out in Appendix B to the submission under LEG-26-SUB-0066;
- 6 note that no change to the threshold that must be met in concession decisions (relating to the purpose for which the land is held) has been made s9(2)(h)
- 7 authorise the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make minor and technical changes to the Bill, in line with Cabinet policy decisions, up until the Bill is introduced;
- 8 agree that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible;
- 9 agree that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

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Cabinet

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Conservation Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio

Conservation

On 23 April 2026, the Cabinet Legislation Committee referred the paper under LEG-26-SUB-0066 to Cabinet for further discussion. The paper considered by LEG is **attached**.

This paper seeks approval to introduce the Conservation Amendment Bill. The Bill is intended to give effect to a series of June and September 2025 decisions on enabling more economic activity on conservation land [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01, CAB-25-MIN-0334.01].

The Minister of Conservation recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 **s9(2)(f)(iv)**
- 2 note that the Bill will streamline the conservation land management framework, better enable appropriate use of conservation land, and support more effective administration of conservation land;
- 3 approve the Conservation Amendment Bill [PCO 28229/17.0] for introduction;
- 4 approve additional proposals for the Bill as set out in the paper and Appendix A under the submission CAB-26-SUB-0141;
- 5 note the policy decisions made during drafting, consistent with Cabinet's earlier delegations, which are set out in Appendix B to the submission under CAB-26-SUB-0141;
- 6 note that no change to the threshold that must be met in concession decisions (relating to the purpose for which the land is held) has been made, **s9(2)(h)**
- 7 authorise the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make minor and technical changes to the Bill, in line with Cabinet policy decisions, up until the Bill is introduced;
- 8 agree that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible;
- 9 agree that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Sam Moffett
for Secretary of the Cabinet

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The Cabinet



Cabinet Legislation Committee

Summary

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Conservation Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio

Conservation

On 23 April 2026, the Cabinet Legislation Committee referred this paper to Cabinet for discussion, and on 28 April 2026, Cabinet referred it back to LEG for further discussion. The paper considered by LEG and Cabinet is **attached**.

This paper seeks approval to introduce the Conservation Amendment Bill. The Bill is intended to give effect to a series of June and September 2025 decisions on enabling more economic activity on conservation land [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01, CAB-25-MIN-0334.01].

The Minister of Conservation recommends that the Committee:

- 1 **s9(2)(f)(iv)**
- 2 note that the Bill will streamline the conservation land management framework, better enable appropriate use of conservation land, and support more effective administration of conservation land;
- 3 approve the Conservation Amendment Bill [PCO 28229/17.0] for introduction;
- 4 approve additional proposals for the Bill as set out in the paper and Appendix A under the submission LEG-26-SUB-0073;
- 5 note the policy decisions made during drafting, consistent with Cabinet's earlier delegations, which are set out in Appendix B to the submission under LEG-26-SUB-0073;
- 6 note that no change to the threshold that must be met in concession decisions (relating to the purpose for which the land is held) has been made, **s9(2)(h)**
- 7 authorise the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make minor and technical changes to the Bill, in line with Cabinet policy decisions, up until the Bill is introduced;
- 8 agree that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible;
- 9 agree that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Sam Moffett
Committee Secretary

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Cabinet

Summary

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Conservation Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio

Conservation

On 23 April 2026, an earlier version of this paper was considered by LEG, and referred to Cabinet for further discussion. Cabinet referred it back to LEG, and on 30 April LEG again referred it back to Cabinet. The paper, and attached bill, have since been updated to reflect Cabinet discussions and Ministerial decisions.

This paper seeks approval to introduce the Conservation Amendment Bill, which is intended to streamline and promote the economic development of conservation land.

The Minister of Conservation recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
- 2 note that the Bill will streamline the conservation land management framework, better enable appropriate use of conservation land, and support more effective administration of conservation land;
- 3 approve additional proposals for the Bill as set out in the paper and Appendix A under the submission CAB-26-SUB-0154;
- 4 note the policy decisions made during drafting, consistent with Cabinet's earlier delegations, which are set out in Appendix B to the submission under CAB-26-SUB-0154;
- 5 note that no change to the threshold that must be met in concession decisions (relating to the purpose for which the land is held) has been made s9(2)(h) [REDACTED]
- 6 agree to amend the purpose-related provisions (amended section 6(e) and new sections 13D, 13H and 14 in the Bill) to recognise the economic opportunities that arise from the use and development of land and other natural and historic resources managed by the Department, and enable this use and development to the greatest extent practicable under this Act and other enactments;
- 7 authorise the Minister of Conservation, with advice from the Parliamentary Counsel Office and Crown Law, to approve the final wording used in the Bill to give effect to the decision in paragraph 6 above;
- 8 s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]

- 9 authorise the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make minor and technical changes to the Bill, in line with Cabinet policy decisions, up until the Bill is introduced;
- 10 approve the Conservation Amendment Bill [PCO 28229] for introduction, subject to final drafting to give effect to the above decisions;
- 11 agree that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible;
- 12 agree that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Sam Moffett
for Secretary of the Cabinet

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Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Conservation Amendment Bill: Approval for Introduction

Portfolio **Conservation**

On 4 May 2026, following reference from the Cabinet Legislation Committee, Cabinet:

- 1 s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
- 2 **noted** that the Bill will streamline the conservation land management framework, better enable appropriate use of conservation land, and support more effective administration of conservation land;
- 3 **approved** additional proposals for the Bill as set out in the paper and Appendix A under the submission CAB-26-SUB-0154;
- 4 **noted** the policy decisions made during drafting, consistent with Cabinet's earlier delegations, which are set out in Appendix B to the submission under CAB-26-SUB-0154;
- 5 **noted** that no change to the threshold that must be met in concession decisions (relating to the purpose for which the land is held) has been made, s9(2)(h) [REDACTED]
- 6 **agreed** to amend the purpose-related provisions (amended section 6(e) and new sections 13D, 13H and 14 in the Bill) to recognise the economic opportunities that arise from the use and development of land and other natural and historic resources managed by the Department, and enable this use and development to the greatest extent practicable under this Act and other enactments;
- 7 **authorised** the Minister of Conservation, with advice from the Parliamentary Counsel Office and Crown Law, to approve the final wording used in the Bill to give effect to the decision in paragraph 6 above;
- 8 s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
- 9 **authorised** the Parliamentary Counsel Office to continue to make minor and technical changes to the Bill, in line with Cabinet policy decisions, up until the Bill is introduced;
- 10 **approved** the Conservation Amendment Bill [PCO 28229] for introduction, subject to final drafting to give effect to the above decisions;

- 11 **agreed** that the Bill be introduced as soon as possible;
- 12 **agreed** that the Government propose that the Bill be referred to the Environment Committee for consideration.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet

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Attachment C: The standard and short process for amending the NCPS

Process for making or amending the National Conservation Policy Statement



Short NCPS process

Pre-approved and exempt activities can be created, amended or removed through a shorter process

Minister initiates

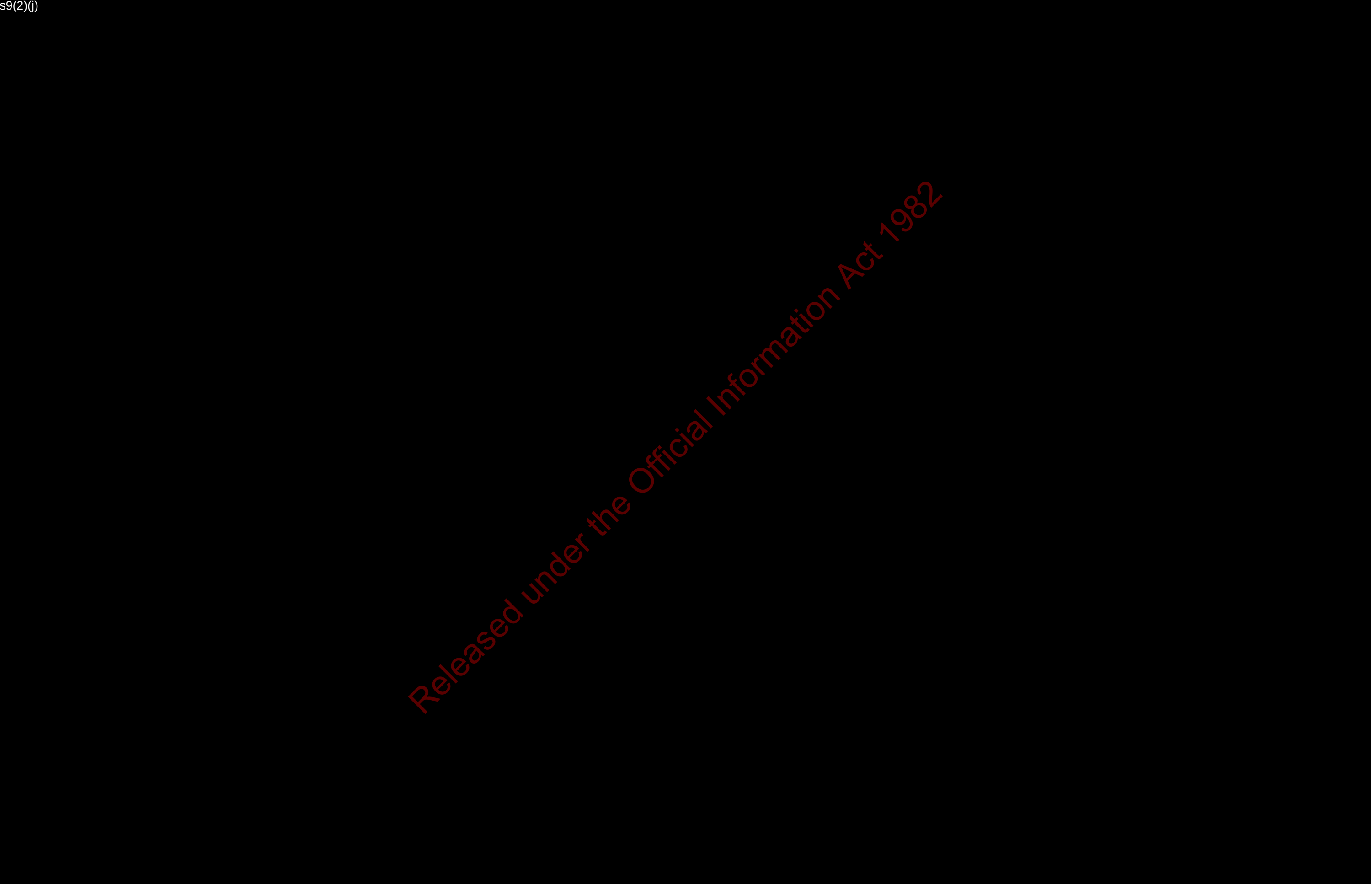
General consultation
(20 working days)

Summary of
comments and
impact analysis
report

Final consultation
(20 working days)

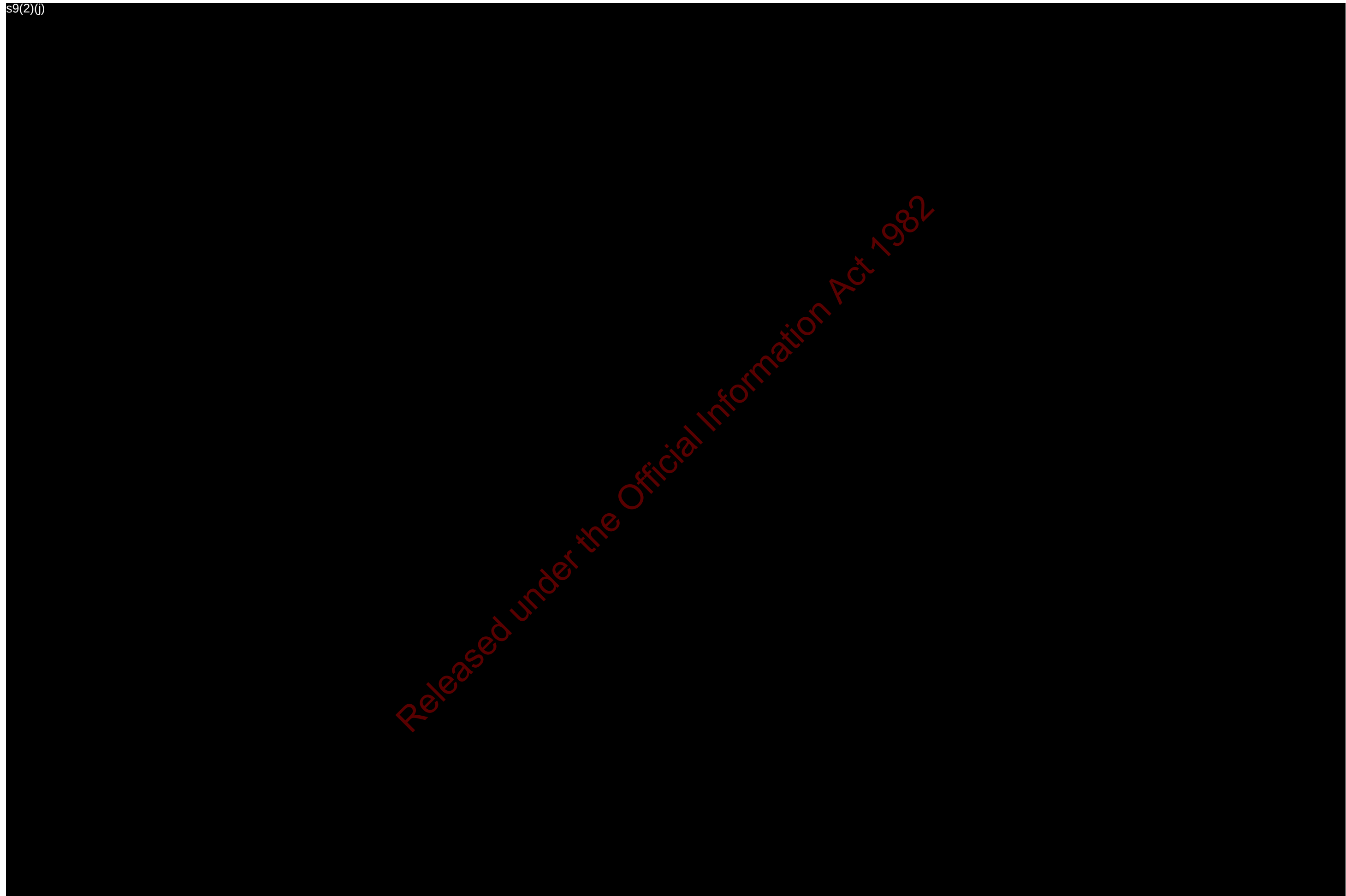
Minister decision

s9(2)(j)



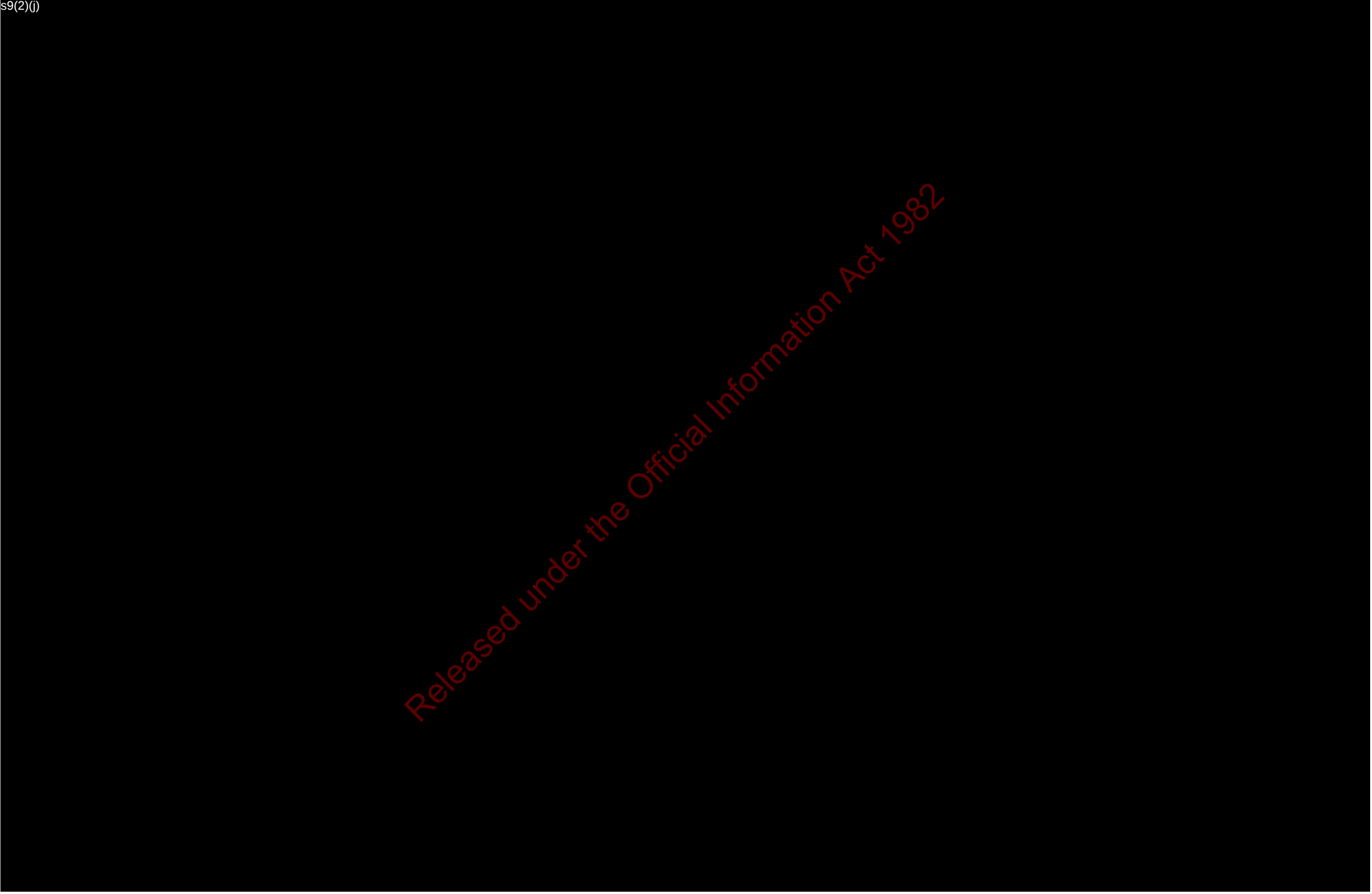
Released under the Official Information Act 1982

s9(2)(j)



Released under the Official Information Act 1982

s9(2)(j)



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s9(2)(j)



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HUI/EVENT BRIEF

HUI/EVENT	Environmental Defence Society (EDS) Conference 'Beyond the election, a new mandate for our environment'
DATE	25/06/2026
TIME	1.45pm – 3.30pm
LOCATION	Grand Millennium Ballroom, Grand Millennium Hotel, 71 Mayoral Drive, Cnr Vincent Street, Auckland
ATTIRE	Business attire

PURPOSE	The Environmental Defence Society (EDS) has invited you to participate in Session 11: Conservation Reform at its two-day annual conference (an afternoon tea will be held after session 11). This session will focus on the future of the conservation estate and how tensions between use and conservation might best be managed. You will be part of a panel with four other speakers. Each panellist will give a short presentation (5–7 minutes), followed by a Q&A session, time permitting. The Chair has prepared a number of questions for this, and we have provided you with supporting talking points. Additional questions may also be taken from the audience. This will be an opportunity for you to talk about the Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) and its objectives.
BACKGROUND	The annual EDS conference is a high-profile event in the conservation sphere. This year's theme of the conference, Beyond the election: A new mandate for our environment focuses on the next term of Government. The conference will examine the key environmental challenges facing Aotearoa and assess the adequacy of responses from across political parties. The programme indicates it will also critique the "workability of recent reforms, and propose solutions to amend, or replace bad law that risks harm to our natural world". You met with EDS on 20 May 2026 to discuss the Bill, there EDS raised concerns about the purpose-related changes. They consider the purpose changes displace the primacy of conservation as the overarching purpose of the system and enable economic activities on conservation land irrespective of their conservation outcomes. In this context, it is likely that questions will arise at the conference regarding the Bill's purpose provisions.
ATTENDEES	The session you will be participating in will be chaired by Corina Jordan, Chief Executive of Fish & Game, and the Game Animal Council (see her biography in Appendix 1). She will open the session, followed by invited panellists. You will be the first to speak, followed by: • Hon Shane Jones, Deputy Leader, NZ First • Hon Priyanca Radhakrishnan, Labour spokesperson for Conservation • Justin Tipa, Chair, Te Rūnunga o Ngāi Tahu • Erika Toleman, Interim CEO, Forest and Bird The wider conference programme also features a range of political representatives, including Hon Chris Bishop (Minister Responsible for RMA Reform), Rt Hon Chris Hipkins (Leader of the Opposition, Labour Party), and other notable participants.

**TALKING
POINTS**
(5 - 7 minutes)

- **The future of conservation** is about managing land use well, protecting what makes places special, supporting communities, and enabling people to connect with nature.
 - By getting this right, we can ensure that future generations inherit a conservation estate that is both protected and enjoyed.
 - The future of conservation must also drive investment into high-value conservation outcomes.
 - Because the scale and complexity of the challenge we face continues to grow.
 - More visitors, changing expectations, and increasing environmental pressure, including climate change, invasive species, and disease — for example the recent *Caulerpa* incursions.
 - **The Conservation Amendment Bill** I introduced to Parliament last month addresses these challenges by enabling appropriate economic activity on conservation land while strengthening conservation outcomes.
 - The question is no longer whether we allow use, but how we direct effort, incentivise investment, and prioritise resources where they make the greatest difference.
 - This is not a trade-off between use and protection. We must deliver both sustainably, because they benefit each other.
 - Let's take tourism as an example. New Zealand's natural environment draws people from around the world, attracting around one million visitors each year.
 - It generates around \$5.3 billion a year and supports jobs and livelihoods in communities across the country.
 - When nature thrives, tourism thrives.
 - Visitors to the conservation estate generate revenue for conservation, while education and experience inspire them to act for nature.
 - However, the current Conservation Act has not kept pace with how people visit these places, how businesses operate, or how we deliver strong conservation outcomes.
 - As a result, outdated rules, costly and slow processes, lengthy processing times, and low certainty discourages individuals and businesses from investing.
 - Given the scale of the challenges, we must encourage investment both for the economy and nature, reduce costs, and prioritise what matters most.
 - The Conservation Amendment Bill does exactly that.
 - It recognises that well-managed use of conservation land can support positive conservation outcomes — these objectives are not mutually exclusive.
 - It modernises and streamlines the conservation system to achieve four key objectives: unlock investment on conservation land, improves efficiency, generates more revenue for conservation, and ensure we invest our resources to the highest priority areas.
- 1. Supporting economic growth on conservation land**
- The Conservation Act already provides for economic activity on Conservation land. More than 1600 businesses operate on conservation land, contributing tens of millions of dollars to local economies, and demand continues to grow.

- The Bill supports economic growth by providing greater clarity for those who want to invest on conservation land, while keeping conservation as the primary purpose.
- It streamlines a planning framework that is currently overly complex and fragmented.
- For example, the Routeburn Track spans two National Parks and operates under multiple plans with different limits for overnight guided walkers. This creates uncertainty about which limits apply.
- The Bill simplifies this by:
 - replacing the two existing general policies with a single National Conservation Policy Statement (NCPS)
 - replacing multiple layers of plans with a single set of clear, non-overlapping area plans.
- These planning documents will focus on clear objectives and regulatory settings and will make the system easier to understand and navigate. This will provide greater certainty for all users of the system, with clearer conservation outcomes.
- While decision-making on planning documents shifts to the Minister, the New Zealand Conservation Authority and conservation boards retain an important advisory role, ensuring that conservation voices and concerns continue to be reflected in the system.
- It also introduces an amenity areas tool for conservation land, allowing for targeted, well-managed development in high-use locations, while protecting more sensitive and pristine areas.

2. Simpler rules and faster processes

- Second, the Bill provides simpler rules and faster processes, including for concessions.
- DOC receives more than 1,500 concession applications each year.
- Currently, the system treats every application largely in the same way, even low-risk, well-understood activities. This creates unnecessary workload, delays, and frustration, and diverts resources from the things that really matter.
- The Bill modernises the concession framework by, for example:
 - Enabling the NCPS to exempt or pre-approved low-risk, low-impact activities (like for news of the day filming or photography)
 - Introducing clear statutory timeframes
 - Clarifying when allocation processes can be used
 - Standardising concessions management.
- These changes reduce delays and provide greater certainty for businesses operating or seeking to operate on conservation land.
- They also allow DOC to focus on proposals that can deliver meaningful conservation and economic benefits.
- Upholding Treaty settlements and principles are both fundamental to enduring, successful conservation and use of the estate.
- The Bill retains section 4 of the Conservation Act and clarifies some process steps for how the Treaty Principles should be given effect to in practice, such as

the required steps, and processes before making statutory decisions, supported by operational policy and guidance.

- This reduces uncertainty and improves consistency for Treaty partners, decisions-makers and applicants.
- The Government remains committed to upholding Treaty Settlements, and where possible this Bill will provide for these commitments directly. There are several complex areas which will require further discussion with our Treaty partners.
- DOC will continue working with post-settlement governance entities and Ngā Hapū o Ngāti Porou as the system is implemented.

3. Generating revenue to improve outcomes for conservation

- The Bill also responds to the real cost of caring for New Zealand's iconic places.
- Maintaining these locations to a standard that protects their natural and cultural values, while keeping visitors safe, requires significant and increasing investment.
- The Conservation Act currently prevents charging for access to public conservation land.
- This Bill changes that, by introducing a common-sense approach already widely used overseas – charging international visitors for access at a small number of high-use sites. Many international visitors are surprised we do not already do this.
- DOC estimates that charging international visitors at four iconic locations (Cathedral Cove / Te Whanganui-a-Hei, Tongariro Crossing, Milford Sound, and Aoraki Mount Cook) could raise around \$60 million a year.
- DOC will reinvest this funding directly into conservation and visitor infrastructure.
- New Zealanders will continue to access these places free of charge, and charges will focus on high-pressure tourism sites.
- This ensures a fairer system, where those who benefit most from these places contribute to the upkeep.

4. Targeting investment to high-value conservation outcomes

- Even with additional revenue, we cannot do everything everywhere. We must make deliberate choices about where to invest for the greatest impact (like our BioInvest approach).
- The Bill supports a more strategic approach to prioritising conservation effort by enabling DOC to manage land in a way that best supports conservation.
- It provides more flexibility in land exchanges and disposals when they deliver better overall results for conservation.
- Land exchanges allow the Crown to obtain land with higher conservation value.
- Land disposals reduce holdings with limited conservation value or that are low in order of investment priorities.
- This frees up resources to invest in areas that matter most.
- Crucially, strong safeguards remain in place. The most precious conservation land will not be eligible for exchange and disposal. The remaining land (approximately 60%) will still have to meet specific tests in order to be eligible. For example, land exchanges will only proceed where the land received has

	higher conservation value than the land traded away. And land disposals can only occur on the recommendation of the Director General of Conservation. Closing: the future vision • In order for conservation to thrive in Aotearoa, we need a system that recognises that use and conservation can work together, and when managed well, they strengthen each other. • Because the future of conservation is not just about protecting what we have — it is about actively improving it. • Ensuring it continues to support our environment, communities, and economy for generations to come. • The Bill builds a system that encourages investment, reduces unnecessary cost, and delivers better outcomes for nature. • The Bill is now before the Select Committee, with submissions open until 2 July, and consultation on the proposed NCPS is open until 10 August. • I encourage everyone with an interest in the future of our conservation estate to engage in these processes and have their say.
Questions Corina Jordan will ask as time allows	1. <i>DOC is severely underfunded. Can we realistically prevent species extinctions and protect indigenous biodiversity with current levels of investment?</i> • Protecting biodiversity is a significant challenge, and it requires us to use available resources in a focused and effective way. • DOC has a strong track record of achieving meaningful conservation outcomes, including bringing species back from the brink of extinction—such as the Mercury Islands tusked wētā, which was successfully recovered through targeted intervention. • Legislative reform, including the Conservation Amendment Bill, is focused on improving efficiency and reducing costs for DOC, so effort and investment can be directed where they will have the greatest conservation impact. • The Bill will also help generate new, sustainable revenue for conservation, including through targeted charges for international visitors at high-use sites. • By combining increased funding, more efficient processes, and clear prioritisation, we can better focus time and resources on the areas that matter most for protecting biodiversity and preventing further species decline. 2. out of scope

3. Increased use and development of the conservation estate is a means of increasing revenue through concessions. Does the Conservation Amendment Bill strike the right balance between providing for greater economic opportunities in the conservation estate and protecting nature?

- The Conservation Amendment Bill is designed to enable appropriate use and development of conservation land while maintaining strong protections for its conservation values.
- It addresses long-standing inefficiencies in the planning and concessions system that have created unnecessary complexity and discouraged investment.
- By modernising the framework, the Bill streamlines processes, unlocks sustainable economic opportunities and generate additional revenue that can be reinvested into conservation.
- Importantly, conservation remains at the heart of the Bill — ensuring that increased use does not come at the expense of the natural values New Zealanders care deeply about.

4. Do you support mining on conservation land?

- Mining on conservation land is primarily managed under the Crown Minerals Act and Fast-track Approvals Act. The list of high value conservation land that can only be subject to the very lowest impact mining activities is not changing.
- Currently, mining is allowed on the majority of public conservation land, other than the land classifications (such as National Parks and Wilderness Areas) listed in Schedule 4 of the Crown Minerals Act.

5. Tourism is both one of conservation's greatest allies and one of its greatest pressures. What does a sustainable tourism model for the conservation estate look like to you?

- A sustainable tourism model is one where tourism both supports and helps fund conservation. That means enabling appropriate tourism activity, while managing pressure at high-use sites and protecting conservation values.
- Through the Conservation Amendment Bill, we are improving how tourism is managed, directing activity to the right places, and ensuring international visitors contribute to the upkeep of the areas they enjoy.
- Ultimately it's about achieving better outcomes for nature, visitors, and local communities.

6. What about selling some of the lower value parts of the conservation estate to ease DOC's operational burden. What are your thoughts on that?

- With around a third of Crown land managed by DOC, it is important that DOC has the full range of tools needed to prioritise and manage land in a way that best supports conservation outcomes.
- The Bill introduces greater flexibility for land exchanges and disposals, while maintaining strong safeguards through new tests, criteria, and decision-making processes.
- This will enable DOC to exchange land for areas with higher conservation value, or to dispose of land where doing so will deliver better overall conservation outcomes.
- In some cases, disposing of lower-value land can also reduce ongoing maintenance and compliance costs — such as managing fire risk — allowing resources to be redirected to higher-value conservation priorities.

7. How should the future of the conservation estate better give effect to Te Tiriti partnerships and Māori aspirations?

- Working in partnership with Iwi and Hapū delivers better conservation outcomes.
- The current Conservation Act provides limited guidance on how Treaty principles must be given effect in decision-making, which has led to inconsistent interpretations, delays, legal uncertainty, and frustration.
- The Conservation Amendment Bill provides greater clarity about the Government's Treaty obligations and how they should be applied in practice.
- It sets out more clearly what is required to give effect to Treaty principles across land management and concession processes. This includes greater specificity around procedural steps, defined statutory roles for iwi, and clearer requirements to consider Treaty rights and interests where these are not currently explicit.
- DOC holds the largest and most complex portfolio of Treaty settlement commitments in the Public Service, and I expect it to deliver these commitments consistently and reliably.

Out of scope

5

	■ Out of scope
	■ [REDACTED]
	■ [REDACTED]
	■ [REDACTED]
	■ [REDACTED]
	11. If you could change three things tomorrow to improve the future of the conservation estate, what would they be?
	• First, modernise conservation management—cut red tape and enable faster decisions while maintaining strong environmental protections.
	• Second, strengthen sustainable funding, including ensuring visitors contribute more directly so we can reinvest in biodiversity and the conservation estate.
	• Out of scope
	■ [REDACTED]

Out of scope

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Cabinet Paper Talking Points: Oral Item – Land exchanges and disposals

To	Minister of Conservation
Committee	Legislation Committee (LEG) – 9:30 AM
Date of meeting	25 June 2026
Reference	26-K-20
Minister lead	Minister of Conservation
DOC contact	Ange Bell, Director Policy, s9(2)(a)
Security level	In Confidence

Purpose – Te aronga

1. To provide talking points to support your oral item at LEG seeking agreement to remove support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals (LED) from the Conservation Amendment Bill.

Background and context – Te horopaki

2. The Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced and had its first reading in May.
3. The Bill reforms the concessions and planning system to make it faster, more consistent, and more responsive. It allows economic activity on conservation land where appropriate, while strengthening conservation outcomes.
4. It also includes provisions that would broaden and streamline the processes for disposing of or exchanging public conservation land. These changes are primarily set out in the Bill's Part 3C (new sections 15 to 15ZB), with some consequential changes (e.g. in Schedules 3 and 5).
5. Over the last week there has been significant public and media interest in this issue in particular. The focus of this interest is the framing that 60 percent of PCL would be eligible for disposal under the Bill, despite much of that land being unable to pass the further tests and process that the Bill creates.
6. Over the weekend of 20 and 21 June the Environment Committee received approximately 30,000 submissions on the Bill, which we assume will largely be focused on this issue. As of 24 June, over 48,000 submissions have been received – almost twice as many as the Fast-track Approvals Act.

We understand you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals in the Bill

7. In order to ensure that the broader benefits of the proposed reforms are able to be realised, we understand that you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and seek Cabinet agreement to that at the LEG meeting on 25 June. We understand you wish to retain the status quo position for land exchanges and disposals in the Conservation Act.

You can seek Cabinet agreement to change the Government's position and then write to inform the Environment Committee

8. Cabinet cannot make changes directly to the Bill while it is before the Select Committee. However, you can inform the committee of the change in the Government's position and note that the Government would support the removal of the provisions in the committee's report.
9. s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
10. We understand that your office has sought Power to Act at LEG so that decisions there can be said to be Cabinet's.
11. We have provided a draft letter to the Environment Committee (see draft letter at Appendix 4) to send should Cabinet agree to the recommendation.

Next steps – Ngā tāwhaitanga

12. Following Cabinet's agreement, you can send the attached letter to the committee expressing the Government's view.
13. We will provide further advice on the process steps required to change the Bill following the Select Committee process.
14. We recommend you table the following proposal at LEG (see Appendix 3):

"That Cabinet:

- Agrees to withdraw the Government's support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals in the Conservation Amendment Bill currently before select committee; and
- Agrees that the Minister of Conservation writes to the Environment Committee expressing that position."

ENDS

Appendix 1: Talking points

Reform of Conservation legislation is critical

- The Conservation Amendment Bill is the most significant reform of conservation management attempted in almost 40 years.
- The primary purpose of the Bill remains conservation, and the need for change is to modernise out of date legislation that makes simple things too complex and restrictive.
- For example, the changes unlock rules prohibiting DOC from charging international tourists to visit some of our iconic sites.
- The estimated \$60m in revenue generated from access fees, will go into conservation and visitor sites.
- The reforms also make it easier for businesses to work with DOC, so they can operate more efficiently and generate more jobs and revenue for the economy.
- We all recognise the importance of a conservation system which protects our special species and places, and allows New Zealanders to enjoy and benefit from that land.
- New Zealanders have let us know in recent days, they deeply value conservation land and I think we need to hear that.
- I believe in these reforms, but I also believe we cannot risk losing the benefit of the changes because some elements have been misinterpreted

Land Exchanges and Disposals

- DOC manages more than a third of New Zealand's land. A great deal of that land is precious for its native flora and fauna, the opportunities it provides for recreation, and the cultural and historical importance it brings for mana whenua and all New Zealanders.

- Too often DOC has become the 'landowner of last resort' with no easy way of rationalising its holdings to deliver better results.
- I believe the reforms we proposed were appropriate. However, it is clear they have become a distraction from the bigger prize of Conservation law reform, of streamlining our planning processes and concessions regime and of bringing in access charging for international visitors.
- I therefore seek your agreement to write to the committee to inform them of the Government's decision to remove the provisions related to land exchanges and disposals from the Bill and return to the status quo. I will also note that I would support the committee extending the submissions window given the level of interest.

Next steps

- I propose to make public our decision today. I will make clear that we have heard the passion of the people for our conservation estate and will recommend the removal of those provisions at Select Committee.

Appendix 2: Questions and Answers

- Question 1: What does this change mean for the Bill?**

Answer

Removing these provisions will not significantly impact the Bill's effectiveness. The major benefits from the Bill will come from speeding up the concessions process and simplifying the overly complex system of planning documents, and from the introduction of access charging for international visitors.

These reforms will support a more efficient conservation system which will deliver significant benefits to all users of Public Conservation Land and treaty partners.

- Question 2: What will this change look like in practice?**

Answer

The Select Committee will be able to recommend drafting changes; I will recommend that they consider amendments that ensure the Bill meets the policy intent of more effective administration of conservation land, while protecting conservation land of high value.

- Question 3: Do you agree with Forest & Bird's representation of the Bill?**

Answer

No. The Bill as drafted was significantly misrepresented in the media. However the level of public concern about land exchanges and disposals is a distraction from other proposed reforms that will significantly improve the experience of thousands of businesses currently operating on conservation land and those who may be intending to in future.

- Question 4: Why not just wait until the Departmental Report to recommend changes?**

Answer

Discussions about land exchanges and disposals have become a distraction from consideration of the Bill as a whole. I want to ensure the public has an opportunity to have their say on other aspects of the Bill, rather than focussing on an incorrect interpretation of the Bill.

Appendix 3: Copy of Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- Agrees to withdraw the Government's support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals in the Conservation Amendment Bill currently before select committee, and
- Agrees that the Minister of Conservation writes to the Environment Committee expressing that position.

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Appendix 4: Draft letter to select committee

s9(2)(g)(i)

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[REDACTED]

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Cabinet Paper Talking Points: Conservation Amendment Bill: Policy changes

To	Minister of Conservation
Committee	Cabinet
Date of meeting	29 June 2026
Reference	26-K-21
Minister lead	Minister of Conservation
DOC contact	Ange Bell, Director Policy, s9(2)(a)
Security level	In Confidence

Purpose – Te aronga

- To provide a draft Cabinet paper seeking agreement to:
 - withdraw the Government's support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals (LED) from the Conservation Amendment Bill; and
 - write to the Environment Committee (the Committee) informing them of this and seeking their advice on changes to the purpose-related provisions to better reflect the government's policy intent.

Background and context – Te horopaki

- The Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced and had its first reading in May.
- The Bill streamlines the management of land under the planning and concessions framework, better enables appropriate use of public conservation land (PCL), and supports more effective administration of PCL. It allows economic activity on PCL where appropriate, while strengthening conservation outcomes.
- The draft Cabinet paper relates to two parts of the Bill – exchanges and disposals and the provisions to more explicitly recognise and enable development on conservation land.

New Part 3C – Exchanges and disposals

- The Bill inserts a new Part 3C into the Conservation Act to enable more flexibility for disposing of or exchanging public conservation land (new sections 15 to 15ZB). Schedules 3 and 5 of the Bill also relate to land exchanges and disposals.
- Over the last week there has been significant public and media interest in this issue. The focus of this interest is the framing that 60 percent of PCL would be eligible for disposal under the Bill, despite much of that land being unable to pass the further tests and process that the Bill creates.
- Over the weekend of 20 and 21 June, the Committee received approximately 30,000 submissions on the Bill. We assume most submissions will largely focus on this issue. As of 24 June, over 48,000 submissions have been received.

Purpose/economic development changes

8. The Bill includes provisions to more explicitly recognise and enable development on PCL, while ensuring conservation remains the Conservation Act's primary purpose. This includes:
- the functions of the Department of Conservation (section 6 of the Conservation Act)
 - the purpose of the National Conservation Policy Statement and area plans (new sections 13D and 13H)
 - the purpose of concessions (new section 14)

You have indicated you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals in the Bill

9. As you announced at the Environmental Defence Society conference on 25 June, you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals in the Bill, to ensure that the broader benefits of the proposed reforms can be realised. We recommend seeking Cabinet agreement to this on Monday 29 June.
10. We understand you wish to retain the legislative status quo for land exchanges and disposals in the Conservation Act and Reserves Act.

We understand you wish to seek the Committee's advice on how to improve the provisions relating to economic development

11. Several non-governmental organisations have raised concerns about the proposed addition of economic development changes to the purpose provisions in the Conservation Act. There is a general concern that the new economic development provisions will displace the primacy of conservation.
12. Stakeholders have also begun considering the interaction between the new economic development provisions and the land exchange and disposals changes. There is a perception that land sales would be emphasised due to the change in DOC's functions at new section 6(ea).
13. We understand that you wish to ask the Committee for advice on changes to the Bill that can enable sensible economic development without the risks that have been raised.

You can seek Cabinet agreement to change the Government's position and then write to inform the Committee

14. Cabinet cannot make changes directly to the Bill while it is before the Committee. However, you can inform the Committee of the change in the Government's position relating to land exchanges and disposals and note that the Government would support the removal of the provisions in the Committee's report.
15. In line with your conversations, you may also wish to request the Committee work with the Environmental Defence Society, Forest and Bird, Iwi and other stakeholders to consider alternative approaches to section 6(ea) that would better enable greater economic activity while supporting strong and enduring conservation outcomes.
16. s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
17. We have provided a draft letter for you to send to the Committee (see draft letter at Appendix 5), should Cabinet agree to the recommendation.

Next steps – Ngā tāwhaitanga

18. Following Cabinet's agreement, you can send the attached letter to the Committee expressing the Government's views.
19. We will provide further advice on the process steps required to change the Bill, following the Select Committee process.

ENDS

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Appendix 1: Draft Cabinet paper

Released under the Official Information Act 1982

Appendix 2: Talking points

Reform of Conservation legislation is critical

- The Conservation Amendment Bill is the most significant reform of conservation management in almost 40 years.
- We need this Bill to modernise the out of date legislation that makes simple things too complex and restrictive.
- For example, the changes unlock rules prohibiting DOC from charging international tourists to visit some of our iconic sites.
- The estimated \$60m in revenue generated from access fees, will go into conservation and visitor sites.
- The reforms also make it easier for businesses to work with DOC, so they can operate more efficiently and generate more jobs and revenue for the economy.
- We all recognise the importance of a conservation system which protects our special species and places, and allows New Zealanders to enjoy and benefit from that land.
- New Zealanders have let us know in recent days that they deeply value conservation land. I think we need to hear that.
- I believe in these reforms, but I also believe we cannot risk losing the benefit of the changes because some elements have been misinterpreted.

Land Exchanges and Disposals

- DOC manages more than a third of New Zealand's land. A great deal of that land is precious for its native flora and fauna, the opportunities it provides for recreation, and the cultural and historical importance it brings for mana whenua and all New Zealanders.
- Too often DOC has become the 'landowner of last resort' with no easy way of rationalising its holdings to deliver better results.

- I believe the reforms we proposed are appropriate. However, it is clear they have become a distraction from the bigger prize of Conservation law reform, of streamlining our planning processes and concessions regime and of bringing in access charging for international visitors.

Purpose

- Conservation land can, and does, support economic development.
- Over 1,600 businesses already operate on or around conservation land, contributing millions of dollars to local economies.
- My proposed changes to include economic development in the purpose of the Act are intended to emphasise that economic opportunities – beyond just tourism – are possible on conservation land.
- At the moment these changes are being tangled with the changes to land disposal and exchange. People are interpreting an intent for the Department to be selling off conservation land to make money. This is not the intent of the changes.
- My intention is to:
 - signal that economic opportunities, beyond just tourism, are possible on conservation land; and
 - support the economic opportunities enabled through the Bill and the National Conservation Policy Statement; and
 - underscore the regulatory responsibilities of the Department, including expanding its role in allowing for economic activity on conservation land.

Writing to committee

- I therefore seek your agreement to write to the Environment Committee to:
 - Inform them of the Government's withdrawal of support for the provisions related to land exchanges and disposals in the Bill and our intent to return to the status quo.

- Request that they work with the Environmental Defence Society, Forest & Bird, Iwi and other stakeholders to advise on alternative ways to enable economic development through the Bill, while supporting strong and enduring conservation outcomes.
- Note that I would support the Committee extending the public submissions window for the Bill, given the level of interest.

Next steps

- I have already announced my intentions at the Environmental Defence Society Conference last week.
- I want to continue to make it clear that we have heard the passion of the people for our conservation estate. I will make another announcement today that reflects my request to Select Committee.

Appendix 3: Questions and Answers

Question 1: What does removing the Land Exchange and Disposal sections mean for the Bill?	
Answer	Removing these provisions will not significantly impact the Bill's effectiveness. The major benefits from the Bill will come from speeding up the concessions process and simplifying the overly complex system of planning documents, and from the introduction of access charging for international visitors. These reforms will support a more efficient conservation system which will deliver significant benefits to all users of Public Conservation Land and treaty partners.
Question 2: Do you agree with Forest & Bird's or Greenpeace's representation of the Bill?	
Answer	No. The Bill as drafted was significantly misrepresented in the media. However, the level of public concern about land exchanges and disposals is a distraction from other proposed reforms that will significantly improve the experience of thousands of businesses currently operating on conservation land and those who may be intending to in future.
Question 3: Why not just wait until the Departmental Report to recommend changes?	
Answer	Discussions about purpose and land exchanges and disposals have become a distraction from consideration of the Bill as a whole. I want to ensure the public has an opportunity to have their say on other aspects of the Bill, rather than focussing on an incorrect interpretation of the Bill.

- **Question 4: What will happen to the ‘bits and bobs’ of land we’ve said we would like to exchange?**

Answer	Removing the proposals does mean that DOC will likely have to hold on to some of these land parcels which it might have been able to sell or exchange if the proposals had gone ahead. However, I consider the cost of this is outweighed by the benefits of the rest of the reforms.
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- **Question 5: Do you expect Select Committee to recommend removing the changes to DOC’s purpose?**

Answer	I would like the committee to work together with the Environmental Defence Society, Forest & Bird, Iwi and other stakeholders to provide advice on how to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports strong conservation outcomes.
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- **Question 6: Will Cabinet have an opportunity to consider Select Committee’s advice on the Bill, particularly the purpose changes?**

Answer	Once Select Committee reports back, I expect to take any proposed policy changes to Cabinet, before kicking off the rest of the parliamentary process.
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Appendix 5: Draft letter to select committee

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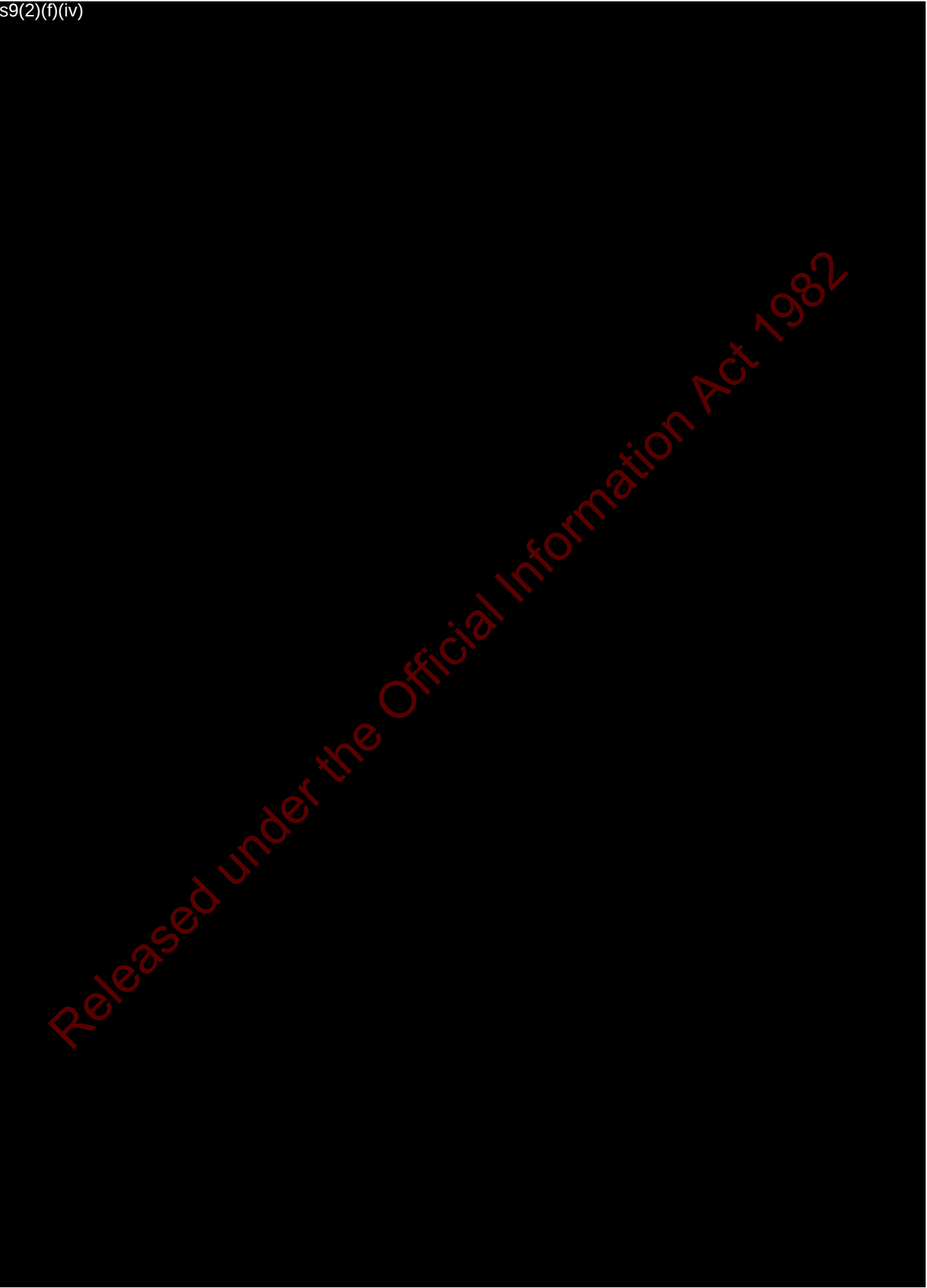
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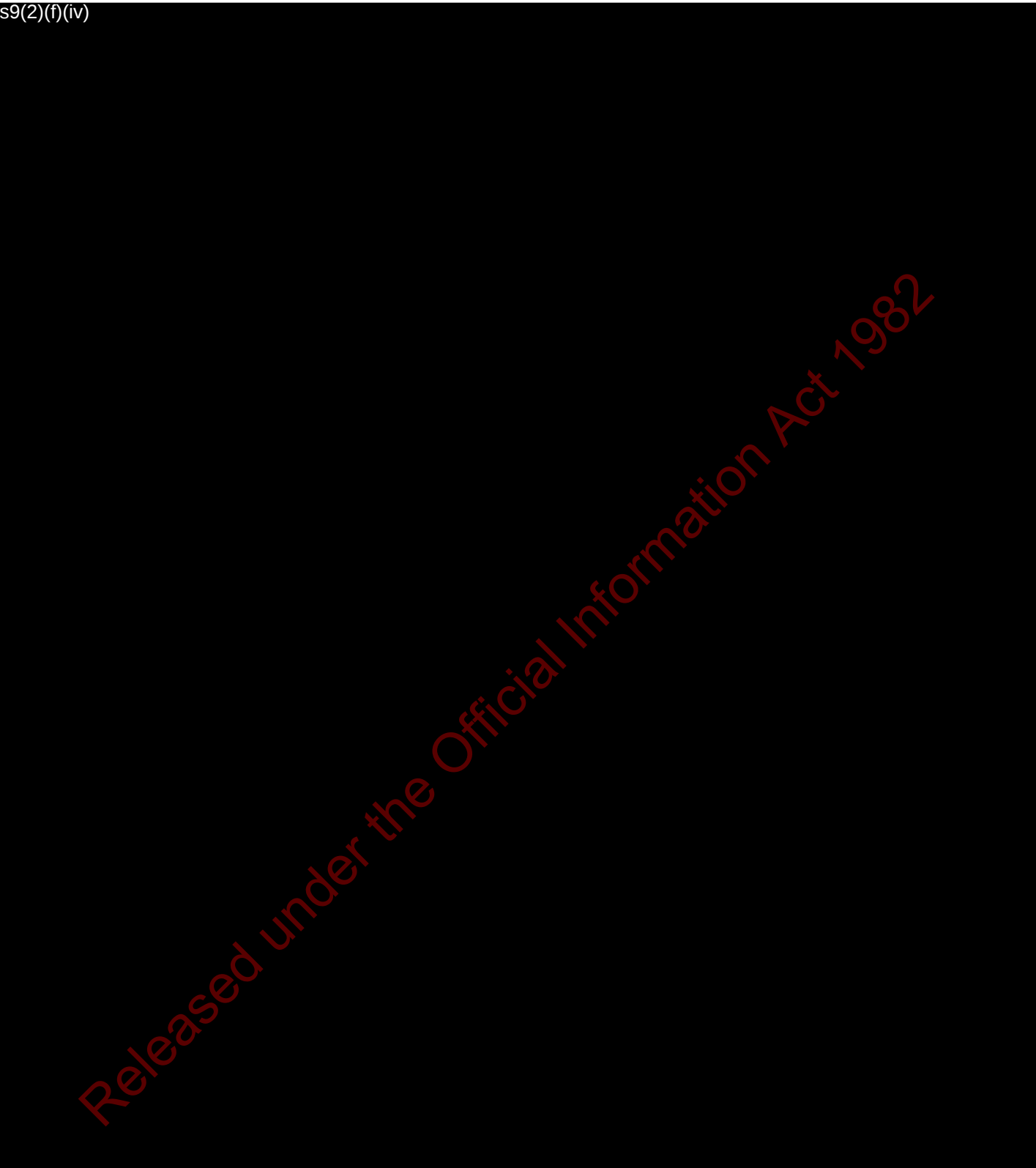
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Cabinet Paper Talking Points: Conservation Amendment Bill: Policy changes

To	Minister of Conservation
Committee	Cabinet
Date of meeting	29 June 2026
Reference	26-K-21
Minister lead	Minister of Conservation
DOC contact	Ange Bell, Director Policy, s9(2)(a) [REDACTED]
Security level	In Confidence

Purpose – Te aronga

- To provide a draft Cabinet paper seeking agreement to:
 - withdraw the Government's support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals (LED) from the Conservation Amendment Bill; and
 - write to the Environment Committee (the Committee) informing them of this and seeking their advice on changes to the purpose-related provisions to better reflect the government's policy intent.

Background and context – Te horopaki

- The Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced and had its first reading in May.
- The Bill streamlines the management of land under the planning and concessions framework, better enables appropriate use of public conservation land (PCL), and supports more effective administration of PCL. It allows economic activity on PCL where appropriate, while strengthening conservation outcomes.
- The draft Cabinet paper relates to two parts of the Bill – exchanges and disposals and the provisions to more explicitly recognise and enable development on conservation land.

New Part 3C – Exchanges and disposals

- The Bill inserts a new Part 3C into the Conservation Act to enable more flexibility for disposing of or exchanging public conservation land (new sections 15 to 15ZB). Schedules 3 and 5 of the Bill also relate to land exchanges and disposals.
- Over the last week there has been significant public and media interest in this issue. The focus of this interest is the framing that 60 percent of PCL would be eligible for disposal under the Bill, despite much of that land being unable to pass the further tests and process that the Bill creates.
- Over the weekend of 20 and 21 June, the Committee received approximately 30,000 submissions on the Bill. We assume most submissions will largely focus on this issue. As of 26 June, over 62,000 submissions have been received.

Purpose/economic development changes

8. The Bill includes provisions to more explicitly recognise and enable development on PCL, while ensuring conservation remains the Conservation Act's primary purpose. This includes:
- the functions of the Department of Conservation (section 6 of the Conservation Act)
 - the purpose of the National Conservation Policy Statement and area plans (new sections 13D and 13H)
 - the purpose of concessions (new section 14)

You have indicated you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals in the Bill

9. As you announced at the Environmental Defence Society conference on 25 June, you wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals in the Bill, to ensure that the broader benefits of the proposed reforms can be realised. We recommend seeking Cabinet agreement to this on Monday 29 June.
10. We understand you wish to retain the legislative status quo for land exchanges and disposals in the Conservation Act and Reserves Act.

We understand you wish to seek the Committee's advice on how to improve the provisions relating to economic development

11. Several non-governmental organisations have raised concerns about the proposed addition of economic development changes to the purpose provisions in the Conservation Act. There is a general concern that the new economic development provisions will displace the primacy of conservation.
12. Stakeholders have also begun considering the interaction between the new economic development provisions and the land exchange and disposals changes. There is a perception that land sales would be emphasised due to the change in DOC's functions at new section 6(ea).
13. We understand that you wish to ask the Committee for advice on changes to the Bill that can enable sensible economic development without the risks that have been raised.

You can seek Cabinet agreement to change the Government's position and then write to inform the Committee

14. Cabinet cannot make changes directly to the Bill while it is before the Committee. However, you can inform the Committee of the change in the Government's position relating to land exchanges and disposals and note that the Government would support the removal of the provisions in the Committee's report.
15. In line with your conversations, you may also wish to request the Committee work with environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to consider alternative approaches to section 6(ea) that would better enable greater economic activity while supporting strong and enduring conservation outcomes.
16. s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
17. We have provided a draft letter for you to send to the Committee (see draft letter at Appendix 5), should Cabinet agree to the recommendation.

Next steps – Ngā tāwhaitanga

18. Following Cabinet's agreement, you can send the attached letter to the Committee expressing the Government's views.
19. We will provide further advice on the process steps required to change the Bill, following the Select Committee process.

ENDS

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Appendix 1: Draft Cabinet paper

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Appendix 2: Talking points

Reform of Conservation legislation is critical

- The Conservation Amendment Bill is the most significant reform of conservation management in almost 40 years.
- We need this Bill to modernise the out-of-date legislation that makes simple things too complex and restrictive.
- For example, the changes unlock rules prohibiting DOC from charging international tourists to visit some of our iconic sites.
- The estimated \$60m in revenue generated from access fees will go into conservation and visitor sites.
- The reforms also make it easier for businesses to work with DOC, so they can operate more efficiently and generate more jobs and revenue for the economy.
- We all recognise the importance of a conservation system which protects our special species and places, and allows New Zealanders to enjoy and benefit from that land.
- New Zealanders have let us know in recent days that they deeply value conservation land. I think we need to hear that.
- I believe in these reforms, but I also believe we cannot risk losing the benefit of the changes because some elements have been misinterpreted.

Land Exchanges and Disposals

- DOC manages more than a third of New Zealand's land. A great deal of that land is precious for its native flora and fauna, the opportunities it provides for recreation, and the cultural and historical importance it brings for mana whenua and all New Zealanders.
- Too often DOC has become the 'landowner of last resort' with no easy way of rationalising its holdings to deliver better results.

- I believe the reforms we proposed are appropriate. However, it is clear they have become a distraction from the bigger prize of Conservation law reform, of streamlining our planning processes and concessions regime and of bringing in access charging for international visitors.

Changes to the functions of the Department of Conservation

- Conservation land can, and does, support economic development.
- Over 1,600 businesses already operate on or around conservation land, contributing millions of dollars to local economies.
- My proposed changes to include economic development in the functions of the Department are intended to emphasise that economic opportunities – beyond just tourism – are possible on conservation land.
- At the moment these changes are being tangled with the changes to land disposal and exchange. People are interpreting an intent for the Department to be selling off conservation land to make money. This is not the intent of the changes.
- My intention is to:
 - signal that economic opportunities, beyond just tourism, are possible on conservation land; and
 - support the economic opportunities enabled through the Bill and the National Conservation Policy Statement; and
 - underscore the regulatory responsibilities of the Department, including expanding its role in allowing for economic activity on conservation land.

Writing to committee

- I therefore seek your agreement to write to the Environment Committee to:
 - Inform them of the Government's withdrawal of support for the provisions related to land exchanges and disposals in the Bill and our intent to return to the status quo.

- Request that they work with environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to advise on alternative ways to enable economic development through the Bill, while supporting strong and enduring conservation outcomes.
- Note that I would support the Committee extending the public submissions window for the Bill, given the level of interest.

Next steps

- I have already announced my intentions at the Environmental Defence Society Conference last week.
- I want to continue to make it clear that we have heard the passion of the people for our conservation estate. I will make another announcement today that reflects my request to Select Committee.
- s9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Appendix 3: Questions and Answers

Question 1: What does removing the Land Exchange and Disposal sections mean for the Bill?	
Answer	Removing these provisions will not significantly impact the Bill's effectiveness. The major benefits from the Bill will come from speeding up the concessions process and simplifying the overly complex system of planning documents, and from the introduction of access charging for international visitors. These reforms will support a more efficient conservation system which will deliver significant benefits to all users of Public Conservation Land and treaty partners.
Question 2: Do you agree with Forest & Bird's or Greenpeace's representation of the Bill?	
Answer	No. The Bill as drafted was significantly misrepresented in the media. However, the level of public concern about land exchanges and disposals is a distraction from other proposed reforms that will significantly improve the experience of thousands of businesses currently operating on conservation land and those who may be intending to in future.
Question 3: Why not just wait until the Departmental Report to recommend changes?	
Answer	Discussions about purpose and land exchanges and disposals have become a distraction from consideration of the Bill as a whole. I want to ensure the public has an opportunity to have their say on other aspects of the Bill, rather than focussing on an incorrect interpretation of the Bill.

- **Question 4: What will happen to the ‘bits and bobs’ of land we’ve said we would like to exchange?**

Answer	Removing the proposals does mean that DOC will likely have to hold on to some of these land parcels which it might have been able to sell or exchange if the proposals had gone ahead. However, I consider the cost of this is outweighed by the benefits of the rest of the reforms.
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- **Question 5: Do you expect Select Committee to recommend removing the changes to DOC’s purpose?**

Answer	I would like the committee to work together with the Environmental Defence Society, Forest & Bird, Iwi and other stakeholders to provide advice on how to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports strong conservation outcomes.
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- **Question 6: Will Cabinet have an opportunity to consider Select Committee’s advice on the Bill, particularly the purpose changes?**

Answer	Once Select Committee reports back, I expect to take any proposed policy changes to Cabinet, before kicking off the rest of the parliamentary process.
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Appendix 4: Copy of Recommendations

I recommend that Cabinet:

- **Note** that the Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced to the House in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee;
- **Note** that there has been significant public and media interest in the Conservation Amendment Bill, particularly changes to the purpose architecture and functions of the Department of Conservation and to land exchanges and disposal settings;
- **Agree** to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and retain the status quo position in the Conservation Act 1987;
- **Note** that, should you agree to 3 above, the Minister of Conservation will write to the Environment Committee to:
 - Withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals provisions in the Conservation Amendment Bill;
 - Ask the committee to undertake work alongside environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports both the Government's goal of greater economic development and strong and enduring conservation outcomes; and
 - Express the Government's support for extending by one week the submissions window for the Select Committee, given the level of public interest in Conservation and the Bill.

s9(2)(g)(i)

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In Confidence

Office of the Minister of Conservation

Cabinet

Conservation Amendment Bill: Policy changes

Proposal

- 1 This paper seeks agreement to remove support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals from the Conservation Amendment Bill.
- 2 I intend to write to the Environment Committee informing them of this decision.
- 3 As part of that letter I will also ask the Committee to work with stakeholders to provide advice on how best to realise the Government's goal of enabling greater economic development on Public Conservation Land while ensuring conservation outcomes are protected.
- 4 Given the changes to the Bill proposed in this paper, and the passion New Zealanders have for conservation, I will also signal to the Committee that I would support an extension to the submissions period.

Background

- 5 The Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) was introduced to the House and had its first reading in May 2026. It is currently before the Environment Committee, with submissions on the Bill due 2 July.
- 6 The Bill streamlines the management of land under the planning and concessions framework, better enables appropriate use of conservation land, and supports more effective administration of conservation land [CAB-25-MIN-0213.01, CAB-25-MIN-0236 and CAB-25-MIN-0334.01 refer].
- 7 It also makes changes to the Conservation Act to more explicitly recognise and enable development on conservation land, while ensuring conservation remains the Act's primary purpose [CAB-26-MIN-0154 refers]. This includes targeted, incisive changes, including:
 - 7.1 the purpose architecture of the Act, primarily the functions of the Department of Conservation (section 6 of the Conservation Act),
 - 7.2 the purpose of the National Conservation Policy Statement and area plans (new sections 13D and 13H), and
 - 7.3 the purpose of concessions (new section 14).
- 8 The Bill also includes provisions that would enable more flexibility for exchanging or selling conservation land. The highest value conservation land (approximately 40 percent) is immediately excluded from these settings through primary legislation, and the remaining 60 percent must pass stringent tests to be considered for exchange or disposal.

Public engagement on the Bill through Select Committee

- 9 New Zealanders care deeply about conservation. Over the past fortnight there has been significant public and media interest in both the addition of economic development to the purpose, and land exchange and disposal changes in particular. The focus of this interest is the framing that 60 percent of public conservation land would be eligible for disposal under the Bill, despite much of that land being unable to pass the further tests and process that the Bill creates.
- 10 Over the weekend of 20 and 21 June the Environment Committee received approximately 30,000 submissions on the Bill that, I assume, will largely focus on this issue. As of 25 June, over 48,000 submissions have been received.
- 11 I believe these changes are needed. However, they have become a distraction from the bigger prize of conservation law reform, from streamlining our planning processes and concessions regime to remove unnecessary constraints and create opportunities for jobs and growth, and of bringing in access charging for international visitors.

I seek Cabinet's approval to withdraw support for proposals on land exchange and disposals

- 12 The proposed changes to land exchanges and disposal provisions are intended to support more effective land management by allowing greater optimisation of the portfolio of land managed by the Department.
- 13 I have met with the Environmental Defence Society and Forest & Bird to hear their concerns and I believe we have found the best way forward.
- 14 As I announced at the Environmental Defence Society's conference last week, I wish to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and retain the status quo position in the Conservation Act 1987. I consider this is a pragmatic approach to make sure that the broader benefits of the proposed reforms can be realised.
- 15 After Cabinet endorsement of my intentions stated herein, I will write to the Environment Committee to inform them of this position.

I also wish to seek the Committee's advice on the proposed changes to the functions of the Department

- 16 Similarly, several non-governmental organisations have raised concerns about the changes to the functions of the Department (purpose architecture). There is a general concern that the inclusion of economic development will displace the primacy of conservation.
- 17 Stakeholders have also begun considering the interaction between the new economic development provisions and the land exchange and disposals changes. There is a perception that land sales would be emphasised due to the change in DOC's functions at new section 6(ea).
- 18 I wish to ask the Environment Committee to work together with environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to ensure these provisions support strong and enduring conservation outcomes.

19 Given the significant level of interest in the Bill, I would also support the Committee extending the submissions window by one week.

20 s9(2)(f)(iv)

Cost-of-living Implications

21 There are no immediate cost-of-living implications from this paper.

Financial Implications

22 There are no immediate financial implications from this paper.

Legislative Implications

23 The Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced to the House in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee. s9(2)(f)(iv)

Subject to your agreement to the proposals in this paper, I will inform the Committee that the Government has withdrawn its support for the proposals relating to land exchanges and disposals in the Bill, and that it intends to revert to the legislative status quo currently in the Conservation Act.

24 I will also request the Committee to work with stakeholders to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports both the Government's goal of greater economic development and strong and enduring conservation outcomes.

Impact Analysis

Regulatory Impact Statement

25 The proposal in this paper is to maintain the status quo and therefore Cabinet's impact analysis requirements do not apply.

Climate Implications of Policy Assessment (CIPA)

26 CIPA requirements do not apply to the proposals in this paper.

Population Implications

27 There are no immediate population impacts from this paper.

Human Rights

28 The proposals in this paper are consistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Use of external Resources

29 Contractors were not involved in the development of this paper or associated advice and documents.

Consultation

30 Public consultation on the reforms took place from November 2024 to February 2025.

- 31 Engagement with Iwi, including Post Settlement Governance Entities, has been ongoing since November 2024 to discuss how to uphold Treaty settlement commitments in the context of these reforms.
- 32 This paper was developed under very truncated timeframes and other agencies were not consulted.

Communications

- 33 I announced my intention at the Environmental Defence Society's conference last week. I will make a formal announcement later today, following the sending of the letter to the Environment Committee, and will publish the letter.

Proactive Release

- 34 I intend to proactively release this paper as soon as possible with redactions as appropriate under the Official Information Act 1982.

Recommendations

The Minister for Conservation recommends that the Cabinet:

- 1 **Note** that the Conservation Amendment Bill was introduced to the House in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee;
- 2 **Note** that there has been significant public and media interest in the Conservation Amendment Bill, particularly changes to the purpose architecture and functions of the Department of Conservation and to land exchanges and disposal settings;
- 3 **Agree** to withdraw support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and retain the status quo position in the Conservation Act 1982;
- 4 **Note** that, should you agree to 3 above, the Minister of Conservation will write to the Environment Committee to:
 - 4.1 Withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals provisions in the Conservation Amendment Bill;
 - 4.2 Ask the committee to undertake work alongside the environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports both the Government's goal of greater economic development and strong and enduring conservation outcomes; and
 - 4.3 Express the Government's support for extending by one week the submissions window for the Select Committee, given the level of public interest in Conservation and the Bill.

Authorised for lodgement

Hon Tama Potaka

Minister of Conservation



Cabinet

Summary

This document contains information for the New Zealand Cabinet. It must be treated in confidence and handled in accordance with any security classification, or other endorsement. The information can only be released, including under the Official Information Act 1982, by persons with the appropriate authority.

Conservation Amendment Bill: Policy Changes

Portfolio

Conservation

The Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) had its first reading in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee [CAB-26-MIN-0154]. Submissions on the Bill are due by 2 July 2026.

This paper seeks agreement to remove the Government's support for the proposals in the Bill relating to land exchanges and disposals.

The Minister of Conservation recommends that Cabinet:

- 1 note that the Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) was introduced to the House in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee;
- 2 note that there has been significant public and media interest in the Bill, particularly changes to the purpose architecture and functions of the Department of Conservation, and to land exchanges and disposal settings;
- 3 agree to withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and to retain the status quo position in the Conservation Act 1987;
- 4 note that the Minister of Conservation will write to the Environment Committee to:
 - 4.1 withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals provisions in the Bill;
 - 4.2 ask the Committee to undertake work alongside the environmental non-government organisations, Iwi and other stakeholders to ensure that new section 6(ea) supports both the Government's goal of greater economic development and strong and enduring conservation outcomes;
 - 4.3 express the Government's support for extending by one week the submissions window for the Committee, given the level of public interest in conservation and the Bill.

Janine Havey
for Secretary of the Cabinet

Hard-copy distribution:
The Cabinet



Cabinet

Minute of Decision

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Conservation Amendment Bill: Policy Changes

Portfolio Conservation

On 29 June 2026, Cabinet:

- 1 **noted** that the Conservation Amendment Bill (the Bill) was introduced to the House in May 2026 and is currently before the Environment Committee;
- 2 **noted** that there has been significant public and media interest in the Bill, particularly changes to the purpose architecture and functions of the Department of Conservation, and to land exchanges and disposal settings;
- 3 **agreed** to withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals proposals and to retain the status quo position in the Conservation Act 1987;
- 4 **noted** that the Minister of Conservation will write to the Environment Committee to:
 - 4.1 withdraw the Government's support for the land exchanges and disposals provisions in the Bill;
 - 4.2 ask the Committee to undertake work alongside the environmental non-government organisations, sector groups, Iwi and other stakeholders to ensure that the new section 6(ea) supports both the Government's goal of greater economic development and strong and enduring conservation outcomes;
 - 4.3 express the Government's support for extending by one week the submissions window for the Committee, given the level of public interest in conservation and the Bill.

Rachel Hayward
Secretary of the Cabinet