

3 March 2026

Whare Kaupapa Atawhai /
Conservation House
18 Manners Street
Wellington 6011
PO Box 10420
Wellington 6140
doc.govt.nz
Ref: OIAD-6079

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Thank you for your request to the Department of Conservation (DOC), received on 10 February 2026, in which you asked for:

...the following info for the Paparoa Track and Heaphy Track:

- 1. The cost to maintain each track and related facilities (serviced huts, bridges, shelters, wardens' huts) each year for the past five years (calendar year preferred, but financial year is fine).*
- 2. How does the cost compare to the cost of other great walks (and given they are different distances is it something you can compare)?*
- 3. The income generated by each track for each year - hut bookings, concessions.*
- 4. How does this compare to the income of other Great Walks?*
- 5. Track usage each year, ideally with a split of cyclists and walkers if possible (and when the tracks were opened to cyclists, if this was new within those years).*
- 6. The number of international vs local users on each track for each year.*
- 7. Are hut wardens on these tracks volunteers or paid?*

We have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the OIA).

I have provided the information you requested per financial year as this is the primary way the information is stored. The information is set out for the last 5 years (2020-25) and is provided in part as noted below. The costs and revenues are net of GST. In addition, each track is different in length, accommodation capacity and popularity which will be reflected in the different costs and revenues.

Your questions and our responses are listed below:

1. **The cost to maintain each track and related facilities (serviced huts, bridges, shelters, wardens' huts) each year for the past five years (calendar year preferred, but financial year is fine).**
2. **How does the cost compare to the cost of other great walks (and given they are different distances is it something you can compare)?**

I have set out the total annual costs for all the Great Walks DOC operates in a table below. I have done this so you can draw your own comparisons.

The costs include personnel, expenses (materials, etc), depreciation, capital charge and overhead allocation. To supply only the operational expenditure would misrepresent the financial position for providing the Great Walks.

Total Cost (000)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Lake Waikaremoana Track	\$542	--	--	--	--
Whanganui Journey	\$679	\$685	--	--	--
Tongariro Northern Circuit	\$481	\$521	--	--	--
Abel Tasman Coast Track	\$1,096	\$1,063	--	--	--
Heaphy Track	\$1,619	\$1,632	--	--	--
Paparoa Track	\$1,353	\$1,234	--	--	--
Routeburn Track	\$873	\$858	--	--	--
Milford Track	\$1,620	\$1,191	--	--	--
Kepler Track	\$775	\$807	--	--	--
Rakiura Track	\$866	\$357	--	--	--
Total cost	\$9,904	\$8,411	--	--	--

The following information is refused pursuant to section 18(g) of the OIA, as the information is not held by DOC:

- costs for the Great Walks from FY2022/23 onwards, as these have not been recorded since 2021/22FY
- costs for the Lake Waikaremoana Great Walk have not been recorded by DOC since 2021 as the track is operated by Te Uru Taumatua. You will need to contact Te Uru Taumatua for that information
- costs for Hump Ridge Track Great Walk are not recorded by DOC as this Great Walk is operated by Tuatapere Hump Track Charitable Trust, which incurs the costs and receives the revenue from this track. However, the financial reports for the Trust are publicly available on the [Charities Services website](#).

3. **The income generated by each track for each year - hut bookings, concessions**
4. **How does this compare to the income of other Great Walks?**

I have set out the annual booking revenue for the Great Walks in the table below. This includes both huts and campsites. I have done this so you can draw your own comparisons.

Bookings Revenue (000)	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Lake Waikaremoana Track*	\$481	\$74	--**	\$96	\$289
Whanganui Journey	\$353	\$270	\$239	\$300	\$339
Tongariro Northern Circuit	\$313	\$265	\$419	\$523	\$538
Abel Tasman Coast Track	\$1,178	\$989	\$1,323	\$1,581	\$1,879
Heaphy Track	\$772	\$348	\$92	\$574	\$825
Paparoa Track	\$461	\$398	\$459	\$581	\$613
Routeburn Track	\$816	\$953	\$1,369	\$1,435	\$1,611
Milford Track	\$1,038	\$1,340	\$1,498	\$1,645	\$1,994
Kepler Track	\$1,277	\$1,067	\$1,778	\$1,937	\$2,173
Rakiura Track	\$209	\$252	\$343	\$368	\$401
Total Revenue	\$6,898	\$5,956	\$7,521	\$8,943	\$10,373

* This Great Walk is booked through DOC's booking system and therefore the financial system collects this information.

** Track closed due to storm and flooding damage.

The following information is refused pursuant to sections 18(g) and 18(f) of the Official Information Act:

- booking revenue for the Hump Ridge Track is not recorded in our financial system, for the same reason outlined in questions 1 & 2.
- **concession revenue** data you requested, either by these Great Walks or across all of them, because this information cannot be made available without substantial collation or research due to the limitations in our database.

I have borne in mind section 18B of the Official Information Act but concluded that use of this provision would not assist in this case.

5. Track usage each year, ideally with a split of cyclists and walkers if possible (and when the tracks were opened to cyclists, if this was new within those years).

Refer to the table under question 6 for track usage.

The table below provides estimates of the proportions of bikers on the Heaphy and Paparoa tracks. We do not keep specific annual records on bikers using these tracks. The estimates are based on responses in the annual Great Walk Survey data (relies on bikers staying in one of the Great Walk huts – many can cycle these tracks in a day).

Proportion of bikers	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Heaphy Track	11.2%	27.8%	17.1%	12.5%	13.0%
Paparoa Track	26.4%	22.8%	15.6%	14.9%	13.2%

The Heaphy Track is only open to cyclists from 1 May to 30 November and the Paparoa Track is open to cyclists all year round.

6. The number of international vs local users on each track for each year.

Track		2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Heaphy	Int'l	627	132	317	1,391	1,442
	NZ	10,077	4,854	1,077	5,424	6,755
	Total	10,704	4,986	1,394	6,815	8,197
Paparoa	Int'l	185	135	668	686	725
	NZ	6,492	5,879	5,826	5,365	4,949
	Total	6,677	6,014	6,494	6,051	5,674
Total Great Walks*	Int'l	7,537**	2,295**	27,789	32,412	32,355
	NZ	86,676	74,199	59,052	55,188	60,088
	Total	94,213	76,494	86,841	87,599	92,444

* Excludes Hump Ridge Track.

** COVID Pandemic period.

The data in the above table is from the DOC's booking system. The data does not include people walking, running or biking the track (or part of it) in a day and not staying in the huts or campsites on these tracks.

7. Are hut wardens on these tracks volunteers or paid?

Hut wardens on Heaphy Track are 8 month paid positions, and on the Paparoa Track they are 6 month paid positions; there are no volunteer wardens on either track.

You are entitled to seek an investigation and review of my decision by writing to an Ombudsman as provided by section 28(3) of the OIA.

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

Nāku noa, nā



Catherine Wilson
Director Heritage and Visitors
Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai